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The Impact of Hostile and Benevolent Sexism on Rape Myth Rejection Among University students in Thailand

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Abstract

This research article aim to the present research was to study the impact of hostile and benevolent sexism on rape myth rejection among university students in Thailand. In this quantitative study, a total of 163 students completed a battery of questionnaires. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics, specifically structural equation modeling (SEM).

Findings are as follows: Both hostile and benevolent sexism significantly and negatively predicted rape myth rejection (β = -.608, $p < .001$ and β = -.207, $p < .01$, respectively $R^2 = .34$ $p < .001$). Specifically, higher levels of sexism were associated with lower levels of rape myth rejection. In other words, they were more likely to endorse rape myths. Furthermore, biological sex moderated the relationship between hostile sexism and rape myth rejection (β = .325, $p < .05$). Among male students, higher levels of hostile sexism were associated with lower rape myth rejection. In contrast, female students demonstrated higher levels of rape myth rejection regardless of their level of hostile sexism. In addition, the influence of hostile sexism on rape myth rejection was weaker in the female student group than in the male student group.

Keywords: Rape Myth Rejection; Rape Myth Acceptance; Rape Supportive Attitude; Hostile Sexism; Benevolent Eexism

Type of Article: Research Article

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ผลกระทบของการเหยียดเพศในเชิงศัตรูและเชิงเมตตาต่อการปฏิเสธความเชื่อที่ผิดเกี่ยวกับการข่มขืนในกลุ่มนักศึกษามหาวิทยาลัยในประเทศไทย

อภิชญา ไชยวุฒิกรณ์วานิช[1] Elizabeth Spruin[2]

บทคัดย่อ

บทความวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาผลกระทบของการเหยียดเพศเชิงศัตรูและการเหยียดเพศเชิงเมตตาต่อการปฏิเสธความเชื่อที่ผิดเกี่ยวกับการข่มขืนในกลุ่มนักศึกษามหาวิทยาลัยในประเทศไทย เป็นการวิจัยเชิงปริมาณ โดยมีตัวอย่างเป็นนักศึกษา จำนวนทั้งสิ้น 163 คน ซึ่งตอบแบบสอบถามเป็นชุดเครื่องมือวิจัย สถิติที่ใช้วิเคราะห์ข้อมูล ได้แก่ สถิติพรรณา และสถิติอนุมานโดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งการวิเคราะห์โมเดลเชิงโครงสร้าง

ผลการวิจัย พบว่า การเหยียดเพศเชิงศัตรูและการเหยียดเพศเชิงเมตตาสามารถทำนายการปฏิเสธความเชื่อที่ผิดเกี่ยวกับการข่มขืนได้อย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติในทิศทางลบ โดยการเหยียดเพศเชิงศัตรูมีอิทธิพลเชิงลบมากที่สุด (β = -.608 p < .001) รองลงมาคือการเหยียดเพศเชิงเมตตา (β = -.207 p < .01) ทั้งนี้ ตัวแปรทั้งสองร่วมกันสามารถอธิบายความแปรปรวนของการปฏิเสธความเชื่อที่ผิดเกี่ยวกับการข่มขืนได้ร้อยละ 34 (R^2 = .34 p < .001) ผลดังกล่าวแสดงให้เห็นว่า บุคคลที่มีระดับการเหยียดเพศสูงมีแนวโน้มปฏิเสธความเชื่อที่ผิดเกี่ยวกับการข่มขืนน้อยลง หรือกล่าวอีกนัยหนึ่งคือ มีแนวโน้มยอมรับความเชื่อที่ผิดเกี่ยวกับการข่มขืนมากขึ้น นอกจากนี้ ยังพบว่า เพศโดยกำเนิดทำหน้าที่เป็นตัวแปรกำกับความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างการเหยียดเพศเชิงศัตรูกับการปฏิเสธความเชื่อที่ผิดเกี่ยวกับการข่มขืนอย่างมีนัยสำคัญทางสถิติ (β = .325 p < .05) โดยในกลุ่มนักศึกษาชายระดับการเหยียดเพศเชิงศัตรูที่สูงขึ้นสัมพันธ์กับระดับการปฏิเสธความเชื่อที่ผิดเกี่ยวกับการข่มขืนที่ลดลงอย่างชัดเจน ขณะที่นักศึกษาหญิงมีแนวโน้มปฏิเสธความเชื่อที่ผิดเกี่ยวกับการข่มขืนในระดับสูงกว่า และอิทธิพลของการเหยียดเพศเชิงศัตรูต่อการปฏิเสธความเชื่อที่ผิดเกี่ยวกับการข่มขืนมีความรุนแรงน้อยกว่ากลุ่มนักศึกษาชาย

