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Exploring the Association between Sexual Orientation Beliefs and Ambivalent Sexism in Young Adults

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Abstract

This paper investigated the association between sexual orientation beliefs and ambivalent sexism in young adults. It was hypothesized that sexual orientation beliefs would correlate with and predicate ambivalent sexism, while there would be significant sociodemographic differences across the study variables. Selecting a cross-sectional (correlation) approach, a non-probability convenient sample of 221 young adults (M_{age} = 24.84, SD_{age} = 5.82) was recruited. After filling out a detailed sociodemographic information sheet, the participants responded to original (English) versions of the Sexual Orientation Beliefs Scale (Arseneau et al., 2013) and the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1996). The analysis revealed that all sub-scales of the Sexual Orientation Beliefs Scale (discreetness, naturalness, informativeness and homogeneity) had positive correlations with hostile sexism and benevolent sexism. Moreover, discreetness, informativeness, and homogeneity beliefs predicted hostile sexism, while only the homogeneity belief predicted benevolent sexism. The socio-demographic variables of age and education emerged as significant correlates. Muslims held stronger ambivalent sexism than non-Muslims but no difference was found in sexual orientation beliefs. Hostile sexism was higher in men and those from a nuclear family system. Benevolent sexism was higher in unemployed and non-heterosexual individuals. Lastly, the discreetness belief was stronger in men and heterosexuals. This study would be a valuable addition to the academic scholarship as it provided insights into the indigenous patterns of sexual orientation beliefs and their relationship with specific forms of sexism.

Keywords: Ambivalent Sexism, Benevolent Sexism, Hostile Sexism, Sexual Orientation Beliefs, Young Adults

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Introduction

Defined as a persistent tendency or an inclination to experience sensual, affective, or romantic attraction towards men, women or both (Herek, 1984), sexual orientation remains one of the least investigated and underreported areas of research investigation as the nature of available literature is rather sparse. By placing this concept within the unique indigenous positionality of the Pakistani socio-cultural context, it would be challenging yet interesting to investigate the attitudes of young adult Pakistanis towards diverse sexual and gender identities.

Beliefs about Sexual Orientation

These ontological ideas about sexual orientation, owing to their apparent ability to predict attitudes towards sexual minorities, have drawn the attention of social psychologists in particular (Hegarty, 2002). Laypersons hold numerous perspectives

regarding the scope and determinants of sexual orientation (Haslam & Levy, 2006; Morandini et al., 2021). Some people view sexual orientation as an innate characteristic, while others assume it to be fluid or subject to personal choice (Whisman, 2012). There is also variation in how sexual orientation is categorized; some individuals believe it may be divided into two or three distinguishable categories (gay, straight, or bisexual). In opposition, others propose a continuum with multiple gradations between the two extremes of exclusively heterosexual and exclusively homosexual (Kinsey et al., 1998), with numerous facets of bisexuality in between (Morandini et al., 2017). Historically, three philosophical schools of thought have been used to classify attitudes towards sexual orientation: essentialist, social constructionist, and interactionist perspectives (DeLamater & Hyde, 1998). Modern essentialist views, such as the "born this way" rationalization of sexual identity (Gaga, 2011) include biological, evolutionary and other scientific explanations. The queer theorists almost exclusively align with the social constructionist perspective, which posits that socio-cultural, political and ethnolinguistic processes mold the acquisition and experience of sexual orientation (Butler, 1990). The interactionist perspective, meanwhile, views sexual orientation as both a fundamental trait and a socially constructed concept (DeLamater & Hyde, 1998).

Perspectives on Sexual Minorities

People's views towards sexual minorities are influenced by their perceptions of sexual orientation (Fry et al., 2020; Grzanka et al., 2016), varying across parameters such as gender, sexual orientation, social status, and religious background (Cragun & Sumerau, 2015).

In general, attitudes are more accepting when one considers homosexuality to be biologically determined and inflexible rather than a fluid disposition, likely because people are then perceived as less responsible for their sexual orientation (Haslam & Levy, 2006). Conversely, considering sexual orientation in rigid, binary terms (gay/straight) foretell higher discrimination, as it may amplify the perceived differences between gay or lesbian individuals and other people (Haslam & Levy, 2006; Hegarty, 2002). Similarly, a major cause of the particular stigma experienced by bisexual people, biphobia, is the denial of the existence of bisexuality (Israel & Mohr, 2004). Sexual and gender minorities experience oppression, discrimination, and prejudice (Boyer & Lorenz, 2020; Ross et al., 2018), even in societies with legal protections.

