ERASMUS UNIVERSITY ROTTERDAM

Erasmus School of Economics

Master Thesis Behavioural Economics

Master Thesis Title: The association of gender blindness with confidence, belongingness and the relationship to gendered wording in job advertisements

Student Name: Iro Kipridi

Student ID number: 571661

Supervisor: Tong Wang

Second assessor: Chen Li

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Abstract

Nowadays women are still not sufficiently represented in the job market, which makes finding the most efficient strategies to eliminate the gender disparities in the job market of key importance. Previous studies have revealed the positive effects of gender blindness on women's confidence and agency. This study expands on these findings, by testing for the first time the effects of gender blindness when people are faced with gendered wording in job advertisements. The experimental survey performed across 123 respondents wanted to answer the question of whether seeing genders as being more similar than different can be positively related to applying for job advertisements with gendered wording. At the same time, it was expected that confidence and belongingness would mediate this relationship, and gender would have a moderating effect. The results did not support most of the expected hypotheses. However, it was found that confidence is indeed positively associated with the application for job advertisements with masculine wording. Supporting the confidence of females and other individuals could be a way to provide more gender-equal access to the workplace arena. Future research could explore gender blindness in other areas of life, as well as see its benefits in the context of gender non-conforming individuals.

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1. Introduction

Nowadays women are still not sufficiently represented in the job market; in the European Union, the participation of women is still 11.5 pp. lower than that of men (European Commission, 2019). Women also still find themselves facing gender disparities in male-dominated environments (Funk & Parker, 2018). Over the last century, gender awareness strategies have taken place in an effort to increase women's equality and participation in the workforce. However, as findings show, increased awareness of the gender bias in male-dominated fields, for instance, STEM, can signal a lack of belongingness to women (Pietri et al., 2019). Therefore, a question arises: Is there another strategy that could be effective for women?

Gender blindness has shown promising signs as a way to tackle gender bias, particularly in the work environment (Koenig & Richeson, 2010). Gender blindness is an ideology that focuses on the resemblance between women and men rather than their differences, while still, it acknowledges the existence of some differences between them. Amongst others, this ideology influences how fixed these differences are perceived to be. For example, gender blindness has shown a negative relationship between gender differences and the beliefs that these differences are rooted in biological reasons rather than social reasons (Hahn et al., 2015). Despite the existence of some small biological differences between men and women, these still will never be able to justify the gender inequality that has existed for all these years (Bem, 1993). The current paper is also expanding on findings by the studies of Martin and Philips (2017). More specifically, it has been found that gender blindness increased women's confidence and agency. Despite these promising results, there are still areas where there is a gap of knowledge on whether gender blindness could serve women, with the job application process being one of them. This is the gap that the current experimental research wants to cover. The present study is connecting the two areas of study in the literature, by empirically testing the application of a gender blindness ideology and its effect on the decision to apply for a job. The research question is whether seeing genders as having more similarities than differences can be positively related to masculine wording in job advertisements. Also, further questions that arise are whether workplace confidence is positively correlated with women's application for these roles. Is gender blindness correlated with an increased sense of belongingness? And, are there any significant differences between women and men? The idea is that if increased confidence can increase women's application rates for masculine-worded jobs, then there is a good indication that gender blindness is a strategy that has the potential to have a

positive practical application for women. Also, since gender blindness aims to focus on the similarities between genders, it implies a higher sense of unity between men and women, and therefore it could potentially lead to a higher sense of belonging for women. Therefore, this study is also connecting gender blindness with the sense of belongingness, by exploring its mediating effect towards applying for masculine wording in job advertisements. Gaucher et al. (2011) studied masculine wording in job advertisements, revealing how it decreases women's interest in them. More specifically, the words that influence women can be subtle or implicit references that can be a "potent contributor to inequality", since they cannot be found in people's areas of awareness (Gaucher et al., 2011). As Gaucher et al. (2011) reveal, these words influence women's sense of belongingness, due to the fact that women perceive these environments to be male-dominated. Therefore, if gender blindness proves to contribute to women's sense of belongingness, it will become one additional positive dimension of gender blindness that has not yet been explored in the literature.

Even though some companies have genuine interest and policies in place towards gender equality, the existence of implicit biases and different associations that men and women have means that societies might need to implement tools that are differentiated for men and women. This study, by providing further knowledge of gender blindness, wants to contribute to gender equality by showing that a gender blindness strategy might be an effective tool for women in the workforce. Even if a gender awareness strategy helps men become more aware and mindful of the differences between men and women, gender blindness could help women achieve more equality. This could come by increasing women's participation in the workforce. As it is already mentioned, the goal of gender blindness should not be to disregard and be oblivious to the fact that there are differences between men and women, but rather to swift the weight to the similarities (Martin & Philips, 2017), especially in the workforce arena. To take this approach one step further, a future that does not focus on the differences between the genders in the job market has the potential to be a more inclusive environment not just for women but for gender nonconforming individuals as well. This is a very relevant topic and will become even more relevant in the upcoming years. Already more than 30% of the Gen Z population in the US believes that gender is not as a defining factor for a person as it used to be (Laughlin, 2016).

2. Literature Review
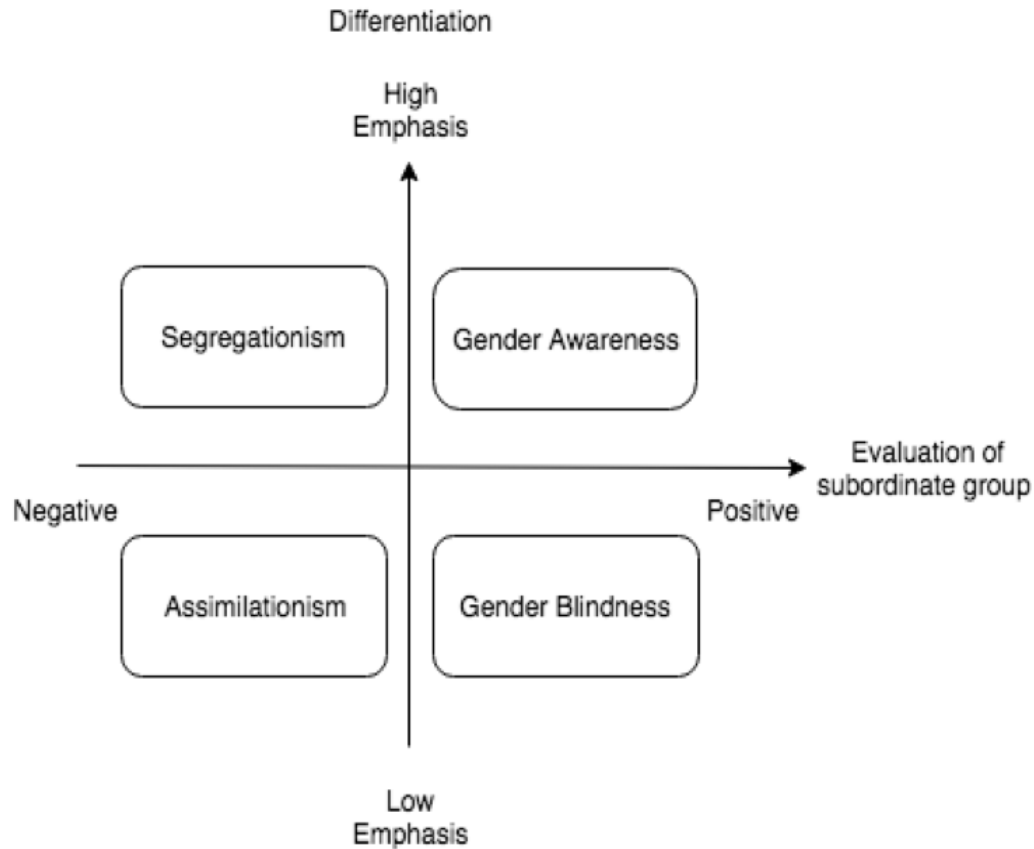
2.1 Gender Blindness

2.1.1 Gender Ideologies

For more than a hundred years researchers have been debating the existence, or lack of, differences between men and women (Hyde, 2014). More recently, scholars like Eagly et al. (2000), Hyde (2005), Davies and Shackelford (2006), Archer (2006), Lippa (2006), and Hyde (2006) have been studying and debating the extent of the gender differences and whether these differences have been overestimated claims or not. The similarities theory seems to hold as the best scientific research shows that in most aspects men and women are actually similar (Hyde, 2006). However, in everyday life, the idea that the genders are more different than similar is still prominent. Gender ideologies represent how these differences are perceived and approached in society. Ideologies are a set of ideas and they are not just individual viewpoints but rather they are ideas shared by groups, forming the opinions and attitudes about social matters (Van Dijk, 2001). People can have a set of different ideologies since they stem from the fact that they themselves belong in multiple groups (Van Dijk, 2001). Ideologies also are part of organizations and they influence self-image, confidence, and the attitude of people who are part of them (Martin & Philips, 2017). So, ideologies can be formed and influenced by the context, and because they represent a set of ideas on a topic, they are a course of action for the person that holds them. For humans, sex is a biological variable that is used to classify the different reproductive systems and workings of the body, due to the different chromosomes that females and males have (Torgrimson & Minson, 2005). On the contrary, the term gender refers to the self-representation of males and females, based on the social construct (Torgrimson & Minson, 2005). Multiple times the terms have been used interchangeably, however ,in the current paper, the adopted term will be gender instead of sex. However, whenever the researchers in their studies have used the term sex, it will be mentioned as per the original paper.