คำสำคัญ: การปฏิเสธความเชื่อที่ผิดเกี่ยวกับการข่มขืน; การยอมรับความเชื่อที่ผิดเกี่ยวกับการข่มขืน; เจตคติที่สนับสนุนการข่มขืน; การเหยียดเพศเชิงศัตรู; การเหยียดเพศเชิงเมตตา

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Background and Significance of the Problem

Sexual violence against women is a global issue that transcends gender, social status, age and sexual orientation. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2025) defines it as “any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, or other act directed against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting. It includes rape, defined as the physically forced or otherwise coerced penetration of the vulva or anus with a penis, other body part or object.”.

Rape is considered one of the most severe and underreported forms of sexual violence worldwide (Yamawaki & Tschanz, 2005), with the highest prevalence rates found among female adolescents and university students (Lee et al., 2010). According to the National Union of Students in the UK, approximately 25% of female students reported experiencing some type of sexual assault, including rape, while at university (Geraldine, 2010). Similar findings have been observed in other Western countries, for example, studies in the United States estimate that 25% of women in higher education experience rape victimization (Fisher et al., 2000), likewise, a Canadian study found that 20% of female students had been raped or experiences attempted rape by the time of graduation (DeKeseredy & Kelly, 1993).

In Thailand, Elle (2021) examined Thai university students’ perceptions of “date rape” and revealed that many victims do not recognize coercive sexual acts as rape due to cultural and patriarchal beliefs. According to the Statistical Yearbook Thailand 2024, there were 1,785 reported rape cases and 2,272 other sexual violence cases in the most recent reporting year. These figures represent reported cases only; the true prevalence is likely much higher due to significant underreporting (National Statistical Office of Thailand, 2024).

These alarming statistics have prompted further investigation into the factors within university settings that may exacerbate sexual assault against women (Abbey et al., 2001).

Situational influences such as alcohol consumption, heightened sexual expectations, drinking parties, and shared living environments have been linked to increased risk. Furthermore, the presence of rape-supportive attitudes within university culture has been identified as a significant predictor of sexual violence (Geraldine, 2010). However, little research examined underlying dispositional mechanisms of rape supportive attitudes in Thailand.

Given the profound influence of culture on attitudes toward women and sexual violence, it is essential to examine rape myths and sexism in the Thai context. To date, little research has explored these attitudes among Thai university students. This study therefore extends existing literature by investigating the acceptance of rape myths and the role of hostile and benevolent sexism in a Thai sample.

Research Objectives

The aim of this study was to examine the predictive roles of hostile and benevolent sexism on the rape myth rejection among Thai university students. The study also sought to determine how demographic and sociocultural factors contribute to these attitudes.

The specific objectives were to:

1. Assess the level of rape myth rejection among Thai university students.

2. Examine how demographic and sociocultural variables (e.g., age, sex, religious beliefs, frequency of religious practice, family structure) are associated with rape myth rejection.

3. Investigate the relationships between hostile sexism and benevolent sexism and rape myth rejection.

4. Explore whether sex moderates the relationship between sexism and rape myth rejection.

Scope of Research

1. Scope of content and variables: This research studied sexism and rape myth of undergraduate students in a university in Bangkok, Thailand

2. Scope of population and sample: The target population was undergraduates in Thailand and the sample size was 163 students.

3. Scope of study area: A university in Bangkok, Thailand.

4. Scope of study period: From September 2018 to September 2019).

Research Benefits

To gain a deeper understanding of the underlying mechanisms of rape myth acceptance and to identify the factors associated with the rejection of rape myths.

Concepts, Theories, and Related Studies

Rape-supportive attitudes, commonly referred to as rape myths (Hust et al., 2019), are prejudicial and stereotyped beliefs about rape and related circumstances (Burt, 1980). These myths are false yet widely pervasive (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994), leading individuals who endorse them to justify or excuse sexually aggressive behavior and blame the victim. Thus, adhering to rape-supportive attitudes has been shown to be a precursor for sexually aggressive behavior in men.

Prior research suggests that generally young men between the age of 18 and 21 are four times more likely to endorse rape myths compared to other populations (Mori et al.,1995).