Ambivalent Sexism

Being a predominantly patriarchal society, Pakistan is susceptible to sexism, much like other male-dominated cultures that enforce strict adherence to prescribed traditional gender roles (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Interestingly, both women and men express sexist attitudes towards each other (Roets et al., 2012). The theories of sexism highlight the distinctiveness of ambivalent sexism, as it is an amalgamation of both positive and negative evaluations of women – referred to as benevolent and hostile sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996). In contrast to BS, which rewards women for conforming to traditional gender norms, HS punishes those women who reject their inferior status to men (Glick & Fiske, 2001). Benevolent sexism is generally perceived as harmless, making it difficult to identify (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Kilianski & Rudman, 1998). On the other hand, hostile sexism (HS) is more overt, expressing gender biases and prejudices (Herzog & Oreg, 2008). Despite the difference in tone, both benevolent and hostile sexism rely on gender stereotypes, often positively correlated across cultures

(Glick et al., 2000). This dynamic serve to reinforce and legitimize patriarchal systems.

Considering the reasons why people might support sexist viewpoints is necessary to comprehend how sexism functions in any society. According to data on sexism by age, men demonstrate more hostile sexism which rises with age; women exhibit both hostile and benevolent sexism in adolescence and young adulthood, which reduces in middle adulthood, and again increases in older age (Ferragut et al., 2016). The more traditional gender roles are reflected in a person's life, the higher that person's benevolent sexism scores are (Deak et al., 2021). Another traditionalism that fuels misogyny is religiosity. Across religious affiliations like Christianity and Islam, both forms of sexism – especially benevolent sexism – have been positively related to levels of religiosity (Mikołajczak & Pietrzak, 2014). The acceptance of benevolent sexism can increase just by being reminded of religion (Haggard et al., 2019).

Literature Review

Morandini et al. (2017) found that for both bisexual and lesbian women, discreteness views were linked to higher levels of internalized stigma. However, naturalness beliefs were linked to lower levels of internalized stigma. Moreover, Tierney et al. (2021) determined the sexual orientation belief profiles of sexual minorities. They found that contrary to non-monosexuality, which indicated membership in the multidimensional essentialism profile (high on naturalness/ discreteness/importance/entitativity), monosexuality (high naturalness, low discreteness /importance/entitativity) predicted participation in the naturalness-only profile.

Few studies have systematically evaluated the differences in sexual orientation beliefs among various sexual identity groups. According to Morgenroth et al. (2021), bisexual people showed less essentialism regarding certain characteristics of sexual orientation than gay or lesbian people. Moreover, they perceive sexual orientation as discrete and less natural. Bisexuals' perceptions of naturalness were lower, which decreased their sense of belonging to the LGBT+ community. Similarly, another study indicated that the significance of SOBs differs between monosexuals and non-monosexuals because gay/lesbian sexual identities are typically more outwardly perceptible and socially plausible than bisexual identities (Tabatabai, 2016).

A study indicated that both sexism and heterosexism were rampant in the U.S. culture, further reinforcing oppression in the intersectional context of merging minority identities, such as social status, race, and ethnicity (Szymanski & Moffitt, 2012). Similarly, Gates (2011) argued that homosexuals are a sexual minority in heteronormative societies and frequently experience stigmatization as they are perceived as a danger to the patriarchal system.

According to a substantial body of research, men suffer anxiety when their masculinity is threatened, and they take action to reassert their social standing (Vandello & Bosson, 2013). Likewise, Vieira de Figueiredo and Pereira (2021) discovered that heterosexual men are actuated to uphold strict distinctions between themselves and homosexual men; they express more homophobic attitudes when this distinctiveness is jeopardized.

Hostile and benevolent sexism serves to justify and maintain male privilege (Glick & Fiske, 1996). As a result, heterosexual men endorse these attitudes more strongly than women across all countries, with hostile sexism typically being more prevalent (Glick et al., 2000). Likewise, cisgender men report higher HS ratings than other gender groupings, while cisgender women and gender-diverse people who were assigned as

female at birth have lower BS scores (Schiralli et al., 2022). Correspondingly, a study indicated that men and heterosexuals had significantly higher hostile and benevolent sexism than women and SMs respectively. Gay men scored lowest on benevolent sexism whereas heterosexual women had higher benevolent sexism than lesbian and bisexual women (Cowie et al., 2019).

Additionally, religious identities and beliefs have been closely related to sexist views. According to Burn and Busso (2005), religious identification — or the significance of religion in a person's life— has also been linked to particular benevolent sexism sub-dimensions, such as paternalism and complementary gender differentiation. A study on religious conformity revealed that pressure to follow religious standards, guiding the status and behavior of women, was what motivated ambivalent sexism in both Christian and Muslim adolescent women (Mastari et al., 2021).