The first researchers that created a distinction for the individual differences of gender were Koenig and Richeson (2010). They did this by comparing them conceptually to the ideologies about race. Therefore, by creating an analogy to the colorblind and multicultural race ideologies, they came up with the sex-blind and sex-aware ideologies. These were divided by a single scale

distinction of either eliminating these differences and treating people as individuals irrelevant to their gender (sex-blind) or appreciating and acknowledging them (sex-aware). Building on the study of Koenig and Richeson (2010), researchers Hahn et al. (2015) categorize gender ideologies on two scales, the one is the "emphasis on group differences", similar to the first study but the additional one is the "evaluations of the subordinate group". These gender ideologies are again an application of the more general model of ideologies that have been created for ethnicities. In two studies across 2,334 subjects, Hahn et al. (2015) respondents answered a few ideology items that have been amended in a way to apply to gender. The existence of more than two ideologies brought further nuance in the understanding of the differences between genders. One distinction is based on how much the differences between the groups are emphasized or minimized and the other distinction is expressed based on whether the subordinate group is perceived positively or negatively by the more dominant group. As expected, the treatment of the subordinate group will depend on whether the intergroup differences are seen as positive, or negative. For instance, if the differences are perceived as negative, the subordinate group needs to adopt the dominant group's characteristics (Hahn et al., 2015). Therefore, Hahn et al. (2015) created four distinct categories, namely gender blindness, gender awareness, assimilationism, and segregationism (Figure 1). Similar to Koenig and Richeson (2010), gender blindness deemphasizes gender differences and perceives individuals only based on their individuality. A note needs to be made that gender blindness's goal is not to be totally oblivious about the differences but rather to de-emphasize their existence and rather focus on the similarities between genders (Martin & Philips, 2017). Gender awareness stresses the differences of the gender, however, without believing that one gender is better than the other. Therefore, both these ideologies fall under the positive dimension, since in both cases the differences are not perceived as something negative. The negative dimension includes assimilationism and segregationism. Assimilationism advocates minimizing the differences between the genders expecting women to assimilate to the norms established by men. Segregationism advocates maintaining the differences between men and women. However, by clearly distinguishing genders this means that men are expected to be of higher status compared to women, as women are perceived as the subordinate gender. These four differentiated ideologies bring a rather complete approach to the views on gender.

Figure 1.

Gender intergroup ideologies, adapted from Hahn et al. (2015)

Differentiation

High
Emphasis

Segregationism | Gender Awareness

Negative — Positive — Evaluation of subordinate group

Assimilationism | Gender Blindness

Low
Emphasis

2.1.2 Implications of gender blindness and gender awareness

Even though racial diversity has received a lot of attention in the literature, very few studies have focused on gender diversity in order to explore how each different gender ideology can help promote better relationships between genders (Martin, 2018). The current study elaborates on the positive view of differences and the emphasis (high and low) of these differences between genders, by focusing on the two prominent ideologies: gender awareness, and gender blindness.

Gender awareness often approaches differences through the lenses of biology and social roles, therefore trying to prove that these differences are fixed skill-sets and abilities for women and men (Martin & Phillips, 2017). As expected, this theory helps to further strengthen the belief that differences rooted in biology are unavoidable (Bem, 1993). On the other hand, gender

blindness is related to beliefs that gender differences are mostly social rather than biological (Hahn et al., 2015). This shows that the differences are not fixed but dynamic and they can change. Therefore, gender awareness further strengthens biological beliefs about gender differences and serves as a justification of the current system, by denying inequality (Martin, 2018). As a consequence, gender awareness messages might increase stereotypes, as shown in the research across 282 subjects conducted by Martin (2018); which as stated means that gender awareness might further restrict opportunities for women, as men are expected to be higher in the gender hierarchy. On the contrary, Martin (2018) suggests that gender blindness can decrease stereotyping. These suggestions serve as a valid starting point in order to question whether awareness should be approached as by default the most effective strategy for dealing with gender differences.

2.1.3 Gender blindness and gender awareness in the working environments

Surveys on work-related contexts reveal that most people endorse gender blindness (Manea et al., 2020; Koenig & Richeson, 2010). The study of Koenig and Richeson (2010) across two samples of 211 subjects reveals that the sex-blind ideology is endorsed for work-related environments. A typical example of a work-related context where sex ideologies are applied is negotiations. Negotiations are traditionally perceived as a masculine activity and men have been found more likely to initiate negotiations (Eriksson & Sandberg, 2012; Kugler et al., 2018). However, the topic of the negotiation and whether it is perceived as a masculine or a feminine topic changes the suggestion of which is the most preferable ideology to follow. Two experiments across 468 subjects reveal that even though sex blindness is the "golden standard" when negotiating, a sex-aware ideology is suggested for the feminine topics (Manea et al., 2020). The study of Koenig and Richeson (2010) also revealed that sex blindness across responders was correlated to less stereotypical ideas about women. Therefore, gender-aware ideologies could help maintain the status quo on the beliefs about the distinct differences between men and women.

On another example of workplace topic, which is leadership, Eagly et al. (1995) suggest that gendered expectations take a toll on both men and women as they negatively influence their leadership effectiveness. The excessive beliefs about these differences between men and women cause significant costs, but mostly for women in the workplace. Martin (2018) argues that because gender awareness places importance on the biological nature of the differences between men and

women, it supports people's ideas of gender stereotypes. In her study across 282 participants and in accordance with past research, the subjects that belonged in the gender awareness treatment were more likely to advocate gender stereotypes. Stereotypes can appear in an effort to rationalize the work-related gender division, as in this case they stem from the supposedly intrinsic differences of the genders (Hoffman & Hurst, 1990). Irrelevant to whether the differences are seen as biological or historical, the behaviour that does not comply with the expected gender roles is perceived as incorrect, further establishing the state of affairs (Kray et al., 2017). For example, a past meta-analysis of gender studies shows that women could be seen as "uncaring autocrats" (Hyde, 2005). As Eagly et al. (1995) suggest, if gender was not a considerable characteristic in organizations, it would not be correlated to leadership effectiveness, therefore both women and men could progress equally well in their roles. Furthermore, three studies performed by Von Hippel et al. (2011) when women compare themselves with men about their career they experience higher stereotype threat and therefore increased intention to quit. In the STEM field, this comparison can be manifested as decreased engagement with work (Van Veblen et al., 2019). In relation to the STEM sector, a few diary studies depict that when women engineers discuss with their male colleagues, they get feelings of lack of competence and unacceptance, which is not the case when they were talking with their female colleagues (Veelen et al, 2019). In a study across 703 subjects, the subjects who were exposed to a situation supportive of the similarities between men and women predicted that women could fit a mostly masculine working environment compared to the subjects who were exposed to a gender differences situation (Vianna, 2020).

2.1.4 Impact on belongingness

Belonging can be explained as "the experience of personal involvement in a system or environment so that persons feel themselves to be an integral part of that system or environment" (Hoffman et al., 2002, p.229). The current evidence shows that the need to belong is a very strong motivation and fundamental human need (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). A study across 1,327 Swedish students in high school measured their interest in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) and HEED (Health care, Elementary Education, and the Domestic spheres) sectors, showed that both male and females thought that they would be a better fit in majors that were dominated by their gender, versus the ones that were dominated by the other gender (Tellhed et al., 2016). These results signal that an increased sense of belongingness for the

gender minority of each major could change these ideas. The more employees are gender-aware, the more they can feel that they are seen primarily as their gender (Veldman et al., 2017). In their paper, "Women (do not) belong here: gender-work identity conflict among female police officers" Veldman et al. (2017) provided a questionnaire to a sample of 789 employees from a police force in Western Europe. The answers showed that in this male-dominated environment women's perception of their gender was related to conflict with their work identity. Women seem to be particularly affected by their gender when they come across male-dominated environments and when they are outnumbered this can increase their lack of belongingness. An experiment performed by Murphy et al. (2007), was performed by showing to 47 Stanford undergraduates either a gender-balanced video or gender unbalanced video of 150 people at a conference. In the gender unbalanced version of the video, out of all people depicted, more men were represented at a ratio of 3 to 1. Participants after viewing the video were asked to express their sense of belongingness responding to different items, for instance, "I would belong in this conference". The study showed that when women watched the gender unbalanced version, they showed less belongingness as well as a desire to participate. Men seemed to be unaffected by the different representations. Taking it one step further, an example across the STEM sector shows that women's awareness of the existence of a gender bias, acts as an identity threat and it signals to them lower belongingness (Pietri et al., 2019). A study reviewing articles published from 1990 onwards shows that particularly across the STEM industry, masculinity creates a bigger feeling of belongingness (and therefore success) to men compared to women (Cheryan et al., 2017). This means that the less the feeling of belongingness the less the chances that women are going to pursue a career in STEM (Cheryan et al., 2017). The aforementioned findings show that for women stressing the differences of their gender in male-dominated places could result in lower belongingness across the sector they are working.

2.1.5 Impact on confidence

Confidence in their abilities can help individuals strive for more aspiring goals and perceive better through difficulties (Benabou & Tirole, 2002). The existence of a confidence gap between women and men has been supported empirically; it undermines success in organizations since it minimizes equal opportunities for both male and female talent acquisition (Carlin et al., 2018). Even though through the literature there are indications that low-self confidence is more prominent

across women than men, it is a characteristic that highly depends on the context. It is argued that these differences are not a result of women's personal choices created in a "social vacuum" (Van Veelen et al., 2019). For instance, the importance that is placed on social comparison and appraisal is influencing the extent to which women will be confident (Lenney, 1977). A questionnaire study across 437 subjects showed that an individual's sex-role identity (behaviour) rather than gender alone was significantly correlated with self-confidence. Chusmir and Koberg (1991) measured their subjects' masculine and feminine attributes as well as their self-confidence, coming to the conclusion that an androgynous sex role was correlated with higher self-confidence compared to a rather male or a feminine orientation. The androgynous style reflects the adaptability to the behaviours of both genders. This finding moves closer to the direction of the positives of de-emphasizing genders, rather than adopting a clear distinction between them. On the other hand, Kolb (1999) with his study across 123 students measuring sex orientation and self-confidence, did not confirm higher self-confidence across androgynous individuals, but he showed a higher self-confidence across male individuals compared to females. This confirms again the confidence gap between women and men.

In relation to how men's and women's view of gender differences affects them, Martin and Philips (2017) suggest that a woman's baseline ideology is being gender-aware and therefore instead of a gender-aware strategy, a gender blindness message could have the potential to increase women's confidence in the workforce. For the first time in the literature, Martin and Philips (2017), connected gender-blindness with confidence across five studies performed in 1,453 subjects. More specifically, across their five studies, it was shown that women think that gender differences weaken their workplace confidence, and as it was empirically shown, gender-blindness increased women's workplace confidence and particularly in male-dominated environments. Additionally, their study found that gender blindness increased women's identification with agency, which increased confidence and therefore led women to take more action. Going one step further, in their third study, Martin and Philips (2017) established that by endorsing a gender-blindness message they can increase the gender-blindness beliefs between women, which therefore increased their confidence. In a between-subject experiment across 146 subjects, Martin and Philips (2017) randomly distributed to their subjects an article to read, which was one version of in total three versions. The first one emphasized gender-blindness and the second emphasized gender awareness, whereas the third one was a control article on a recycling program of the region. After

the completion of reading the article, the subjects answered questions on gender blindness and workplace confidence. The study found that the females in the gender-blind group were scoring higher on the gender-blindness scale. This group showed higher workplace confidence compared to the subjects in both the gender-aware and control groups. The aforementioned results showed not only the positive effect of gender-blindness in the workplace confidence of women but also they have been particularly helpful in male-dominated contexts. Especially there, a gender blindness policy could be implemented in order to bring positive results where they are most needed for women.