Rape myths also have a broader consequences, perpetuating silence and stigma for victims and shifting blame away from perpetrators (Anderson, 2007). Acceptance of rape myths further leads to the belief that sexual violence is part of normal behavior, which gives perpetrators the opportunity to avoid being held accountable for their actions. Consequently, research on rape-myth acceptance has become essential for understanding the attitudinal makeup of sexually aggressive men, and for assessing their degree of acceptance (Geraldine, 2010). Thus, measuring rape myth acceptance is essential for understanding the attitudinal factors that enable sexual aggression and for informing prevention efforts (Payne et al., 1999). The Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance (IRMA) Scale captures the multidimensional nature of rape myths. It includes five distinct factors: 'She asked for it', 'He didn't mean to', 'He didn't mean to (intoxication)', 'It wasn't rape', and 'She lied' (Payne et al., 1999; PettyJohn et al., 2023). Examining these specific dimensions provides deeper insight into the stereotypes that perpetuate sexual violence.

The meta-analysis by Trottier et al. (2026) found that sexism and rape myth acceptance are strongly associated with biased perceptions of sexual violence. Individuals with higher levels of hostile and benevolent sexism were more likely to blame victims, minimize sexual assault, and excuse perpetrators. The study also showed that rape myth acceptance consistently reinforced stereotypical and inaccurate beliefs about sexual violence, highlighting sexism as an important factor underlying rape-supportive attitudes.

While numerous studies have examined sexual violence and rape myths, most have been conducted in European or North American contexts. Generalizing these findings risks overlooking sociocultural differences in attitudes toward sexual violence. While this has certainly advanced our understanding of the issue, generalizing the experiences of Western populations fails to consider the sociocultural factors that are embedded in the realities of sexual violence across non-Western societies. More specifically, one factor that may influence rape-supportive attitudes is culture. Burt (1980) pioneering work on rape myths, indeed, implies that these attitudes should be different in cultures in which rape myths and related attitudes and beliefs are widely accepted than they are in cultures in which those myths receive little support. As such, cultural ideologies can play a crucial role in confronting and perceiving the problem of rape supportive attitudes and behavior. Previous studies have shown that in general, people from more traditional cultures (e.g., China, Thailand, Japan, etc.) tend to be more conservative in their sexual behavior (Chan, 1990; Meston et al., 1996), along with their views on homosexuality, masturbation, multiple partners, oral sex, premarital sex, prudery, and gender roles (Meston et al., 1998).

Research in Thailand on sexism and rape myth acceptance remains limited but generally reflects patterns found in international studies. Thai studies and social analyses suggest that traditional gender norms, victim-blaming attitudes, and patriarchal beliefs contribute to rape myth acceptance and the minimization of sexual violence. Media representations and cultural expectations surrounding female modesty and male authority have also been identified as factors reinforcing rape-supportive beliefs in Thai society (Suebklin & Vungthong, 2022).

Additionally, the study by Pipatshukiat (2020) investigated rape myth acceptance among male child and adult sex offenders in Thailand and found that individuals with higher rape myth acceptance were more likely to use cognitive distortions and victim-blaming attribution styles to justify sexual offending behavior. The findings suggest that rape myths may function as a psychological mechanism that minimizes offender responsibility and reinforces sexist beliefs about victims and sexual violence.

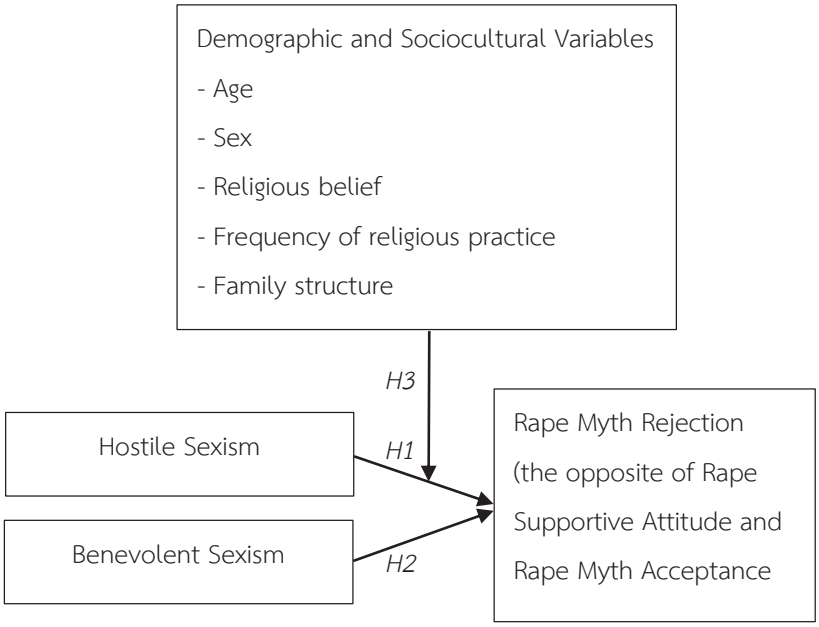
Sexism is often conceptualized as multidimensional, comprising hostile and benevolent components, as measured by the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI). Hostile sexism encompasses Dominative Paternalism (HDP), Competitive Gender Differentiation (HCGD), and Heterosexual Hostility (HHH), all of which overtly demean or distrust women. Dominative Paternalism refers to a belief system in which men see themselves as the natural protectors and decision-makers for women — but in a way that reinforces male dominance and women's dependency (e.g., "Women exaggerate problems they have at work."). Competitive Gender Differentiation refers to the belief that men and women are fundamentally different and that men are superior or more competent in certain important domains (e.g., leadership, intelligence, strength) (e.g., "Women are too easily offended."). Heterosexual Hostility is a negative attitude toward the opposite sex, often marked by distrust, resentment, or anger in heterosexual relationships. It reflects antagonism between men and women, seeing them as opponents rather than partners (e.g., "Once a woman gets a man to commit to her, she usually tries to put him on a tight leash.").