Sinno et al. (2022) revealed that SO was the most salient predictor of endorsing all subscales in the SOBs Scale. Also, they found gender differences in the perceptions of SO. Likewise, another study established that SO was a robust and exceptionally uniform predictor of social attitudes across various issues (Schnabel, 2018). While investigating sexual orientation beliefs, Grzanka et al. (2016) found that counsellors considered SO as the only defining aspect of sexual minorities (SMs). While addressing the sexist stereotypes regarding SO, Rees-Turyn et al. (2008) found an enduring pattern of labelling lesbians as “masculine” and gay men as “feminine”.

Based on the above-cited literature, it can be concluded that heterosexism and sexism have sociocultural implications that provide insight into the social dynamics of society by highlighting its trends and changes.

Rationale of the Study

While gender and sexuality-based studies have substantial momentum in Western academia, a cursory look at the indigenous Pakistani literature would result in an underwhelming experience. This gap underscores the need to focus on issues related to gender and sexual identities within our sociocultural context. This pioneering indigenous study would substantially contribute to academia and research, offering useful insights for clinical and counselling psychologists working with diverse populations. These findings would be of specific interest to social psychologists, sociologists, social workers and gender experts as they highlight the underlying complex dynamics of gender and sexuality-related challenges faced in Pakistan.

Objectives

a) The study would investigate the relationship between sexual orientation beliefs and ambivalent sexism in Pakistani young adults.
b) The study would highlight the sociodemographic differences across sexual orientation beliefs and ambivalent sexism in Pakistani young adults.

Hypotheses

a) The sexual orientation beliefs would correlate with dimensions of ambivalent sexism in young adults.
b) The sexual orientation beliefs subscales would predict benevolent sexism and hostile sexism in young adults.
c) There would be significant sociodemographic differences across sexual orientation beliefs and ambivalent sexism in young adults.
d) There would be a significant interaction of sex and sexual identity on ambivalent sexism in young adults

Method

After getting approval from the competent authority (with Ref. No. D/695/ORIC, University of Punjab), permission was taken to use the scales from the respective authors.

A sample size of 189 was calculated through G-power software (Faul et al., 2007). Owing to the sensitivity of the research topic and the initial reluctance of participants, a convenient sampling strategy was employed. For this cross-sectional (correlation) study, 300 young adults were initially approached in-person. Only 221 young adults from Lahore-based universities eventually participated in the study as the remaining either did not return the questionnaires in time or did not complete them. Every participant gave their formal consent to participate and responded to the sociodemographic information sheet, the Sexual Orientation Beliefs Scale (Arseneau et al., 2013) and the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1996) for the investigation. Throughout the research, APA-mandated ethics were followed and confidentiality of the data was maintained. Ultimately, results were analyzed and interpreted in the context of existing scholarly research.

Measures

The questionnaire included original versions of the employed scales. These tools, along with the socio-demographic information sheet, were in English language. The following assessment measures were included in the current investigation:

Sociodemographic Information Sheet

It included basic information like age, sex, educational experience, employment status, monthly family income, birth order, religious affiliation, geographical affiliation, ethnicity, and sexual identity.

Sexual Orientation Beliefs Scale- Form 2

By incorporating the essentialist, constructivist and social constructionist themes about sexual orientation beliefs, this 31-item scale (Arseneau et al., 2013) comprised four subscales: naturalness (e.g., "Sexual orientation is innate"), discreetness (e.g., "A person has only one true sexual orientation"), homogeneity (e.g., "People who share the same sexual orientation pursue common goals"), and informativeness (e.g., "A person's sexual orientation is an important attribute'). The test-retest reliability indices for these subscales (.76, .72, .71 and .80 respectively) showed moderate to high stability.

Ambivalent Sexism Inventory

The 22-item Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI; Glick & Fiske, 1996) was used to measure participants' attitudes towards women. Participants responded to the questions on a 6-point Likert scale: strongly disagree (0), somewhat disagree (1), slightly disagree (2), slightly agree (3), somewhat agree (4), and strongly agree (5). It consists of 11 items in each subscale: (1) Hostile Sexism (HS) which evaluates chauvinist opposition towards women (e.g., "Most women fail to appreciate fully all that, men do for them", and "Women seek to gain power by getting control over men"), and (2) Benevolent Sexism (BS) that measures personally positive but condescending attitudes towards women (e.g., "Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess" and "Women should be cherished and protected by men"). The participant's HS and BS scores were calculated using the mean score for each subscale. A high score indicated greater hostile or benevolent attitudes. HS and BS had Cronbach's alphas of .89 and .83 respectively.