2.2 Gendered wording in job advertisements

2.2.1 Gender equality in language

Language can have real consequences on gender equality. The empirical study of Prewitt-Freilino et al. (2011) examined gender equality across 111 countries with gendered, natural gender, and genderless languages. With data used from the 2009 World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report, it was found that countries with languages that are gendered are less gender-equal compared to the grammatically natural gender and genderless ones (Table 1). The norm is that the masculine forms in language are used to represent all individuals regardless of their gender, offering a higher status to men; whereas the feminine forms are not used to refer to all individuals but rather only to women (Sczesny et al., 2016).

A study of a random selection across 1,600 job advertisements showed that the wording in job advertisements resembles their gender typicality, however, the feminine forms are rarely used (Hodel et al., 2013). In relation to workplaces, whenever the masculine form is used, people are more likely to think that a job is male-dominant and they suggest for the job candidates who are male (Perez, 2019).

But what about how women perceive the language and are affected by it? Three studies by Stout and Dasgupta (2011) which were performed as mock job interviews, showed that for women, non-gender inclusive language led to less belongingness and motivation. These findings showed clearly that language can negatively influence women and lead to feelings of disengagement in a few working environments. The results of the study of Hentschel et al. (2018) came to add to these existing findings. Their experiment included 156 women and tracked their willingness to

participate in entrepreneurial programs. These programs were advertised amongst others, also with gendered wording forms. The results showed that women reacted more negatively when a masculine wording form appeared in the program advertisements, by showing less interest. At the same time, examples of job ads related to leadership roles show that the prominent use of masculine words keeps women's perceived fit for these roles low (Horvath & Sczesny, 2015). Gendered languages and pronouns are explicit signs of gender and therefore they could be more easily accounted for by organizations to avoid potential pitfalls. However, one of the biggest dangers for gender equality comes from implicit references. These refer to implicitly masculine words, for instance, "challenge" and "boast" that are falling outside of people's awareness of gendered language; causing women's disinterest for jobs in majority-male fields (Gaucher et al., 2011).

Table 1.

Language types regarding the expression of gender, adapted from Sczesny et al. (2016)

Language Type	Language Examples	Characteristics
Genderless	Finnish, Turkish	Neither nouns nor pronouns differentiated for gender Gender expressed only via attributes or gender nouns (e.g. male/female, mother/father)
Natural Gender	English, Swedish	Most personal nouns are gender-neutral (e.g. student) Pronouns differentiated for gender (he/she)
Grammatical Gender	French, German	Every noun has grammatical gender Pronouns differentiated for gender

2.2.2 Effect of gendered wording in job advertisements

One of the most prominent methods to attract candidates for a job vacancy is through job advertisements. On the premise that the people who possess the required skills will be the ones that will actually apply for the roles. As mentioned by previous researchers in the literature, the theories of job attraction and similarity-attraction advise that when the personal requirements that are mentioned in a job ad are matching the job seeker's characteristics, then the applicant will be more attracted to the role (Born & Taris, 2010). Since the type of recruitment for a role will influence the talent that will apply for it, employee recruitment is gathering a lot of attention (Breaugh, 2013). Even though informal techniques (i.e. referrals) can be very effective to attract talent, women, and minorities have more chances to respond to formal techniques like advertisements (Newman & Lyon, 2009). Therefore job advertisements play a significant role in the attraction of potential employees and especially women.

In 1973, Bem and Bem (1973) conducted two studies, empirically proving that the gendered wording of job advertisements and their publication in sex-segregated columns, decreased both females' and males' willingness to apply for the opposite sex's job. This likelihood to apply was irrelevant to whether these individuals were qualified for the roles or not. When the same job advertisement was changed from a sex-biased description to a non-sex biased description, it increased the interest of women by 20 percentage points (Bem & Bem, 1973). The study of Taris and Bok (1998), based on personal characteristics mentioned across 512 job advertisements, showed that when women come across job advertisements with masculine requirements, they feel less qualified for the positions, compared to when they see job positions with neutral or feminine requirements. In addition to the aforementioned studies, the experiments of Born and Taris (2010) across 78 Dutch Master's students, showed that when the requirements in a job ad are presented like traits, women (and not men) are less included to apply for a masculine profile compared to when the characteristics presented in the job ad are shown as behaviours. This showed that females are sensitive to how typical of their gender the requirements in job descriptions are, compared to men who are indifferent by the presentation of the requirements. In support of this, the more recent study of Wille and Derous (2018), showed that the women who hold negative meta-stereotypes for the traits that are mentioned in a job ad will be less attracted and likely to apply to these jobs when they are presented in a trait-way compared to a behaviour-like way. For instance, the difference could be a trait presented as: "you are calm" versus the behaviour: "you keep calm in

stressful situations". Wille and Derous (2018) performed two experiments across female Belgian students investigating how this difference in the wording of job advertisements influenced the subjects' decision-making process. In their second study which was performed across 183 students in their last year of Master's studies, Wille and Derous (2018) showed to their subjects two different versions of the same advertisement. In one version the job requirements were shown as traits, and in the other version as behaviours. The next step was to measure the application decision of the subjects, while also accounting for their skill. When traits were used, this affected qualified women more negatively compared to qualified men. A number of studies have shown that when personal characteristics are used as traits, they convey to people ideas that these characteristics are more telling about an individual's true nature compared to when these traits are shown as behaviours (Born & Taris, 2010). The above findings show how language can have a detrimental impact in applications through job advertisements for qualified people, and most notably for women.

2.2.3 Impact of gendered wording on belongingness

Male-dominated environments tend to include more masculine wording in their job advertisements; which signals to women the fact that this environment is majority-male (Gaucher et al., 2011). This, as a consequence, negatively influences the feelings of belongingness that women have. A series of five studies performed by Gaucher et al. (2011), showed that gendered wording across job advertisements maintains gender inequality. More specifically in one of the studies, the analysis of a random selection of 1,493 online advertisements showed that the higher the percentage of males in an occupation the higher the number of masculine words used. Gaucher et al. (2011) with another study showed that this is not happening for majority-female environments, which means that they did not find increased use of feminine words in female environments. They also performed another study across 102 psychology students, where the subjects read 6 job advertisements two (feminine- and masculine-worded) from each of the three different job types (feminine, masculine and neutral type). Afterwards, they had to rate both their appeal towards them as well as their anticipated belongingness. Women appeared to find less appealing the masculine wording and they felt a lower sense of anticipated belongingness, which partly explains the lowest appeal of these roles. At the same time, the wording did not seem to have any significant effect on male subjects (Gaucher et al., 2011). Adding to the literature, the

study of Hentschel et al. (2020) across 329 university students in Germany, showed that when women were exposed to traditionally masculine words compared to feminine words, they anticipated lower belongingness and they applied less for the given career programs. Similar to the process that Gaucher et al. (2011) followed, the gendered words weren't explicitly grammatically gendered but were rather perceived as masculine. For instance, masculine words were words like: determined, outstanding, leadership, and analytical. The high use of gendered wording can make women overlook roles that they would otherwise be interested in, for which they would have both the skill and qualifications.

2.3 Hypotheses Formulation

During their third study, Martin and Philips (2017) by manipulating gender blindness, established that by exposing subjects to gender-blindness messages, they can increase their gender blindness and therefore positively influence their confidence. Indeed the women who were part of the gender-blindness group showed higher confidence as well as higher gender-blindness compared to the gender-aware group. Therefore, the endorsement of gender blindness is expected to lead to increased gender blindness, forming the below hypothesis:

H1: Reading about gender blindness is expected to increase gender blindness.

The studies of Gaucher et al. (2011) and Hentschel et al. (2020) connected gendered wording in job ads to decreased anticipated belongingness and motivation to apply; since women perceive masculine wording as a sign that the workplace is a majority-male environment. As mentioned above, Martin and Philips (2017) associated gender blindness with increased agency and confidence for women, especially in male-dominated environments. Therefore, even though masculine wording signals to women that the environment is male-dominated, it is expected that gender blindness will be positively connected to the probability to apply for the job ad with masculine wording. So, the below hypotheses are formed:

H2: Gender blindness will be positively associated with the application for a masculine-worded job ad.

H3a: Gender blindness will be positively associated with confidence.

H3b: Confidence will be positively associated with the application for a masculine-worded job ad.

H3c: Confidence will mediate the positive relationship between gender blindness and the application for a masculine-worded job ad.

Studies by Veldman et al., (2017) and Murphy et al. (2007) indicate that implying the existence of differences between men and women, especially in a male-dominated environment, can lead to a decreased sense of belongingness. For women, a lack of belongingness can lead to reduced motivation to be successful, particularly in male-dominant sectors (Cheryan et al., 2017). Therefore, gender blindness is expected to be associated with an increased sense of belongingness and therefore, the probability to apply for a masculine-worded job advertisement. This leads to the below hypotheses:

H4a: Gender blindness will be positively associated with belongingness.

H4b: Belongingness will be positively associated with the application for a masculine-worded job ad.

H4c: Belongingness will mediate the positive relationship between gender blindness and the application for a masculine-worded job ad.

Since the findings of the aforementioned studies have mostly been focusing on the effects on women, not showing significant results for men, it is expected that gender will moderate the relationships between gender blindness and the applications for masculine-worded job ads. Therefore the below hypotheses are formed:

H5a: Gender will moderate the relationship between gender blindness and confidence so that females are expected to show higher confidence compared to males.

H5b: Gender will moderate the relationship between gender blindness and belongingness so that females are expected to show higher belongingness.

Figure 2.

