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The Role of Perception of Threats, Conservative Beliefs and Prejudice on Prosocial Behavioural Intention in Favour of Asylum Seekers in a Sample of Italian Adults

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# Current Psychology

## The role of perception of threats, conservative beliefs and prejudice on prosocial behavioural intention in favour of asylum seekers in a sample of Italian adults --Manuscript Draft--

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| <b>Manuscript Number:</b>                            | CUPS-D-17-00475R3   |
| <b>Full Title:</b>                                   | The role of perception of threats, conservative beliefs and prejudice on prosocial behavioural intention in favour of asylum seekers in a sample of Italian adults  |
| <b>Article Type:</b>                                 | Original Article  |
| <b>Funding Information:</b>                          |   |
| <b>Abstract:</b>                                     | Based on the Dual Process Model (DPM), this study investigates the relationship among the perception of in-group threats, conservative ideologies (social dominance orientation, SDO, and right-wing authoritarianism, RWA), prejudice, and prosocial behavioural intentions (PBI) towards asylum seekers. A sample of 200 people living in Italy answered an anonymous questionnaire administered using a cross-sectional design. The results partially supported the DPM's expectations while also showing, however, some unexpected effects with respect to behavioural intentions to help asylum seekers. As predicted by the DPM, the perception of in-group threats, whether realistic or symbolic, directly and indirectly (via SDO and RWA) affected prejudice against asylum seekers. SDO and RWA did not have a direct effect on behavioural intentions but their effects were totally mediated by prejudice. This is a novel finding and suggests that conservative ideologies can positively affect people's behaviour but only through a decreased attitudinal disposition towards asylum seekers. The theoretical and practical implications derived from the data are discussed. |
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| <b>Author Comments:</b>                              | June 18th, 2018<br><br>Dear Editor,<br>I am pleased to re-submit (R3) with the final corrections as suggested by Richard Ferraro, PhD<br><br>Thank you for the opportunity to publish our manuscript in Current Psychology.<br><br>Kind regards,<br>Tiziana Mancini   |
| <b>Response to Reviewers:</b>                        | All editing suggestions have been included in the manuscript.<br><br>On regard of the suggestions of Reviewer #5  |

\*P. 9 "People living in Tuscany, Italy, were enrolled in this study." The authors should give at least brief information about how they recruited these people. How did they identify the sample? What means did they use to reach the potential sample?  
We add the following information: People living in Tuscany, Italy, were enrolled in this study through a quota sampling method stratified by gender and age groups (see Table 1). To reach the potential sample means that researcher has to reach at least 25 participants for the each cell of Table 1.

\*P. 14 "Moreover, both SDO ( $b = 0.11$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ ,  $Z = 3.46$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ,  $95\%CI [0.05 - 0.17]$ ) and RWA ( $b = 0.06$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ ,  $Z = 2.03$ ,  $p = 0.043$ ,  $95\%CI [0.02 - 0.12]$ ) significantly mediated the relationship between the in-group threat and prejudice; nevertheless, conservative beliefs did not mediate the relationship between in-group threat and PBI (SDO:  $b = -0.04$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ ,  $Z = 0.92$ ,  $p = 0.358$ ,  $95\%CI [-0.12 - 0.05]$ ; RWA:  $b = 0.05$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ ,  $Z = 1.11$ ,  $p = 0.268$ ,  $95\%CI [-0.04 - 0.14]$ )." It is unclear what the results in the parentheses represent. For example, was  $b=.11$  the relations between SDO and prejudice, SDO and in-group threat, or the indirect effect? Similarly, it is unclear what SDO:  $b = -.04$  represents. Also, to claim that there is a significant mediation, the authors need to report indirect effect.

We clarify as requested by the Reviewer

\* "P. 30-31, why did the authors use 90% CI when in other places they used 95% CI? In model fit, we report 90% CI because, for RMSEA, 90% CI is more informative than 95%CI and commonly recommended (see, e.g., Herzog & Boomsma (2009)).

## PREJUDICE AND PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS ASYLUM SEEKERS 1

**The role of perception of threats, conservative beliefs and prejudice on prosocial behavioural intention in favour of asylum seekers in a sample of Italian adults****Abstract**

Based on the Dual Process Model (DPM), this study investigates the relationship among the perception of in-group threats, conservative ideologies (social dominance orientation, SDO, and right-wing authoritarianism, RWA), prejudice, and prosocial behavioural intentions (PBI) towards asylum seekers. A sample of 200 people living in Italy answered an anonymous questionnaire administered using a cross-sectional design. The results partially supported the DPM's expectations while also showing, however, some unexpected effects with respect to behavioural intentions to help asylum seekers. As predicted by the DPM, the perception of in-group threats, whether realistic or symbolic, directly and indirectly (via SDO and RWA) affected prejudice against asylum seekers. SDO and RWA did not have a direct effect on behavioural intentions but their effects were totally mediated by prejudice. This is a novel finding and suggests that conservative ideologies can positively affect people's behaviour but only through a decreased attitudinal disposition towards asylum seekers. The theoretical and practical implications derived from the data are discussed.