Benevolent sexism, while seemingly positive, reinforces inequality through Protective Paternalism (BPP), Complementary Gender Differentiation (BCGD), and Heterosexual Intimacy (BHI) (Glick & Fiske, 1997, 2001). Research suggests these dimensions can interact with rape myth acceptance, as benevolent sexism may normalize victim-blaming in subtle ways (Yamawaki et al., 2007). Protective Paternalism is the belief that men should protect, care for, and provide for women, viewing them as delicate or dependent (e.g., "Women should be cherished and protected by men."). Complementary Gender Differentiation is the belief that men and women have different but complementary traits, which "fit together naturally.". Men and women are

seen as different but equal in value — though this often masks inequality by assigning powerful roles to men and nurturing roles to women (e.g., “Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess.”). Heterosexual Intimacy reflects an idealized, romantic view of relationships between men and women- believing that love and closeness make men and women “complete.”. It portrays heterosexual relationships as emotionally fulfilling and natural but also assumes women’s worth is tied to being loved by men (e.g., “Every man ought to have a woman whom he adores.”).

Conceptual framework

The study was further guided by a conceptual framework highlighting the interplay between cultural, demographic, and attitudinal factors in shaping beliefs about sexual violence.



Hypotheses of Research

H1: Higher hostile sexism (IV) will be associated with lower rape myth rejection (DV).

H2: Higher benevolent sexism (IV) will be associated with lower rape myth rejection (DV).

H3: Sex could be a moderator of the relationship between sexism and rape myth rejection.

Research Methodology

This is surveyed quantitative research with 163 participants (22.7% males, 77.3% females), aged 17 years onwards who were registering the general psychology course and obtained a course credit for participation in this study. All students participated voluntarily and had other projects to participate in, if they did not want to participate in this project.

The number of participants computed from the G*power program (Faul et al., 2009) is 134. There are 5 main predictors, namely, sex, age, religious involvement, hostile sexism and benevolent sexism. The effect size is .10. The power is .80. To increase the power, we will collect up to 165 participants.

This study was approved by The Research Ethics Review Committee for Research Involving Human Research Participants, Health Sciences Group (COA No. 225/2018).

The back translation method was used for scale translation. All the scales had been translated into Thai by the first author, then the postgraduate student who had the bachelor's degree from the Thai international curriculum and had the bachelor's degree from the US translated them back to English. Finally, the second author checked the congruence between the English back translation and the original ones. All questionnaires were self-administered.

Demographic Information. Participants were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire. These questions elicited information regarding gender, age, level of education, faculty, religious orientation, frequency of religious worship [an indicator of religiosity used in other research (Sierra et al., 2010).

Frequency of religious practice from never, less than once a week, once a week, twice a week, more than twice a week, and every day before sleeping.

The dependent variable is rape myth rejection assessed by The updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (McMahon & Farmer, 2011; Payne et al., 1999) which is a 22-item self-report instrument developed to measure the complex set of cultural beliefs that serve to support and perpetuate sexual violence (McMahon & Farmer, 2011; Payne et al., 1999). Example items include *"If both people are drunk, it can't be raped."* and *"If a girl doesn't say "no", she can't claim rape."* Items are responded to on a Likert-type scale that ranges from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*).