The model suggested by the current study
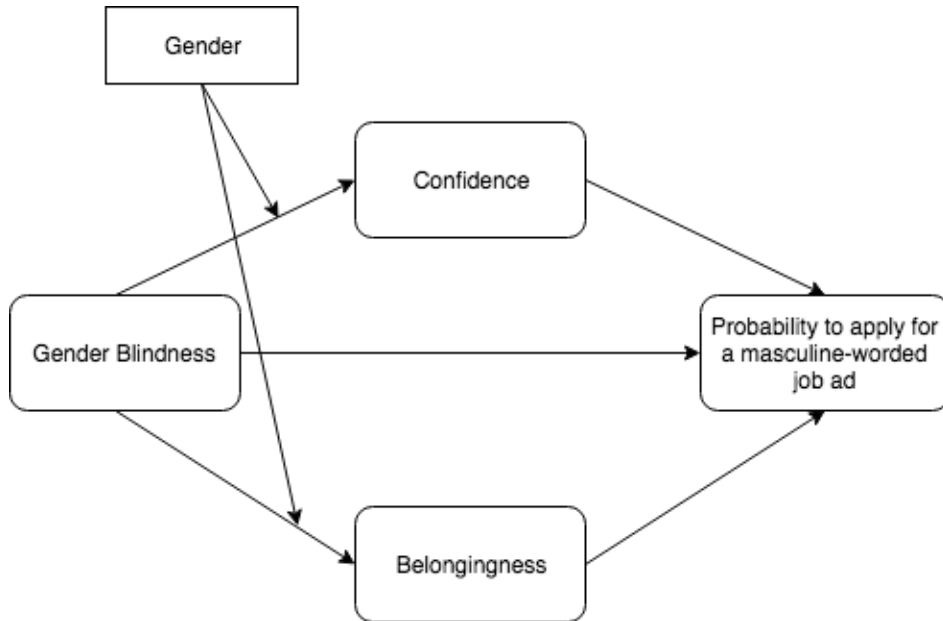
3. Methodology

3.1 Experimental Design

This study was performed via an online questionnaire created with the Qualtrics software platform. The distribution of the online survey was performed from May 21 until June 16 of 2021. The survey was distributed online in a convenience sample, mostly across students of the Erasmus University Rotterdam as well as other online survey platforms. The subjects' gender blindness level was manipulated by asking the respondents to read an article. This was done by separating the subjects randomly into three groups, a gender blindness treatment, a gender awareness treatment and the neutral-topic control group. Afterwards, the gender blindness level of the respondents was measured and then they were asked to indicate their choice between two advertisements with gendered wording. They were exposed to the same advertisement presented in a feminine- and in masculine-wording. The respondents after indicating their advertisement of choice, had to respond to questions measuring their confidence and anticipated belongingness. The demographic questions were added at the end of the survey and the total number of questions for each participant was 27. The questionnaire could be completed in approximately seven minutes and the order of the questions was randomized. In order to validate the continued participation of respondents, five attention and text comprehension questions were added. A lottery incentive was given and respondents had the opportunity, only if they chose to, to enter their email and participate in the random lottery to win one of two Amazon vouchers, valued at 15 euros each.

3.2 Measurements

3.2.1 Manipulation of gender blindness

The applied method for the manipulation of gender blindness was performed similarly to the method of Martin and Philips (2017), which was conducted by asking subjects to read articles. Each group would read one article that emphasized the topic that was relevant to each. The three groups created were the gender blindness treatment, the gender awareness treatment and the control group. The complete survey instructions can be found in the Appendix. In this study, the gender blindness and gender awareness articles that subjects had to read were adjusted articles

from Martin and Philips (2017). The reason for the adjustment was to shorten their length. The control article that Martin and Philips (2017) used was about a local recycling program and has not been provided in the appendix of their paper. Therefore in this study, a similar neutral article that was not referring to gender was written using the research of Papargyropoulou et al. (2014) on food waste. The passage has been created in such a way to resemble as much as possible the other two, in terms of word count, name mentioning and writing style. All three articles can be found in the Appendix. To increase the robustness of the study, an article comprehension question was asked after each article, to exclude the subjects that did not read or understood the main point of the given article (gender blindness treatment and gender awareness treatment).

3.2.2 Decision on gendered wording in job advertisements

To measure the decision to apply either for a masculine- or feminine-worded job advertisement, subjects were asked to read two versions of the same job advertisement. The one was feminine-worded and the other one masculine-worded. The job advertisement used is from the study of Gaucher et al. (2011). The list of words in the gendered versions of the job advertisements include communal and agentic words, as well as masculine- and feminine-trait words. Gaucher's use of gender wording in job advertisements is in line with a previous study analyzing more than 14,000 samples of text that depict the differences in language use across gender (Newman et al., 2008). In order to make sure that the order of the job advertisements did not influence the decision-making, the order of the two descriptions has been randomized. Also, to avoid any effects that are created from occupations that are seen as either traditionally male-dominated or traditionally female-dominated, the chosen occupation to test was a neutral job (Gaucher et al., 2011). This occupation was a real estate agent, so as to create the least connection with a gender stereotype. Below is a part of the job advertisement with a feminine (masculine) description:

Company description

• Join our sales community (Take our sales challenge)! Even if you have no previous experience, we will help nurture (facilitate) and develop (the acquisition of) your sales talents (abilities).

• We support (boast) our employees with an excellent (a competitive) compensation package.

In order to make sure that subjects read the advertisement carefully and understood the job requirements, a comprehension question was asked after the descriptions.

3.2.3 Workplace confidence

In total six questions were added in order to measure the workplace confidence of the participants. The questions asked as they can be seen in Table 2, were taken by Martin and Philips (2017) and the previous research of Rogers et al. (1997).

Table 2.

Workplace confidence measurement

Questions	Source	Format
I generally accomplish what I set out to do	Rogers et al. (1997)	7-item Likert scale
I am confident in my ability to attain any goal I set for myself		
I am confident in most of the decisions I make		
I think I am performing better than others in the same role/position as myself at work	Martin and Philips (2017)	
I feel comfortable tackling any work-related challenge that comes my way		
I never feel uncomfortable challenging a co-workers idea in front of other people		

3.2.4 Belongingness

Another measurement was added to measure the sense of anticipated belongingness in the workplace. Gaucher et al. (2011) adapted Walton and Cohen's belongingness scale questions in

order to measure a more occupational form of belongingness (Table 3). The questions used by Gaucher et al. (2011) were later used by Hentschel et al. (2018) and Hentschel et al. (2020) too.

Table 3.

Belongingness measurement

Questions	Source	Format
I could fit in well at this company	Gaucher et al. (2011)	7-item Likert scale
I am similar to the people who work in this career		
My values and this company's values are similar		
The type of people who would apply for this job are very different from me		

3.2.5 Gender Blindness

To measure gender blindness, the scale that has been used is the gender-blindness scale by Martin and Philips (2017). As it can be seen in Table 4, the statements that were used overlap with previous gender-blindness studies, by Koenig and Richeson (2010), Malicke (2003) and Hahn et al. (2015).

Table 4.

Gender Blindness measurement

Statements	Source	Format
All people are basically the same regardless of their gender	Malicke, J. (2003) Hahn, A., Banchefsky, S.M., Park, B., & Judd, C.M. (2015)	7-item Likert scale
We should describe others in terms of their individual traits rather than their gender	Koenig, A. & Richeson, J. (2010)	
Talking about differences between men and women causes unnecessary tension	Koenig, A. & Richeson, J. (2010)	
We should try not to notice or think about whether an individual is male or female	Koenig, A. & Richeson, J. (2010)	
It is easier for men and women to get along if they simply acknowledge they approach things differently	Malicke, J. (2003)	
We need to recognize and celebrate cultural differences between men and women to create an equal society	Koenig, A. & Richeson, J. (2010)	
The differences between men and women should be acknowledged and celebrated	Koenig, A. & Richeson, J. (2010) Hahn, A., Banchefsky, S.M., Park, B., & Judd, C.M. (2015)	
We should adjust our behavior when interacting with men and women because men and women are different	Koenig, A. & Richeson, J. (2010)	

4. Results

4.1 Sample Data Analysis

The survey was completed by 157 participants, primarily targeting students. Prior to the analysis of the results, 33 respondents were dropped as they failed to pass the attention and comprehension questions and one participant was dropped for not identifying as male or female. The subjects that did not manage to pass the comprehension and attention-checking questions did not differ significantly from the rest of the respondents, as they were split between all groups. Therefore the final number of respondents included in the analysis was 123 participants. The ages of the respondents ranged from 19 to 50 years old with an average of 24.7 years old. The majority of respondents were female with a total number of 81 (65.3%) female respondents and 42 (33.87%) male respondents. The vast majority of respondents, 111 (90.25%), were students. Of all the subjects, 74 (60.2%) have a Bachelor's Degree, 38 (30.1%) have a Master's Degree and 11 (8.94%) have another educational level. Finally, 58 (50.9%) respondents have studied Business & Law, followed by 26 (22.9%) respondents who have studied Social Sciences and 7 respondents (6.1%) who have a background in Arts & Humanities. Out of the responders that were randomly assigned into the three groups, 49 (39.8%) were assigned to the gender blindness treatment, 38 (30.9%) of them to the gender awareness treatment, and 36 (29.3%) respondents were assigned to the control group.

4.2 Descriptive results

As it can be seen in Table 5, the "Job FM" variable depicts the choice that subjects made, 1 in case the subjects choose to apply for the feminine-worded job advertisement and 2 when the subjects chose to apply for the masculine wording. The variable "Belong" depicts the belongingness score which was calculated as the average of the four questions asked. It has been measured in a 7-item Likert scale with 1 depicting strongly disagree and 7 depicting strongly agree. The belongingness measurement has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.72, which is reliable. The "Conf" variable depicts the workplace confidence of the subjects and it is the average of the six questions asked. This scale has a reliable Cronbach's alpha of 0.71. The gender blindness variable depicts the gender blindness score which was computed by calculating the average of the eight scores of the statements per subject. The internal consistency of the gender blindness scale was acceptable,

as it showed a Cronbach's alpha of 0.62 (Ursachi et al., 2015). The variable gender is coded so that 0 equals male and 1 equals female. The "Gb" variable depicts the gender blindness score. Where it was appropriate Mann-Whitney U and Fisher's exacts tests were used, as well as one-way ANOVA.

A few of the correlations between the variables of interest show statistical significance at the 5% significance level (Table 5). More specifically, as it was hypothesized, confidence has a positive correlation with the application for a masculine-worded job advertisement (0.18). Similarly, gender blindness has a positive correlation with belongingness (0.20) and confidence (0.22). Also, confidence has a positive correlation with belongingness (0.20). Age has a positive correlation with gender blindness, suggesting that people of older age have higher gender blindness (0.20). However, as it can be seen these correlations between the variables are weak, as they stand between 0.10 and 0.39 (Schober & Schwarte, 2018). The rest of the relations between the variables do not show statistical significance.

