

An Examination of an Unintended Measure of Unconscious Bias Using a Religious Bystander Intervention Metric: The Implicit Association of Gender



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Introduction

- **Bystander intervention** is a strategy to prevent various types of violence, such as religious discrimination and sexual harassment (Hunter & Smith, 2010).
- **Unconscious bias** refers to a bias that we are unaware of and which happens outside of our control (Allport & Ross, 1967).
 - Unconscious bias is important because of its profound effect on religious discrimination and bystander intervention.
 - In this study, unconscious bias is measured through implicit association of gender.
- **Religious discrimination** involves unequal treatment for adherents of different religions, either in institutional or legal settings (Ghumman, Ryan, Barclay & Markel, 2013).
 - Religious discrimination can lead to increases in stress, anxiety, and exclusion and lead to decreases in unit cohesion.

Purpose

- To examine an unintended measure of implicit association using a religious discrimination task

Hypotheses

- **H1:** Victims who are perceived as *females* and who experience religious discrimination have more active bystanders with a more severe response than victims perceived as males.
- **H2:** Leaders who are perceived as *females* and who perpetrate religious discrimination have fewer active bystanders and have a less severe response than leaders who are perceived as males.

Methods

Design: Cross-sectional survey

Participants: 565 students in a human relations training program (457 total, 265 with self-reported gender)

- **Sex:** 60.0% male, 40.0% female
- **Race:** 38.5% Majority, 28.9% Minority, 32.6% No Response
- **Rank:** 0.0% Jr Enlisted, 16.0% Non-Commissioned Officer, 63.2% Sr Enlisted, 10.5% Jr Officer, 10.5% Sr Officer
- **Religion:** Christian: 67.2%, None: 10.6% (atheist, secular, agnostic), Buddhist: 0.9%, Muslim: 0.3%, Jewish: 0.2%, No response: %

Materials: Participants were presented similar scenarios across 4 religions (Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Atheist).

- The selected scenario included time off for religious observances.
- Participants were provided gender-neutral names in the scenario.
- Questions were scored on a 2-point scale (e.g., 0 = Sufficient Intervention / Necessary Intervention, 1 = Extreme Intervention / Excessive Intervention)
- Scores were converted to intervention likelihood and intervention severity
- Questions asked about respondents' gender