Results

The sociodemographic analysis indicated that the participants had an average age of 24.84 years (*SD* = 5.42), with 273935.14 PKR as their mean monthly family income (*SD* = 1093215.77). On average, they had 15.67 years (*SD* = 1.79) of educational experience. Table 1 shows the socio-demographic information of the employed respondents.

Table 1

Sociodemographic Characteristics of Study Participants (N = 221)

Characteristics	*n*	%	Characteristics	*n*	%
Sex			*Ethnic Affiliation*		
Man	67	30.3	Punjabi	185	83.7
Woman	154	69.7	Non-Punjabi	36	16.3
Family System			*Employment Status*		
Joint	145	65.6	Employed	90	40.7
Nuclear	76	34.4	Unemployed	131	59.3
Religious Affiliation			*Sexual Identity*		
Muslim	202	91.4	Heterosexual	180	81.4
Non-Muslim	19	8.6	Non-heterosexual	41	18.6
Geographical Affiliation					
Rural	40	18.1			
Urban	181	81.9			

Note. *n* = frequency, % = percentage

Table 2

Psychometric Properties of Study Variables (N = 221)

Variables	(α)	*M*	*SD*	Range
HS	.69	26.64	8.00	10-49
BS	.47	29.58	6.34	11-44
Nat.	.22	31.57	5.05	18-49
Dis.	.22	16.51	3.78	6-27
Info.	.75	24.39	5.99	10-37
Homo.	.74	15.76	5.04	6-28

Note. (α) = Cronbach alpha, *M* = Mean, *SD* = Standard Deviation, HS = Hostile Sexism, BS = Benevolent Sexism, Nat. = Naturalness, Dis. = Discreteness, Homo. = Homogeneity, Info. = Informativeness

Table 2 shows the Cronbach alpha (α) values, mean, standard deviation and obtained score ranges of scales employed in this study. The Cronbach alpha values for hostile sexism, informativeness and homogeneity beliefs were satisfactory. However, they were below the adequate range for benevolent sexism, naturalness, and discreetness subscales.

Table 3

Correlation between Study Variables (N = 221)

	Variables	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Age	24.84	5.42	-	-	-.09	-.28***	-.06	-.17*	-.14*	-.26***
2	Ed. Exp	15.67	1.79		-	-.18**	-.24***	-.08	-.13	-.20**	-.16*
3	HS	26.64	8.00			-	.31***	.14*	.32***	.29***	.30***
4	BS	29.58	6.34				-	.14*	.27***	.28***	.30***
5	Nat.	31.57	5.05					-	.28***	.22***	.32***
6	Dis.	16.51	3.78						-	.39***	.40***
7	Info.	24.39	5.99							-	.45***
8	Homo.	15.76	5.04								-

Note. Ed. Exp = Educational Experience, HS = Hostile Sexism, BS = Benevolent Sexism, Nat. = Naturalness, Dis. = Discreteness, Homo. = Homogeneity, Info. = Informativeness.
*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

Table 3 shows the correlation matrix of study variables. The findings, in Table 3, show that hostile sexism was positively associated with benevolent sexism, and sexual orientation beliefs of naturalness, discreteness, homogeneity and informativeness.

Moreover, benevolent sexism was positively correlated to naturalness, discreteness, homogeneity and informativeness beliefs. Two important demographics of age and educational experience also showed significant results. Age was negatively associated with benevolent sexism, discreteness, homogeneity and informativeness. Education was a significant negative correlate of hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and homogeneity and informativeness beliefs.

Next, multiple linear regression analyses were run to determine the predictive strength of sexual orientation beliefs (naturalness, discreteness, homogeneity and informativeness) for hostile sexism and benevolent sexism individually. It was hypothesized that sexual orientation beliefs would predict both HS and BS.

Table 4

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Predicting Benevolent Sexism in Young Adults (N = 221)

Predictor	B	SE	*β*	95% CI		*t*	*p*
				LL	UL		
Intercept	18.01	2.88		12.33	23.70	6.25	.01
Nat.	.02	.09	.02	-.15	.19	.23	.82
Dis.	.23	.12	.13	-.01	.46	1.85	.07
Homo.	.23	.09	.18	.04	.41	2.38	.02
Info.	.15	.08	.14	-.002	.30	1.94	.05
F	8.19***						
R^2	.13						

Note. Nat. = Naturalness, Dis. = Discreetness, Homo. = Homogeneity, Info. = Informativeness
*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

Table 4 indicates that the overall regression model was statistically significant (R^2 = .13, F = 8.19***). It was found that homogeneity significantly predicted benevolent sexism in young adults (β = .18, p = .02*). However, naturalness, discreteness and informativeness beliefs were not significant predictors of benevolent sexism.