Table 5.

Means, standard deviations, and Pearson's Correlations between the variables

	Mean	SD	Job FM	Belong	Conf	Gb	Gender	Age
Job FM	1.26	.44	-					
Belong	4.39	.65	-.03	(.72)				
Conf	4.99	.72	.18*	.20*	(.71)			
Gb	4.46	.55	.10	.20*	.22*	(.65)		
Gender	.66	.48	-.003	.02	-.05	.009	-	
Age	24.78	4.48	-.08	.09	.02	.20*	-.06	-

Note. *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). N=123. The numbers in the brackets show Cronbach's alpha for the different scales used.

4.3 Results of treatment effects on the different variables

In order to measure whether the treatment had an effect on the gender blindness of the subjects, two Mann-Whitney U tests have been performed between the groups in order to compare

their gender blindness scores (Table 6). The comparisons between the gender blindness treatment and the gender awareness treatment, and the control versus the gender blindness treatment did not show any statistical significance (Figure 3). Therefore, hypothesis H1 could not be supported. As it can be seen in Figure 4, the one-way ANOVA shows that gender blindness in females has no statistically significant difference between the treatments, neither does for male subjects. In relation to workplace confidence (Figure 5) and belongingness (Figure 6) the scores do not seem to have any statistically significant difference between treatments when split based on gender.

The Fisher's exact test showed that gender has no statistically significant difference between the treatment groups ($p=0.07$). Similar for the variable of age, the one-way ANOVA shows that age has no statistically significant difference between the treatment groups ($p=0.52$).

Table 6.

Gender Blindness across the three groups

Group	Observations	Gender Blindness Scores
Gender Blindness	38	4.46
Gender Awareness	36	4.36
Control	49	4.53

Figure 3.

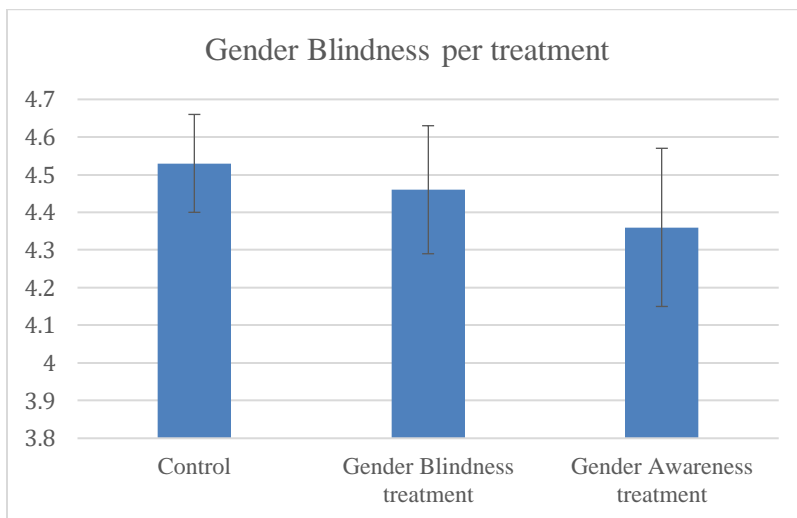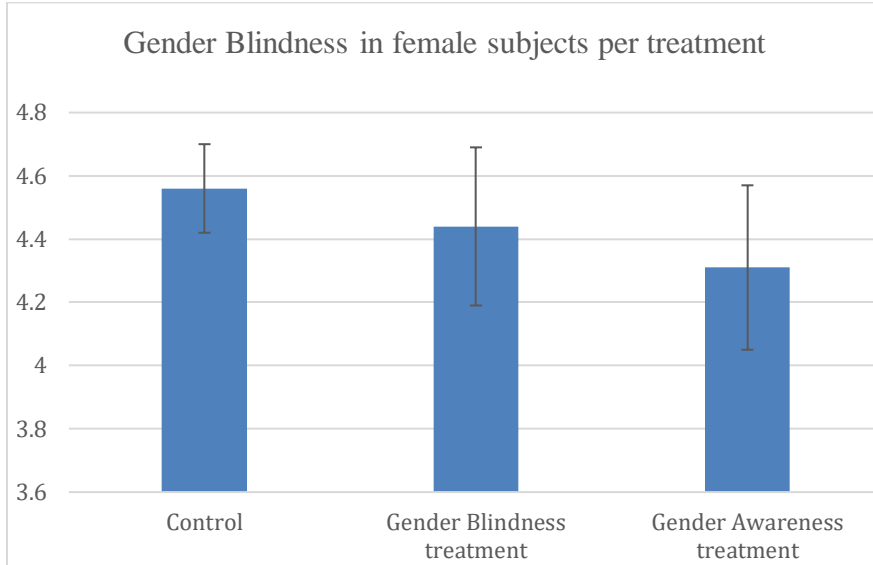*Gender Blindness across the treatments including error bars*

Figure 4.

Gender Blindness in female subjects split across the treatment groups including error bars

Gender Blindness in female subjects per treatment

Gender Blindness in male subjects split across the treatment groups including error bars
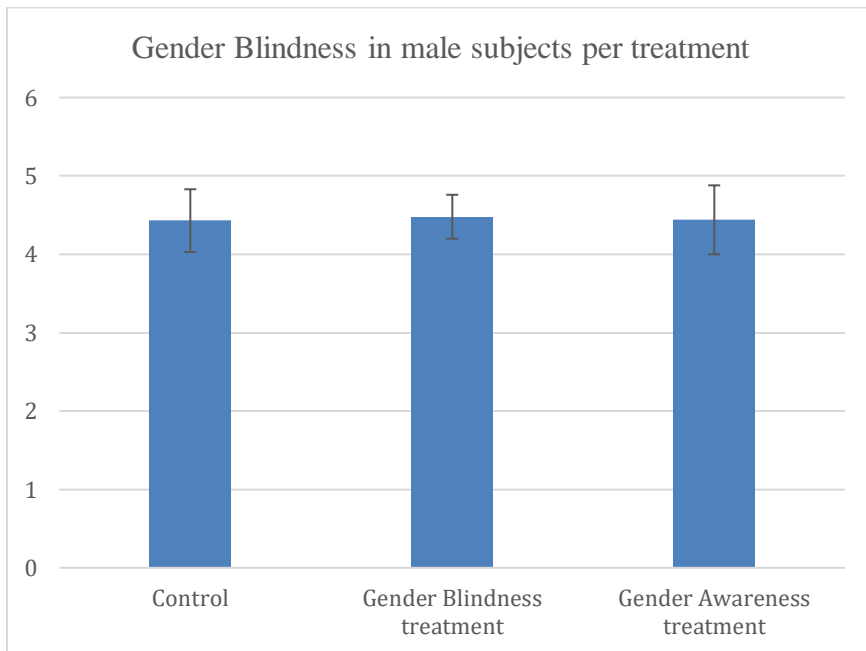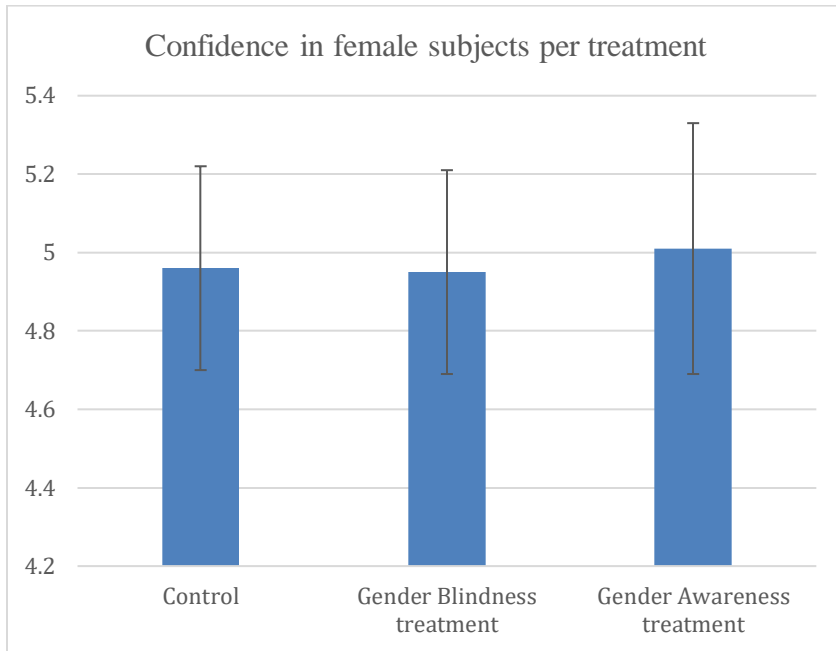

Gender Blindness in male subjects per treatment

Figure 5.

Workplace confidence in female subjects split across the treatment groups including error bars

Confidence in female subjects per treatment

Workplace confidence in male subjects split across the treatment groups including error bars
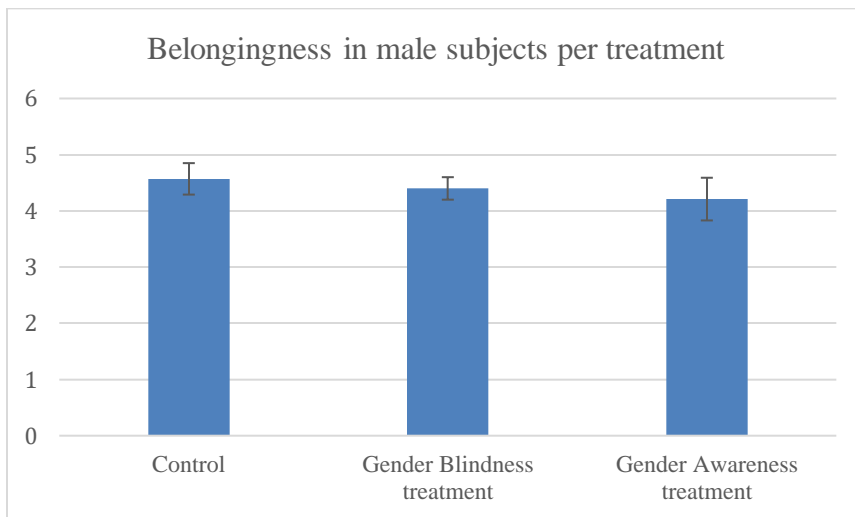