*Keywords:* asylum seekers; prosocial behavioural intention; in-group threat; prejudice; ideological beliefs

## Introduction

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In recent years, the number of asylum claimants is significantly on the rise in Europe, thereby demonstrating that the world situation is certainly at a critical juncture and in a worrying state of regress with respect to fundamental human rights. Forced migration worldwide caused by wars, conflicts, and persecution has reached the highest levels recorded thus far and the numbers are rapidly increasing. By the end of 2016, 65.6 million individuals had been forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, violence or human rights violations, an increase of 300,000 people over the previous year. There were 2,826,508 asylum seekers, i.e., individuals who sought international protection and whose claims for refugee status have not yet been determined, irrespective of when they were lodged. Due to its central location in the Mediterranean Sea, Italy is the third country (after Germany and the USA) for the number of received new asylum claims in 2016 (122,972), with 247,992 people arriving by sea, often with tragic outcomes (UNHCR, 2016). A major political and social media debate on the migration emergency has generated stereotyped representations of asylum seekers as *bogus*, as victims, or as a threat to national borders (for a review see Bottura and Mancini 2016). From 2015, Italian newspapers, for example, have significantly increased the attention paid to the issue of immigration, which has encouraged feelings of solidarity in the native population and, often, feelings of being invaded and threatened (Barretta 2015).

Strong evidence exists in psychosocial literature showing that feelings of threats are strongly linked to prejudice against migrants (e.g., Stephan et al. 2009) and threats and prejudice are associated with ideological beliefs (e.g., Duckitt and Sibley 2010). Indeed, several studies consistently showed that perceived threats and ideological beliefs are core antecedents of prejudice against out-groups (e.g., Anderson 2018; Anderson and Ferguson 2018; Duckitt and Sibley 2010; Esses et al. 2008; Stephan et al. 2009).

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Nevertheless, to the best of our knowledge, two aspects are still under-investigated in psychosocial research: a) the role of threats and ideological beliefs in prejudice against a particular category of migrants, that is to say asylum seekers, and b) the relationship of threats and ideological beliefs with behavioural intention in favour of or against asylum seekers. The aim of this paper was to try to partially fill these gaps by investigating the relationship among threats (real and symbolic), ideological beliefs (RWA and SDO), prejudice, and behavioural intention toward asylum seekers in a sample of Italian people.

### **Threat and prejudice towards asylum seekers**

With the exception of some studies conducted in Australia (e.g., Canetti et al. 2016; Pedersen et al. 2005; Suhnan et al. 2012), few studies have explicitly investigated prejudice against asylum seekers. Most of the research has been focused on refugees instead, often including asylum seekers within this more general category (e.g., Schweitzer et al. 2005; Turoy-Smith et al. 2013). Compared to both economic migrants and refugees, contemporary asylum seekers are generally a more vulnerable group. The indefinite nature of their claim, their need for long-term assistance from the state, and doubts regarding the validity of their rights to seek asylum seem to bolster people's negative attitudes towards them (e.g., Canetti et al. 2016). Accordingly, studies, albeit few in number, have consistently highlighted that threat is a core issue that leads people to increase negative attitudes towards asylum seekers. For example, Louis, Duck, Terry, Schuller, and Lalonde (2007) analysed perceptions of structural and instrumental threats against asylum seekers in Australia and showed that these variables predicted unfavourable attitudes towards asylum seekers, support for exclusionary measures, and representation of asylum seekers as an over-benefited group. The topic of threat has also been highlighted in studies on the social representation of asylum seekers (e.g., Goodman and Burke 2010; Lynn and Lea 2003; Moloney 2010; Pearce and Stockdale 2009). Lynn and Lea (2003), studying the media construction of the representation of asylum

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seekers in the UK, underlined how the term *bogus* was used as a rhetorical device to reinforce a phantom threat, represented by the possibility that among asylum seekers there could be criminals or persons who had exploited resources by living off the government's generosity. In the study by Goodman and Burke (2011), religious grounds and the associated threat of terrorism were arguments that undergraduate students participating in focus groups used to oppose asylum. Other studies (e.g., Klocker 2004; Pedersen et al. 2005; Suhnan et al. 2012) pointed out how this rhetorical mechanism was powerful in spreading false beliefs about asylum seekers, beliefs that were related to high scores of threat and prejudice. For example, Pedersen, Watt and Griffiths (2007) found a significant and positive correlation between the perceived threat from terrorism and prejudice against asylum seekers in a sample of Australian people. In sum, the available evidence suggests that asylum seekers are often and easily perceived as a threat for the in-group.

### **Ideological beliefs (SDO/RWA) and prejudice towards asylum seekers**

Individual and ideological-based orientations such as social dominance orientation (SDO, Pratto et al. 1994) and right-wing authoritarianism (RWA, Altemeyer 1981) have been taken into account when looking at intergroup relations in reference to asylum seekers. SDO is meant to capture people's desire that social groups are arranged in an iniquitous social hierarchy, in which some groups dominate other groups. RWA, instead, captures people's desire for social order and protection of the in-group's worldview. In this way, SDO is considered as an ideology which increases people's desire to maintain and protect the social advantage of the in-group (e.g., material resources), while RWA appears to be linked to people's desire to defend the values, norms, and culture of the in-group (e.g., symbolic resources). Accordingly, the research confirmed that SDO and RWA, albeit related, are two independent antecedents of prejudice towards asylum seekers (Anderson 2018, Study 2; Anderson et al. 2015; Esses et al. 2008; Louis et al. 2007; Nickerson and Louis 2008). For