Table 5

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Predicting Hostile Sexism in Young Adults (N = 221)

Predictor	B	SE	β	95% CI		t	p
				LL	UL		
Intercept	10.74	3.59		3.66	17.81	2.99	.003
Nat.	.01	.11	.01	-.20	.22	.08	.94
Dis.	.43	.15	.21	.14	.73	2.86	.01
Homo.	.24	.12	.15	.00	.47	2.00	.047
Info.	.19	.10	.15	.00	.39	2.01	.045
F	9.84***						
R^2	.15						

Note. Nat. = Naturalness, Dis. = Discreetness, Homo. = Homogeneity, Info. = Informativeness
*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

Table 5 shows that the overall regression model for HS was statistically significant (R^2 = .15, F = 9.84***). It was found that discreteness (β = .21, p = .005**), homogeneity (β = .15, p = .047*) and, informativeness (β = .15, p = .05*) beliefs significantly predicted hostile sexism in young adults. The findings also suggest that naturalness did not significantly predict hostile sexism (β = .01, p = .94).

Next, independent sample t-tests were employed to investigate socio-demographic differences across the study variables. It was hypothesized that there would be significant differences across ambivalent sexism and sexual orientation beliefs in young adults.

Table 6

Socio-demographic Differences across Ambivalent Sexism and Sexual Orientation Beliefs in Young Adults (N = 221)

Variable	Muslims		Non-Muslims		t (219)	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
HS	27.02	7.89	22.58	8.26	2.34	.02*	.55
BS	30.01	6.17	24.95	6.40	3.41	.001**	.80
Nat.	31.73	4.90	29.95	6.36	1.47	.14	.49
Dis.	16.65	3.72	15.05	4.22	1.76	.08	.40
Info.	24.60	5.93	22.26	6.39	1.63	.11	.38
Homo.	15.92	5.11	14.11	3.87	1.51	1.33	.40

Variable	Man		Woman		*t* (219)	*p*	Cohen's *d*
	M	***SD***	***M***	***SD***			
HS	29.18	8.67	25.53	7.46	3.17	.002**	.45
BS	28.97	6.66	29.84	6.20	-.94	.35	.14
Nat.	31.25	5.75	31.71	4.72	-.62	.53	.09
Dis.	15.75	3.57	16.84	3.84	-1.98	.049*	.29
Info.	23.73	5.70	24.68	6.11	-1.08	.28	.16
Homo.	16.40	4.85	15.49	5.10	1.25	.22	.18
Variable	**Joint family system**		**Nuclear family system**		***t* (219)**	***p***	**Cohen's *d***
	M	***SD***	***M***	***SD***			
HS	25.60	7.54	28.62	8.53	-2.7	.01**	.38
BS	29.94	6.40	28.28	6.21	1.16	.25	.26
Nat.	31.73	4.80	31.28	5.52	.64	.53	.08
Dis.	16.36	3.90	16.79	3.58	-.80	.42	.11
Info.	24.43	6.05	24.32	5.92	.14	.89	.02
Homo.	15.77	5.12	15.76	4.90	.003	.99	.01
Variable	**Rural**		**Urban**		***t* (219)**	***p***	**Cohen's *d***
	M	***SD***	***M***	***SD***			
HS	27.43	8.26	26.46	7.96	.69	.49	.11
BS	30.73	6.98	29.33	6.18	1.27	.21	.21
Nat.	30.55	6.32	31.80	4.71	-1.42	.16	.22
Dis.	16.65	3.86	16.48	3.78	.26	.79	.04
Info.	23.75	6.62	24.54	5.86	-.75	.45	.13
Homo.	15.43	4.86	15.84	5.08	-.47	.64	.08
Variable	**Punjabi**		**Non-Punjabi**		***t* (219)**	***p***	**Cohen's *d***
	M	***SD***	***M***	***SD***			
HS	26.72	7.78	26.22	9.15	.34	.73	.06