Confidence in male subjects per treatment
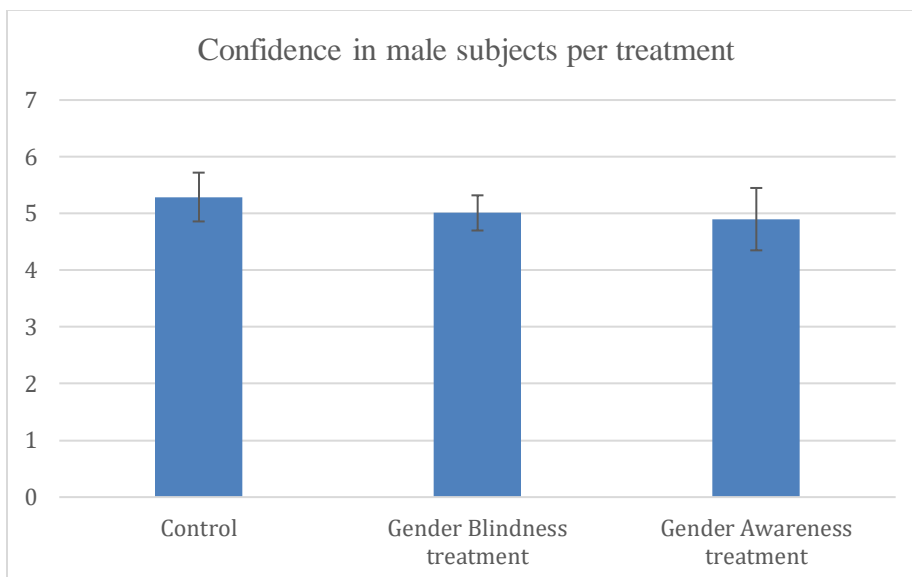
Figure 6.

Belongingness in female subjects split across the treatment groups including error bars

Belongingness in female subjects per treatment

Belongingness in male subjects split across the treatment groups including error bars
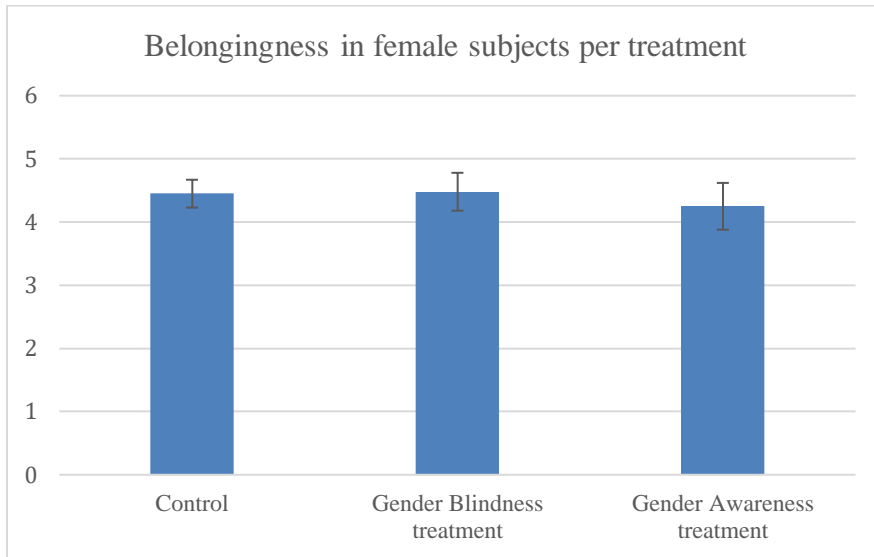

Belongingness in male subjects per treatment

The rate of selecting the feminine-worded job advertisement compared to the masculine-worded advertisement can be seen in Figure 7. There is a difference across all treatment groups, as subjects have been selecting the feminine-worded job advertisement instead of the masculine

one. However, the Fisher's exact test shows that the differences between the groups are not statistically significant.

Figure 7.

Job advertisement decision per treatment
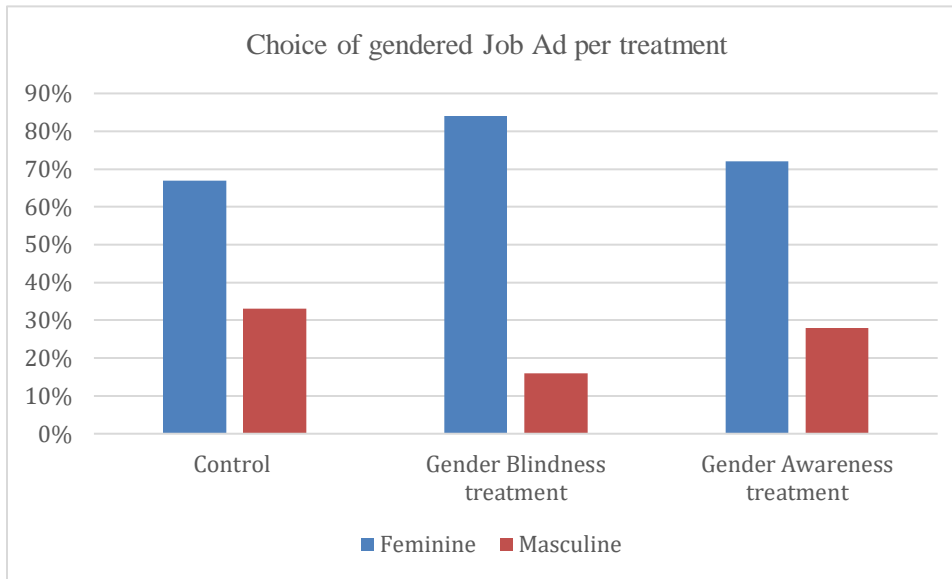
The one-way ANOVA showed that the difference in the workplace confidence between the treatments is not statistically significant (p=0.90). Similarly, for the belongingness variable, there is no statistically significant difference between the groups either (p=0.22).

4.4 Main Analysis

The model used in the current study (Figure 2) is the moderated mediation model 7, by Hayes (2013). In this model, which consists of three regressions, the path from gender blindness to confidence is suggested to be moderated by gender, so is the path from gender blindness to belongingness. Confidence and belongingness are regressed on gender blindness, gender and their interaction. These two are linear regressions. The regression where the probability to apply for a masculine-worded job advertisement is the dependent variable is a logistic regression. The heteroskedasticity has been accounted for by using robust standard errors and no mean centering was used as the moderator is a binary variable (gender). Due to the limitations of the sample size, the bootstrap methodology was used with a number of 5,000 replications.

4.5 Regression Outcomes

Table 7 below, includes the outcomes of the regressions. The demographic variables have not been controlled since they did not show any strong correlations with the main variables (Table 5). In regression 1, confidence is the dependent variable and the results are not statistically significant. In regression 2, belongingness is the dependent variable, however as it can be seen in Table 7, the results do not show any statistical significance either. In regression 3, the probability to apply for a masculine-worded job advertisement is the dependent variable and confidence increases the probability to apply for the masculine wording. This result is statistically significant at a 10% significance level (p=0.05). The results are significant at 10% level, and the bootstrapped confidence intervals (0.041 - 1.601) also confirm that this aforementioned relationship is significant (Table 8). Therefore, hypothesis H3b is supported, whereas the rest of the hypotheses are not supported.

Table 7.

Coefficients of the regressions

	(1) Confidence	(2) Belongingness	(3) Job FM
Gender Blindness	0.27 (0.22)	0.19 (0.14)	0.42 (0.42)
Confidence	-	-	0.67 (0.34)*
Belongingness	-	-	-0.31 (0.32)
Gender	-0.19 (1.36)	-0.35 (1.03)	-
Interaction (Gender, Gb)	0.03 (0.30)	0.08 (0.23)	-
Constant	3.82*** (1.04)	3.55*** (0.61)	-4.95(2.53)*
R-squared	0.05	0.04	-

Note.*** $p<0.01$; **$p<0.05$; * $p<0.1$. In brackets are the robust standard errors

Figure 8.
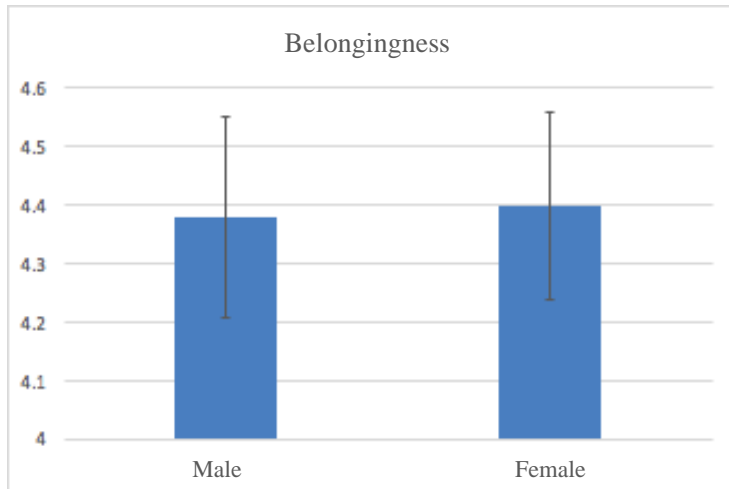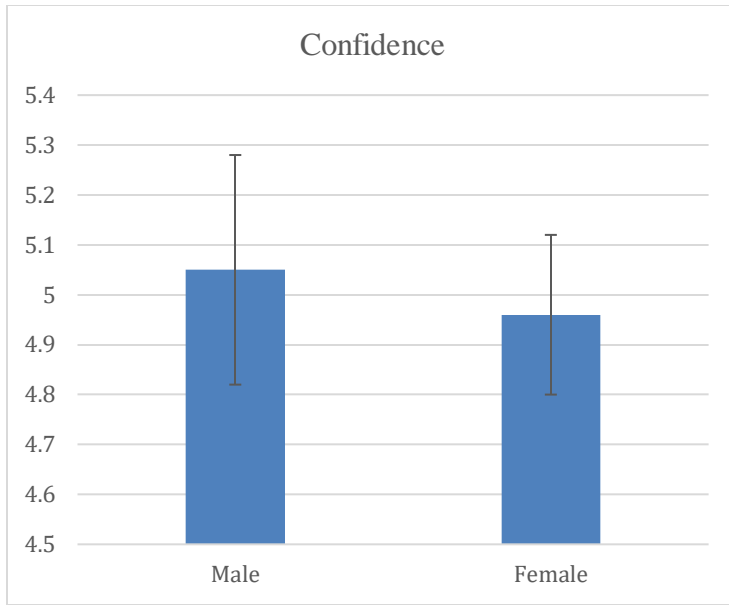
Confidence and belongingness divided by gender

Confidence

Belongingness

Table 8.