1 example, Esses and colleagues (2008) reported a significant and positive correlation between  
2 SDO and the tendency to dehumanise refugee claimants in Canada. Nickerson and Louis  
3  
4 (2008) showed that attitudes and feelings towards asylum seekers were more negative among  
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6 Australians with high levels of RWA and SDO. Some Australian studies showed that when  
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8 participants perceived asylum seekers as “cheaters” of the system, prejudicial attitudes  
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10 (Anderson et al., 2015) and endorsements for restriction of asylum seekers’ access (Louis et  
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12 al., 2007) predicted high scores for SDO and RWA. Conversely, when participants perceived  
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14 asylum seekers as being in a disadvantaged position and therefore in need of resources, low  
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16 scores for SDO and RWA predicted positive attitudes towards asylum seekers (Anderson et  
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18 al., 2015). Anderson’s (2018) cross-sectional studies provided further evidence that SDO  
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20 predicts negative attitudes towards asylum seekers at both an implicit and explicit level, and  
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22 RWA predicts negative explicit attitudes (Study 2). Finally, Anderson and Ferguson’s (2018)  
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24 recent meta-analysis showed that SDO and RWA are strongly correlated with anti-asylum  
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26 seeker sentiments.  
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### 33 **Behavioural intentions and prejudice towards asylum seekers**

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36 Behavioural intentions in favour of or against asylum seekers have also been rarely  
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38 analysed in psychosocial research which, instead, has focalized mostly on prejudices and  
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40 negative attitudes. This is somewhat surprising, given the relevance that behavioural  
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42 intentions and actual behaviours have for the relationships between asylum claimants and  
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44 native populations. As is well known, attitudes and behavioural intentions are linked to one  
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46 another, even though the strength of this relationship is highly variable, from weak to  
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48 moderate (Ajzen 1991; Ajzen and Fishbein 1980; Fishbein 2008). More importantly, attitudes  
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50 appear to be weakly predictive of actual behaviour, while behavioural intention appears to be  
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52 the most direct predictor of a range of behaviours (e.g. Albarracin et al. 2001). Meta-  
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54 analytical evidence shows that behavioural intentions predict from 19 to 38 per cent of the  
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1 variance of actual behaviour (Sutton 1998), suggesting that intentions to behave in a  
2 particular way are the immediate and best predictor of behaviour (see also Hutchison and  
3 Rosenthal 2010). For these reasons, investigating the antecedents of behavioural intentions in  
4 favour of or against asylum seekers, as well as their connections with prejudice, appears to be  
5 greatly relevant in order to better understand how people would behave toward asylum  
6 claimants.  
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13 Some studies have taken into account behavioural intention and its relationship with  
14 prejudice, but they have mainly analysed behavioural intentions in terms of the local  
15 population's support for exclusionary asylum policies (Canetti et al. 2016; Louis et al. 2007).  
16 For example, Canetti and co-workers (2016) showed that conservative political ideologies  
17 increased the threat perception held by members of both the Israeli and the Australian  
18 majority and that threat increased support for exclusionary asylum policies. Other studies  
19 considered variables related to intergroup relations, such as national identification (Nickerson  
20 and Louis 2008; Pehrson et al. 2009) or asylum seeker stereotypes (Verkuyten 2004). In a  
21 longitudinal study, Pehrson et al. (2009, study 2) confirmed that the more intense the  
22 definition of nationalism in a population, the more restrictive the behavioural intentions  
23 towards asylum seekers. Similarly, Nickerson and Louis (2008) found that Australian  
24 participants who strongly identified with asylum seekers as humans were also more positive  
25 in their behaviour towards asylum seekers than those who strongly identified with their own  
26 nationality. Using a scale of behaviours that analysed the participants' intentions to reduce  
27 the number of asylum seekers (for example, voting in a confidential ballot/referendum, taking  
28 part in a rally, or signing a petition), Louis and colleagues (2007) found that Australians'  
29 willingness to restrict the access of asylum seekers to their nation and its resources was  
30 predicted accurately by intergroup hostility and prejudice and by concerns for procedural and  
31 distributive fairness. Similarly in Europe, Verkuyten (2004) tested whether the influence of  
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1 anger and sympathy on policy support, and on opportunities and rights that asylum seekers  
2 should or should not receive, changed as a function of the way asylum seekers were defined  
3 as migrants with no choice but to migrate or as cheaters of the asylum system. The author  
4 found that, for genuine asylum seekers, feelings of sympathy predicted behavioural intentions  
5 in support of their plight whereas, for bogus asylum seekers, feelings of anger affected  
6 behavioural intentions against them.  
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14 Therefore, these studies seem to confirm a negative relation between prejudice, or  
15 variables affecting prejudice, and native people's support of political actions and policies  
16 towards asylum seekers. However, with the exception of Pehrson et al. (2009), none of these  
17 studies measured an active intention to extend aid to asylum seekers, as for example, in  
18 assisting a charity that was interested in getting young people involved in volunteer work  
19 with asylum seekers. Unlike the support for political actions or norms and policies towards  
20 immigration, "active" support assumes a more direct exposition of the host population to the  
21 needs of asylum seekers and therefore represents a more concrete and proximally related  
22 indicator of prosocial behaviour towards asylum seekers. In order to have a direct and active  
23 indicator, in this study we considered willingness to provide asylum seekers with material  
24 assistance in terms of hospitality, money or volunteer work as measure of the behavioural  
25 intentions in support of asylum seekers.  
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### 43 **Aim of the present study**

