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Moral Disengagement and Self-Reported Harassment Proclivity in Men: The Mediating

Effects of Moral Judgment and Emotions

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Abstract

Three online studies investigated the association between moral disengagement and men's self-reported harassment proclivity. Participants (total $N = 336$) were required to read a vignette depicting either quid pro quo harassment (Studies 1 and 2) or hostile work environment harassment (Study 3). A salience manipulation was used in each study to explore the causal directionality of this association. The mediating effects of moral judgment, negative affect (guilt and shame) and positive affect (happiness) about the harassment were also assessed as participants were asked to imagine themselves as the harassment perpetrator. Across the three studies, it was shown that moral disengagement had an indirect effect in predicting men's proclivity to harass by lowering their moral judgment and negative affect about the harassment, conversely amplifying positive affect. Overall, the findings support Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, indicating that moral disengagement may enable people to self-regulate their own behavioural inclinations to harass.

Keywords: moral disengagement; sexual harassment; sexual harassment proclivity; workplace; social cognition; emotions

Legal frameworks classify sexual harassment at work within two distinct categories; quid pro quo harassment and hostile work environment harassment (Gutek et al., 1999). Quid pro quo harassment occurs when the terms and conditions of an individual's employment (e.g., salary; opportunities for training and promotion) become dependent upon sexual cooperation or submission to other inappropriate requests from a superior (e.g., work supervisor). Hostile work environment harassment, in contrast, refers to unwelcome social-sexual misconduct, such as sexist jokes, sexual epithets, and displays of pornography, that occurs due to the target's sex; that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to adversely alter the conditions of the target's employment, creating an intimidating, hostile, and abusive work environment (Leskinen & Cortina, 2014; Wiener, Gervais, Brnjic, & Nuss, 2014).

Almost no empirical research has investigated the psychological pathways that lead people to perpetrate sexually harassing behaviour. . Theoretically, it is argued that hostile work environment harassment serves to punish and reject women[1] who defy traditional gender ideals (e.g., Berdahl, 2007a, 2007b; Kabat-Farr & Cortina, 2014). Sexual harassment represents immoral and aggressive behaviour (e.g., Bowes-Sperry & O'Leary-Kelly, 2005; Fitzgerald, 1993; O'Leary-Kelly, Paetzold, & Griffin, 2000; Page & Pina, 2015; Page, Pina, & Giner-Sorolla, 2015), arising when certain men, particularly those who hold sexist attitudes, perceive a sense of masculinity threat (e.g., Hitlan, Pryor, Hesson-McInnis, & Olson, 2009; Holland & Cortina, 2013; Maass & Cadinu, 2006; Maass, Cadinu, Guarnieri, & Grasselli, 2003).Harassment , thus, enables the perpetrator to communicate to women that they are unwelcome on male territory.

The social cognitive theory of moral disengagement (SCT; Bandura, 1986) explains how people self-regulate a diverse array of morally transgressive behaviours. For example, moral disengagement has been positively associated with aggression and bullying (e.g.,

Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996; Caprara et al., 2014; Paciello, Fida, Tramontano, Lupinetti, & Caprara, 2008; Sticca & Perren, 2015), underage drinking (e.g., Quinn & Bussey, 2015a, 2015b), academic cheating (e.g., Shu, Gino, & Bazerman, 2011), antisocial sporting behaviour (e.g., Stanger, Kavussanu, Boardley, & Ring, 2013; Traclet, Moret, Ohl, & Clemence, 2015), and corporate crime (e.g., Bandura, Caprara, & Zsolnai, 2000; Detert, Sweitzer, & Trevino, 2008). To date, however, almost no research has examined the self-regulatory role of moral disengagement in the behavioural domain of sexual harassment (Page & Pina, 2015; Page et al., 2015), and perpetration of sexual aggression more generally (Bandura, 1986; Carroll, 2009; Henry, Ward, & Hirschberg, 2004; Scarpati & Pina, 2017).

The purpose of the present studies, therefore, was to examine the association between moral disengagement and men's self-reported proclivity to commit quid pro quo and hostile work environment harassment. Using a salience manipulation (Bohner et al., 1998; Bohner, Jarvis, Eyssel, & Siebler, 2005; Schwarz & Strack, 1981), the studies provided a preliminary exploration of the causal directionality of this association. A further aim was to assess potential psychological mediators of this relationship across both harassment types. The studies build an important platform for testing the behavioural effects of moral disengagement in perpetration of sexual harassment and sexual aggression in a broader context.

The relationship between harassment proclivity and harassment behaviour

Research on sexual harassment perpetration has mostly assessed the self-reported proclivity of men to harass (e.g., Begany & Milburn, 2002; Diehl, Glaser, & Bohner, 2014; Galdi, Maass, & Cadinu, 2013; Key & Ridge, 2011; Luthar & Luthar, 2008; Pryor, 1987; Pryor, Giedd, & Williams, 1995; Pryor, LaVite, & Stoller, 1993; Rudman & Borgida, 1995).

These studies are predominantly situated in the domain of quid pro quo harassment (e.g., Bargh, Raymond, Pryor, & Strack, 1995; Dall'Ara & Maass, 1999; Krings & Facchin, 2009; Maass et al., 2003), and usually measure a person's intention to commit acts of sexual coercion.

Men who demonstrate harassment proclivity hold adversarial sexual beliefs, endorse myths that legitimise sexual aggression (Begany & Milburn, 2002; Diehl et al., 2014; Gerger, Kley, Bohner, & Siebler, 2007; Pryor, 1987; Vanselow, Bohner, Becher, & Siebler, 2010), exhibit empathy deficits (Bartling & Eisenman, 1993; Diehl et al., 2014), dehumanise women (Galdi et al., 2013; Rudman & Mescher, 2012), and blame harassment targets (Key & Ridge, 2011).

Most importantly, however, it has been shown that harassment proclivity is positively associated with actual harassment behaviour. Pryor et al. (1993; see also Pryor et al., 1995) reported that male college students who scored high (versus low) in harassment proclivity made more attempts at touching a female confederate when situational factors were permissive. Computer harassment paradigm studies have found that men with higher harassment proclivity commit more gender harassing behaviour such as sending sexist jokes to an online female chat partner (Dall'Ara & Maass, 1999; Maass et al., 2003; Siebler, Sabelus, & Bohner, 2008). These studies demonstrate that a person with a chronic predisposition to harass may eventually proceed to commit a sexually harassing act when contextual factors are favourable.

Exploring the relationship between moral disengagement and harassment proclivity

SCT postulates that moral conduct arises from bi-directional reciprocal interactions between cognitive and personal factors, behavioural factors, and environmental influences (Bandura, 1986, 1991). It is theorised that people internalise moral standards during socialisation. These standards prohibit immoral behaviour and guide future conduct. Bandura

(1986) proposed that individuals are motivated to perceive themselves as moral beings. When a person behaves in line with their moral standards, they experience positive feelings of satisfaction and self-worth. Conversely, behaviour that violates moral principles results in social sanctions and self-censure (i.e., negative emotions of guilt and shame). However, the competing motivation to commit an immoral act, such as sexual harassment, with the simultaneous desire to uphold moral standards, creates an internal moral conflict. When environmental constraints are weak or absent, people choose to deactivate their moral standards and self-sanctions, thus enabling them to perpetrate immoral behaviour without incurring self-reproach.