Bootstrapped confidence intervals

	Coeff	BootMean	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
constant	-4.95	-5.412	2.898	-11.577	-.354
Gender blindness	.42	.455	.490	- .470	1.492
Confidence	.67	.725	.395	.041	1.601
Belongingness	-.31	-.320	.363	-1.035	.410

Table 9 shows the conditional effects of gender blindness with the probability to apply for a male job advertisement when gender is male and when gender is female. The direct effect of gender blindness on the application towards a masculine-worded job advertisement is 0.42, however, the effect is not statistically significant (Table 9). Similarly, for males, the indirect effect of gender blindness is - 0.058 and 0.183 and for females, the indirect effect of gender blindness is -0.084 and 0.199, although in all cases the results do not show a statistical significance. This is because the Bootstrap results show that the effect could also be zero because the intervals range from negative to positive values. Therefore, there is no significant relationship.

Table 9.

Conditional Direct and Indirect effect of Gender Blindness on the application for a Job

Conditional Direct Effect of Gender Blindness on the application for a Job Ad FM

Effect	SE	p-value
0.42	0.42	0.32

Indirect Effect via Belongingness

| Gender	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Male	-0.058	0.098	-0.313	0.086
Female	-0.084	0.129	-0.400	0.108

Indirect Effect via Confidence

Gender	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Male	0.183	0.193	-0.108	0.653
Female	0.199	0.191	-0.050	0.676

Figure 9 shows the results depicted on the model, where one correlation with statistical significance was found between confidence and the probability to apply for a masculine-worded job advertisement.

Figure 9.

The model
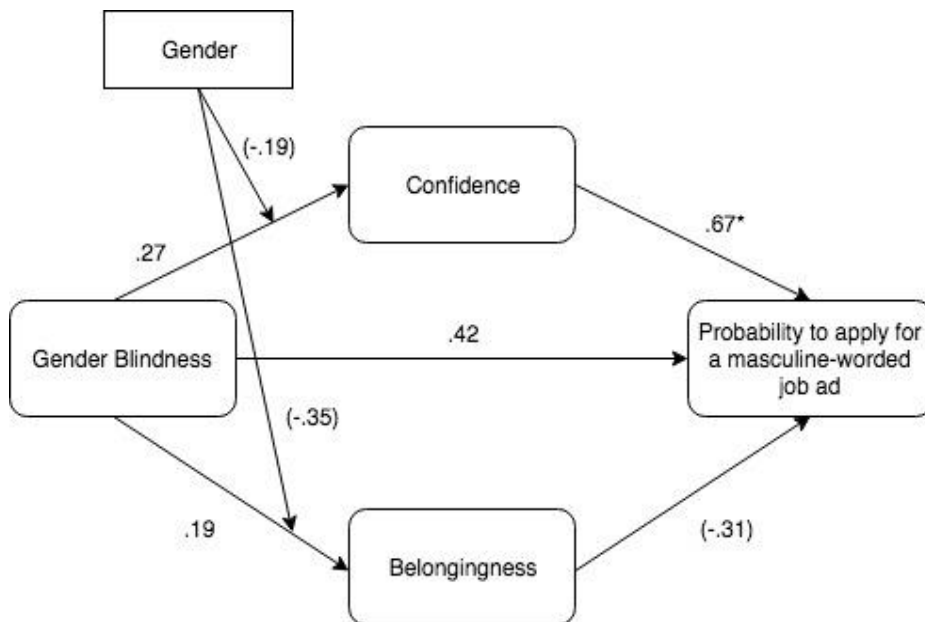
Note. *p<0.1

5. General Discussion

The initial research question asked was related to whether seeing genders as more similar than different is positively related to applying for masculine-worded job advertisements. This study was the first to connect two areas of research, the topic of gender blindness to the application for work. At the same time, it proposed the mediating effects of confidence and belongingness and tested their association with gender. Overall, it has been supported that confidence is positively associated with the application for a masculine-worded job advertisement. The rest of the expected results have not been confirmed as they were not statistically significant, however, some interesting comments can be made.

In their research, Martin and Philips (2017) proved that gender blindness can be manipulated, as the subjects that read about gender blindness showcased higher gender blindness compared to their two other conditions. Also, the subjects that showed higher gender blindness showed higher confidence compared to the rest. Therefore, the causality of gender blindness was addressed and proved. Contrary to their findings these results were not supported in the current study. This could be explained by the differences between the studies. Initially, in relation to reading about gender blindness, Martin and Philips (2017) performed their study only across female participants who had on average 12.70 years of work experience and an average age of 36.6 years. In this survey, the subjects were both female (65.3%) and male (33.87%) participants, out of which 90.25% were students with an average age of 24.7 years. The differences in the demographics could explain that these respondents have a higher gender blindness baseline level, which is 4.53, compared to the ones of Martin and Philips (2017), which were at a level of 3.97. Therefore, the subjects of this current study are more gender blind overall, potentially explaining why there were no significant differences between the control and the treatment groups. Also, the materials that were used by Martin and Philips (2017) were lengthier and more elaborate but they were adjusted to a shorter length in order to keep the current study short. This could have influenced the impact that the articles had on the subjects. Similarly, gender did not seem to show any significant difference across the subjects. This could mean that when it comes to the differences across genders, young people are showing more similarities than differences.

Gaucher et al. (2011) and Hentschel et al. (2020) connected the gendered job advertisements with decreased belongingness and willingness to apply for work, particularly for women. In this experiment, their findings were not supported as the results were not statistically

significant. Gaucher et al. (2011) performed their study across students, by using six different job advertisements from multiple job types. In this experiment, only a particular area of work has been presented, the job role of the real estate agent. It could be that a combination of different job types, neutral, masculine, and feminine, gives a more complete, conclusive, and statistically significant result in the decreased belongingness that respondents can feel by being exposed to gendered advertisements.

On the other hand, this study supports the expectation that confidence is positively correlated to the probability to apply for a masculine-worded job advertisement. More specifically, the scale that was used to measure the confidence of the subjects was created to indicate a more agentic type of confidence; especially because agency presents itself in the fundamental gender differences (Martin & Philips, 2017). Paris and Bok (1998) showed that women who read advertisements that include what is considered as masculine qualifications, see themselves as less qualified for the position, compared to feminine or neutral descriptions. This is in line with the findings that confidence has a positive relationship with the application towards masculine wording descriptions of job roles. Overall, society expects women to showcase kindness and warmth, whereas men are expected to be confident and agentic (Eagly, 2007). This means that women are expected to cultivate communal traits rather than confidence. The importance of confidence can be shown from an early age, for example in subjects that have masculine attributions, like math (Makarova et al., 2019). A study by Pajares and Graham (1999) amongst students found that feeling confident compared to having an actual achievement on mathematics, predicts better whether students will choose mathematics or not. The findings of the current study support the importance of confidence when subjects are asked to decide whether to apply for a masculine-worded advertisement. Maybe by focusing and nurturing this trait to all, the way to equality could become a bit more accessible and realistic.

5.1 Limitations

The current study has a few limitations, firstly in relation to the sample. The sample was relatively small, consisting of 123 subjects. A small sample can undermine the external validity of the study and, in order to account for the sample limitations, the bootstrap methodology was used with 5,000 replications. Bootstrap is a way of resampling and the way it works is that it creates thousands of "phantom samples" with replacement by using the real data as the "surrogate

population" (Singh & Xie, 2008). Bootstrapping is a process through which no assumptions need to be made about the distribution (Preacher & Hayes, 2004), therefore its advantage is safety, as it does not need to assume a normal distribution. At the same time, the method is very accurate as it provides results that are similar to other statistical methods (Walters & Campbell, 2004).

Furthermore, in relation to the profile of the sample, 90.25% of the respondents were students. Even though this increased the homogeneity of the sample, the current study investigates gendered wording in the decision to apply for work. Since most of the students are not part of the workforce or they have not been actively seeking work yet, they might have approached the job ad decision as an artificial experiment rather than as a real-life process they would follow for an actual job advertisement. Therefore, the sample might not be a very representative one for the rest of the population and the results might have been different if the sample consisted of active job seekers. This could have undermined the external validity of this study. Also, the setting where the questions were asked (online survey) was different from the actual environment where subjects are exposed to job advertisements, for instance, an employment-service mobile application. The latter could have influenced the way participants pay attention or filter the job requirements in order to make their decision. In the future, a design in a natural setting or one that is the closest possible to the experience that job seekers have in one of those websites and applications could increase the validity of the results. Also, another idea would be to extent the research to respondents in different levels and years of working experience. This could prove whether the conclusions of the results are applicable widely or whether they are dependent on the subjects' experience in the workforce.

In order to avoid any stereotypical beliefs related to an occupation being perceived as either masculine or feminine, the job advertisement that was used, the real-estate agent, is considered neutral (Gaucher et al., 2011). However, the actual decision-making process takes place inside the sector of expertise of each job seeker. Therefore, this means there could potentially be varied results of how people react to gendered wording inside their sector. This implication could be solved by being including also sectors that are perceived traditionally more masculine and feminine.

The measurements that were used had Cronbach's alphas that were inside the acceptable values, which means that the scales were reliable. However, because they were not excellent, this could have decreased the internal validity of the study. In the future this issue could be treated by

introducing other questions that could have increased the internal validity of some of the measurements. Finally, a limitation in the internal validity of the study is the order of the gendered wording of the job advertisements. There was a statistically different result in the decisions of the subjects that read the feminine-worded job ad first compared to the subjects that first read the masculine-worded job ad. However, this was accounted for by randomizing the order of the job advertisements. In the future, showcasing the advertisements in a more equal way, for example, next to each other, could have minimized this effect.

5.2 Future Research

Since this study explored the practical implementation of gender blindness in applying for work, future research could focus on how gender blindness translates and affects contexts in other areas of life. For instance, this could be academic performance or performance in the STEM sector. Also, future research could connect gender blindness with other variables. These variables could be related to confidence. Agency can also be defined as empowerment (Klugman et al., 2014) and it is linked with assertiveness and belief in one's competence. Therefore, future research could explore how empowerment via gender blindness can assist with individuals' gender equality in the workforce.