BS	30.02	6.14	27.33	6.95	2.35	.20	.41
Nat.	31.63	5.08	31.31	4.94	.35	.73	.06
Dis.	16.68	3.78	15.64	3.72	1.51	.13	.28
Info.	24.76	5.92	22.53	6.13	2.06	.04*	.37
Homo.	15.82	5.07	15.47	4.92	.38	.70	.07
Variable	**Employed**		**Unemployed**		***t* (219)**	***p***	**Cohen's *d***
	M	***SD***	***M***	***SD***			
HS	25.68	8.66	27.30	7.48	-1.48	.14	.20
BS	28.00	6.62	30.66	5.92	-3.13	.002**	.42
Nat.	30.76	5.33	32.14	4.78	-2.01	.045*	.27
Dis.	15.60	3.76	17.13	3.69	-3.01	.003**	.41
Info.	23.11	6.17	25.27	5.73	-2.67	.01*	.36
Homo.	15.57	5.23	15.90	4.92	-.48	.62	.06
Variable	**Heterosexual**		**Non-Heterosexual**		***t* (219)**	***p***	**Cohen's *d***
	M	***SD***	***M***	***SD***			
HS	26.89	7.48	25.53	10.01	.98	.33	.15
BS	30.23	5.89	26.73	7.47	3.26	.001**	.22
Nat.	31.74	4.82	30.83	5.94	1.05	.30	.17
Dis.	16.90	3.63	14.78	4.02	3.31	.001**	.55
Info.	24.81	5.91	22.59	6.12	2.16	.03*	.37
Homo.	15.93	4.92	15.02	5.50	1.04	.30	.17

Note. HS = Hostile Sexism, BS = Benevolent Sexism, Nat. = Naturalness, Dis. = Discreteness, Homo. = Homogeneity, Info. = Informativeness.
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

Table 6 shows significant differences in ambivalent sexism between Muslims and Non-Muslims. Muslims scored higher on hostile sexism ($M = 27.02$, $SD = 7.89$, $d = .55$) and benevolent sexism ($M = 30.01$, $SD = 6.17$, $d = .80$) than non-Muslims, exhibiting medium to large effect sizes respectively. However, no significant difference was observed in the beliefs of naturalness, discreteness, homogeneity and informativeness.

Sex differences were also reported as men ($M = 29.18$, $SD = 8.67$, $d = .45$), compared to women ($M = 25.53$, $SD = 7.46$), scored significantly higher on HS. No significant sex differences were found in BS. Men also

exhibited higher scores on the discreteness dimension of sexual orientation beliefs.

In the context of family setup, participants from nuclear families (M = 28.62, SD = 8.53, d = .38) scored higher on HS than those living in joint families (M = 25.60, SD = 7.54), exhibiting a small effect size. No significant differences were found in benevolent sexism, naturalness, discreteness, homogeneity and informativeness. Moreover, no significant differences across study variables were found between urban and rural participants.

Participants with a Punjabi ethnic background (M = 24.76, SD = 5.92, d = .37) showed significantly higher scores on informativeness than non-Punjabis (M = 22.53, SD = 6.13). No differences were found in hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, naturalness, discreteness and homogeneity between Punjabis and non-Punjabis.

Working status also depicted significant differences. Unemployed individuals reported higher benevolent sexism, naturalness, discreteness and informativeness than the employed. No differences between employed and unemployed participants were found in hostile sexism and homogeneity. Lastly, heterosexuals exhibited higher scores on benevolent sexism, discreteness and informativeness than non-heterosexuals. No differences were found in hostile sexism, naturalness and homogeneity between heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals.

Lastly, a 2 (Man/Woman) by 2 (Heterosexual/Non-Heterosexual) ANOVA was employed to explore HS and BS across sex and sexual identity. It was hypothesized that there would be a significant interaction of sex and sexual identity on both dimensions of ambivalent sexism in young adults. The interaction between sex and sexual identity for BS was not significant (F (1, 217) = .04, p >.05, η_p^2 = .00). In contrast, the interaction between sex and sexual identity for HS was significant (F (1, 217) = .7.17, p <.05, η_p^2 = .032). Non-heterosexual men (M = 29.35, SD = 10.34) scored higher on HS than heterosexual men (M = 29.07, SD = 7.55). Heterosexual women scored higher (M = 26.24, SD = 7.37) on HS than non-heterosexual women (M = 18.93, SD = 4.64).

Discussion

The psychometric analysis established a relatively lower reliability for the Benevolent Sexism subscale of the Ambivalent Scale Inventory. This could be linked to cultural or community factors influencing how sexism is acquired and exhibited, as ambivalent sexism can vary across nations (Brandt, 2011; Davis et al., 2022; Hayes & Swim, 2013; Off et al., 2022).

In a similar vein, relatively low values of Cronbach alpha were found for the Naturalness and Discreetness subscales of the SOBs Scale, which contrasts with moderate-to-high reliability reported in the other samples (Arseneau et al., 2013; Santos & Cerqueira-Santos, 2023). In Pakistan where homophobia and heteronormativity are legally and religiously endorsed (Yahya, 2020), participants might have indulged in social desirability bias. Moreover, Asians have been noted to demonstrate low sexual knowledge and more conservative attitudes towards sexuality (Okazaki, 2002).

