



# Ambivalent Sexism and Neosexism: Examining the Role of Affirmative Action Attitudes in Sustaining Workplace Gender Inequality

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## Abstract

Gender-based affirmative action (GAA) in the workplace, despite targeting gender discrimination, elicits negative reactions. Few studies have explored socio-cognitive factors sustaining critics towards GAA. In this study we aim to fill the gap, asserting that individuals can simultaneously hold neosexist beliefs and positive attitudes towards GAA, forming an attitudinal combination that perpetuates workplace gender inequality. We argue that ambivalent sexism precedes adherence to this combination and that ambivalent sexists, high on both hostile and benevolent sexism, endorse this combination more than other sexists. In a sample of 792 participants ( $n=555$  employed in public and private institutions;  $n=237$  college students), results showed that, men displayed higher levels of hostile and benevolent sexism, as well as neosexism, and supported GAA less than women. Additionally, hierarchical cluster analysis identified four sexist profiles, with an analysis of variance revealing that these profiles were linked to varying levels of neosexism endorsement and support for GAA. Overall, ambivalent sexists reported significantly higher levels of both neosexism and support for GAA compared to hostile, benevolent, or nonsexist participants.

**Keywords** Gender-based affirmative action · Gender inequality · Neosexism · Ambivalent sexism · Workplace

## Introduction

Efforts toward achieving gender equality have been a pivotal concern in societal discussions and organizational policies. A critical element of these efforts is the implementation of Gender Affirmative Action (GAA), which aims to address systemic

barriers and promote equitable opportunities for women in the workplace (Crosby et al., 2006). These policies typically include measures like gender quotas and targeted initiatives designed to correct historical and systemic biases (Burzynska & Contreras, 2020). Despite these goals, the effectiveness of GAA has often fallen short of expectations, with persistent inequalities underpinned by socio-cognitive factors such as ambivalent sexism and neosexism (Furtado et al., 2021; Tougas et al., 1995). Ambivalent sexism theory posits that hostile and benevolent sexist attitudes coexist and interact to sustain gender hierarchies (Glick & Fiske, 1996), while neosexism reflects subtle resistance to structural change, often cloaked in egalitarian rhetoric (Tougas et al., 1995). This study examines these constructs and their interplay in shaping attitudes toward GAA, aiming to clarify their role in perpetuating workplace gender inequalities.

Research on GAA has explored various themes, including its influence on workplace diversity (Furtado et al., 2021), its impact on organizational performance (Silva et al., 2021), and the socio-cognitive mechanisms driving public support or opposition (Tougas et al., 1995; Fraser et al., 2015). However, a critical gap remains in understanding how ambivalent sexism and neosexism interact to form paradoxical attitudes toward GAA—simultaneously endorsing superficial support while resisting its principles. Addressing this gap is essential because these attitudinal dynamics undermine the objectives of GAA and perpetuate subtle forms of gender inequality (Sibley & Becker, 2012; Begeny et al., 2020). This issue becomes particularly significant in contexts like Portugal, where progressive gender equality legislation, such as the 2017 gender balance law, contrasts with persistent workplace disparities (Casaca, 2023; Rodrigues, 2023).

The Portuguese context offers a unique lens for examining GAA attitudes. Despite a robust legal framework promoting gender equality, including provisions in the 1976 Constitution and the 2017 legislation mandating gender balance on corporate boards, significant disparities persist in income, employment conditions, and career advancement opportunities for women (Rodrigues, 2023; Casaca, 2023). The intersection of these disparities with socio-cognitive factors like ambivalent sexism and neosexism provides fertile ground for investigating how attitudes toward GAA are shaped. This study builds on the theoretical assumptions of ambivalent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996), neosexism (Tougas et al., 1995), and social construction theory, aiming to elucidate the mechanisms through which these constructs interact in the Portuguese workplace. Grounded in ambivalent sexism theory (Glick & Fiske, 1996), neosexism theory (Tougas et al., 1995), and social construction theory, this study aims to address this gap by examining the interplay of these attitudes. Specifically, it seeks to achieve three objectives: (1) to investigate how neosexist beliefs coexist with positive attitudes toward GAA, (2) to explore ambivalent sexism as a precursor to this paradoxical attitudinal combination, and (3) to analyze how distinct sexist profiles (ambivalent, hostile, benevolent, and nonsexist) influence these attitudes.

This research contributes to the literature in several ways. First, it integrates ambivalent sexism and neosexism to explain paradoxical attitudes that simultaneously endorse GAA while undermining its objectives (Sibley & Becker, 2012; Furtado et al., 2021). Second, it provides empirical insights into the socio-cognitive factors sustaining gender inequality, emphasizing the dual role of hostile and benev-

olent sexist attitudes (Feather & Boeckmann, 2007; Glick & Fiske, 1996). Third, by situating the analysis within the Portuguese context, it highlights the interaction between progressive legal frameworks and persistent socio-cultural resistance, offering practical implications for policy design and organizational interventions (Casaca, 2023; Silva et al., 2021).

### **Gender Affirmative Action (GAA)**

The Portuguese Democratic State of Law is fundamentally based on equality among individuals, gaining prominence in the Constitutions of 1822, 1838, 1911, and in the 1826 Constitutional Charter, which stipulated that laws apply equally to all. The 1933 Constitution was trailblazing in endorsing social equality, ensuring access to public roles. However, a period of dictatorship until 1974 modified this perspective. The 1976 Constitution finally firmly entrenched this principle, banning discrimination and eliminating privileges. Article 13 explicitly states: “No one may be privileged, favored, harmed, deprived of any right, or exempted from any duty on grounds such as ancestry, sex, race, language, territory of origin, religion, political or ideological beliefs, education, economic situation, social condition, or sexual orientation.”

The Portuguese Constitution is rich in provisions about equality: it includes the proposition for well-being and equality promotion, equal access to public office, and equal opportunities in professions. Additionally, addresses equal opportunities to counter economic, social, and cultural disparities, and equal access to education and higher learning, respectively. Fiscal and economic equality is also considered, emphasized thru property taxation’s role in equality, civil and political rights equal to genders, and public administration principles of equality, respectively. Overall, Portugal’s supreme law nurtures human dignity through equality, pivotal to the Rule of Law.

Despite this framework, Portugal has significant disparities in income and social exclusion, which are highlighted as major issues in the country. Various studies and reports have depicted a challenging landscape in terms of income distribution and poverty levels (Rodrigues, 2023), but also in terms of gender wage gap and work opportunities. It is important to note that gender disparities are reflected in poverty and low-income levels and women are at greater labor vulnerability. This is evident in their significant representation in sectors and professions where the quality of employment is generally lower, opportunities for advancement are weaker, working conditions are more precarious and wages are lower (Casaca, 2023).