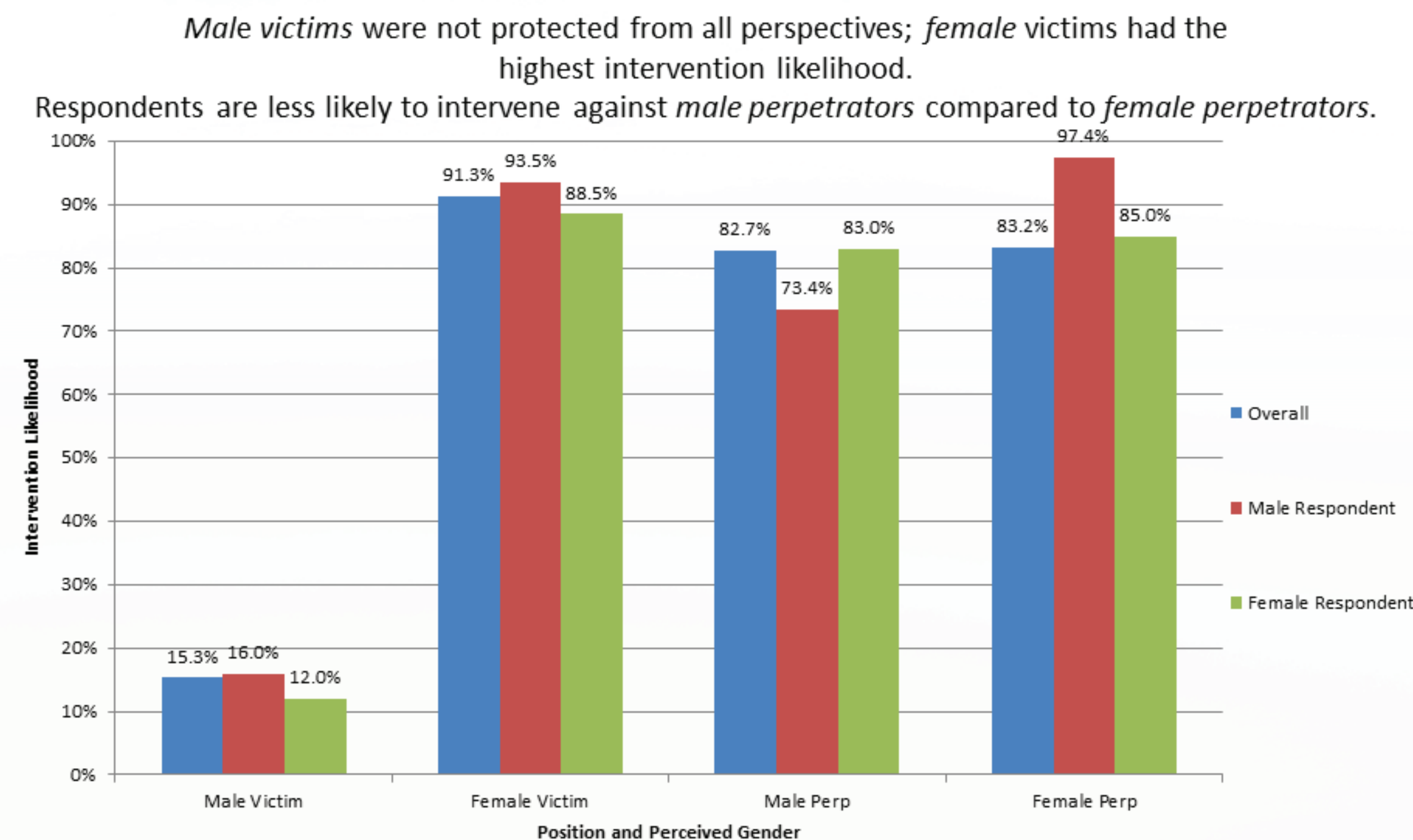
Analysis: Frequencies and proportions

Sample Scenario: Muslim

You and two others are working on a project. You don't know either co-worker outside of work but have known them each professionally for several months. During the project your supervisor comes in and tells you that the deadline has moved up to next Monday and the command needs everyone to work through the weekend. **One of your co-workers, Kim, can work Saturday and Sunday, but observes Friday as a day of prayer and rest for those of the Muslim faith and does not work after prayer takes place just after noon.** Your supervisor (commander- we may need to discuss what appropriate teams are) looks annoyed and says "If you can't get the work done maybe I'll just find someone who is committed to what we do here" and storms off. Later that day Kim is reassigned to another project.