44 The aim of this work was to investigate the relationship among perceived threat, SDO,  
45 RWA, prejudice, and behavioural intention toward asylum seekers among a sample of Italian  
46 adults. In order to meet this goal, we considered the dual process model of ideology and  
47 prejudice (DPM, Duckitt 2001; 2006; Duckitt and Sibley 2010; Matthews et al. 2009) as a  
48 theoretical framework. The DPM posits that RWA and SDO are rooted in a dangerous  
49 (threatening) and competitive social worldview and that RWA and SDO would predict  
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prejudice depending on the extent to which migrants were perceived as threatening or deviant or as competitive and economically disadvantaged (Cohrs and Stelzl 2010). In the DPM, SDO and RWA follow two parallel but distinct ways in which SDO reflects a dimension of competition for intergroup dominance, while RWA reflects a dimension of reduction of in-group threat and research of collective in-group security. Both dimensions, however, contribute to increase prejudice and negative attitudes toward the competitive and threatening out-groups.

To the best of our knowledge, several studies have tested and supported the DPM's expectations considering prejudice against migrants as a primary outcome variable (e.g., Caricati et al. 2017; Cohrs and Stelzl 2010). However, no studies have until now verified the explicative role of the DPM on behavioral indicators, such as those related to the intention of helping someone. Nevertheless, we believe that DPM can easily be enlarged to also include expectation about behavioural intention, assuming that both prejudice and behavioural intentions are expressions of the same underlying psychosocial process. In other words, DPM leads to the expectation that both SDO- and RWA-ways decrease people's intention to engage in prosocial behaviours toward out-groups, which increases prejudice against these out-groups. Accordingly, based on the existing literature and DPM, the first expectation of this study was that for realistic and symbolic in-group threats, SDO, and RWA was positively associated with prejudice against asylum seekers (hypothesis 1A) and negatively associated with intentions to help them (hypothesis 1B). Moreover, in line with previous studies (e.g., Canetti et al. 2016; Louis et al. 2007; Nickerson and Louis 2008; Pehrson et al. 2009; Verkuyten 2004) we expected that the more people are prejudiced against asylum seekers the less they would be oriented to behave in favour of asylum seekers (hypothesis 2). Furthermore, based on the DPM and the evidence that RWA and SDO are affected by the extent to which a group is perceived as threatening (e.g., Caricati et al. 2017; Cohrs and Stelzl

2010; Duckitt and Sibley 2010; Matthews et al. 2009), we expected that the effect of a realistic threat on both prejudice against asylum seekers and intention to help them would be mediated by SDO (hypotheses 3A and 3B). In the same way, we expected that the effect of symbolic threat on both prejudice and prosocial behavioural intentions towards them would be mediated by RWA (hypotheses 4A and 4B). Similarly, we also expected that both realistic and symbolic in-group threats would affect the prosocial behavioural intentions towards asylum seekers through SDO (or RWA) and prejudice (hypothesis 5 and 6). Figure 1 shows this model.

## Method

### Design, participants and procedure

A survey questionnaire design was used. The first page of the questionnaire clearly stated that participation was voluntary and data collection was anonymous. Non-students were enrolled in the study using a snowball technique that followed a quota sampling method based on equal numbers ( $N = 25$ ) of male and female participants belonging to four age groups (18–34, 35–44, 45–55, and more than 55 years old).

**Sample.** People living in Tuscany, Italy, were enrolled in this study [through a quota sampling method stratified by gender and age groups \(see Table 1\)](#). Two hundred participants, with a mean age of 43.51 ( $SD = 13.41$ , range = 18–75 years), answered a questionnaire that was distributed and presented by a researcher. Table 1 describes the distribution of participants according to their gender and age groups.

### TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Almost all of the participants (197) were born in Italy, and the majority (167, 83.5%) were Catholic (32, 16.5% were atheist). More than three-quarters of the sample (154, 77.0%) were in paid employment. Only 19.0% said that they knew one or more asylum seekers. Finally, 155 participants (77.4%) had attained a bachelor's or master's degree level.

**Measures.** *Social dominance orientation* was measured with the Italian version of the short form of the SDO scale (Pratto et al. 2013, e.g., ‘Superior groups should dominate inferior groups’), which is composed of four items rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = disagree; 5 = agree).

*Right-wing authoritarianism* was measured with four items (e.g., ‘Obedience and respect for authority are the most important values children should learn’) taken from the authoritarian submission and aggression dimension of the Italian version of the RWA scale (Manganelli et al. 2007). Items were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = disagree; 5 = agree).

*In-group threat* was measured with a short version of the zero-sum beliefs scale (Esses et al. 2001). The scale is composed of 12 items rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = disagree, 5 = agree). Five items asked the participants to express their agreement with some statements referring to realistic threat (e.g., ‘Money spent on social services for asylum seekers means less money for services for Italians already living here’) and seven items referred to the symbolic threat from asylum seekers (i.e., ‘When asylum seekers are encouraged to maintain their cultural practices, Italian culture is weakened’). Confirmatory factor analysis with robust standard error estimation suggested that the two-factor model had an acceptable fit,  $\chi^2(51) = 88.49, p < .001, CFI = 0.924, TLI = 0.902, RMSEA = 0.061, 90\% CI [0.041 - 0.080], p = .175, SRMR = 0.054$ .