In 2017, Portugal enacted a law to promote gender balance on corporate boards, which took effect on January 1, 2018. This legislation mandates that public sector companies and public listed companies (PLCs) achieve a minimum representation of the under-represented sex. Specifically, state-owned and local government companies must ensure at least 33% representation, while PLCs are required to meet a 20% threshold in 2018, increasing to 33% by 2020. Additionally, companies are required to develop, implement, and monitor Gender Equality Action Plans (GEAPs), and these plans must be made publicly accessible on their websites, that show the effort made in affirmation action policies. Portugal’s robust legal framework for equality,

anchored in its Constitution, highlights the nation's commitment to combating gender disparities.

Despite progress in gender equality, persistent challenges like income inequality and women's workplace vulnerability reveal ongoing systemic barriers. These barriers are what affirmative action policies seek to address. Our study explores why there is resistance to these policies by examining the role of ambivalent sexism and neosexism. Portugal offers an especially relevant case study for this research, given its progressive legal framework for gender equality (including the 2017 law requiring gender balance on corporate boards) contrasted with continuing workplace disparities. This makes it an ideal setting to study attitudes toward gender-based affirmative action (GAA).

The general term "affirmative action" (also known as positive action or positive discrimination) refers to a set of temporary and proactive policies or initiatives developed by governments or organizations, that are aimed at promoting the inclusion of members of social groups that were historically discriminated because of their belonging to their group (e.g., ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation) in areas in which their groups were, or are still, excluded or underrepresented. Crosby et al. (2006) define affirmative action as a set of policies and practices aimed at promoting equal opportunity and addressing past discrimination against underrepresented groups. These policies have been particularly significant in addressing gender disparities in various professional fields. However, the effectiveness and perception of AA policies continue to be contentious issues. Recent research by Begeny et al. (2020) highlights the persistence of gender bias in professional settings, demonstrating that both men and women consistently underestimate the magnitude of gender bias against women. This underestimation may contribute to the continued need for gender-based affirmative action policies, despite progress in gender equality.

Accordingly, gender affirmative action (GAA) refers to policies or initiatives developed to encourage, support, and increase the presence of women in the legislature, government, and industry. GAA can be implemented, for example, through gender quotas (Burzynska & Contreras, 2020). Noteworthy, GAA differs from other related actions for the development of gender equality, like equal employment opportunities and diversity management, because it is conceived as a corrective measure against gender systemic bias and discrimination (Furtado et al., 2021).

Although varying across countries and organizations, GAA generally generates a great deal of controversies about its implementation and value in the public or private sphere among the general population, employees, practitioners, and scholars (Furtado et al., 2021; Silva et al., 2021). For example, critics sustain the arguments that GAA impedes women showing their competence and undermines their achievements, motivates women to identify themselves as disadvantaged, or stigmatizes women as incompetent. GAA is also considered unfair because selection is said to be made on gender and not on competence and can favor women over better qualified men. GAA is also seen as a kind of reverse discrimination because it is based on the reduction of men's presence at work and thought of as hindering reconciliation between men and women. Finally, GAA is considered, by opponents, as an unacceptable violation of the core principles of merit and the meritocratic system, that is, fairness, neutrality, and non-discrimination because they consider that gender discrimination is no longer

a widespread problem and, accordingly, corrective measures are no longer necessary (Furtado et al., 2021; Silva et al., 2021). Interestingly, among opponents to GAA, we can find both men and women.

While some studies have shown that GAA could have a positive impact for women in the workplace (e.g., Burzynska & Contreras, 2020), other studies have shown that GAA had mixed results in employees' performance, satisfaction, or conception of merit and support (see Furtado et al., 2021, for a review). Several researchers have suggested that a better understanding of the socio-cognitive factors associated with attitudes towards GAA could help to understand the mixed perception and reception of GAA (Furtado et al., 2021; Fraser et al., 2015; Silva et al., 2021; Tougas et al., 1995). One identified factor is neosexism.

### Neosexism and Attitudes Towards Affirmative Action

Tougas et al. (1995) have suggested that the recent social valorization of gender egalitarian values has made less acceptable the open expression of sexist beliefs. However, these normative and legislative changes towards equality can conflict with residual traditional sexism. To resolve this conflict, people can endorse neosexist beliefs. While neosexism shares similarities with modern sexism (Swim et al., 1995), it is particularly focused on the denial of continued discrimination against women in the workplace. We chose to focus on neosexism in this study due to its specific relevance to attitudes about workplace gender equality and affirmative action policies.

Indeed, Tougas et al. (1995) suggested that neosexism is a set of beliefs that arise from the tension between one's gender egalitarian values (which may be socially prescribed) and residual negative feelings toward women. Basically, neosexist beliefs rely on the beliefs that, in contemporary society, gender social arrangements as well as gender employment system are fair, gender discrimination at work no longer exists (or it is marginal and can be easily overcome with enough effort and hard work from women), and consequently women employment revendications are overexaggerated and unfair.

Interestingly, if endorsement of neosexist beliefs allows people to perceive themselves, and to appear to others, as "egalitarian" or "non-sexist", it is also associated to unsupportive attitudes towards policies aimed at improving gender equality. Indeed, if gender discrimination at work is over, or can easily be overcome by effort and competence from women, then it is not fair to implement policies that favorize one group over another. Congruently, Tougas et al. (1995) showed that, if old fashioned sexism and neosexism were linked to nonsupport to attitude towards affirmative action, only neosexism has an impact on attitude towards affirmative action. Moreover, male participants with a higher consideration of men's collective interest, were also those who endorsed more old-fashioned sexism, neosexism and negative attitude towards affirmative action. In short, neosexism is associated with opposition to gender equality programs. Tougas et al. (1995) argued that neosexism is a contributing factor to the slow progress towards gender equality and integration of women and minorities.

The conceptualization of sexism has evolved significantly over the years, revealing its multifaceted nature. Tougas et al. (1995) introduced the concept of neosexism, which they viewed as rooted in traditional hostile sexism towards women. Neosexism

refers to the belief that gender discrimination is no longer a problem and that demands for equality are unnecessary or exaggerated. This perspective operates by denying the existence of ongoing discrimination, thereby maintaining gender inequality. However, subsequent research has expanded our understanding of sexism's complexity. Glick and Fiske (1996) proposed the theory of ambivalent sexism, which includes both hostile and benevolent dimensions. Benevolent sexism, in contrast to neosexism, involves subjectively positive attitudes towards women that are protective yet patronizing. While seemingly positive, these attitudes ultimately restrict women by reinforcing traditional gender roles. Both neosexism and benevolent sexism contribute to maintaining gender inequality, but through different mechanisms. Neosexism does so by dismissing the need for further progress, while benevolent sexism operates through ostensibly favorable but ultimately limiting views of women. This nuanced understanding of sexism has led researchers to explore the relationships between these various forms of sexism and support for Gender Affirmative Action (GAA) policies, revealing complex and sometimes paradoxical attitudes towards gender equality in the workplace.