Results

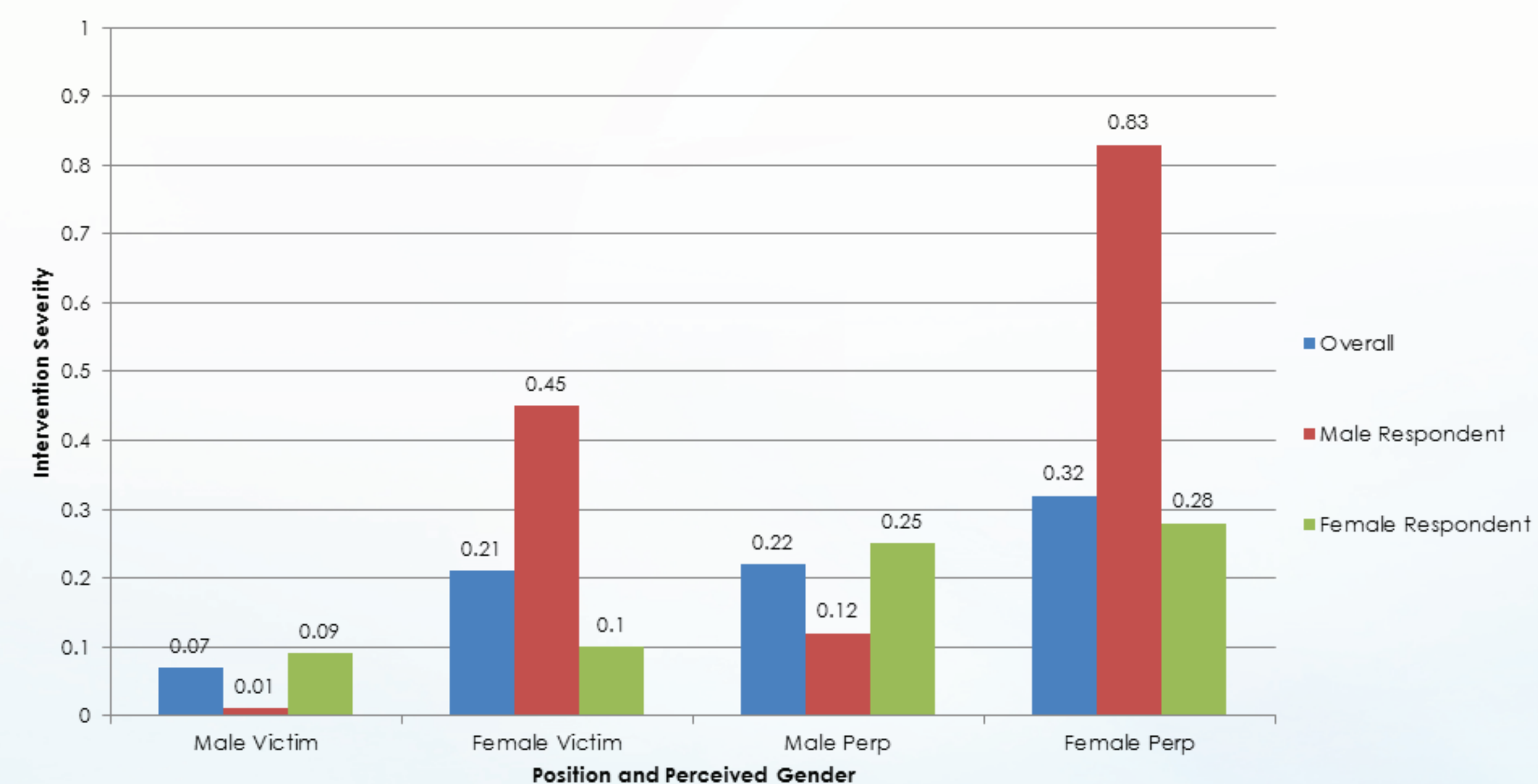
Figure 1: Intended Intervention Likelihood Based on Position and Perceived Gender



Note: Overall N = 457; Male Respondents N = 159; Female Respondents N = 106

Figure 2: Intended Intervention Severity Based on Position and Perceived Gender

Male victims were neglected, but male perpetrators were not held accountable. Male respondents were protective of female coworkers/victims but hypercritical of female perpetrators/leaders.



Summary of Results

- **H1: Supported** - Across all religions, *female victims* were **more likely** to be protected and had a **higher intervention severity** than their male counterparts.
- **H2: Not supported** - Across all religions, *male perpetrators* were **less likely** to be intervened against and had a **lower intervention severity** than their female counterparts.
- *Male respondents* were extremely protective of *female victims/coworkers*.
- *Male respondents* were more critical and intervened more severely against *female perpetrators/leaders*.

Best Practice Recommendations

- **Recommendation 1:** Inform commanders of at-risk groups. Increase involvement with at-risk groups and inform unit of these groups.
- **Recommendation 2:** Educate bystanders about at-risk groups and religious discrimination to intervene more effectively and often by increasing awareness.

Limitations and Future Research

- Self-report data was used.
- Larger sample size.
- Create even sample sizes for each religion to test the effect of a respondent's religion on intended intervention likelihood.
- Future research may benefit significantly from the creation of a measurement tool for religious discrimination.
- Future research should track religion of responses to discover unconscious religious preferences and biases.

References

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Acknowledgments

- This research was supported in part by the Office of Naval Research (ONR) 2017 Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM) Internship Program.
- I would like to thank LT Harris for guidance and support through the analysis process.
- I would also like to thank Dr. Farmer for his expertise and his involvement in this project.
- Finally, I would like to thank MAJ Rashad and Mr. Shawn Seman for sparking my interest in religious discrimination.