*Prejudice against asylum seekers* was measured with 17 items from the attitudes towards asylum seekers scale (ATAS) that Pedersen, Attwell, and Heveli designed in a [bottom-up](#) fashion in an Australian context (2005). Examples of items are: ‘Asylum seekers are manipulative in the way that they engage in self-harm protesting such as self-mutilation’, ‘I sympathise with the situation of asylum seekers’. Because the Australian context is different to the Italian one, three independent judges translated the 18 items and evaluated

1 their application to the situation of asylum seekers in Italy. One item of the original scale  
 2 (Asylum seekers who mutilate themselves would not make model citizens) was excluded  
 3 because it was judged to not be applicable to Italy. Responses were rated on a 5-point Likert-  
 4 type scale (1 = disagree, 5 = agree). Explorative factor analysis revealed that two items had  
 5 poor loading on the latent dimension and were weakly correlated with the total score. Thus,  
 6 these items were removed and the total score of the ATAS was computed on the remaining  
 7 15 items).

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 17 *Proactive behavioural intention* (PBI) was measured with three ad hoc items asking  
 18 participants to indicate the extent to which they would engage in some behaviours directed  
 19 towards asylum seekers (i.e., “host an asylum seeker for a few days”, “donate money to a  
 20 charity that deals with asylum seekers”, and “perform volunteer work in an association that  
 21 deals with asylum seekers”) on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = certainly not; 5 = certainly yes).

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 29 For all measures, the intended items were averaged to create a composite score in  
 30 which higher scores indicated higher levels of the measured constructs.

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40 Table 2 shows zero-order correlations among the considered variables as well as  
 41 descriptive statistics and internal reliability. As indicated, all scales had adequate internal  
 42 reliability and were significantly correlated with one another. As expected, SDO, RWA, and  
 43 in-group threat were positively correlated with prejudice against asylum seekers, which, in  
 44 turn, was negatively correlated with PBI. Finally, SDO and RWA were positively correlated  
 45 with both realistic and symbolic in-group threats. Moreover, the gender and age of the  
 46 participants affected none of the considered variables (all  $ps > 0.30$ ).

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In order to test the model, a path analysis was performed using maximum likelihood estimation with robust standard error estimation in order to take into account the possible non-normality of some variables. The R software package (R Core Team 2015) was used to perform the analyses. As indicated above, realistic and symbolic in-group threats, SDO, and RWA were the primary antecedents of both prejudice (ATAS; H1A) and pro-social behaviour intentions (PBI; H1B); prejudice was the primary antecedent of PBI (H2). Based on the DMP (Duckitt and Sibley 2010), SDO was considered as mediating the effect of realistic in-group threat on both ATAS (H3A) and PBI (H3B), and RWA as mediating the effect of symbolic in-group threat on both ATAS (H4A) and PBI (H4B). Finally, it was expected that realistic and symbolic in-group threats would indirectly affect PBI via SDO and ATAS or RWA and ATAS respectively (H5 and H6).

#### FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

Figure 1 shows the results of the path analysis. As one can see in Figure 1, in accordance with hypothesis 1A, both realistic ( $b = 0.11$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ ,  $Z = 1.96$ ,  $p = .05$ , 95%CI [0.00, 0.21]) and symbolic threats ( $b = 0.32$ ,  $SE = 0.06$ ,  $Z = 5.03$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95%CI [0.19, 0.44]), and both SDO ( $b = 0.18$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ ,  $Z = 3.75$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95%CI [0.08, 0.27]) and RWA ( $b = 0.10$ ,  $SE = 0.04$ ,  $Z = 2.28$ ,  $p = .023$ , 95%CI [0.01, 0.18]) significantly and positively predicted prejudice against asylum seekers. However, contrary to hypothesis 1B, only realistic threats significantly and negatively predicted intention to act with prosocial behaviours towards asylum seekers ( $b = -0.32$ ,  $SE = 0.09$ ,  $Z = 3.35$ ,  $p = .001$ , 95%CI [-0.50, -0.13]). Furthermore, as expected from hypothesis 2, prejudice decreased people's intention to act with prosocial behaviours towards asylum seekers ( $b = -0.61$ ,  $SE = 0.11$ ,  $Z = 5.48$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95%CI [-0.82, -0.39]). Moreover, in accordance with hypotheses 3A and 4A, SDO significantly ( $b = 0.07$ ,  $SE = 0.02$ ,  $Z = 3.07$ ,  $p = .002$ , 95%CI [0.02, 0.11]) mediated the relationship between realistic in-group threat and prejudice, while RWA significantly