### **Ambivalent Sexism and Attitudes towards Gender-Based Affirmative Action (GAA)**

Ambivalent sexism theory, introduced by Glick and Fiske in 1996, has become a well-established framework for understanding the complex nature of sexist attitudes, composed of two complementary, yet essentially different, types of sexist attitudes, i.e., hostile sexism (HS) and benevolent sexism (BS), that are articulated to form a system of domination. HS refers to the classical hostile, antipathetic and antagonistic attitudes towards women who are perceived as incompetent and competing with men and not respecting their traditional gender roles. HS depicts women as weak, inferior, incompetent and childish, and accordingly, trying to get power over men through sexual seduction or feminist ideology. BS refers to a set of positive attitudes towards women who respect men's rules and power. BS depicts women as the complementary half part of men and as morally superior to men. However, BS also envisions women as incompetent and accordingly in need for men's help.

HS and BS function together as the carrot and the stick (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Women respecting BS injunctions are considered as deserving men's respect, protection, idealization, and affection, while women who do not respect BS injunctions are treated with hostility (i.e., HS). In short, ambivalent sexism works to justify, maintain, and perpetuate existing gender unequal social arrangements at home but also at work. For example, Feather and Boeckmann (2007) found that, even after controlling for participants' level of BS, male and female participants endorsing higher levels of HS were also those who considered women as responsible for their failure to get ahead in their career, and who considered that women should feel more guilty for having an unfair advantage and reducing men opportunities for promotion. However, BS (after controlling for HS) did not show any significant association with women responsibility and guilt. Sibley and Perry (2010) found that HS and BS were, respectively, negative and positive predictors of attitudes towards gender equality of income and employment opportunity. Finally, Fraser et al. (2015) found in a large sample ( $N=5697$ ) that HS was negatively, whereas BS was positively associated

with support to GAA in male participant subsample. However, in female participant subsample, only BS was positively associated with support to GAA. Interestingly, they also found that BS attenuate the relationship between social dominance orientation (SDO) and opposition to GAA. In other words, BS buffered the effect of SDO on support to GAA.

Globally, such a pattern of results indicates that if the interplay between HS and BS maintains and justifies existing gender inequality and male advantage within the domain of work, they also work in very different ways. In the workplace, competence is a central feature, and it is associated with status. HS depicts women as oversensitive, naturally submissive, and less able and competent than men, and suggests that women use seduction and feminism to overcome their incompetence. Therefore, hostile sexists (whether male or female) can believe that women do not deserve the same opportunities and social status in the workplace and can only achieve at the expense of men. Consequently, they are more likely to be opposed to GAA.

BS portrays women as warm, caring, morally pure and weak and, as such, women are not adapted to the toughness of workplace competition. However, BS also depicts women as wonderful because of their warmth, and because they complete men. Accordingly, benevolent sexists (whether male or female) can support action for labor equality between genders, because women need and deserve men's help and provision to make their way in the workplace.

If HS works clearly as a hierarchy-enhancing ideology, BS seems to work as a hierarchy-attenuating ideology (Fraser et al., 2015). However, despite of its positive aspect, BS is based on a highly paternalistic, condescending, and patronizing view of women and only women who display traditional gender roles deserve men's respect and protection (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Benevolent sexists can display positive attitudes towards GAA because they think that the warm nature of women is not compatible with leading functions in the workplace, and even helped, women will never be able to challenge men.

In short, although incompatible at first sight, one can be an ambivalent sexist and promoting, at the same time, policies or initiatives for gender equality because of the compensating role of BS and HS. Indeed, BS discourse is compatible, through its sweet paternalism, with support of GAA because only traditional women, that is women who respect patriarchy rules, will be helped. The HS discourse is then reserved for women who dare to compete with men and to punish them.

### **All Ambivalent Sexists are not the Same**

Sibley and Becker (2012) showed that all ambivalent sexists were not equally ambivalent. Indeed, based on nationally representative New Zealand sample ( $N=6450$ ), they showed the existence of six different types of sexists:

- 1) Strongly ambivalent sexists (i.e., high in BS, high in HS),
- 2) Moderate ambivalent sexists (i.e., medium in BS, medium in HS),
- 3) Mild ambivalent sexists (i.e., mild in BS, mild in HS),
- 4) Non-sexists (i.e., low in BS, low in HS).
- 5) Univalent benevolent sexists (i.e., high in BS, low in HS), and.

## 6) Univalent hostile sexists (i.e., high in HS, low in BS).

Interestingly, Sibley and Becker (2012) also showed that each profile was associated with different level of ideologies, like social dominance orientation and right-wing authoritarianism, that are implicated with system justification. For example, compared to non- or mild ambivalent sexists, strongly ambivalent sexists, were those who endorsed the highest levels of gender-specific system justification. According to Sibley and Becker (2012), the simultaneous endorsement of BS and HS leads strongly ambivalent sexists to think that the gender system is fair because the discrimination faced by women due to HS is compensated by the advantages associated with BS.

### Overview of the Current Study

The landscape of sexism and attitudes towards gender equality has evolved over time. Zehnter et al. (2021) introduce the concept of “sexism shift,” which describes the transition from blatant to more subtle forms of sexism in contemporary society. This shift aligns with our understanding of ambivalent sexism and neosexism, where discriminatory attitudes may be masked by seemingly positive or egalitarian views. In the context of affirmative action, this subtle sexism may manifest as superficial support for gender equality policies while simultaneously denying the existence of gender discrimination, a phenomenon we observed in our study of ambivalent sexists.

In reviewing the existing literature on gender affirmative action (GAA) and attitudes towards it, a notable gap emerges in the understanding of how neosexism and ambivalent sexism collectively influence individuals’ perceptions of GAA. While previous studies have explored these concepts independently, there is a lack of comprehensive research that examines the interplay between neosexism, ambivalent sexism, and support for GAA.

Based on the previous literature review, we argue that 1) people can hold, at the same time, neosexist beliefs and positive attitudes towards GAA that form a attitudinal combination<sup>1</sup> that can justify the status quo and maintain gender inequality in the workplace; 2) ambivalent sexism can be the antecedent of the adherence to this attitudinal combination; and 3) ambivalent sexist (i.e., high on both hostile and benevolent sexism) will endorse more this attitudinal combination than any other kind of sexists.