Lower score indicates higher acceptance of rape myth, and higher score indicates higher rejection of rape myth. ***Therefore, this study, the term "rape myth rejection" would be used instead of rape myth acceptance, to comprehend it easily.***

The Rape Myth Acceptance scale has 5 dimensions; "She asked for it. (Askfor)", "He didn't mean to it. (HDMT)", "He didn't mean to it (intoxication). (HDMTintoxication)",

and It wasn't rape. (Notrape)", and "She lied." (Lied). (See PettyJohn, et al., 2023.).

Cronbach's alpha of 'She asked for it' is .592., 'He didn't mean to', .056 'He didn't mean to (intoxication)', .389, 'It wasn't rape', .764, and 'She lied', .871. Overall Cronbach's alpha of Rape myth acceptance is .545. Some items may exhibit strong factor loadings while others have weaker loadings, which can cause Cronbach's alpha to be low even though the construct is still reliable. In other words, the items do not appear to measure a single homogeneous construct. However, the composite reliabilities (rho a) are not low (see Figure 1).

The independent variables are the hostile and benevolent attitudes toward women assessed by the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1996), which is a 22 item self-report measure which may be used as an overall measure of sexism, with hostile and benevolent components equally weighted. The ASI has been widely used in research on sexism and was therefore selected as part of the battery of assessments. Respondents will be required to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (*disagree strongly*) to 5 (*agree strongly*). An example item on the Hostile Sexism Scale includes: "*Most women interpret innocent remarks as being sexist"*. An example item on the Benevolent Sexism Scale includes: "*Women should be cherished and protected by men"*. Items were recoded where appropriate. Higher score indicates higher sexism. The Hostile sexism scale has 3 dimensions; Dominate Paternalism (HDP), Competitive Gender Differentiation (HCGD), and Heterosexual Hostility (HHH). The Benevolent sexism scale has 3 dimensions; Protective Paternalism (BPP), Complementary Gender Differentiation (BCGD), and Heterosexual Intimacy (BHI). (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

The Cronbach's alpha for each dimension; HDP is .735 (7 items), HCG = .023 (2 items), HHH = .044 (2 items), BPP = .031 (4 items), BCGD = .672 (3 items), BHI = .775 (4 items)

The Cronbach's alpha of hostile sexism is .25 and benevolent sexism's is .414. The overall Cronbach's alpha of both scales is .462. The low Cronbach's alphas may be due to the heterogeneity of the dimensions of the scales. However, the composite reliabilities (rho a) are not low (see Figure 1).

The procedure for participants to be recruited and the description of the research assistant.

Participants were recruited from the university by asking permission from the lecturer of the General Psychology course as a requirement for research participation**.** The research assistant who was the doctoral candidate of the Psychology program had been trained according to the form of information for research participants**.** After getting all the approvals, she posted the announcement with the details of the survey on the board provided, together with the sign-in form**.** Each interested participant had to sign the time slot that he/she was willing to attend**.**

At the time of the survey session, the research assistant disseminated the questionnaires to each participant. She described the participants the information according to the research participant information form before asking participants to fill in the questionnaires.

The risk for participants

If participants felt irritated with the items in the questionnaire, they could stop immediately and the research assistant assisted them to see the counselor at the wellness center of the faculty.

Protection of Participants' Rights

Participants were not asked to fill in their names. They could refuse or terminate answering the questionnaire any time, if they would like to. Finally, participants got debrief and a small souvenir (a pen).

Data Analysis

The data were inspected closely using the SPSS program version 29 (IBM Corp, 2023). No standardized data (z score) were beyond +/- 3.3 which means no outliers. Also, Mahalanobis distance was used to detect multivariate outliers. Cases with values exceeding the critical chi-square value ($\chi^2 = 13.82$, $df = 2$, $p < .001$) were considered outliers. No cases exceeded this threshold. The missing data were replaced, where appropriate, with mean of the variable. A Hierarchical multiple regression was used to analyse the data. VIF of hostile and benevolent sexisms was 1.162. Tolerance of hostile and benevolent sexisms was .860. These indicated no multicollinearity. Normality was evaluated by examining skewness and kurtosis. All values fell within the acceptable range of −2 to +2, indicating no substantial deviation from normality. The SmartPLS4 software (Ringle et al., 2024) was used to do structural modelling analysis.