1 mediated ( $b = 0.06$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ ,  $Z = 2.12$ ,  $p = .034$ , 95%CI [0.004, 0.11]) the relationship  
 2 between symbolic in-group threat and prejudice. However, in contrast to hypothesis 3B, the  
 3 relationship between realistic in-group threat and PBI was not significantly mediated by SDO  
 4 ( $b = -0.04$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ ,  $Z = 1.13$ ,  $p = .259$ , 95%CI [-0.10, 0.03]). Similarly, in contrast to  
 5 hypothesis 4B, the relationship between symbolic in-group threat and PBI was not  
 6 significantly mediated by RWA ( $b = 0.06$ ,  $SE = 0.04$ ,  $Z = 1.43$ ,  $p = .153$ , 95%CI [-0.02,  
 7 0.14]). Finally, as expected from hypotheses 5 and 6, realistic in-group threat had a  
 8 significant total indirect effect – through the mediation of both SDO and prejudice – on PBI  
 9 ( $b = -0.10$ ,  $SE = 0.04$ ,  $Z = 2.84$ ,  $p = .004$ , 95%CI [-0.18, -0.03]), and symbolic in-group threat  
 10 had a significant total indirect effect – through the mediation of both RWA and prejudice –  
 11 on PBI ( $b = -0.23$ ,  $SE = 0.06$ ,  $Z = 3.74$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95%CI [-0.34, -0.11]). This model explained  
 12 the considerable amount of variance of both PBI and prejudice ( $R^2 = .40$  and  $R^2 = .50$   
 13 respectively). On the whole, however, the model did not have an excellent fit (Hu & Bentler,  
 14 1999):  $\chi^2(3) = 37.98$ ,  $p < .001$ , CFI = 0.912, TLI = 0.559, RMSEA = 0.241, 90% CI = 0.185 -  
 15 0.302,  $p < .001$ , SRMR = 0.079.

16 Considering the high correlation between realistic and symbolic in-group threats, as  
 17 well as the similar correlation between both the two types of threats and SDO and RWA  
 18 (Table 2), a second model was tested, in which a single threat predictor was considered.

#### 19 FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

20 This second model (Figure 2) had a good fit:  $\chi^2(1) = 0.010$ ,  $p = .920$ , CFI = 1.00, TLI  
 21 = 1.00, RMSEA = 0.000, 90% CI = .000 - .065,  $p = 0.919$ , SRMR = 0.001, and accounted for  
 22 38% of the variance of the PBI. In accordance with the previous model, this second model  
 23 confirmed only some of the hypotheses of the study: the in-group threat ( $b = 0.41$ ,  $SE = 0.06$ ,  
 24  $Z = 6.91$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95%CI [0.29, 0.52]) and conservative beliefs (SDO,  $b = 0.19$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ ,  
 25  $Z = 3.91$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95%CI [0.09, 0.28]), and RWA,  $b = 0.09$ ,  $SE = 0.04$ ,  $Z = 2.10$ ,  $p = .036$ ,

95%CI [0.01, 0.17]) significantly and positively predicted prejudice against asylum seekers (hypothesis 1A); in partial contrast to hypothesis 1B, only in-group threat ( $b = -0.34$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ ,  $Z = 3.39$ ,  $p = 0.001$ , 95%CI [-0.54, -0.14]) significantly and negatively predicted intention to act with prosocial behaviours towards asylum seekers. Confirming hypothesis 2, prejudice decreased people's intention to act with prosocial behaviours towards asylum seekers ( $b = -0.58$ ,  $SE = 0.11$ ,  $Z = 5.06$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95%CI [-0.80, -0.35]). Moreover, ingroup threat had indirect effects on prejudice through both SDO ( $b = 0.11$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ ,  $Z = 3.46$ ,  $p = 0.001$ , 95%CI [0.05, 0.17]) and RWA ( $b = 0.06$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ ,  $Z = 2.03$ ,  $p = 0.043$ , 95%CI [0.02, 0.12]); nevertheless, conservative beliefs did not mediate the relationship between in-group threat and PBI (indirect effect through SDO:  $b = -0.04$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ ,  $Z = 0.92$ ,  $p = 0.358$ , 95%CI [-0.12, 0.05]; indirect effect through RWA:  $b = 0.05$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ ,  $Z = 1.11$ ,  $p = 0.268$ , 95%CI [-0.04, 0.14]). However, the in-group threat had a significant total indirect effect – through the mediation of both SDO and prejudice – on PBI ( $b = -0.32$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ ,  $Z = 4.12$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95%CI [-0.47, -0.17]).

### Discussion and conclusion

Using the dual-process model of ideology and prejudice (Duckitt 2001) as a theoretical framework, the aim of the present research was to investigate whether realistic and symbolic in-group threats and conservative ideologies (i.e., SDO and RWA), would affect both prejudice against and prosocial behavioural intentions towards asylum seekers. The present study is novel, given that psychosocial literature only rarely focuses on asylum seekers and behavioural intentions, focalizing mostly on prejudice against migrants in general or refugees. First, that of asylum seekers is a timely topic, given the impact of the surge in asylum seekers in various European countries, and especially in Italy. The capacity to meet the needs of this particularly vulnerable subgroup of migrants through adequate infrastructure, ideology, and host country attitudes is therefore an important topic of research