Neosexist beliefs can fully coincide with gender egalitarian beliefs at work because neosexist discourse neutralize the implementation of GAA. If gender employment system is now fair and gender discrimination at work does not longer exist then there is no need for companies to carry out these equality programs. Moreover, according neosexism, when some cases of gender discrimination at work can be found, they are only residual and can be attributed to personal failure rather than to a systematic discrimination. Claiming that gender equality is good but that it is useless because discrimination does no longer exist (or its marginal occurrences can be easily over-

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<sup>1</sup> We use the term ‘attitudinal configuration’ to refer to the simultaneous endorsement of neosexist beliefs and positive attitudes towards gender affirmative action. This configuration differs from singular prejudice concepts by capturing the complexity of holding seemingly contradictory views that can ultimately reinforce gender inequality in the workplace.

come) is a way to reject any changes in the status quo for women condition at work, and to be opposed to social policy changes that would benefit women at work.

Ambivalent sexism can be the antecedent of the “attitudinal combination” composed of the association between positive attitudes towards GAA and neosexism. First, ambivalent sexism was shown to be related to positive attitude towards policies or initiatives for gender equality because the hostility at work towards women due to HS is compensated by the protection associated with BS (see Feather & Boeckmann, 2007; Fraser et al., 2015; Sibley & Becker, 2012; Sibley & Perry, 2010). Second, ambivalent sexism was shown to promote the adherence to ideologies that promote system justification and the perception that the status quo is fair (Sibley & Becker, 2012). By emphasizing the complementary characteristics of men and women, and accordingly increasing the sense that the social gender arrangements are fair, adherence to ambivalent sexism can bolster the perception that gender arrangement at work are also fair and, *in fine*, facilitate the endorsement of neosexist beliefs.

Adherence to the attitudinal combination neosexism/GAA support should vary according to the levels of endorsement of HS and BS. Based on Sibley and Becker (2012) cluster analysis results, we expect that non-sexists (i.e., low in HS and BS) should express a very low level of neosexism and a high support to GAA. Because neosexism taps into traditional sexism, we expect hostile sexists (i.e., high in HS and low in BS) to display a high level of neosexism and a low level of GAA support. Benevolent sexists (i.e., high in BS and low in HS) are expected to exhibit moderate levels of neosexism and GAA support. Finally, because strongly ambivalent sexists (i.e., high in BS and high in HS) use to display high levels of gender-specific system justification (Sibley & Becker, 2012), we expect that, compared to all the other profiles, they will display the higher endorsement of both neosexism and GAA support.

## Method

### Participants and Procedure

This study focuses on the Portuguese adult population, with age (<18 years) and nationality as exclusion factors. Participants completed a paper self-response questionnaire. Data were collected in Portuguese companies and at a university in the south of the country. The final sample is composed of 792 Portuguese participants, mostly women (66.9%, 32.8% men, and 0.3% non-binary or other gender identities), educated (41.1% with at least a degree), aged between 18 and 81 years, with an average of 33.7 years ( $SD=12.73$ ). Men and women do not differ in mean age ( $t_{(780)} = -0.015, p = .98$ ).

Data were collected from public and private organizations across Portugal, with a predominant representation from the Algarve region, Greater Lisbon, and Greater Porto areas. The majority of participants (70.07%) were confirmed active workers in these organizations, though complete employment status data was not available for the entire sample, and hence discarded from the analysis. Organizations included both public institutions and private companies, representing various sectors of activity. All participants were recruited through their workplace settings, ensuring the

study's focus on organizational contexts where gender-based affirmative action policies are implemented. This sampling approach, while providing robust data from actual workplace environments, presents some limitations regarding complete demographic characterization, which will be addressed in the limitations section.

Our sample size was determined based on a power analysis conducted using G\*Power 3.1. For our planned analyses (assuming a 4-group ANOVA or similar), with an alpha of 0.05 and power of 0.80, a minimum sample size of 785 was required to detect a small effect size ( $f \approx 0.12$ ). Our final sample of 792 participants met and slightly exceeded this criterion, ensuring sufficient power for our analyses. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee on Humans at the author's University.

Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS version 26.0 and JASP version 0.16.4. Our choice of cluster analysis over alternative methods like latent class analysis (LCA) was based on several methodological considerations. While LCA is powerful for identifying underlying latent structures, cluster analysis is more appropriate for our objective of identifying distinct response patterns in observed data. Additionally, cluster analysis makes fewer assumptions about the underlying distribution of the data and is more robust with smaller sample sizes compared to LCA.

To ensure methodological rigor, we employed a two-step clustering approach. First, we conducted a hierarchical cluster analysis using Euclidean distance and mean linkage criterion to determine the optimal number of clusters. This method was chosen because it allows for the natural emergence of cluster structures without pre-specifying the number of clusters. Second, we employed K-means clustering to refine these initial clusters, as this method is particularly effective at optimizing cluster membership once the number of clusters is established.

Cluster validation was performed by examining within-cluster heterogeneity and the explained proportion of variance for each cluster. To test for differences between clusters, we conducted one-way ANOVA with Tukey's post-hoc tests for pairwise comparisons.

See [https://osf.io/cq8b6/?view\\_only=4d57cf936f0a4cf785680fcea5012cae](https://osf.io/cq8b6/?view_only=4d57cf936f0a4cf785680fcea5012cae) for the study materials and data used for analysis.

## Material

### Ambivalent Sexism

The Portuguese version (Gonçalves et al., 2015) of the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1996) was used. Participants responded, on a 7-point scale (from 1= Totally disagree to 7= Totally agree), to the 11 items measuring hostile sexism (HS; e.g., "Women seek to gain power through the dominance of men") and the 11 items measuring benevolent sexism (BS; e.g., "A good woman should be put on a pedestal by her man"). The higher the score on the ambivalent sexism measures, the higher the individual's levels of sexism. Both HS and BS scales displayed good internal reliability (respectively, Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.87$  and 0.82).

## Neosexism

The Neosexism Scale (Tougas et al., 1995) was translated into Portuguese and was administered. Participants indicated their level of agreement on a 7-point scale (from 1 = totally disagree to 7 = totally agree) to the 11 items of the scale (e.g., “I consider the current employment system unfair to women”). In this study, an internal consistency coefficient Cronbach’s  $\alpha=0.72$  was obtained.

## Attitudes towards Gender Affirmative Action

The scale used by Tougas et al. (1995) was translated into and administered. Participants indicated their degree of agreement on a 7-point scale on the 3 items (e.g., “If there are no affirmative action programs helping women in employment, they will continue to be unfairly treated”). Higher score indicates more favorable the attitude towards affirmative action measures for women. The scale displays a good internal consistency (Cronbach’s  $\alpha=0.78$ ).