Through eight psychosocial mechanisms, anticipatory self-sanctions can be disengaged from immoral conduct by cognitively restructuring the detrimental behaviour itself (i.e., 'moral justification', 'euphemistic labelling', and 'advantageous comparison'), obscuring causal agency (i.e., 'displacement of responsibility' and 'diffusion of responsibility'), disregarding or misrepresenting injurious consequences (i.e., 'distortion of consequences'), and vilifying the victims (i.e., 'attribution of blame' and 'dehumanisation') (Bandura, 1991, 1999). In the domain of sexual harassment, euphemistic labelling, for example, allows harassing acts to be renamed as "flirting", "banter" or "joking", thereby disguising their harmful appearance. .Another example is when people distort the perceived negative consequences of harassment as being pleasurable or flattering for the target (see Page & Pina, 2015 for a comprehensive review of moral disengagement in the sexual harassment context).

Several hypotheses are theoretically plausible regarding the causal relationship between moral disengagement and harassment proclivity. Firstly, moral disengagement may be a direct antecedent or cause of harassment proclivity (or harassing behaviour).Mechanisms

of moral disengagement may enable a person to attenuate or disable self-sanctions in anticipation, or in contemplation, of committing a harassing act. Nevertheless, given that behaviour results from bi-directional causal influences (Bandura, 1986, 1991), it is also feasible to predict that moral disengagement is a direct consequence of harassment proclivity. Hence, mechanisms of moral disengagement may be activated as post-hoc rationalisations only *after* an individual has contemplated committing a harassing act.

Alternatively, it is possible that moral disengagement has an indirect relationship with harassment proclivity through exerting mediating effects on other theoretically meaningful variables. Bandura et al. (1996) tested a conceptual model of the paths of influence through which moral disengagement affects behaviour. Importantly, Bandura et al. observed no direct link between moral disengagement and aggressive behaviour among Italian elementary and high school students. Moral disengagement predicted aggressive behaviour *indirectly* by lowering anticipatory guilt and prosocial orientation, and also by fostering aggression proneness. Guilt and shame are usually considered to be the primary "self-conscious" moral emotions (e.g., Sheikh & Janoff-Bulman, 2010a, 2010b; Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Tangney, Wagner, Fletcher, & Gramzow, 1992). Both of these emotions encourage people to uphold moral standards and thereby regulate moral behaviour (Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007). In accordance with Bandura's (1986, 1991) theory of moral self-regulation, the emotions of guilt and shame would be expected to mediate the relationship between moral disengagement and harassment proclivity. The use of moral disengagement to restructure and justify harassment is expected to attenuate or inhibit anticipatory negative affect when individuals contemplate harassment perpetration. Low anticipatory guilt and shame would, in turn, predict a stronger proclivity to harass due to the weakening of these negative self-reactive influences. It is also possible, however, that positive affect (e.g., feelings of happiness)

mediates the relationship between moral disengagement and harassment proclivity. Bandura (1991) proposed that people experience anticipatory positive emotions for behaviour that is considered righteous and self-rewarding. The use of moral disengagement to cognitively reconstruct harassment into benign and morally acceptable conduct may lead high moral disengagers to report stronger positive affect in contemplation of harassment perpetration which, in turn, will increase their proclivity to harass. In the general domain of sexual aggression, Carroll (2009) observed that moral disengagement was a negative predictor of moral judgment (operationalised as pre-existing level of moral reasoning) and a positive predictor of rape supportive attitudes expressed by male U.S. college students. Path modelling revealed that lower levels of moral judgment displayed by these men intensified the positive association between moral disengagement and rape supportive attitudes. We propose that a similar pattern of findings will emerge when testing a context based measure of moral judgment (operationalised as perceived moral acceptability of a harassing situation) in the domain of sexual harassment perpetration. Indeed, SCT explicates that moral standards do not regulate behaviour unless activated and can thus be disengaged from transgressive conduct (Bandura, 1991). The use of moral disengagement to cognitively restructure harassment into innocuous and socially worthy behaviour arguably obscures the moral salience of harassing actions. Among persons higher in moral disengagement, inhibition or deactivation of moral standards concerning the harmfulness and wrongfulness of harassment is expected to weaken moral appraisals of specific harassment situations. Moral judgment in this context may, therefore, act as a mediator of the relationship between moral disengagement and harassment proclivity. High moral disengagers may evaluate specific harassing episodes as being less morally unacceptable (i.e., making a lower moral judgment about the harassing situation), which, in turn, will increase their proclivity to harass.

The salience manipulation as a test of causal relationships

Within the sexual violence literature, numerous studies document a positive correlation between men's rape myth acceptance[2] (RMA) and their self-reported rape proclivity (RP; e.g., Bohner et al., 1998, 2005; Malamuth, 1981; Malamuth & Check, 1985). As an experimental method of testing causal relationships, Bohner et al. (1998) manipulated the relative cognitive accessibility of RMA and RP. Two experiments were performed that varied the order in which male respondents completed self-report measures of these constructs. Bohner et al. reasoned that, if variations in RMA cause variations in RP, then a stronger positive link between both variables would be found if rape myth beliefs had greater temporal salience for respondents and were measured directly before RP (Bohner, Pina, Viki, & Siebler, 2010). This hypothesis was supported; the magnitude of the positive correlation between both variables was significantly larger when RMA was measured directly before RP rather than vice versa (i.e., when RP was measured directly before RMA). Bohner et al. concluded that RMA has a direct causal impact on a man's self-reported rape proclivity.

Interestingly, Bandura (1986) noted that mechanisms of moral disengagement are embodied within rape myths that serve to blame the victim and exonerate the rapist (Page & Pina, 2015; Page et al., 2015). Both of these theoretical constructs exhibit conceptual proximity in terms of their overall function; to enable people to deny personal responsibility for sexually aggressive behaviour, downplay its harmful consequences, and blame the victim. We argue, on the basis of this proximity, that a salience manipulation is an appropriate methodological technique for preliminary exploration of the causal links between moral disengagement and harassment proclivity.

The current research

Building on previous work (Bohner et al., 1998, 2005), we report three studies in which we manipulated the temporal salience of moral disengagement and harassment

proclivity. Our first two studies assessed quid pro quo harassment whereas study three examined hostile work environment harassment. Based on the extant literature, we hypothesised a positive correlation between moral disengagement and males' self-reported proclivity to engage in both harassment types. We also tested three hypotheses concerning the underlying causal directionality of this association. First, we assessed the theoretically plausible notion that moral disengagement is a direct antecedent or cause of harassment proclivity. If variation in moral disengagement causes variation in harassment proclivity, then we would expect a stronger positive correlation between both variables when moral disengagement has greater temporal salience for participants and is measured directly before harassment proclivity. Second, we tested the reverse causal link; moral disengagement as a direct consequence of harassment proclivity. Support for this hypothesis would be obtained if the positive correlation between both variables is significantly larger when harassment proclivity is measured directly before moral disengagement.

