Antecedents and consequences of support for the #MeToo movement:
a research project

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BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The #MeToo movement can be defined as a collective action (i.e. any action performed to promote the interests of one's group; Becker, 2012) against sexual harassment.

Studies on collective action has highlighted some possible *antecedents* of participation, such as identification with the disadvantaged group, perception of unjust discrimination against the group, perception that social change is possible, and moral conviction (Van Zomeren et al., 2012).

Moscatelli et al. (2019) showed that internalized sexualisation (the interiorization of the idea that being sexually attractive to men is an important part of women's identity) is negatively associated to support for #MeToo.

With respect to *consequences*, research showed possible effects of participating in on-line collective actions on people's well-being (Foster, 2015). (However, research also examined how on-line activism could bring to *slacktivism* (i.e. spending the minimal amount of effort in fighting important issues off-line; Gomez & Kaiser, 2019).

- Is the endorsement of sexualized gender stereotypes in men and women be related to opinions on and intention to participate in the #MeToo? Is this relation affected by the perceived sexism and the perceived support from society? Do the levels of gender system justification play a role?
- Do people, who post against sexual harassment on Facebook, perceive higher well-being? Are they also willing to engage in off-line activism?

HYPOTHESES

Considered both previous studies on collective action and on the #MeToo movement (Gill and Orgad, 2018; Kunst, Bailey, Prendergast & Gundersen, 2018), we hypothesized that:

- the endorsement of sexualized gender stereotypes (SGS) will be related to adherence to the #MeToo and will be moderated by perceived sexism and perceived support from society (**study 1**);
- the endorsement of sexualized gender stereotypes (SGS) will predict adherence to the #MeToo and laws about sexual harassment, with the mediation of gender system justification levels (**study 2**);
- posting against sexual harassment (i.e. participating in the #MeToo online) will affects positively people's well-being, but also reduce the intention to act off-line (**study 3**).
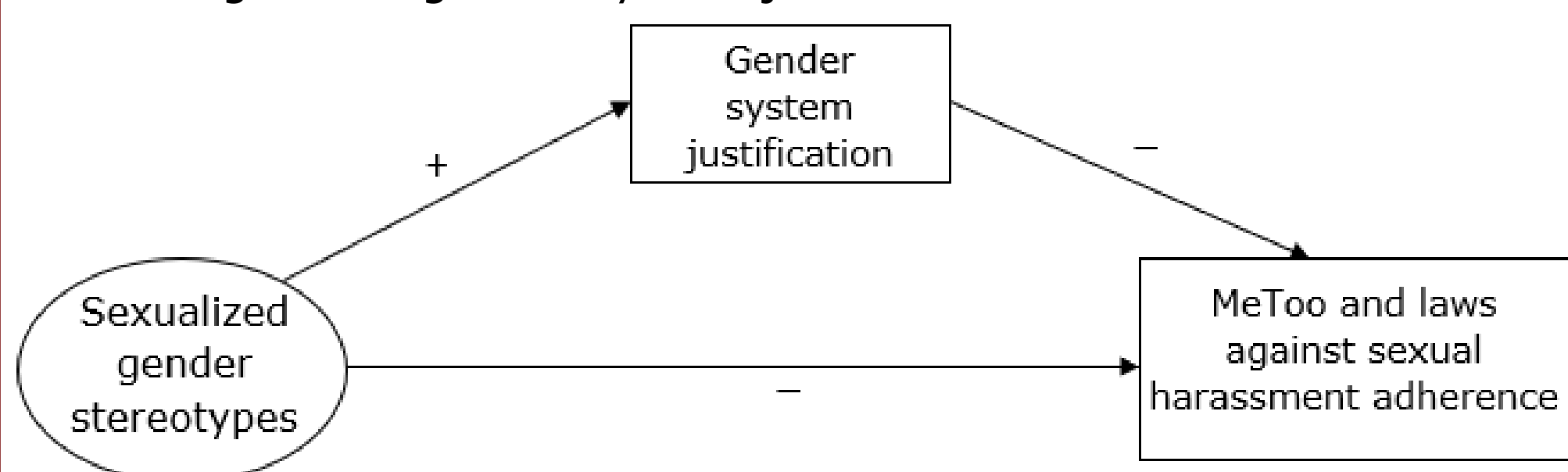