The scales underwent a comprehensive translation and back-translation process (Hambleton, 2005) to ensure accuracy in Portuguese. Initially, two bilingual specialists independently translated the scales from English to Portuguese. Then, two different bilingual specialists independently back-translated these versions to English. Three expert psychologists compared and adjusted these translations against the original versions. To validate the Portuguese translation and identify potential semantic issues, we conducted a pre-test with 30 participants (not included in the final sample). The pre-test demonstrated strong internal consistency (Cronbach’s  $\alpha>0.70$ ) with no interpretation problems detected. Additionally, items that showed any comprehension issues were further refined through consultation with a bilingual individual and an expert in gender studies and organizational psychology, ensuring the scales’ reliability in the Portuguese context.

The sociodemographic questionnaire included age, gender with which participants identify, and their education, and nationality. Data were collected through paper questionnaires between the end of 2018 and the beginning of 2020. To minimize common method variance, we implemented several procedural remedies: (1) using different response formats and scales; (2) ensuring anonymity and confidentiality to reduce social desirability bias; and (3) counterbalancing question order. We were unable to use temporal separation - collecting independent and dependent variables, as desirable, due to the difficulty to retrieve the working sample in the second moment.

## Results

### Descriptive and Correlational Analyses

A series of one-sample *t*-test showed that participants reported positive attitudes toward GAA and low levels of HS, BS, and neosexism (see Table 1). Exploration of gender differences showed that men displayed significantly higher levels of HS, BS and neosexism than women. However, women showed stronger support to GAA

**Table 1** Descriptive statistics and correlations

	HS	BS	NS	AGAA
<i>M (DP)</i>	3.39 (0.97)	3.27 (0.95)	2.793 (0.85)	4.89 (1.39)
Skewness	-0.21	-0.10	0.75	-0.51
Kurtosis	-0.23	-0.25	1.24	-0.08
Minimum	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Maximum	6.00	6.27	6.72	7.00
One-sample T-test (test value = 3.5)	$t_{(790)} = -3.071$ , $p = .002$	$t_{(790)} = -6.628$ , $p < .001$	$t_{(790)} = -22.584$ , $p < .001$	$t_{(790)} = 27.038$ , $p < .001$
<i>M (DP) Men</i>	3.81 ± 0.916	3.41 ± 0.93	3.09 ± 0.859	4.78 ± 1.364
<i>M (DP) Women</i>	3.18 ± 0.941	3.20 ± 0.982	2.64 ± 0.820	4.94 ± 1.406
Student's <i>t</i> -test	$t_{(790)} = 8.947$ , $p < .001$	$t_{(790)} = 2.922$ , $p < .010$	$t_{(790)} = 7.116$ , $p < .001$	$t_{(790)} = -0.114$ , $p > .050$
HS	—			
BS	0.50***	—		
NS	0.54***	0.36***	—	
AGAA	0.07*	0.16***	-0.04	—

Notes. HS = hostile sexism; BS = benevolent sexism; NS = Neosexism; AGAA = Attitudes toward gender-based affirmative action

than men. Correlational analyses showed that HS and BS were positively correlated with both neosexism and GAA support. Neosexism was not significantly associated to attitudes towards GAA.

### Cluster Analysis of Sexist Types

The existence of clusters was explored based on the responses provided to the dimensions of the ambivalent sexism inventory. We chose to use cluster analysis rather than mean scores of the Ambivalent Sexism subscales to identify distinct profiles of sexist attitudes. This approach allows us to capture the nuanced combinations of hostile and benevolent sexism that individuals may hold, rather than treating them as separate continuous variables. Cluster analysis can reveal patterns that might be obscured when using mean scores alone, providing a more holistic view of how different types of sexist attitudes co-occur within individuals. While Sibley and Becker (2012) used latent class analysis (LCA), we chose to use cluster analysis for several reasons. First, our sample size was smaller than that of Sibley and Becker, making cluster analysis more appropriate. Second, cluster analysis allowed us to identify distinct groups based on patterns of responses without making assumptions about the underlying latent structure.

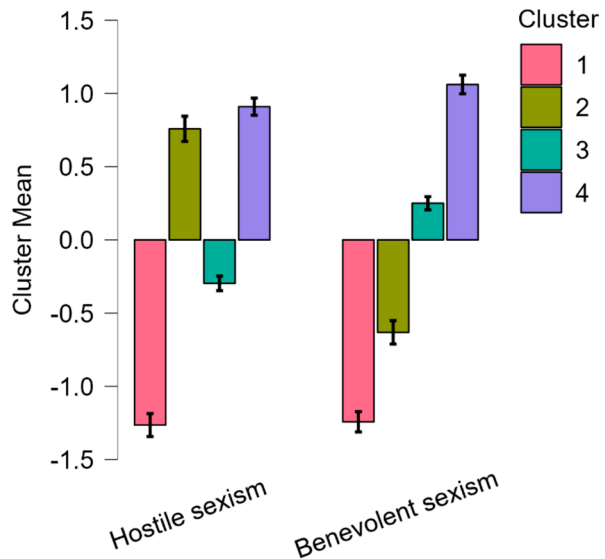
We used the Euclidean distance and the linkage between clusters (mean criterion) as the hierarchical clustering method. The model was optimized for a total of 8 clusters, based on the lowest Bayesian Information Criterion. Results indicated that the first 4 clusters aggregated 89.9% of the total sample and that they explained 88.2% of the cluster heterogeneity. Thus, it was decided to retain 4 clusters. The *K*-Means Clustering was used to form the 4 clusters (see Table 2). This approach allowed us to identify meaningful and interpretable patterns in how individuals combine hostile and benevolent sexist attitudes, while maintaining methodological robustness.

**Table 2** Cluster information

Cluster	1	2	3	4
Size (n)	214	170	274	134
Explained proportion within-cluster heterogeneity	0.275	0.254	0.272	0.199
Within sum of squares	125.771	116.117	124.498	91.289
<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> ) HS	4.28 (0.50)	2.15 (0.60)	3.11 (0.49)	4.13 (0.59)
<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> ) BS	4.28 (0.54)	2.08 (0.52)	3.51 (0.43)	2.66 (0.54)
Min-Max HS	3.09-6.00	1.00-3.27	3.27-5.91	3.455-6.27
Min-Max BS	3.45-6.27	1.00-3.36	2.64-4.91	1.09-3.46

*Notes.* HS=hostile sexism; BS=benevolent sexism

**Fig. 1** Sexists' profiles (clusters) according to mean response to hostile sexism (HS) and benevolent sexism (BS)



The mean profile of each cluster is represented in Fig. 1, which shows how HS and BS contribute to the construction of the cluster. The first cluster includes 214 participants (46.3% men; 53.7% women;  $M_{(age)}=32.05 \pm 12.583$ ) and is composed of individuals who score highly on both HS and BS. The minimum observed in this group is close to the midpoint of the measurement scale. They are the group that obtains the highest maximum values (6.00 and 6.27), presenting the highest mean scores for sexism. This cluster clearly corresponds to ambivalent sexists (i.e., high in BS and high in HS).