It is possible, however, that neither causal pathway would be supported with positive correlations between both variables unaffected by the manipulation of temporal salience. Our third hypothesis, therefore, was that moral disengagement and harassment proclivity would be indirectly related via the mediating effects of moral judgment about the harassment (assessed in Studies 1-3), as well as anticipatory negative and positive affect about the harassment (assessed in Studies 2-3 only).

An impression management (IM) scale was also administered in each of our studies to control for social desirability response bias. We considered it necessary to ascertain whether the relationships between moral disengagement, harassment proclivity and the potential mediating variables is unaffected by a tendency of participants to present themselves in a positive manner. Given that our studies are exploratory, we did not favour a specific

hypothesis concerning the causal directionality of the association between moral disengagement and proclivity to harass.

Study 1

Participants

One hundred and twenty male U.K. participants were recruited online using the Prolific Academic crowdsourcing platform[3]. After excluding nine participants who failed the attention check, a final sample of 111 participants was retained for data analyses. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 69 years ($M = 29.2$, $SD = 10.4$). The sample reported their ethnicity as White/Caucasian (78.4%, $n = 87$), Black (3.6%, $n = 4$), East Asian (6.3%, $n = 7$), Asian (5.4%, $n = 6$), Latino (0.9%, $n = 1$), Mixed (4.5%, $n = 5$), or did not disclose (0.9%, $n = 1$). Participants reported being employed (53.2%, $n = 59$), self-employed (13.5%, $n = 15$), unemployed (4.5%, $n = 5$), students (26.1%, $n = 29$), home-makers (1.8%, $n = 2$), or did not disclose (0.9%, $n = 1$). Of those participants employed or self-employed, the majority worked full-time (63.5%, $n = 47$), whilst the remaining participants worked part-time (31.1%, $n = 23$), through an employment agency (2.7%, $n = 2$), 'Other' (freelance – 1.4%, $n = 1$), or did not disclose (1.4%, $n = 1$). The sample reported working in a wide array of occupations and employment sectors that included: retail; administration; hospitality; financial services; healthcare; maintenance and construction; and Information Technology. Participants were each paid £1.25 in compensation.

Design

Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions of a single factor design (order of administration: Moral disengagement measured directly before harassment proclivity vs. Moral disengagement measured directly after harassment proclivity). In the first

condition (high salience: $n = 56$), participants responded to the measure of moral disengagement prior to completing the measure of harassment proclivity. In the second condition (low salience: $n = 55$), the order of both measures was reversed. After responding to the moral disengagement and harassment proclivity measures, all participants subsequently completed the moral judgment and IM scales.

Measures

Harassment proclivity

Harassment proclivity was assessed by presenting a vignette that described a hypothetical scenario of quid pro quo harassment in an accounting firm. The vignette was adapted from existing proclivity measures (see Bohner et al., 1998; Pryor, 1987) and is provided below:-

Imagine that you are the managing director of a large accounting firm. You discover that your personal assistant, Sarah Williams, has been making mistakes in her work since she joined your firm six months ago. She had already been given several warnings from you but things have not improved. You have always got on well with Sarah. One day you hold a private meeting in your office with Sarah to discuss her work performance. She tells you that she really needs to keep her job. You have always found Sarah attractive. While alone you tell Sarah that you will allow her to keep her job only if she agrees to visit your home for dinner.

Participants were asked to imagine themselves as the male protagonist and to respond to two items on a 7-point scale: (1) 'In this situation, would you have done the same?' (1 = *would definitely not have done the same,* 7 = *would definitely have done the same*); and (2) 'In this situation, how much would you enjoy getting your way?' (1 = *would not enjoy it at*

all, 7 = *would greatly enjoy it*). These items assess participants' behavioural propensity to engage in quid pro quo harassment and enjoyment of the harassment. A 30 second timer ensured that participants paid sufficient attention to the vignette before responding to the remaining measures. Both items displayed a moderate positive correlation ($r = .40$, $p = .002$) and Cronbach alpha was .66. Participants' responses to both items were averaged to compute an index of harassment proclivity.

Moral disengagement

An eight item version of the Moral Disengagement in Sexual Harassment Scale (MDiSH; Page et al., 2015) measured moral disengagement (see Appendix). The shortened form of the full length (32-item) scale was constructed through psychometric analyses of data ($n = 654$) that had been used to develop the MDiSH in prior studies of the general male population (see Page et al., 2015). The best performing item (highest corrected item-total correlation within each of the eight mechanisms) was selected for inclusion in the short form. An example item is: "Employees who make sexual jokes in the workplace are just bantering together" (Euphemistic labelling). Construct validity of this measure had been established through correlational and exploratory factor analyses with the Illinois Sexual Harassment Myth Acceptance Scale (ISHMA; Lonsway, Cortina, & Magley, 2008). In the current study, a factor analysis of these eight items revealed one factor (eigenvalue = 4.22) with item loadings that ranged from .50 to .78, and accounted for 46.35% of the total variance. These items were rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree,* 7 = *strongly agree*) and were reliable ($\alpha = .87$) in the current study. A composite mean score of moral disengagement was computed by averaging across the 8 items.

Moral judgment

Thirteen items were adapted from Page et al. (2015) to measure an evaluation of the quid pro quo harassment as being morally wrong. Participants were asked to imagine

themselves as the male protagonist and to indicate the extent to which they considered the request of Sarah Williams to be fair (recoded), harmless (recoded), innocent (recoded), unjustified, prejudicial, bad, negative, harsh, wrong, inappropriate, serious, intentional, and immoral. A factor analysis of these items revealed one factor (eigenvalue = 6.43) with factor loadings that ranged from .36 to .80, and accounted for 45.73% of the total variance. These items were rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree*) and were reliable (α = .91). A composite mean score of moral judgment was computed by averaging across the thirteen items. After reverse coding, higher scores indicate that the harassment was viewed as being morally unacceptable. The mean of this measure (M = 5.78, SD = 1.01) was significantly greater than the scale midpoint (4), $t(110)$ = 18.58, $p<.001$, indicating that, overall, participants judged the quid pro quo harassment as being morally wrong.

Impression management (IM)

A shortened version of the IM scale of the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR; Paulhus, 1988, 1991) measured IM (α = .70) in each study. The ten items from the original 20-item scale that had exhibited the highest corrected item-total correlations in earlier pilot research were selected for the present studies. Example items include "I sometimes tell lies if I have to" and "I have never dropped litter on the street." A factor analysis identified two factors. Factor 1 was loaded by the positively worded items (eigenvalue = 2.53) with five loadings that ranged from .35 to .54, and accounted for 18.11% of the total variance. Factor 2 was loaded by the negatively worded items (eigenvalue = 1.40) with five loadings that ranged from .35 to .64, and accounted for 6.85% of the total variance. The negatively worded items were reverse coded, and all responses were averaged to produce a composite mean score of IM.

Procedure

Participants completed an online questionnaire. The study was first approved by the School of Psychology Ethics Committee. Participants were informed that the purpose of the study was to examine "social relationships" in order to minimise response bias. After providing written consent, participants provided personal and demographic information. They proceeded to complete the MDiSH and the measures of moral judgment, harassment proclivity, and IM. Participants were thoroughly debriefed in writing upon completion of the study.