1 (Mancini et al. 2018a). This study has provided some insight into how attitudinal research can  
2 help to improve the reception of asylum seekers in host countries. Second, to the best of our  
3 knowledge, the present work is one of the first studies to take into account, along with  
4 prejudice, the intention to act pro-socially towards asylum seekers and to investigate  
5 behavioural intentions in favour of asylum seekers through a measure of willingness to give  
6 active and concrete aid to asylum seekers. Specifically, this study has tried to assess the  
7 psychological processes which can affect the prosocial behavioural intentions of the local  
8 population towards asylum seekers.  
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20 Results indicated that the perception of asylum seekers as a threat for the in-group  
21 resources or values strongly and directly affected prejudice against this group. More  
22 precisely, supporting DPM and previous studies (Klocker 2004; Louis et al. 2007; Pedersen  
23 et al. 2005; Suhnan et al. 2012), higher scores of realistic and symbolic in-group threats were  
24 associated with increased prejudice. Again, supporting the DPM and previous studies (e.g.,  
25 Caricati et al. 2017; Jost et al. 2003), SDO and RWA appeared to be boosted by perceived  
26 threats and to increase prejudice against asylum seekers. Moreover, SDO and RWA partially  
27 mediated the effect of threats on prejudice confirming, thus, the important role of  
28 conservative ideologies in fuelling prejudicial attitudes (Duckitt 2001; 2006). In line with  
29 studies showing the important role of in-group threat on intergroup relations (e.g., Canetti et  
30 al. 2016; Louis et al. 2007; Suhnan et al. 2012), the effects of in-group threat also extended to  
31 the conative domain so that perceived threat appeared to affect prosocial behavioural  
32 intentions directly. It is worth noting that the first model suggested that realistic more than  
33 symbolic perceived threat appears to be the most powerful motivational thrust for denying  
34 help to asylum seekers. Model two, however, indicated that a composite measure of threat is  
35 associated with pro-social behavioural intentions in both direct and indirect (i.e., via  
36 prejudice) fashions. Interestingly, prejudice was positively and significantly associated with a  
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1 decrease in intention to act pro-socially (i.e., hosting an asylum seeker for a few days,  
2 donating money to a charity that deals with asylum seekers, and volunteering to work in an  
3 association that deals with asylum seekers). This finding is in line with studies showing that  
4 the more people are prejudiced against asylum seekers, the less supportive they are for  
5 inclusion policies and non-restrictive actions towards asylum seekers (Canetti et al. 2016;  
6 Louis et al. 2007; Nickerson and Louis 2008; Pherson et al. 2009; Verkuyten 2004). This  
7 result is also consistent with the Reasoned Action Approach (Ajzen 1991; Ajzen and Fishbein  
8 1980; Fishbein 2008) supporting the idea that attitudes and behavioural intentions are linked  
9 one to another.  
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22 Other results did not support our expectations and DPM and evidenced some new  
23 interesting findings. First, we were not able to clearly distinguish the two distinct processes  
24 which are hypothesised by the DPM. More precisely, symbolic and realistic threats have  
25 similar effects on both SDO and RWA so it is virtually impossible distinguish their effects.  
26 Thus, contrary to DPM (Duckitt 2001; 2006) and previous findings (Caricati et al. 2017;  
27 Cohrs and Stelzl 2010; Duckitt and Sibley, 2010; Matthews et al. 2009), conservative beliefs  
28 increased prejudice against asylum seekers, but this did not occur through the two distinct  
29 hypothesised paths in which a) realistic in-group threat increased prejudice via SDO, and b)  
30 symbolic in-group threat increased prejudice via RWA. A possible explanation for this  
31 unexpected result might rely on both the specific target considered in this study – asylum  
32 seekers – and the particular situation in which the data have been collected. The migration  
33 emergency and the large number of asylum claimants that in recent years have reached the  
34 Italian coast has increased the fear of invasion among the native population. Together, the  
35 rhetoric of the Italian media has documented the arrival of the asylum claimants mainly by  
36 contraposing images of landings and images of deaths at sea (Barretta 2015). These images  
37 have probably mixed fears that asylum seekers are deviant or competitive with fears that  
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asylum seekers are disadvantaged people who need the help of western countries. Therefore, it might be that both fears of threat and invasion (realistic threat) and feelings of compassion and piety towards people from a different culture (symbolic threat) have been stimulated among the native population, making the perception of the sources of threat less clear and more mixed, as shown in recent Italian studies (e.g., Caricati et al. 2017; Mancini et al. 2018b).

Another unexpected result was that conservative ideologies had no direct effects on behavioural intentions because their effects were completely mediated by prejudice. In other words, the present results suggest that conservative ideologies (i.e. SDO and RWA) could affect people's behavioural intentions (i.e., discrimination or favouritism towards a group) only through an increased or decreased attitudinal disposition towards an out-group, highlighting that the effect of conservative ideologies may be limited to the attitudinal domain (e.g., Saunders et al. 2016). This might suggest that prejudice and intention to help asylum seekers are not expressions of the same underlying psychosocial process. However, as we have discussed above, this result could be target specific, sample specific, and culture specific, so other studies with other group targets and with other populations should be done in order to confirm our results.

From a practical point of view, these results provide a road to understanding how to ameliorate prosocial behaviours, i.e., the practical ways in which people demonstrate behavioural intentions, through hospitality, money or volunteerism. According to the studies that show that behavioural intentions predict actual behaviour (e.g., Sutton 1998; Hutchison and Rosenthal 2010), we can suppose that the intention to act pro-socially can stimulate behaviors of effective help towards asylum seekers. The results of this study show that, in order to increase pro-social behaviours, the perception of the host population's worries about asylum seekers should be reduced. This is the reason why political and social interventions,

1 as well as media communication, should promote and sustain the idea that asylum seekers are  
2 more of a resource than a threat for the host population. European research on the economic  
3 impact of refugees who arrived as asylum seekers is only at the early stage. The International  
4 Monetary Fund staff (IMF, 2016) estimated that, on a Gross Domestic Product-weighted  
5 basis, average budgetary expenses for asylum seekers in EU countries will add up to around  
6 0.19% in 2016. However, in time, as the new arrivals integrate into the workforce, they are  
7 expected to boost annual output by 0.1% for the EU as a whole and, given the relative youth  
8 of the migrants, to help (in a small way) to reverse the upward creep of the cost of state  
9 pensions. There is evidence in Australia, a country that has been facing the problem of forced  
10 migration for a long time, that refugees can be beneficial to the general economy (e.g.,  
11 Stilwell 2003).