The second cluster gathers 170 participants (14.7% men; 85.3% women;  $M_{(age)}=34.43 \pm 11.684$ ) and is made up of the lowest response averages of hostile sexism and benevolent sexism. The maximum value observed in the dimensions does

not exceed the mean value of the measurement scales. This cluster correspond to nonsexists (i.e., low in BS and low in HS).

The third cluster aggregates the largest number of participants ( $n=274$ ; 27.4% men; 72.6% women;  $M_{(age)}=33.66\pm 13.117$ ). If participants do not seem to present an extreme position on any of the two dimensions of ambivalent sexism, they are characterized by a low level of HS and a moderate level of BS. This cluster was named benevolent sexists (i.e., high in BS and low in HS).

Finally, the fourth cluster included the fewest participants ( $n=134$ ; 47.0% men; 52.7% women; 0.3% non-binary;  $M_{(age)}=35.48\pm 13.230$ ) and grouped participants who displayed a high level of HS but with low values of benevolent sexism. This cluster was identified as hostile sexists (i.e., high in HS and low in BS).

Clusters were statistically associated with the gender of the participant ( $\chi^2=58.509$ ,  $p<.001$ ), but not with their age ( $F_{(3)}=2.221$ ,  $p=.084$ ). More precisely, men were statistically associated with cluster 1 (i.e., ambivalent sexists), while women were statistically associated with cluster 2 (i.e., nonsexists). Clusters 3 and 4 did not show any statistical association with gender.

### Neosexism and Attitudes Toward Gender-Based Affirmative Action in Function of Ambivalent Sexist Profiles

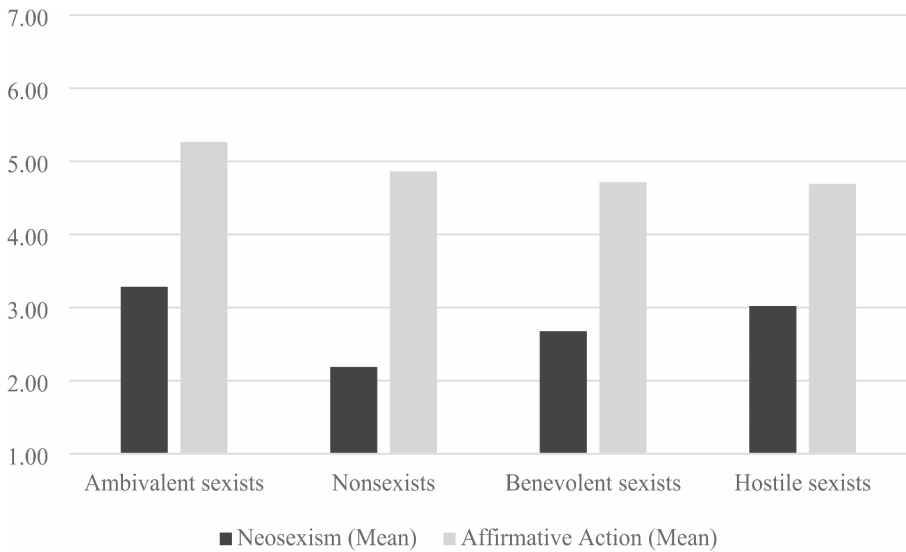
To determine the influence of the sexist profiles on the endorsement of the attitudinal combination neosexism/GAA support, we conducted a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). Results indicated that the clusters differ significantly on neosexism,  $F(3,788)=71.65$ ,  $p<.001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.214$ , and on attitude toward affirmative action,  $F(3,788)=7.701$ ,  $p<.001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.028$ . All *post hoc* pairwise comparisons were performed by the Tukey test (see Table 3). Figure 2 shows means for neosexism and attitude toward GAA according to sexist profiles.

Overall, ambivalent sexist (high in HS and BS) were those who endorsed more neosexism and displayed more favorable attitude towards GAA than any of the three other type of sexists. Nonsexists was characterized by the lowest level of neosexism,

**Table 3** Post-hoc comparison for neosexism and attitudes toward gender-based affirmative action by sexist profile

Measures	Comparison	Mean Difference	SE	<i>t</i>	Cohen's d
Neosexism	1 vs. 2	1.09	0.07	14.02***	1.32
	1 vs. 3	0.60	0.07	8.73***	0.77
	1 vs. 4	0.26	0.08	3.14*	0.29
	2 vs. 3	-0.49	0.07	-6.59***	-0.75
	2 vs. 4	-0.83	0.08	-9.47***	-1.16
	3 vs. 4	-0.34	0.08	-4.27***	-0.49
Affirmative Action	1 vs. 2	0.40	0.14	2.84*	0.28
	1 vs. 3	0.54	0.12	4.37***	0.42
	1 vs. 4	0.57	0.15	3.77**	0.42
	2 vs. 3	0.14	0.13	1.09	0.10
	2 vs. 4	0.17	0.15	1.07	0.11
	3 vs. 4	0.02	0.14	0.16	0.01

Notes. \*  $p<.05$ , \*\*  $p<.01$ , \*\*\*  $p<.001$ ; 1 = Ambivalent sexists; 2 = Nonsexists; 3 = Benevolent sexists; 4 = Hostile sexists; Cohen's d does not correct for multiple comparisons; p-value and confidence intervals adjusted for comparing a family of 4 estimates



**Fig. 2** Neosexism and attitude toward gender-based affirmative action means by sexist profiles

but they did not differ on attitudes towards GAA support from benevolent or hostile sexists. Finally, hostile and benevolent sexists displayed, respectively, the second and the third higher level of neosexism after ambivalent sexists. However, they both endorsed a similar level of support to GAA as nonsexists. In short, ambivalent sexists were those who displayed more the attitudinal combination neosexism/GAA support.

## Discussion

The study aimed at investigating the socio-psychological roots of people's opposition to gender-based affirmative action (GAA), and especially the association between ambivalent sexism and the combination neosexism / support to GAA.

Hostile (HS) and benevolent sexism (BS) were found to be independently and positively associated with neosexism and attitudes towards GAA. Benevolent sexists may support GAA because BS encompasses the idea that women, while are wonderful due their gentle and nurturing nature, require men's protection and assistance. Consequently, in the workplace context, benevolent sexists may believe that women need assistance from social policies to enter and navigate the labor market, with GAA being one such policy. The aim of hostile sexism is to maintain men's dominance over women through the derogation of women complaining about sexism and the denunciation of their use of feminism or sexuality to gain power (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001). Not surprisingly, hostile sexists also endorsed neosexism more strongly, as neosexism is based on denying the existence of gender discrimination at work and the necessity of addressing it. Furthermore, neosexism was conceptually rooted in traditional sexism (Tougas et al., 1995). Interestingly, hostile sexism was also positively correlated with attitudes towards GAA, which may seem counterintuitive.