Results

Preliminary analyses

G*Power 3 (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007) was used to compute the statistical power of the analyses. Based on the sample size of $N = 111$ participants and an alpha level of .05, the statistical power of the study to detect a medium (0.25) and large effect (0.40) given Cohen's (1988) guidelines was found to be .74 for a medium effect and .99 for a large effect in the following analyses.

Descriptive statistics for each of the measures are presented in Table 1. A one-way MANOVA examined whether the mean responses on each measure varied across the two conditions. The overall model was not significant, Pillai's Trace $= .05$, $F(4, 106) = 1.25$, $p = .293$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$, thus revealing no significant differences between conditions (see Table 2 for all means and standard deviations). Due to these null effects, we did not control for order condition in the subsequent regression and mediation analyses.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Relationship between moral disengagement and harassment proclivity

As expected, moral disengagement was positively correlated with harassment proclivity, $r(110) = .39$, $p<.001$ in the overall sample. The magnitude of the zero-order correlation was larger for those participants in the 'high salience condition' who first completed the MDiSH, $r(55) = .41$, $p = .002$, than for those participants in the 'low salience condition' who first completed the measure of harassment proclivity, $r(54) = .36$, $p = .006$. A z-test for differences in independent correlations (Cohen & Cohen, 1983) revealed no significant difference in the magnitude of these correlations between conditions ($z = .29$, $p = .772$).

Neither moral disengagement ($r = -.13$, $p = .168$) nor moral judgment ($r = .05$, $p = .642$) were significantly correlated with IM. Harassment proclivity, on the other hand, yielded a marginally significant negative correlation with IM ($r = -.19$, $p = .052$). Partial correlations of moral disengagement and harassment proclivity controlling for IM were, therefore, computed for the total sample and for each condition individually. When controlling for IM, moral disengagement remained positively correlated with harassment proclivity, $r(110) = .39$, $p<.001$. The magnitude of the partial correlation was larger when moral disengagement was measured first, $r(53) = .41$, $p = .002$, rather than when it was assessed after harassment proclivity, $r(52) = .33$, $p = .014$. However, the z-test was not significant ($z = .46$, $p = .647$). Collectively, we found no initial support for a direct causal link between moral disengagement and harassment proclivity. Rather, the positive relationship between these constructs may be indirect and influenced by moral judgment about the harassing behaviour.

Mediation of moral disengagement and harassment proclivity via moral judgment

Mediation analysis (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) explored whether moral judgment about the quid pro quo harassment (controlling for IM) mediates the effect of moral disengagement on harassment proclivity[4]. A linear regression analysis demonstrated that moral disengagement was a significant positive predictor of proclivity to harass ($\beta = .39$, $t = 4.41$, $p<.001$). A hierarchical regression model was then tested in which IM and moral judgment were entered at Step 1, moral disengagement was entered at Step 2, and harassment proclivity was the criterion variable. Moral judgment was found to be a significant negative predictor of harassment proclivity, explaining 24.01% of the unique variance. IM was a marginally significant negative predictor of harassment proclivity, which explained 2.66% of the variance. At Step 2, the effect of moral disengagement on harassment proclivity became non-significant, thus indicating full mediation of moral judgment. The results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 3.

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

Using the Preacher and Hayes (2008) INDIRECT macro in SPSS, a mediation model was tested with estimates based on 10,000 bootstrap resamples[5]. IM was entered as a covariate. The 95% Bias Corrected confidence intervals for the indirect (mediated) effect of moral judgment did not include zero (95% confidence interval [CI] = .18, .86). This indicates that moral judgment fully mediated the predictive effect of moral disengagement on harassment proclivity (see Figure 1). That is, men who expressed stronger moral disengagement perceived the quid pro quo harassment as being less morally wrong which, in turn, predicted a greater proclivity to harass.

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

Discussion

Using our salience manipulation, we found no preliminary evidence of a direct causal link between moral disengagement and male proclivity to commit quid pro quo harassment. As expected, moral disengagement and harassment proclivity were positively correlated. However, no statistically significant difference in the magnitude of these positive correlations was observed across the two order conditions. Moral disengagement was shown to have an indirect effect in predicting harassment proclivity via the mediating effect of moral judgment about the harassment. Building on these findings, a second study examined other potential mediators of this relationship. In addition to moral judgment, Study 2 assessed the mediating effects of negative affect (operationalized as guilt and shame) and positive affect (operationalized as happiness) in the relationship between moral disengagement and harassment proclivity.

Study 2

Participants

One hundred and nineteen male U.K. participants were recruited online using Prolific Academic. After excluding eight participants who failed the attention check, a final sample of 111 participants was retained for data analyses. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 67 years ($M = 26.6$, $SD = 9.3$). The sample reported their ethnicity as White/Caucasian (77.5%, $n = 86$), East Asian (9.9%, $n = 11$), Asian (9.0%, $n = 10$), Latino (0.9%, $n = 1$), and Mixed (2.7%, $n = 3$). Participants reported being employed (51.4%, $n = 57$), self-employed (4.5%, $n = 5$), unemployed (0.9%, $n = 1$), students (39.6%, $n = 44$), home-makers (1.8%, $n = 2$), unable to work (0.9%, $n = 1$), or did not disclose (0.9%, $n = 1$). Of those participants employed or self-employed, the majority worked full-time (54.8%, $n = 34$), whilst the remaining participants

worked part-time (40.3%, *n* = 25), through an employment agency (3.2%, *n* = 2), or did not disclose (1.6%, *n* = 1). The sample reported working in a broad range of occupations and employment sectors. Participants were each paid £1.25 in compensation.

Design, measures and procedure

As in Study 1, participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions of a single factor design (order of administration: Moral disengagement measured directly before harassment proclivity vs. Moral disengagement measured directly after harassment proclivity). In the first condition (high salience: *n* = 57), participants completed the MDiSH prior to the harassment proclivity measure. In the second condition (low salience: *n* = 54), the order of both measures was reversed. After responding to the moral disengagement and harassment proclivity measures, all participants subsequently completed the moral judgment and IM scales. . A one sample t-test revealed that the mean of the moral judgment scale (*M* = 5.61, *SD* = 1.06) was significantly greater than the scale midpoint (4), *t*(110) = 15.97, *p*<.001, indicating that, overall, participants evaluated the quid pro quo harassment as being morally wrong.