Finally, in the literature, the dichotomy of gender is very prominent, as it is viewed mostly as a binary. Over the last years, more individuals are expressing publicly that they might not comply with the traditional idea of gender that society has. It would be interesting to see how gender blindness serves and impacts people who are gender non-conforming and how this is connected to their representation or lack of in job advertisements.

This current research did not support the expectation that increased gender blindness can be a tool that will assist gender equality in the area of masculine-worded job advertisements. However, since confidence is positively connected with the application for jobs with masculine wording, there is an indication that supporting the confidence of females and other individuals could be a way to provide more gender-equal access to the workplace arena.

6. Conclusion

The current study asked the question of whether seeing genders as more similar than different, could be positively related to the applications towards job advertisements with masculine descriptions. The starting point for this research arose from the fact that despite all the gender awareness strategies, women still find themselves underrepresented in the job market. Following this initial question, the study explored as well the role of confidence and belongingness in the decision making process on gendered wording in job advertisements. Even though the study did not confirm most of the expected hypotheses, it confirmed that confidence indeed plays a role in the decision to apply for work. More specifically, confidence increases the probability to apply for a masculine-worded job advertisement. In many cases, women are not expected to showcase confidence and agency but rather they are expected to showcase communal characteristics. Since moving towards the direction of gender equality is more relevant than ever, it might be worth focusing on cultivating more confidence in individuals, even from a young age. This study could inspire further research on the topic of gender blindness as well as include its impact on gender-nonconforming individuals too.

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Appendix

Q1 Dear participant,

Thank you in advance for your participation in this questionnaire, which is part of my Master thesis research at the Erasmus University of Rotterdam. The survey takes approximately 7 minutes. It is completely confidential and you can discontinue your participation at any point.

Only if you wish, you will have the chance to enter a random lottery in order to win one of the two Gift Cards.

Questions
For any question or concern, please get in touch at the following email: 571661ik@eur.nl
Consent
Please click the **I agree** button below, if you have read and agree with the information given.

○   I agree

○   I do not agree

Q2 Please read the following article carefully. After you finish reading, move to the next page to answer some questions.

Q7 **Science advocates gender-awareness**
Dr. Katherine Richardson, author of The Gender Paradox, suggests that modern society would be better off if people would recognise that women and men have their own strengths, weaknesses, experiences, and issues. Acknowledging this diversity would help build a sense of

harmony and unity amongst men and women. ''That is really the story here – the most striking thing about men and women is how different they are. There is great variety between the two groups. The most important thing is to pay attention to these differences - recognising these differences builds a sense of harmony and complementarity to each group''.

"The notion of 'the opposite sex' has some truth," says Michael Klein, a Sociology Professor at Columbia University, who agrees with Richardson's point of view. ''The genders are more different than they are alike." Klein points out that these differences could be due to biological make-up or they may simply be learned and socialised through our culture. 'Understanding men and women approach life tasks in different ways is productive to society," says Klein. Thus, social scientists encourage us to see the larger picture, and to appreciate that at our core, we really are all different.

Q9 Science advocates gender-blindness

Dr. Katherine Richardson, author of The Gender Paradox, suggests that modern society would be better off if people would recognise that women and men are much more similar than they are different. Acknowledging this similarity would help build a sense of harmony and unity amongst men and women. ''That is really the story here – the most striking thing about men and women is how much they have in common. There is simply so much overlap between the two groups. The most important thing is to pay attention to the characteristics that make a person a unique individual rather than focusing on his or her gender."

''The notion of 'the opposite sex' is really just a historical artefact," says Michael Klein, a Sociology Professor at Columbia University who agrees with Richardson's point of view. ''The genders are much more alike than they are different." Klein points out that these similarities may be due to the largely identical biological make-up that all humans share, or they may be shaped and molded through our culture. ''Pretending men and women approach life tasks in fundamentally different ways is counterproductive to society," says Klein. Thus, social scientists encourage us to see the larger picture, and to appreciate that at our core, we really are all the same.

Q11 Science advocates attention to food waste

Dr. Katherine Richarson, author of The food waste hierarchy, suggests that food waste is becoming an increasingly important issue at both a local and global level. The greenhouse gas emissions from food production and consumption, as well as from its final disposal, depletion of natural resources and pollution are the most prominent environmental impacts associated with food waste. "Food waste has economic implications for everyone within the food supply chain, from the farmer to the food producer and the consumer. The disparity between food poverty and food wastage raises concerns over global food security and highlights the social and moral dimensions of food waste." "Applying a waste hierarchy in the context of food can be used as a framework to identify and prioritise the options for the minimisation and management of food surplus and waste throughout the food supply chain," says Michael Klein, a Professor at Columbia University who agrees with Richardson's point of view. "Preventing food waste in agriculture and food processing requires improved infrastructure and technological solutions in harvesting,

storage, transport and distribution," says Klein. Thus scientists suggest that waste management policies should be integrated and aligned with the wider policies on food, agriculture, food standards, food poverty alleviation and sustainable production and consumption.

End of Block: GB manipulation

Start of Block: Testing manipulation reading

Display This Question:

If Science advocates gender-awareness Dr. Katherine Richardson, author of The Gender Paradox, sugges... Is Displayed

Q8 According to the previous article "The genders are more different than they are alike".

○ True

○ False

Display This Question:

If Science advocates gender-blindness Dr. Katherine Richardson, author of The Gender Paradox, sugges... Is Displayed

Q10 According to the previous article "The genders are much more alike than they are different".

○ True

○ False

Display This Question:

If Science advocates attention to food waste Dr. Katherine Richarson, author of The food waste hiera... Is Displayed

Q12 According to the previous article "Food waste has economic implications for everyone within the food supply chain".

○ True

○ False

Q13 Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewh at disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
All people are basically the same regardless of their gender	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
We should describe others in terms of their individual traits rather than their gender	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Talking about differences between men and women causes unnecessary tension	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

We should try not to notice or think about whether an individual is male or female	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○					
It is easier for men and women to get along if they simply acknowledge they approach things differently	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○					
We need to recognise and celebrate cultural differences between men and women to create an equal society	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○					
The differences between men and women should be acknowledged and celebrated	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○					
We should adjust our behaviour when interacting with men and women because men and women are different	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○					

Q17 Below you will read two job advertisements for the **same** job role, a real estate agent. Please read carefully both of the job advertisements and choose only the one for which you wish to apply for work.

 Page Break

Q18 Job A
Company description
Join our sales community! Even if you have no previous experience, we will help nurture and develop your sales talents. We support our employees with an excellent compensation package.
Qualifications
As the ideal candidate, you will have a pleasant attitude, dependable judgment, and be attentive to details
Excellent communicator
Bilingualism is an asset
Previous background in real estate an asset, but not required
Responsibilities
Connect with potential clients; being sensitive to their needs, introduce them to properties.
Serve as the connection between your client and each property's seller.
Understand real estate markets to establish appropriate selling prices for properties.

Q19 Job B
Company description
Take our sales challenge! Even if you have no previous experience, we will facilitate the acquisition of your sales abilities. We boast a competitive compensation package.
Qualifications

The superior candidate will have a self-confident attitude, decisive judgment, and be detail-orientedStrong communicatorBilingualism is an assetPrevious background in real estate an asset, but not required

Responsibilities

Recruit potential buyers; determine their interests and lead them to properties

Negotiate for your buyer with each property's seller

Analyse real estate markets to determine appropriate selling prices for properties

Q20 You wish to apply for:

○   Job A

○   Job B

Q21 Job A

Company description

Take our sales challenge! Even if you have no previous experience, we will facilitate the acquisition of your sales abilities. We boast a competitive compensation package.

Qualifications

The superior candidate will have a self-confident attitude, decisive judgment, and be detail-orientedStrong communicatorBilingualism is an assetPrevious background in real estate an asset, but not required

Responsibilities

Recruit potential buyers; determine their interests and lead them to properties

Negotiate for your buyer with each property's seller

Analyse real estate markets to determine appropriate selling prices for properties

Q22 Job B

Company description

Join our sales community! Even if you have no previous experience, we will help nurture and develop your sales talents. We support our employees with an excellent compensation package.

Qualifications

As the ideal candidate, you will have a pleasant attitude, dependable judgment, and be attentive to details
Excellent communicator
Bilingualism is an asset
Previous background in real estate an asset, but not required
Responsibilities
Connect with potential clients; being sensitive to their needs, introduce them to properties.
Serve as the connection between your client and each property's seller.
Understand real estate markets to establish appropriate selling prices for properties.

Q23 You wish to apply for:

○   Job A

○   Job B

End of Block: Job Ad Decision A(M)/B(F)

Start of Block: Job Ad validation

Q24 According to both the real estate agent job descriptions: ''Previous background in real estate is not required.''

○   True

○   False

End of Block: Job Ad validation

Start of Block: Belongingness / Work Confidence

Q16 Based on the job advertisement you applied for, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I could fit in well at this company	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am similar to the people who work in this career	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My values and this company's values are similar	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The type of people who would apply for this job are very different from me	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Please validate your continued participation by selecting Agree for this statement	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Page Break

Q15 Based on the knowledge about yourself, please select the answer that best fits each statement:

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I generally accomplish what I set out to do	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am confident in my ability to attain any goal I set for myself	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am confident in most of the decisions I make	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I think I am performing better than others in the same role/position as myself at work	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel comfortable tackling any work-related challenge that comes my way							
I never feel uncomfortable challenging a co-worker's idea in front of other people	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

End of Block: Belongingness / Work Confidence

Start of Block: Demographics

Q3 What gender do you identify as?

○   Male

○   Female

○   Non-binary

○   Prefer not to say

Q4 What is your age?

_____

Q5 What is your highest completed level of education?

○ High School

○ Bachelor's Degree

○ Master's Degree

○ Ph.D. or higher

○ Trade School

○ None of the above/Prefer not to say

Q6 What is your current employment status?

○ Student

○ Student working full/part time

○ Employed Full/Part-Time

○ Unemployed (not) seeking for opportunities

○ None of the above/Prefer not to say

Q23 What is/was your field(s) of study?

☐   Arts & Humanities

☐   Business & Law

☐   Health & Welfare

☐   Social Sciences

☐   STEM

☐   Other/Not applicable

End of Block: Demographics

Start of Block: Lottery Survey

Q25 If you are interested, please insert your email below, to have the chance to win one of the two (15€) Amazon Gift Cards. Once the two lottery winners are selected all the data will be deleted.

_____

End of Block: Lottery Survey