However, HS is aimed to keep women in a subordinate position by portraying them as incompetent and inferior to men (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001). Consequently, hostile sexists may believe that women need GAA to succeed in the professional world due to their perceived incompetence and lack of personal merit.

The present study goes beyond the mere observation of individual impact of HS and BS on the endorsement of the combination neosexism / support to GAA. Indeed, by breaking down the endorsement of this attitudinal combination according to sexist profiles, the study shows how ambivalent sexism, and the attitudinal combination are intricately related. Results demonstrated that participants with an ambivalent sexist profile (i.e., high in both HS and BS) endorsed the attitudinal combination more strongly than those with nonsexist, benevolent, or hostile sexist profiles. This pattern suggests that ambivalent sexism, typically associated with interpersonal relationships, can extend its paternalistic and patronizing beliefs to the employment sphere through an ambivalent discourse based on neosexism and support for GAA. This ambivalent discourse may promote an effective form of social control reinforcing the status-quo and preventing changes for more equality at work. Indeed, ambivalent sexists can simultaneously present themselves as progressists (by displaying positive attitude towards GAA), deny the existence of gender discrimination at work and attribute it to the past and finally delegitimize feminist claims for equality (neosexist discourse).

Notably, all four sexist profiles displayed high support for GAA, suggesting that endorsing gender equality policies may have become a social norm. However, participants characterized by an ambivalent sexist profile showed a higher level of support to GAA than participants characterized by a nonsexist profile. This over-display of positive attitude towards GAA by ambivalent sexists can be interpreted as a strategy to avoid accusation of discrimination. Indeed, let's recall that ambivalent sexists also displayed a higher endorsement of neosexism than any other kind of sexists.

Our findings on the high support for Gender Affirmative Action (GAA) across different sexist profiles, including among those with ambivalent sexist attitudes, raise intriguing questions about the nature of this support. Fleischmann and Burgmer (2020) found that abstract thinking increases support for affirmative action. This suggests that the way individuals conceptualize affirmative action policies may influence their attitudes. It's possible that ambivalent sexists in our study engaged in more abstract thinking about GAA, leading to higher reported support. However, this support may not necessarily translate into concrete actions or genuine commitment to gender equality.

Furthermore, the practical implementation of affirmative action policies can have nuanced effects. Henningsen et al. (2022) examined how affirmative action policies in academic job advertisements influence gender discrimination in hiring processes for professorships. They found that while such policies can increase the likelihood of women being shortlisted, they may also lead to backlash effects, particularly among individuals with higher levels of modern sexism. This aligns with our observation of the complex relationship between neosexism and support for GAA, suggesting that overt support for such policies may coexist with underlying biases.

Regarding gender differences according to sexist profiles, results showed that men were more heavily represented in the ambivalent sexist profile while women were more represented in the non-sexist profile indicating that men could endorse more

employment gender-specific system justification than women. In other words, members of the group which is dominant in the labor market (i.e., men) display more a system justification discourse than non-dominant groups (like women). These results are congruent with those of Sibley and Becker (2012) who found that participants characterized by an ambivalent sexist profile displayed more system justification ideologies (i.e., higher levels of social dominance orientation and right-wing authoritarianism), and ambivalent sexist profile was more associated with men.

Interestingly, all four sexist profiles displayed a high support to GAA which indicates that the support for gender equality policies seems to be now the norm. The relative uniformity in support for gender affirmative action across different sexist profiles is intriguing. This could suggest that support for GAA has become a social norm, even among those holding sexist attitudes. Alternatively, it may indicate that individuals with sexist beliefs support GAA for different reasons than non-sexists - perhaps seeing it as unnecessary but harmless, or even as potentially reinforcing gender stereotypes. Future qualitative research could explore the reasoning behind GAA support across different sexist profiles.

However, participants characterized by an ambivalent sexist profile showed a higher level of support to GAA than participants characterized by a nonsexist profile. This over-display of positive attitude towards GAA by ambivalent sexists can be interpreted as a strategy to go undercover and to avoid accusation of discrimination. Indeed, let's recall that ambivalent sexists also displayed a higher endorsement of neosexism than any other kind of sexists.

It is important to note that measures of attitudes towards gender affirmative action may be susceptible to social desirability bias. Participants may have reported more positive attitudes than they actually hold due to perceived social pressure. This potential bias could explain, in part, the high support for GAA observed across all four sexist profiles. The over-display of positive attitudes towards GAA by ambivalent sexists, which we interpreted as a strategy to avoid accusations of discrimination, might also be influenced by this social desirability effect.

In previous research, neosexism used to appear to be negatively associated with to affirmative action programs designed for women (e.g., Moya & Expósito, 2001; Tougas et al., 1995). This negative association was interpreted as the sign of a psychological conflict between the two set of beliefs. Interestingly, in the present study, a zero-correlation association between neosexism and support to GAA was observed. This result could be due to the very nature of ambivalence because ambivalence could theoretically and empirically imply a conflict between beliefs (and accordingly a negative correlation) or an absence of correlation (Cacioppo & Bernston, 1994 Glick & Fiske, 1996). Alternatively, this result could indicate that the endorsement of neosexist beliefs and attitudes towards GAA are no longer experienced.

## Practical Implications

The recognition of sexist or discriminatory statements and behaviors is the first step in behavior change (König & Heine, 2023). Our results shed light on the potential difficulties to increasing participants' recognition of and sensitivity in gender equality at work through educative intervention. A brief intervention to recognize only neosex-

ism could not be as efficient as though. The simultaneous endorsement for neosexism and positive attitudes towards GAA can (1) undermine the potential self-questioning about gender discrimination at work and serve as a counterargument when confronting to an equalitarian discourse and (2) impede the recognition of others' discriminative statement and behavior related to gender equality at workplace. Moreover, results showed that the endorsement of this attitudinal combination is associated with the endorsement of a deeper-rooted conception of intimate relationships between men and women, i.e., ambivalent sexism. Practitioners should not only deconstruct neosexism but also ambivalent sexism and show how both are intricately related with support to GAA. The fact that not all ambivalent profiles hold at the same rate of the attitudinal combination suggests that tailoring interventions according to the target audience's ambivalent profile (when profiling is feasible) could increase the recognition of and sensitivity in gender discrimination at work.