Participants were also required to imagine themselves as the male protagonist and to rate the extent to which they would feel *guilt* (guilty; regretful; remorseful), *shame* (ashamed; disgraced; humiliated), and *happiness* (happy; pleased; amused; cheerful) in response to the request of Sarah Williams. These ten emotion items were derived from Page et al. (2015) and were accompanied by a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all,* 7 = *very much*). The emotion items were submitted to EFA using oblique (direct oblimin) rotation and three factors were imposed. Oblique rotation was chosen because the emotion items were expected to correlate. The rotated solution did not confirm the presence of three distinguishable factors as expected. Factor 1 was identified as *negative affect* (eigenvalue = 5.84) with six loadings; "guilty", "regretful", "remorseful", "ashamed", "disgraced", and "humiliated," that ranged from .51 to

.86 and accounted for 54.13% of the total variance. Factor 2 was identified as *positive affect* (eigenvalue = 1.33) with four loadings; "happy", "pleased", "amused", and "cheerful," that ranged from .58 to .99 and accounted for 11.11% of the variance. The measures of emotion, moral judgment, and IM formed the final part of the questionnaire. All scales displayed acceptable to excellent internal consistencies (MDiSH: α = .87; moral judgment: α = .91; negative affect: α = .88; positive affect: α = .91; IM: α = .70; harassment proclivity: α = .64). Therefore, composite mean scores for each measure were computed by averaging across the relevant items. As before, the two items assessing participants' behavioural propensity and enjoyment of the quid pro quo harassment were positively correlated (r = .50, p<.001).

Results

Preliminary analyses

The statistical power of the analyses was computed using G*Power 3 (Faul et al., 2007). Based on the sample size of N = 111 participants and an alpha level of .05, the statistical power of the study to detect a medium (large) effect given Cohen's (1988) guidelines was found to be .74 (.99) for the following analyses.

Descriptive statistics for each of the measures are provided in Table 1. A one-way MANOVA found no significant mean differences on the measures between conditions, Pillai's Trace = .03, $F(6, 104)$ = .52, p = .796, η_p^2 = .03 (see Table 4 for means and standard deviations). We therefore did not control for order condition in the following regression and mediation analyses.

INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

Relationship between moral disengagement and harassment proclivity

As in Study 1, moral disengagement was positively correlated with harassment proclivity, $r(110) = .57$, $p<.001$, in the overall sample. The magnitude of the zero-order correlation was larger for those participants in the 'high salience condition' (who first completed the MDiSH), $r(56) = .62$, $p<.001$, than for those participants in the 'low salience condition' (who first indicated their harassment proclivity), $r(53) = .49$, $p<.001$. A z-test revealed no significant difference in the magnitude of these correlations between conditions ($z = .99$, $p = .324$).

None of the measures were significantly correlated with IM except for harassment proclivity ($r = -.22$, $p = .022$). Partial correlations of moral disengagement and harassment proclivity that controlled for IM were, therefore, computed for the overall sample and for each condition individually. When controlling for IM, moral disengagement remained significantly positively correlated with harassment proclivity in the overall sample, $r(108) = .57$, $p<.001$. The magnitude of the partial correlation was larger when moral disengagement was measured first, $r(54) = .61$, $p<.001$), rather than when it was assessed after harassment proclivity, $r(51) = .49$, $p< .001$). However, the z-test was not significant ($z = .92$, $p = .358$). Replicating the findings of Study 1, we found no support for a direct causal link between moral disengagement and harassment proclivity.

Mediation of moral disengagement and harassment proclivity via moral judgment, negative affect and positive affect

Mediation analysis tested whether moral judgment and emotions about the quid pro quo harassment (controlling for IM) mediates the effect of moral disengagement on proclivity to harass. A linear regression analysis demonstrated that moral disengagement was a significant positive predictor of harassment proclivity ($\beta = .57$, $t = 7.27$, $p<.001$). A hierarchical regression model was then tested in which IM, moral judgment, negative affect, and positive affect were entered at Step 1, moral disengagement was entered at Step 2, and

harassment proclivity was the criterion variable. This revealed that IM was not a significant predictor of harassment proclivity. Moral judgment, on the other hand, was a significant negative predictor of harassment proclivity and explained 2.43% of the unique variance. Negative affect was also a significant negative predictor of proclivity to harass and explained 2.34% of the variance. In contrast, positive affect was a significant positive predictor of harassment proclivity, explaining 10.69% of the variance. At Step 2, the effect of moral disengagement on harassment proclivity became non-significant thereby indicating full mediation of moral judgment, negative affect, and positive affect. The results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 5.

INSERT TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

Using the Preacher and Hayes (2008) INDIRECT macro in SPSS, a multiple mediation model was tested with estimates based on 10,000 bootstrap resamples. IM was included as a covariate. The 95% Bias Corrected confidence interval for the indirect effects of moral judgment, negative affect, and positive affect did not include zero in predicting harassment proclivity (moral judgment: 95% CI = .01, .25; negative affect: CI = .00, .24; positive affect: CI = .15, .44). This shows that the predictive effect of moral disengagement on harassment proclivity was fully mediated by moral judgment and emotions associated with the harassment. That is, men who demonstrated greater moral disengagement judged the quid pro quo harassment as being less morally wrong, expressed less anticipatory negative affect in relation to the harassment, and reported increased anticipatory positive affect about the harassing behaviour. In turn, reduced moral judgment and negative affect, and increased positive affect about the harassment led those men higher in moral disengagement to self-report a greater proclivity to harass (see Figure 2).

INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

Discussion

We replicated the findings of Study 1. Moral disengagement had an indirect effect in predicting men's proclivity to commit quid pro quo harassment via the influence of the proposed mediators. When controlling for IM and emotions, individuals' moral judgment about the harassment was again found to fully mediate the relationship between moral disengagement and harassment proclivity. Those men who scored higher in moral disengagement evaluated the quid pro quo harassment as being less morally wrong which, in turn, predicted a greater proclivity to harass. Interestingly, emotions also fully mediated this relationship. Moral disengagement predicted a reduction in anticipatory negative affect and predicted increased positive affect about the harassment which, in turn, predicted a greater proclivity to harass.

A limitation of both studies is that harassment proclivity was exclusively measured in the context of quid pro quo harassment. It is, therefore, important to examine whether these preliminary findings generalize to a situation of hostile work environment harassment. This is necessary to establish as past research consistently documents the latter harassment type to be the most prevalent (e.g., European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights [FRA], 2014; United States Merit Systems Protection Board [USMSPB], 1995). Contrary to quid pro quo harassment which is more easily recognized, hostile work environment harassment is comparatively more subtle and ambiguous (see Pina, Gannon, & Saunders, 2009 for a review). We therefore examined the relationship between moral disengagement and men's proclivity to commit hostile work environment harassment.

Study 3

Participants

One hundred and twenty three male U.K. participants were recruited online using Prolific Academic. After excluding nine participants who failed the attention check, a final sample of 114 participants was retained for data analyses. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 49 years ($M = 25.8$, $SD = 6.9$). The sample reported their ethnicity as White/Caucasian (71.9%, $n = 82$), Black (4.4%, $n = 5$), East Asian (4.4%, $n = 5$), Asian (6.1%, $n = 7$), Latino (3.5%, $n = 4$), Native American (0.9%, $n = 1$) and Mixed (8.8%, $n = 10$). Participants reported being employed (48.2%, $n = 55$), self-employed (9.6%, $n = 11$), unemployed (6.1%, $n = 7$), students (33.3%, $n = 38$), home-makers (0.9%, $n = 1$), unable to work (0.9%, $n = 1$), or did not disclose (0.9%, $n = 1$). Of those participants employed or self-employed, the majority worked full-time (66.7%, $n = 44$), whilst the remaining participants worked part-time (27.3%, $n = 18$), through an employment agency (4.5%, $n = 3$) or stated 'Other' (1.5%, $n = 1$). The sample reported working in a broad array of occupations and employment sectors. Participants were each paid £1.25 in compensation.