To further this argument, Pakistan as a predominately Islamic society has distinct attitudes towards sexuality compared to the Western nations. A similar study quoted how Indonesia's traditional and religious values promote heterosexism (Ichwan, 2014), and Islamic countries generally show high intolerance towards sexual diversity (Khoir, 2020). This hesitancy may have led participants to provide inconsistent responses regarding their true beliefs regarding sexual orientation. The SOBs scale, validated on Western samples (Arseneau et al., 2013; Santos & Cerqueira-Santos, 2023) might not

fully capture cultural nuances in Pakistani society, as Crawford and Gregory (2008) highlighted that potential problems could arise while using foreign scales in a research study, even in populations least dissimilar from the original sample.

A positive relationship between hostile sexism and naturalness beliefs was observed, aligning with Keller's (2005) findings that attitudes towards naturalness support the justification of inequality, pointing to a potential causal relationship between naturalness and hostile sexism. According to Kray et al. (2017), exposure to naturalness ideas enhances men's propensity to justify the status quo and their acceptance of societal injustices, which fosters hostile sexism. Additionally, Studziska and Wojciszke (2014) discovered a favorable correlation between hostile sexism and the idea that sexual orientations have biological origins.

The study's findings indicated that discreteness, homogeneity, and informativeness beliefs predicted hostile sexism in young adults. According to a study by Bowleg (2013), Black men identifying as gay and bisexual mainly view their identities as complete rather than as discrete parts. According to one study participant, "Once you've blended the cake, you can't take the parts back to the main ingredients" (Bowleg, 2013, p. 758). Vrangalova and Savin-Williams (2012) similarly observed that distinct identity labels often fail to adequately represent the cognitive and behavioral experiences of many people, which breeds hostile sexism. Instead, they discovered that a sizeable proportion reported their identity as straight, gay or lesbian, or bisexual, using the word "mostly" (for example, "mostly straight") through cross-sectional survey research. Grzanka et al. (2017) found that those who scored higher on discreteness, homogeneity, and informativeness beliefs reported higher homonegativity.

The findings also evidenced homogeneity belief as a predictor of benevolent sexism, likely because this notion accepts that people of the same sexual orientation share the same goals (Arseneau et al., 2013), which would support women who follow their stereotypical roles (goal).

Additionally, sociodemographic variations between young adults' attitudes towards ambivalent sexism and sexual orientation beliefs were observed in our study. Educational experience showed negative correlations with hostile and benevolent sexism, consistent with previous studies (Glick et al., 2002; Hellmer et al., 2018). Simply, education reduces sexist schemas (Shahzad et al., 2015). Moreover, age had a negative correlation with benevolent sexism. There exists evidence of high sexism in adolescence and young adulthood (Ferragut et al., 2016), supporting the findings. Ambivalent sexism differed significantly by religion, with Muslims scoring higher on both HS and BS than non-Muslims. Our findings were supported by Mikołajczak and Pietrzak (2014), who found that Muslims had higher mean values for both benevolent and hostile sexism towards women than Christians. Similarly, Hannover et al. (2018) found Muslims support religious fundamentalism more strongly and have more ambivalent sexist beliefs towards women. However, no differences in sexual orientation beliefs were observed which may reflect the societal expectation influencing beliefs (Abdolmanafi et al., 2018) and the broader Islamic cultural context in Pakistan which shapes societal views regarding sexual orientation (Khoir, 2020). Moreover, many religions (e.g., Abrahamic religions and Hinduism, etc.) support traditional heterosexual norms (Etengoff & Lefevor, 2021).

Sex differences were also evident, with men scoring higher on discreteness belief and hostile sexism, supported by literature which

suggests men tend to resist diverse sexual orientations and are more homophobic due to perceived threats to heterosexual norms (Vieira de Figueiredo & Pereira, 2021). The high HS scores in men relate to how HS is more pronounced in countries with gender inequality (Brandt, 2011) and recent global surveys report Pakistan to be worse in gender disparity (Khan & Khalid, 2019). Likewise, previous research indicates men had significantly higher hostile sexism compared to women (Cowie et al., 2019; Khan & Khalid, 2019; Schiralli et al., 2022). Interestingly, no significant differences were found in HS when looking at the combined effect of sex and sexual identity. A similar study by Khan and Khalid (2019) highlighted that women in Pakistan, predominately heterosexual, are equally sexist and support patriarchal structures through their same-sex hostility in both personal and professional contexts. This might also suggest why heterosexual women had higher HS scores as opposed to non-heterosexual women who rebel against the patriarchal norms in a male-dominant society (Clarke, 1996).