Study 1

Study 1 will examine the relation between sexualized gender stereotypes and adherence to the #MeToo movement. Moreover, it will test whether this relation is moderated by perceived sexism against women and the perception of support for the movement. This cross-cultural study will be carried out in Italy and in America, two countries where the movement elicited different reactions: Americans have been mainly positive about it, whereas people in Italy showed high disapproval.
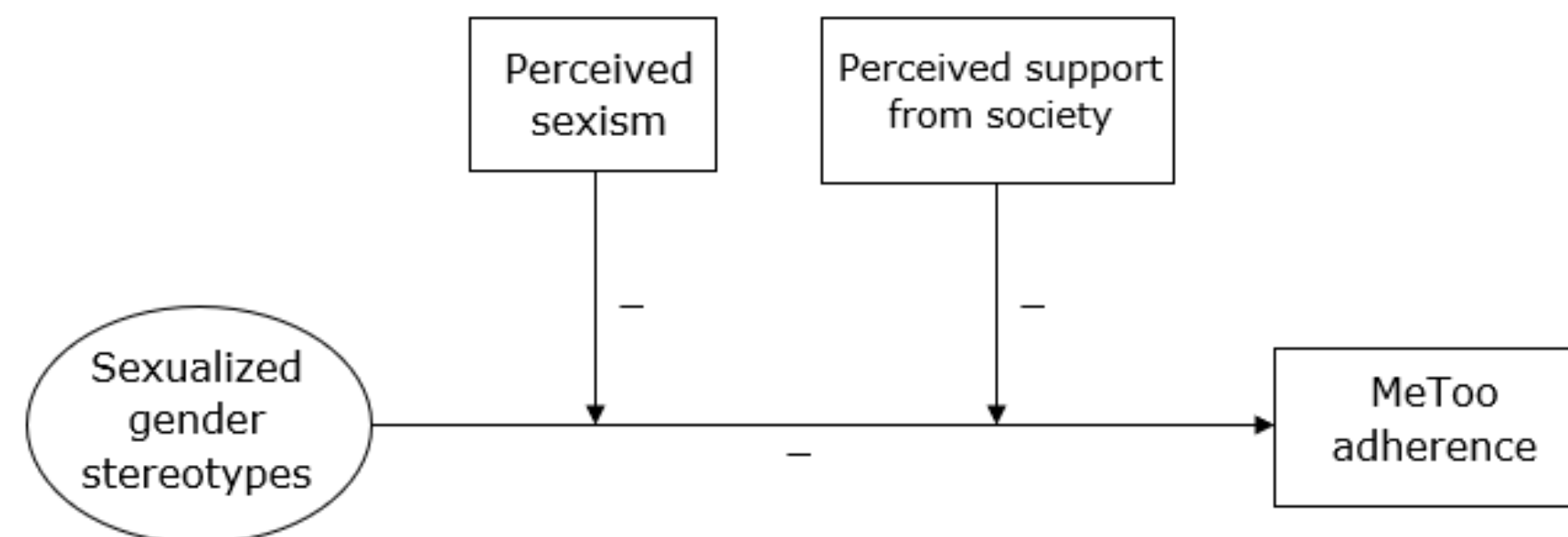

Study 2

The levels of SGS will be experimentally manipulated and their impact on adherence to the #MeToo movement will be tested. In order to capture men's and women's more general attitudes towards the problem of sexual harassment and towards possible action for social change, in Study 2 support for laws against sexual harassment and gender inequalities will be also measured. Moreover, the mediating role of gender system justification will be examined.

Study 3

Study 3 will examine if people who participate in the #MeToo movement through social media show higher levels of well-being than people who do not participate. It will also test whether on-line of participation refrain people from engaging in off-line participation.
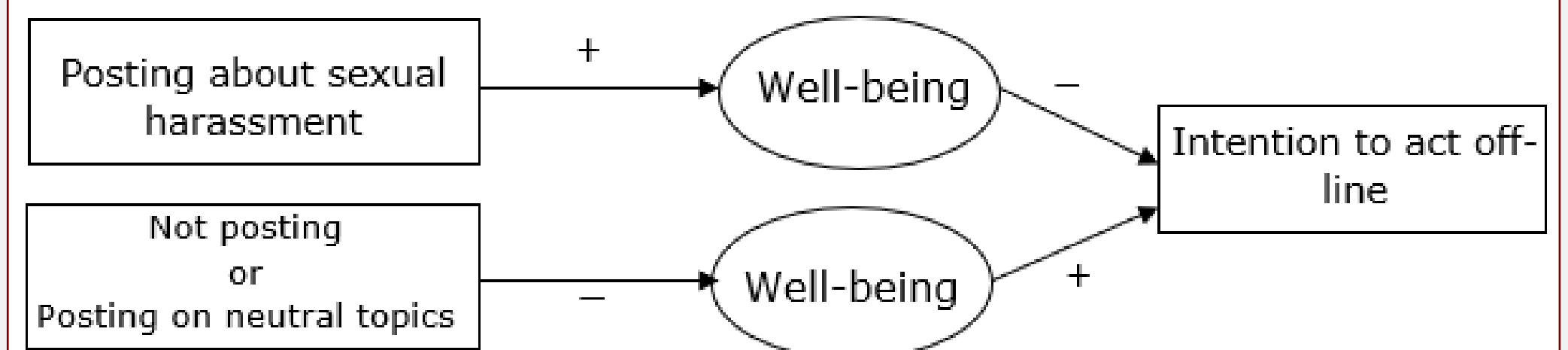
THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Theoretically, this research will contribute to the understanding of antecedents and consequences of collective actions that take place via social media, such as the #MeToo movement.

Moreover, it will focus on support for collective action by the non-disadvantaged group, involving men in a study about women sexual harassment.

This research should also help understand how to encourage people to engage collective actions against the social issue of sexual harassment. Social media, that are currently part of our everyday, could play a significant role in this: participating in a collective action on-line can be easier since it requires less engagement, and perceiving more well-being from that could bring people to participate even more as a consequence. The other side of the coin, however, is that participating in a collective action on social media could actually stops people from engaging in real life protests in support of victims of sexual harassment.

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