Design, measures and procedure

The ten emotion items were resubmitted to EFA. Two factors were identified using maximum likelihood estimation and oblique (direct oblimin) rotation. Factor 1 was identified as *negative affect* (eigenvalue = 6.59) with six loadings; "guilty", "regretful", "remorseful", "ashamed", "disgraced", and "humiliated", that ranged from .57 to .90, and accounted for 55.90% of the total variance. Factor 2 was identified as *positive affect* (eigenvalue = 1.39) with four loadings ("happy", "pleased", "amused", and "cheerful"), that ranged from .88 to .97 and accounted for 16.59% of the variance. A one sample t-test revealed that the mean of the moral judgment scale ($M = 5.30$, $SD = 1.32$) was significantly greater than the scale

midpoint (4), $t(113) = 10.52$, $p<.001$. This suggested that, overall, participants judged the hostile work environment harassment as being morally wrong.

The design, measures and procedure were identical to Studies 1 and 2 with one exception. Harassment proclivity was assessed using a vignette that described a hypothetical situation of hostile work environment harassment (see below):-

Imagine that you are employed at a large accounting firm. You share an office with several male co-workers and a young woman named Sarah Williams. Every day in the office, Sarah is in the vicinity when you are telling sexual jokes about women and female employees at the firm. Just yesterday you made your male co-workers laugh with the following joke: "How did the medical community come up with the term "Premenstrual syndrome"? (PMS)… "Mad Cow Disease" was already taken. You often send emails to Sarah of things that you find appealing and sometimes these contain pictures of young women who are posing topless and wearing revealing underwear. Sarah tells you that she dislikes the sexual jokes and emails, asking you to stop it. Despite Sarah's repeated requests for you to stop, you do not see why you should stop your jokes and emails and carry on regardless.

Participants responded to the following two items on a 7-point scale: (1) 'In this situation, would you have done the same?' (1 = *would definitely not have done the same*, 7 = *would definitely have done the same*); and (2) 'In this situation, how much would you enjoy watching Sarah's reaction?' (1 = *would not enjoy it at all*, 7 = *would greatly enjoy it*). These items assess participants' behavioural propensity to engage in hostile work environment harassment, and enjoyment of the female target's reaction. A 30 second timer ensured that participants paid sufficient attention to the vignette before responding to the remaining measures. Participants completed the measures of moral disengagement, harassment

proclivity, moral judgment, emotions, and IM. The measures employed in this study displayed acceptable to excellent internal consistencies (MDiSH: α = .86; moral judgment: α = .95; negative affect: α = .92; positive affect: α = .96; IM: α = .75; harassment proclivity: α = .63). The two items assessing behavioural propensity and enjoyment of the hostile work environment harassment were positively correlated (r = .47, p<.001). Therefore, participants' responses to both items were averaged to compute an index of harassment proclivity.

Results

Preliminary analyses

G*Power 3 (Faul et al., 2007) was used to calculate the statistical power of the analyses. Based on the sample size of N = 114 participants and an alpha level of .05, the power of the study to detect a medium (large) effect given Cohen's (1988) guidelines was found to be .75 (.99) for the following analyses.

Descriptive statistics for each of the measures are presented in Table 1. A one-way MANOVA revealed no significant mean differences on these measures between conditions, Pillai's Trace = .09, F(6, 107) = 1.79, p = .108, η_p^2 = .09 (see Table 6 for means and standard deviations). Therefore, we did not control for order condition in the following regression and mediation analyses.

INSERT TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE

Relationship between moral disengagement and harassment proclivity

As in Studies 1 and 2, moral disengagement was positively correlated with harassment proclivity, r(113) = .37, p<.001, in the overall sample. The magnitude of the zero-order correlation was larger for those participants in the 'high salience condition' (n = 53)

who first completed the MDiSH, $r(52) = .39$, $p = .004$, than for those participants in the 'low salience condition' ($n = 61$) who first completed the measure of harassment proclivity, $r(60) = .36$, $p = .004$. A z-test revealed no significant difference in the magnitude of these correlations between conditions ($z = .16$, $p = .870$).

None of the measures were significantly correlated with IM except for harassment proclivity ($r = -.22$, $p = .018$). Partial correlations of moral disengagement and harassment proclivity that controlled for IM were, therefore, computed for the overall sample and for each condition individually. When controlling for IM, moral disengagement remained positively correlated with harassment proclivity in the overall sample, $r(111) = .35$, $p<.001$. However, the z-test was not significant ($z = -.07$, $p = .943$).

Mediation of moral disengagement and harassment proclivity via moral judgment, negative affect and positive affect

Mediation analysis tested whether moral judgment and emotions about the hostile work environment harassment (controlling for IM) mediated the effect of moral disengagement on harassment proclivity. A linear regression analysis demonstrated that moral disengagement was a significant positive predictor of proclivity to harass ($\beta = .37$, $t = 4.17$, $p<.001$). A hierarchical regression model was then tested in which IM, moral judgment, negative affect, and positive affect were entered at Step 1, moral disengagement was entered at Step 2, and harassment proclivity was the criterion variable. This revealed that IM was a significant negative predictor of harassment proclivity. When controlling for the other predictors, neither moral judgment nor negative affect were significant predictors of harassment proclivity. Positive affect, on the other hand, was a significant positive predictor of proclivity to harass and explained 16.97% of the unique variance. At Step 2, the effect of moral disengagement on harassment proclivity became non-significant, thus indicating full mediation of positive affect. The results of this analysis are displayed in Table 7.

INSERT TABLE 7 ABOUT HERE

Using the Preacher and Hayes (2008) INDIRECT macro in SPSS, a multiple mediation model was tested with estimates based on 10,000 bootstrap resamples. IM was included as a covariate. The 95% Bias Corrected confidence interval for the indirect effect of positive affect did not include zero in predicting harassment proclivity (95% CI = .04, .30). Moral judgment and negative affect were not statistically significant mediators as their CIs included zero (moral judgment: CI = -.11, .10; negative affect: CI = -.03, .02). This showed that the predictive effect of moral disengagement on harassment proclivity was fully mediated by positive affect about the harassment (see Figure 3).

INSERT FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE

Discussion

In replicating the findings of Studies 1 and 2, we found that moral disengagement had an indirect effect in predicting harassment proclivity. Contrary to the previous studies, however, negative affect and moral judgment were not statistically significant mediators of this relationship. Although moral disengagement attenuated males' anticipatory negative affect and moral judgment about the hostile work environment harassment, these variables did not mediate the relationship between moral disengagement and harassment proclivity when IM and positive affect were controlled. Interestingly, positive affect was the only statistically significant mediator. Those men who displayed higher moral disengagement

reported stronger feelings of happiness about the hostile work environment harassment which, in turn, predicted an increased proclivity to harass.