Unlike research (Glick et al., 2000; López-Sáez et al., 2020) that posits heterosexual men endorse ambivalent sexism more strongly, our study suggested non-heterosexual men exhibited more HS than heterosexual men. It may be linked to the notion that heterosexual men are dependent on women for their sexual needs, they have to perpetuate an apparent favorable attitude (Jost & Kay, 2005), also evident in this study. This was in line with the findings by Glick and Fiske (1996) that suggested heterosexual men perform better on BS than non-heterosexuals. In a similar vein, lesbian women and gay men are shown to endorse BS less frequently than their straight counterparts, according to Kántás and Kovacs (2022). The non-existence of dependency on women for sexual needs and our prevailing patriarchal social context may allow non-heterosexual men to exhibit more HS.

Moreover, participants from nuclear families scored higher on hostile sexism. This was in accord with literature that suggests ambivalent sexism is more common in nuclear families that have higher religious ritual levels than those living in other family systems, leading to differences in ambivalent sexism (Shahzad et al., 2015). Interestingly, no differences in ambivalent sexism and sexual orientation beliefs were found in participants belonging to urban versus rural areas, suggesting that patriarchal (Khalid, 2021) and heteronormative norms (Jahangir, 2022; Yahya, 2020) are pervasive across Pakistan. However, the underrepresentation of rural participants in this study warrants further exploration. Likewise, no ethnic differences were found in ambivalent sexism. This could be linked to group cohesiveness and social control of traditional norms that might have influenced the results (Gungor et al., 2012). Literature also suggests that pressure for ethnic conformity might play a role in ambivalent sexism (Van Kerckem et al., 2014). It is important to consider that non-Punjabis were significantly underrepresented in this study, necessitating future exploration. Finally, employment was associated with ambivalent sexism, with unemployed people reporting more benevolent sexism. This aligns with literature suggesting young people residing in areas with increased unemployment express more sexism. Off and colleagues (2022) explored modern sexism, where newer generations consider gender equality as a threat to men's employment opportunities, leading to increased expression of sexism driven by this perceived competition.

Conclusion

The study revealed that both dimensions (hostile and benevolent) of ambivalent sexism had positive associations with all subscales of the SOBs Scale. While

homogeneity belief predicted benevolent sexism, discreetness, homogeneity, and informativeness beliefs predicted hostile sexism. The sociodemographic factors of age and education emerged as important correlates of the study variables. Significant differences were observed in religious affiliation, with Muslims exhibiting higher ambivalent sexism than non-Muslims. Hostile sexism was also found to be higher in men, and participants from a nuclear family system. Also, unemployed participants and heterosexuals reported greater benevolent sexism. Heterosexuals scored higher on discreetness and informativeness beliefs. Lastly, the combined effect of sex and sexual identity was significant for hostile sexism.

Limitations and Suggestions

The current study involved assessment measures initially developed and validated for the Western population, therefore for future studies indigenous scales could be incorporated for the data quality and relevance to be enhanced. Especially, EFA analysis could be employed on the SOBs Scale to seek if items exhibit themselves adequately, in an indigenous context, within the otherwise validated subscales. Similarly, sample size can be extended in future studies across sociodemographic characteristics to have an empirical study with larger external validity. Qualitative approaches can also be used to bring in culturally relevant and sensitive material regarding ambivalent sexism and sexual orientation beliefs in upcoming studies.

Implications

As sexual orientation beliefs have not been studied within the Pakistani context, these findings are a valuable addition to indigenous research scholarship. The study highlighted the role of rigid sexual orientation beliefs in reinforcing sexist views, as documented by literature. The higher prevalence of benevolent sexism in heterosexuals further supports Glick and Fiske's (1996) theory which posits that benevolent sexism subtly reinforces gender equality by rewarding women who conform to traditional gender roles. Moreover, these findings carry beneficial implications for social psychologists, gender experts, policymakers and researchers working in NGOs and NPOs, providing them with a better empirical understanding of the complexities surrounding sexual orientation and ambivalent sexism towards women in Pakistan.

Contribution of Authors

Faiz Younas: Methodology, Formal Analysis, Writing - Reviewing & Editing
Shazia Qayyum: Methodology, Writing - Reviewing & Editing, Supervision
Fatima Younas: Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing – Original Draft

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest declared by the authors.

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Data Availability Statement

The datasets of the current study are not available publicly due to ethical reasons but are available from the corresponding author [S.Q.] upon the reasonable request.

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