

Ambivalent Sexism and International Aid for Women

Abstract

Advancing gender equality is a central goal of many foreign aid initiatives. However, the effectiveness of these projects often hinges on local preferences and support. While studies have focused on understanding whether gender equality and/or gender empowerment have been achieved, there is limited research addressing the impact of public opinion on the receptiveness to gender-focused international aid. This paper addresses this gap and investigates the extent and types of women's empowerment projects endorsed by local populations. Crucially, it explores the presence of ambivalent sexism, two coexisting forms of prejudice, namely hostile and benevolent sexism. The first has a negative connotation, while the second appears positive but reinforces traditional gender roles, particularly when projects aim to empower women economically and politically. This form of sexism can significantly hinder gender equality. Moreover, it is often more accepted among women due to its more benevolent form of expression. Through an online survey experiment in Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines, we randomly present information about the donor's advocacy for women's empowerment across different domains, including health, education, economics, and formal political participation, to assess public endorsement of these gender projects and to determine whether support differs between male and female participants.