Results

For the demographic characteristics of the 163 respondents, the results indicated that the majority were female (n = 126). Most participants were 19 years old (n = 85), enrolled in the Faculty of Communication Arts (n = 92), and were second-year students (n = 100). Regarding religion, 137 participants reported having a religious affiliation, with most identifying as Buddhists (n = 125). Concerning religious practice, the largest group reported participating in religious activities less than once per week (n = 78). Most respondents had never experienced rape (n = 158) and did not know anyone who had been raped (n = 149). In terms of family structure, the majority reported living with both their father and mother (n = 123). Descriptive statistics are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Means, SDs, minimum, and maximum of hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and rape myth rejection (N = 163). Mean and SD are based on the average of the scale per item.

Variables	Scale Range	Min	Max	Mean (*SD*)
Hostile sexism	0-5	0.09	4.18	2.13 (0.74)
Benevolent sexism	0-5	0.27	4.27	2.05 (0.80)
Rape myth rejection*	1-5	1.59	4.86	3.64 (0.60)

*The higher score indicates greater rejection of rape myths.

Correlations of the variables of interest are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Correlations of rape myth rejection, hostile sexism, and benevolent sexism (*N* = 163)

Variables	1. Sex	2. Age	3. Have religion	4. Frequency of religious practice (*n* = 128)	5. Hostile sexism	6. Benevolent sexism	7. Rape myth rejection
1. Sex	-	.05	.08	.02	-.28***	.001	.25**
2. Age		-	-.21**	-.06	.01	-.05	-.03
3. Have religion			-	-.13	.02	.26**	-.14
4. Frequency of religious practice				-	.07	.19*	-.12
5. Hostile Sexism					-	.37**	-.49***
6. Benevolent Sexism						-	-.43***
7. Rape myth Rejection							-

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed).

Note. 1 = male, 2 = female.; 0 = no religion, 1 = having religion

Sex, age, having religion, and frequency of religious practice could affect the variables of interest. To control for religious affiliation and frequency of religious practice, a composite measure of religious involvement was created to represent both variables and was treated as a continuous variable. The categories no religion, never, less than once a week, once a week, twice a week, more than twice a week, and every day before sleeping were coded as –0.5, 0, 0.5, 1, 2, 3, and 3.5, respectively, prior to inclusion in the hierarchical regression analyses.

Table 3

*Regression models test the predictors of Hostile and Benevolent sexism (N = 152)**

Predictors	Hostile sexism				Benevolent sexism			
	β	*SE*	*t*	*p*	β	*SE*	*t*	*p*
Model 1								
Sex	-.26	.14	-3.24	**	-.03	.16	-.36	*ns*
Age	-.01	.06	-.15	*ns*	-.07	.06	-.80	*ns*
%variance explained		R^2 = .066				R^2 = .005		
Model 2								
Sex	-.26	.14	-3.29	**	-.05	.15	-.59	*ns*
Age	.00	.06	.003	*ns*	-.02	.06	-.26	*ns*
Religious involvement	.09	.06	1.07	*ns*	.31	.06	3.89	***
%variance explained		R^2 = .073				R^2 = .098		

**N* = 152 due to specifying others and missing values for frequency of religious practice = 11.

Note. 1 = male, 2 = female.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, ns = non significance.

Table 4

Regression models test the predictors of Rape Myth Rejection (N = 152).*

Predictors	Rape myth rejection			
	β	*SE*	*t*	*p*
Model 1				
Sex	.27	.12	3.35	**
Age	.02	.05	.21	*ns*
%variance explained	R^2= .071**			
Model 2				
Sex	.28	.11	3.56	***
Age	-.01	.05	-.17	*ns*
Religious involvement	-.21	.05	-2.65	**
%variance explained	R^2 = .113***			
Model 3				
Sex	.18	.10	2.60	*
Age	-.02	.04	-.28	*ns*
Religious involvement	-.09	.04	-1.29	*ns*
Hostile sexism	-.31	.06	-4.13	***
Benevolent sexism	-.29	.06	-3.75	***
%variance explained	R^2 = .34***			

**N* = 152 due to specifying others for frequency of religious practice = 11.

Note. 1 = male, 2 = female.

Structural Equation Modelling was performed to see the results in detail or specific dimensions using the SmartPLS4 software. Religious Involvement was controlled due to it may affect the relationship. The results showed that hostile sexism could predict rape myth rejection (β = -.608, p < .001). Benevolent sexism could predict rape myth rejection (β = -.207, p < .01). Sex could be the moderator between the relationship between hostile sexism and rape myth rejection (β = .325, p < .05), as shown in Figure 1 and Graph 1.

