

The role of social norms on the willingness to act and donate against sexual harassment

Problem

- Sexual harassment (SH) is a social problem faced throughout the world that leads to both social and economic inequalities in addition to extreme personal strains on the harassed.
- Why don't more witnesses of sexual harassment do something and why don't more people actively support related causes?
- Lack in the link between the role of injunctive social norms and donations in the context of sexual harassment.

General Objective

- Investigate through an **experimental setting** the role of social norms on the willingness of people to **act against** scenarios of sexual harassment **and donate** toward related campaigns and organizations.
- Encourage people to not be idle bystanders during incidences of sexual harassment.
- Determine if social norm information on appropriateness can also move people to act in a way to correct another's socially inappropriate behavior.

Experimental Design

Scenario Summaries

- Photos:** A male is sharing pictures of females with little clothes on in a mixed gender WhatsApp group.
- Dancing:** A male is repeatedly asking a female to dance after she says no.
- Hugging:** A male hugs a female coworker from behind.
- Dinner:** Someone in charge of hiring asks an interviewee to dinner.

The Experiment

- Four scenarios were shown to participants.
- Treatment:** participants were told the percentage of peers from a previous experiment that found the behavior inappropriate.
- The participants were asked if they would act against the negative behavior.
- After all scenarios, participants were informed about a campaign aimed at preventing and helping SH victims and were asked if they would like to donate \$1 from their participation payment to this campaign.

The participants were 478 university students across 19 sessions, with a treatment rate of 50.93%, and a mean payment of \$4.32. A demographic survey was conducted after the experiment.

RESULTS

Treatment effects on the probability of donating by gender

	(1) LPM	(2) LPM	(3) Logit	(4) Probit
TE Females	0.112* (0.0987)	0.119* (0.0813)	0.114* (0.0627)	0.113* (0.0648)
TE Males	0.0455 (0.480)	0.0420 (0.516)	0.0384 (0.544)	0.0386 (0.537)
Difference	0.0663 (0.481)	0.0765 (0.417)	0.0758 (0.393)	0.0747 (0.398)
Observations	478	478	478	478
Session FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Demographics	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Risk aversion	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

White robust p -values in parentheses. Each column represents a specification. See text for details

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Photo

For females, the treatment reduced the likelihood of being willing to act by 3.97 percentage points. Difference in ATE between males and females is significant at 10% level for the probit specification.

Dinner

Female results are negative while male results are positive, but none of them are significant. Difference between males and females is approx. 15 percentage points and significant at 10% level.

Dancing

No significant differences of ATE between or within gender groups.

Hugging

The willingness to act for females increased by more than 15 percentage points. There was no significant effect for males.

CONCLUSIONS

- The social norm has varying effects on males and females across the scenarios. The donation to the SH campaign is increased by the treatment only for females.
- Positive treatment effects for donations across specification were seen for both males and females, but were only significant for females.
- A boomerang effect is observed in the Photo and Dinner scenario, probably due to the social cost of acting.
- Entities seeking to encourage actions against sexual harassment may use injunctive social norm information with caution, as it could cause mixed effects.