General Discussion

The present studies provide the first empirical evidence of a positive association between moral disengagement and men's self-reported proclivity to commit two legally distinct types of harassing behaviour at work; quid pro quo harassment and hostile work environment harassment. Our findings have important theoretical implications for understanding the social cognitive processes that self-regulate males' behavioural inclinations to harass. The studies represent a necessary and important preliminary step in examining the effects of moral disengagement in facilitating perpetration of sexual harassment and sexually aggressive behaviour within a broader context.

The salience manipulation found no convincing support for moral disengagement as either a direct antecedent or direct consequence of male harassment proclivity. Although the positive bivariate correlations (both zero-order and partial) between both variables were consistently larger when moral disengagement was measured directly prior to harassment proclivity, there were no statistically significant differences in the magnitude of these correlations across the two order conditions. Thus, we found no support for the notion that moral disengagement is activated as post-hoc rationalisations for existing behavioural inclinations to harass. This finding is consistent with longitudinal studies that also found no evidence of moral disengagement as a direct consequence of morally transgressive behaviour such as bullying (Sticca & Perren, 2015), and underage drinking (Quinn & Bussey, 2015a). Rather, our three studies repeatedly showed that moral disengagement predicted harassment proclivity indirectly (for both harassment types) via the mediating influence of theoretically related variables.

In the context of quid pro quo harassment, studies 1 and 2 demonstrated that the positive association between moral disengagement and harassment proclivity was fully mediated by moral judgment about the harassment. Overall, participants in our samples evaluated the harassing conduct portrayed in the vignettes as being morally wrong. However, when imagining themselves committing a specific act of quid pro quo harassment, men who indicated greater levels of moral disengagement evaluated the harassing behaviour as being less morally unacceptable. The use of moral disengagement to cognitively restructure harassment into benign and socially acceptable behaviour appears to prevent the immorality of harassment from becoming salient, thereby weakening a person's moral appraisal of the specific harassing situation. This is theoretically plausible when considering that moral standards can be selectively disengaged when individuals contemplate engaging in behaviour that usually conflicts with their personal moral principles (Bandura, 1991). A lowered moral judgment of the harassing situation may, therefore, act as a mechanism that enables high moral disengagers to rationalise their own behavioural inclinations to harass.

Extending these findings, Study 2 revealed that emotions also fully mediated this relationship. More precisely, men who displayed higher levels of moral disengagement reported feeling weaker negative affect (measured as guilt and shame), and stronger positive affect (measured as happiness) about the quid pro quo harassment which, in turn, predicted a greater proclivity to harass. Study 3, in contrast, found that the positive association between moral disengagement and harassment proclivity was mediated only by positive affect. Nevertheless, in the context of hostile work environment harassment, moral disengagement was observe to attenuate both moral judgment and negative affect, conversely enhancing positive affect about this type of harassing behaviour.

The consistent finding of an indirect effect of moral disengagement in predicting harassment proclivity is congruent with the tenets of SCT (Bandura, 1986) and previous

empirical findings. . Bandura (1991) postulated that moral disengagement can exert both a direct and indirect effect in predicting detrimental conduct. As stated earlier, Bandura et al. (1996) observed that moral disengagement only *indirectly* predicted aggressive behaviour of Italian students by lowering their anticipatory guilt and prosocial attitudes, and by fostering aggression proneness.. As sexual harassment is a manifestation of aggressive behaviour (Fitzgerald, 1993; Krings & Facchin, 2009; O'Leary-Kelly et al., 2000; Page & Pina, 2015; Page et al., 2015), the findings of the present studies suggest that a similar self-regulatory process occurs when moral disengagement is tested in the context of harassment proclivity.

Overall, the findings of Studies 2 and 3 corroborate Bandura's (1986) SCT model of moral self-regulation. . The use of moral disengagement to rationalise harassment appears to serve as a psychological buffer to the anticipatory self-restraints that would ordinarily inhibit or deter a person from perpetrating harassment at work, or contemplating doing so in the future. Indeed, as already stated, moral disengagement was shown to attenuate males' negative affect about harassment which, in turn, predicted a greater proclivity to harass. Alleviation of negative self-conscious emotions such as guilt and shame thus allows high moral disengagers to endorse harassment proclivity free of self-censure. These findings also lend preliminary support to the notion that moral disengagement is a self-regulatory process in sexual harassment perpetration (Page & Pina, 2015). The ongoing use of moral disengagement strategies could gradually disinhibit a person with harassment proclivities to eventually harass if released from negative self-reactive influences and situational constraints. Moreover, our mediational findings support other studies of moral disengagement in alternative behavioural domains. Stanger et al. (2013), for example, observed that low anticipatory guilt mediated the positive link between moral disengagement and males' self-reported likelihood to aggress in sport. Similarly, Quinn and Bussey (2015a) found that mediation of anticipatory guilt in the relationship between moral judgment and adolescents'

underage drinking was moderated by moral disengagement. Adolescents who made a stronger moral judgment about underage drinking (i.e., perceived it more negatively), reported greater expectation of guilt which subsequently predicted less underage drinking. This mediating effect of guilt was weakened when individuals showed increased levels of moral disengagement.

Additionally, our finding of a strong mediating effect of positive affect in the relationship between moral disengagement and harassment proclivity is also interesting and important. Not surprisingly, ratings of positive affect showed clear floor effects as participants reported very low levels of happiness about the harassment in Studies 2 and 3 (mean scores of 2.33 and 2.10, respectively on a 7-point scale). Interestingly, however, moral disengagement predicted increased positive affect about both harassment types. In fact, when controlling for impression management and the other predictors, positive affect explained a considerable proportion of the unique variance in predicting harassment proclivity. These findings support Bandura's (1986) SCT model. Bandura proposed that human behaviour is motivated by anticipatory positive affect. The cognitive distortion of harassment into righteous and self-rewarding behaviour via the use of moral disengagement mechanisms allows some people to actually feel pleased about their misconduct. On these theoretical grounds, it seems logical to argue from our findings that a person may gradually become more prone to harass(and increase the frequency and severity of their harassing actions over time) if positive emotions, such as happiness, are anticipated to result from engaging in that behaviour. It is fascinating to consider *why* moral disengagement amplifies positive affect in association with harassment. Although a tentative proposition, it is feasible that positive affect may arise from a person's anticipated amusement or pleasure in seeing the harassment target "put in her rightful place". This notion makes theoretical sense when considering that acts of hostile work environment harassment are often a retaliatory response

to women who are seen to violate traditional gender ideals (e.g., Berdahl, 2007a, 2007b; Holland & Cortina, 2013).

An important limitation of the present research, however, is that we only assessed the self-reported proclivity of men to harass using hypothetical vignettes. Questionnaire based proclivity measures such as these, only indicate a general interest, tendency, or inclination of a person to perpetrate a specific type of behaviour. Consequently, it is not possible to ascertain from these measures whether our participants had ever committed harassing acts in the past, or whether they would ever perpetrate harassment in the future. Our samples may have included individuals who held a proclivity to harass but were unwilling to disclose these interests or behavioural inclinations. Nevertheless, given the positive link between harassment proclivity and harassing behaviour established in previous research (e.g., Galdi et al., 2013; Pryor et al., 1993, 1995), the findings of our research are highly promising, and indicate that moral disengagement does have the potential to facilitate actual harassing behaviour.