Figure 1 Modelling of the predictors of rape myth rejection (Path coefficients, loadings and *p* values in paratheses, composite reliability rho a in each circle of the variables), R^2 = .348, p < .001

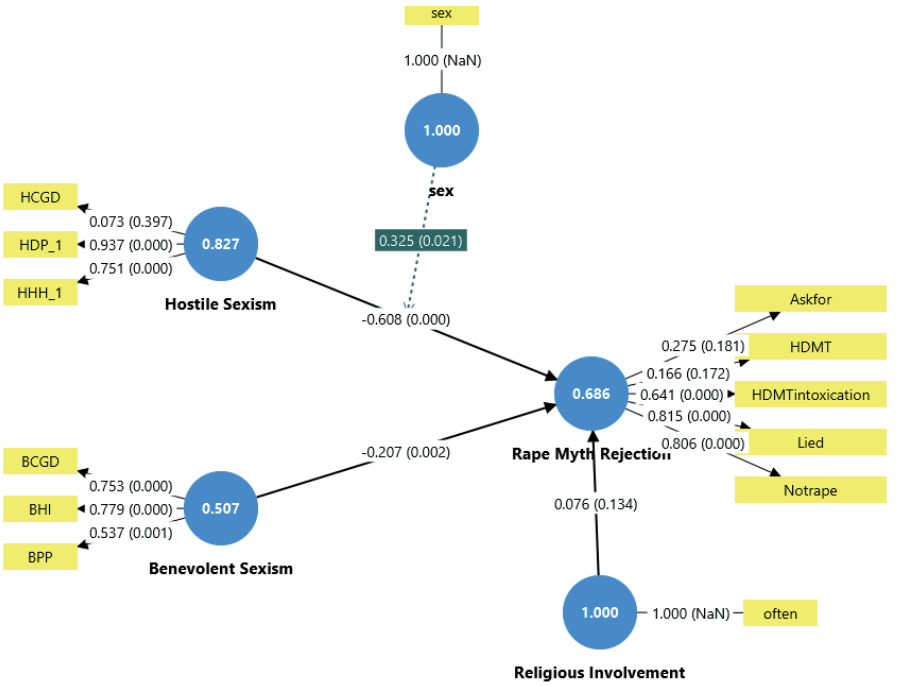


Figure 1 Modelling

As shown in Figure 2, biological sex moderated the relationship between hostile sexism and rape myth rejection (β = .325, p < .05). Among male students, higher levels of hostile sexism were associated with lower rejection of rape myths. In contrast, female students demonstrated higher levels of rape myth rejection regardless of their level of hostile sexism.

Figure 2 shows the moderating effect of sex on the relationship between hostile sexism and rape myth rejection. (0 = male, 1 = female)

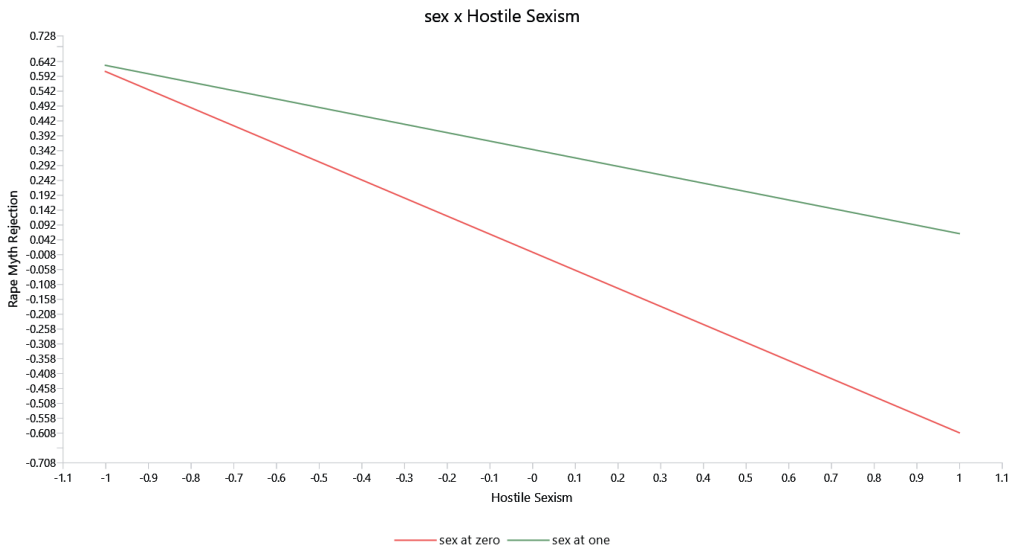


Figure 2 biological sex moderated

Discussion

Results revealed significant negative correlations between hostile and benevolent sexism and rape myth rejection. Both forms of sexism negatively predicted rejection of rape myths, consistent with previous findings. This suggests that individuals who hold sexist beliefs are more likely to blame victims and excuse perpetrators.