Our findings may have significant implications for Portuguese policy makers and organizations implementing the 2017 gender balance law. Organizations should revise their Gender Equality Action Plans (GEAPs) to address both overt and subtle forms of sexism, particularly the combination of neosexist beliefs with superficial support for GAA. Also, understanding the distinct profiles of sexist attitudes can help organizations develop more effective and targeted approaches to gender equality. For example, organizations might: (1) Develop differentiated communication strategies that address both overt and subtle forms of resistance to gender equality initiatives; (2) Design training programs that specifically address the coexistence of benevolent and hostile sexist attitudes; (3) Implement monitoring systems that can detect both explicit and implicit forms of gender bias; (4) Frame equality policies in ways that acknowledge and address different forms of resistance, from open opposition to more subtle forms of neosexism. For HR professionals, our findings suggest the importance of recognizing that resistance to gender equality initiatives may stem from complex combinations of attitudes rather than simple opposition. This understanding can inform more nuanced approaches to policy implementation and organizational change management.

### Limitations and Future Research

The present study offers valuable insights into the structure of sexist attitudes and their relationship with support for Gender Affirmative Action (GAA) in Portugal. However, several limitations should be noted, which also point to promising avenues for future research.

First, the cross-sectional nature of our study prevents causal inferences about the relationships between ambivalent sexism, neosexism, and attitudes toward GAA. While our results suggest important associations between these constructs, longitudinal research would be necessary to establish temporal precedence and causality and examine how changes in workplace policies affect these relationships, for example. Future longitudinal studies could provide valuable insights into how experiences with GAA policies influence attitudes and beliefs over time.

Second, our results revealed that benevolent sexists ( $n=274$ ) and ambivalent sexists ( $n=214$ ) represented the majority of our sample (61.61%). While this might sug-

gest that benevolent and ambivalent sexism characterize Portuguese society, we must exercise caution in generalizing these findings. The use of a convenience sample limits our ability to extrapolate these results to the entire Portuguese population. Future research should employ a representative sample to provide a more accurate picture of sexist attitudes across Portugal.

The complex interplay of historical, social, and political factors in Portugal shapes modern ideologies surrounding affirmative action for women. Our study did not account for participants' direct experiences with affirmative action policies, which could significantly influence their attitudes. Future research should explore this aspect in more detail, examining how personal experiences with affirmative action and its perceived effectiveness might shape attitudes towards these policies. Also, future studies could incorporate social desirability scales or use implicit measures to address this limitation. Such methods could provide a more accurate picture of individuals' true attitudes towards GAA, potentially revealing more nuanced differences between sexist profiles.

The correlation found between ambivalent sexism and neosexism suggests these ideologies are intertwined. Future studies could investigate how these constructs might act as moderators or mediators in shaping support for affirmative action policies. This could provide a more nuanced understanding of the mechanisms through which sexist attitudes influence policy support.

Our results suggest the potential efficacy of targeted interventions based on sexist profiles. Future research should test this approach, determining which educational content is most effective for each sexist profile. This could lead to more efficient strategies for reducing sexist attitudes and increasing support for gender equality initiatives.

Another important limitation of this study concerns the incomplete employment status data for our sample. While we confirmed that 70% of participants were active workers from public and private organizations, detailed employment characteristics (e.g., tenure, hierarchical position, specific sector) were not systematically collected for all participants. This limitation restricts our ability to analyze how specific workplace factors might influence the relationship between ambivalent sexism and attitudes toward GAA.

Additionally, the mixed composition of our sample may mask important differences in how workplace experience shapes attitudes toward GAA. While having both employed individuals and students provides broader insights, those lacking extensive workplace exposure may hold more theoretical views about gender discrimination and affirmative action compared to individuals with direct experience of workplace dynamics and policies.

Future research should address these limitations by:

- 1) implementing more comprehensive demographic data collection procedures;
- 2) examining employed and student populations separately;
- 3) stratifying samples by organizational sector, hierarchical level, and tenure;
- 4) conducting comparative studies between public and private institutions; and
- 5) developing longitudinal studies to track how attitudes evolve as individuals transition from university to workplace.

Our study's binary treatment of gender represents a significant limitation that future research should address. Our sample included participants across the gender spectrum; however, the relatively small number of non-binary participants limited our ability to conduct meaningful statistical analyses for this group. We acknowledge this as a limitation of our study and emphasize the need for future research to actively include more diverse gender identities. Gender affirmative action policies affect people across the entire gender spectrum, and understanding attitudes toward these policies requires a more inclusive approach to gender identity. Future research should actively seek to include participants with diverse gender identities and examine how different forms of sexism might affect non-binary and gender non-conforming individuals in workplace contexts.

While we used a Portuguese translation of the Neosexism Scale (Tougas et al., 1995), a full validation study of this translated version has not been conducted. This limitation highlights the need for future research to validate this scale in the Portuguese context, ensuring its reliability and validity for use in Portuguese-speaking populations.

## Conclusions

Relatively few studies have, so far, examined the determinants of people's attitudes towards affirmative action for women at work. The present study was aimed at filling the gap by exploring the relationship between ambivalent sexism, neosexism and support to GAA. Results showed that ambivalent sexism can promote ambivalent positions about women status at work based on the simultaneous endorsement of neosexist beliefs and support to GAA. In other words, by promoting the combination neosexism/support to GAA, and its perception that the employment system is fair, ambivalent sexism extends and actualizes its paternalistic patronizing beliefs about interpersonal relationships between men and women to employment.

The identification of different sexist profiles has significant implications for society. Understanding these profiles can help in developing targeted interventions to address sexism and promote gender equality in the workplace. For instance, recognizing that ambivalent sexists may support affirmative action while simultaneously holding neosexist beliefs highlights the complexity of addressing gender bias. Tailored educational programs and policies that address both overt and subtle forms of sexism could be more effective in fostering a truly egalitarian work environment.

Moreover, in line with Sibley and Becker (2012), we contribute to the literature by showing the importance of breaking down ambivalent sexism into profiles according to the different levels of endorsement of HS and BS to account for more nuanced and complex effects of ambivalent sexism on discourse about gender work equality.

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**Data Availability** The dataset and all study materials described in this article are openly available in the Open Science Framework at [https://osf.io/cq8b6/?view\\_only=4d57cf936f0a4cf785680fcea5012cae](https://osf.io/cq8b6/?view_only=4d57cf936f0a4cf785680fcea5012cae).

## Declarations

**Informed Consent** The participants were provided with detailed information and gave informed consent before taking part in the study.

**Ethical Approval** Approval was obtained from the ethics committee of University of Algarve. The procedures used in this study adhere to the tenets of the Declaration of Helsinki.

**Competing Interests** The authors have no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

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