Building on our studies, it is necessary for future research to investigate whether these findings replicate when harassing behaviour is assessed; perhaps by using the "computer harassment paradigm" (e.g., Diehl, Rees, & Bohner, 2016; Maass et al., 2003; Siebler et al., 2008). It would be intriguing to explore whether moral disengagement can predict a person's engagement in harassing acts, and to examine the psychological variables that mediate or moderate this association. Due to the cross-sectional design of the present research, our findings are preliminary and caution must be used when interpreting causal relationships. We strongly recommend that longitudinal studies are conducted to further investigate the causal pathways between moral disengagement, mediators such as affect, harassment proclivity, and harassing behaviour. In assessing bi-directional relationships, longitudinal research can address important questions; for example, do pre-existing levels of moral disengagement

predict increases in males' harassment proclivity and harassing behaviour over time? Alternatively, do initial levels of harassment proclivity and harassing behaviour predict increases in moral disengagement? Exploring these questions will enable a more comprehensive test of Bandura's (1986) self-regulatory model in the context of sexual harassment perpetration and determine whether there are reciprocal links among these constructs.

Moreover, researchers should examine the relationship between moral disengagement and harassment proclivity in alternative social environments such as online social media (Tang & Fox, 2016) and academic settings. It is also important for future research to consider other target-perpetrator dyads such as female-on-male and male-on-male harassment (see Holland, Rabelo, Gustafson, Seabrook, & Cortina, 2015; Stockdale, Gandolfo Berry, Schneider, & Cao, 2004). In short, the present studies provide important groundwork for investigating the effects of moral disengagement in facilitating sexual harassment perpetration. In a wider context, the studies build a useful platform for researchers who seek to understand the role of moral disengagement in self-regulating other sexually aggressive behaviours such as rape and domestic violence.

Practical implications

Our findings emphasise the need for expansion in sexual harassment awareness training. These courses must assist employees in recognising and responding to situations of quid pro quo and hostile work environment harassment, but should also better educate workers about the attitudes and social cognitions of those individuals who display a proclivity to harass. It is, therefore, essential that employers educate their workforces on how moral disengagement mechanisms adversely influence people's moral judgments, emotions and perceptions of harassing events, as this may gradually increase a person's proclivity to commit harassing acts in the future. Furthermore, it is necessary to design educational

programmes which explicitly communicate the negative consequences of sexual harassment. This may have a positive impact in reducing moral disengagement and lowering harassment proclivity among male workers.

It is also extremely important that organisations devise explicit anti-harassment policies and complaint procedures, communicating these effectively to employees. As stated earlier, a person with a chronic predisposition to harass will only tend to act on this proclivity and commit a harassing act when situational factors are permissive (see Pryor et al., 1993, 1995). Workplace regulations that clearly prohibit and sanction sexual misconduct will foster a climate of equality, dignity, fairness and respect. Enforcing these regulations will hold employees more accountable for their actions, reducing the risk of those with a proclivity to harass from eventually perpetrating sexually harassing behaviour.

Acknowledgements

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Footnotes

[1] It is important to acknowledge that men also experience sexual harassment at work (see Berdahl, 2007b; Holland, Rabelo, Gustafson, Seabrook, & Cortina, 2015; Stockdale, Gandolfo Berry, Schneider, & Cao, 2004) either from female or same-sex perpetrators. The current studies are situated only in the context of male-perpetrated sexual harassment of women. This is because it is statistically the most frequent perpetrator-victim constellation (see McDonald, 2012; O'Leary-Kelly et al., 2009). However, in the general discussion section, we mention the need to examine other perpetrator-victim dyads in future research.

[2] Rape myths have been defined as "descriptive or prescriptive beliefs about rape (i.e., about its causes, context, consequences, perpetrators, victims, and their interaction) that serve to deny, downplay or justify sexual violence that men commit against women" (Bohner, 1998, p.14).

[3] Prolific Academic is a crowdsourcing platform that is used to conduct psychological research online. It is increasingly used as a suitable alternative to Amazon Mechanical Turk (see Peer, Brandimarte, Samat, & Acquisti, 2017) and enables registered users to participate in studies in return for monetary reward. Crowdsourcing platforms such as Prolific Academic and Amazon MTurk are frequently used by social scientists to recruit and compensate participants (see Goodman, Cryder, & Cheema, 2013). These services offer various advantages to researchers such as providing access to samples that are demographically diverse and have more relevant work experience (Behrend, Sharek, Meade, & Wiebe, 2011). Researchers have also demonstrated that crowdsourcing platforms produce highly reliable and valid data that are equivalent or better in quality to data collected using traditional Internet participant pools and university student samples (see Behrend et al., 2011; Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012).

[4] The measures of moral disengagement and moral judgment displayed moderate negative correlations in each of the three studies (Study 1: $r = -.54$, $p<.001$; Study 2: $r = -.52$, $p<.001$; Study 3: $r = -.38$, $p<.001$). Exploratory factor analyses were performed on the combined items of both scales which consistently produced a clear two factor solution. The eight items of the moral disengagement scale loaded strongly on to factor 1, whereas the thirteen items of the moral judgment scale loaded strongly on to factor 2 revealing independent clusters. These analyses indicate that our measures of moral disengagement and moral judgment are empirically separable as distinct constructs. Full details of these factor analyses can be obtained from the first author.

[5] Bootstrapping is a nonparametric resampling procedure. It is widely considered to produce more accurate estimates of indirect effects because it does not impose the assumption of normality of the sampling distribution. Bootstrapping involves repeated resampling of the available data to create an empirical approximation of the sampling distribution. Estimates of indirect effects are calculated with greater precision by constructing confidence intervals that are corrected for bias and accelerated. In each of our analyses, an indirect effect was considered significant when the bootstrapped confidence interval did not contain zero (Hayes, 2009; Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

Appendix

Short Version of the Moral Disengagement in Sexual Harassment Scale

1. Women often get jobs based on their looks, and should therefore expect to receive sexual comments about their looks from male colleagues
2. Employees should not be blamed for swearing or using sexual language, when most of their colleagues do it too
3. In a workplace with a relaxed atmosphere, men cannot be blamed for "trying it on" with attractive women when they get the chance
4. Women shouldn't get offended by sexual jokes in the workplace as they are usually meant to be harmless
5. It is good to have an attractive woman around the workplace to keep morale up
6. Employees who make sexual jokes in the workplace are just bantering together
7. When you think that some people steal from their employer, displaying a calendar of naked women in the workplace doesn't seem all that serious
8. Employees who receive sexual interest from their colleagues have usually sent some kind of welcoming signal to attract it

Note. Items corresponding to the eight mechanisms of moral disengagement. *Moral justification:* 1. *Euphemistic labelling:* 6. *Advantageous comparison:* 7. *Displacement of responsibility:* 3. *Diffusion of responsibility:* 2. *Distorting consequences:* 4. *Dehumanization:* 5. *Attribution of blame:* 8.