Our findings further aligned with previous research indicating that specific dimensions of hostile sexism, particularly Dominative Paternalism (HDP) and Heterosexual Hostility (HHH), are the strongest predictors of rape myth rejection (Yamawaki et al., 2007). These dimensions promote male dominance and antagonistic feelings or attitudes toward opposite sexes, often expressed through blame, mistrust, or resentment in gender relations, which align closely with victim-blaming attitudes. Benevolent sexism also predicted rape myth rejection. Although benevolent sexism appears supportive of women, it reinforces traditional gender roles by idealizing women as needing male protection (Glick & Fiske, 2001). This can foster beliefs that women who fail to conform to such expectations are responsible for their victimization.

Findings from the research also showed that participants, on average, rejected rape myths (M = 3.64 on a 1–5 scale) and expressed relatively low levels of both hostile and benevolent sexism (2.13 and 2.05, respectively in 0-5 scaling which mean disagree slightly with the items). It is important to note however that most participants were female, and females tended to reject rape myths more strongly and express lower levels of hostile sexism compared to males. There was also no significant relationship between sex and benevolent sexism.

Structural equation modelling further revealed that sex moderated the relationship between hostile sexism and rape myth rejection. For male participants, higher levels of hostile sexism were associated with lower rape myth rejection. Among female participants, rape myth rejection was generally high regardless of hostile sexism levels (See Figure 2). This highlights the need for targeted prevention strategies. Interventions aimed at male students should directly challenge hostile sexist beliefs, particularly those promoting male dominance (HDP) and Heterosexual Hostility (HHH). Educational campaigns should also address specific rape myths (high factor loadings) from the IRMA scale, such as “He didn’t mean to it (intoxication) (HDMTintoxication).”, and it wasn’t rape (Notrape).”, and “She lied.” (Lied), which feeding directly into victim-blaming.

Cultural norms and patriarchal social structures play a significant role in shaping sexism and rape myth acceptance across societies. Traditional beliefs emphasizing male dominance, female submissiveness, and female modesty often reinforce hostile and benevolent sexism, which in turn contribute to victim-blaming attitudes and the minimization of sexual violence. In many Asian and non-Western contexts, cultural expectations surrounding gender roles may normalize male authority and discourage women from challenging sexual aggression, thereby sustaining rape myths and excusing perpetrators (Trottier et al., 2026). Thai media studies further suggest that portrayals of rape victims and perpetrators often reflect sexist stereotypes that question victims’ credibility and indirectly justify offenders’ behavior (Suebklin & Vungthong, 2022). Overall, culture influences rape myth acceptance by embedding sexist beliefs within social norms, media discourse, and gender role expectations.

Limitations

The relatively lower Cronbach’s alpha of the short form rape myth scale and sexism scale observed in this study may be attributed to cross-cultural differences and variations in item interpretation, as translated instruments can yield different psychometric properties across contexts. In addition, the items do not appear to measure a single homogeneous construct. These findings underscore the need for culturally grounded Thai-language measures to improve reliability and construct validity. To the best of our knowledge, few studies have reported the factor loadings of the dimensions of both scales.

Additionally, a smaller number of male participants may reduce the statistical power to detect moderation effects. Therefore, future studies should consider increasing the proportion of male participants to enhance the generalizability and clarity of the findings.

Implications and Future Research Directions

This research has important implications for rape awareness, prevention, and intervention efforts. Findings suggest that rape-supportive attitudes may contribute to sexual aggression and rape. Prevention campaigns should focus on rape myth dimensions that showed the strongest influence in the Thai sample. These include beliefs that intoxication excuses sexual aggression, that incidents are “not really rape,” and that women frequently fabricate rape accusations. Challenging these beliefs may help reduce victim-blaming attitudes and increase rape myth rejection. Educational programs should promote a clear understanding of consent and emphasize that the absence of a verbal “no” does not imply consent. Interventions should also improve communication and mutual understanding regarding sexual consent between men and women. Broader public education should promote human rights, gender equality, and accurate knowledge about sexual violence. The findings further indicate that sex moderates the relationship between sexism and rape myth acceptance. Interventions targeting male students should focus on reducing hostile sexist beliefs related to male dominance and negative attitudes toward women, as these were among the strongest predictors of rape myth acceptance.

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