12 The study described in this paper has some important limitations. First, it must be  
13 emphasized that only the explicit, classical component of prejudice has been measured  
14 (Anderson 2017; Anderson and Cheers 2017) in this study. Thus, a generalization of our  
15 results to other components of prejudice – such as modern prejudice (Akrami, Ekerhammar,  
16 and Araya 2000) and conditional prejudice (Anderson 2017) – is not possible. The second  
17 rests on the correlational nature of the research design. This, as is known, suggests that  
18 caution should be used when inferring causal relationships among variables. Moreover, the  
19 results may be affected by common method bias. Overall, these limitations may have affected  
20 the results and limited the generalizability of the findings. Replicating our model in other  
21 samples and/or in a more controlled manner, for example manipulating in-group threat, could  
22 strengthen the results. In general, more research is necessary in order to demonstrate how  
23 threats, conservative ideologies and prejudice affect pro-social behavioural intentions in  
24 different samples: for example, in the policemen who work at the national borders and along  
25 the Mediterranean migrant routes, in people who live close to the reception centres, or in  
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1 professionals working with forced migrants. Further studies could explore other predicting  
2 variables such as the inclination of people to conform to social norms, for example, the norm  
3 of helping a person in need. As to professionals working with forced migrants, it could be  
4 very useful to study how these pro-social behavioural intentions could drive the quality of  
5 their professional actions. It would also be interesting to conduct interviews with laypeople,  
6 service providers, and others to gain a deep understanding of why they engage in pro-social  
7 behaviour towards asylum seekers. Another question that needs to be explored is how  
8 religion might promote or limit one's pro-social behavioural intentions. Due to the fact that  
9 83.5% of this sample group were Catholic, no conclusion about this question was possible in  
10 this study. As one study conducted in Australia showed (Perry et al. 2015), Christians were  
11 less likely to hold prejudice towards asylum seekers compared with non-Christians  
12 participants, but this occurred only when RWA was taken into account. Therefore, exploring  
13 the effects of religious identity in Italy would be an interesting new line of research. Finally,  
14 in light of the Syrian refugee crisis, it would be interesting to examine the rhetoric of  
15 'terrorism/terrorists' as another layer of prejudice or in-group threat perception towards this  
16 group of asylum seekers and whether or not this rhetoric adversely affects behavioural  
17 intentions. However, despite these shortcomings, we believe that the results are robust  
18 enough to offer some useful suggestions for dealing with prejudice against asylum seekers –  
19 or at least with the explicit component of it – and for improving the reception of asylum  
20 seekers in host countries. The results of this research suggest that reducing the fear of threat  
21 and invasion among the native population, a threat that the Italian media and political rhetoric  
22 always contribute to reinforcing (Barretta 2015), is an important goal to achieve in order to  
23 encourage pro-social attitudes towards asylum seekers.

24 This research has some practical implications not only for laypeople, but also for  
25 those who provide professional assistance to asylum seekers. We must not forget that  
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1 encouraging prosocial behaviours in a native population is not only an expected action in a  
2 civilized country, but also a necessity at this particular historical moment. The migration  
3 crisis and the large number of asylum claimants that some European countries have to  
4 manage means that, today, more and more people are involved with asylum seekers. Some of  
5 these individuals provide services, others offer or refuse political and material support, and  
6 others are engaged in charity. Whatever the reasons people interact with asylum seekers, it is  
7 their feeling of perceived threat and their prejudice that improve or hinder their pro-social  
8 actions. How these actions could be driven is not without consequence for the quality of the  
9 reception of asylum systems, for the integration of asylum seekers in the host society, and for  
10 asylum seekers' wellbeing, as some studies (e.g., Mancini et al. 2018a) and reviews have  
11 shown (Rossi and Mancini 2016). This is the reason why European countries should promote  
12 positive and prosocial behaviours both in the local population and in professionals connected  
13 with asylum systems. Raising awareness in the local population seems to serve this aim, as  
14 some reception projects in Italy seem to show (see for example the projects in which refugees  
15 are hosted in Italian families).

#### 41 **Compliance with Ethical Standards**

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46 **Conflict of Interest:** The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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51 **Funding:** The authors declare that they have no funding source to report.

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56 **Ethical Approval:** All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in  
57 accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee

and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

**Informed Consent:** Informed consent was obtained from all participants included in the study.

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Table 1

Sample characteristics: gender and age groups

|            |                        | Women       | Men        | Total        |
|------------|------------------------|-------------|------------|--------------|
| Age groups | 18-34                  | 25 (12.5%)  | 26 (13.0%) | 51 (25.5%)   |
|            | 35-44                  | 28 (14.0%)  | 25 (12.5%) | 53 (26.5%)   |
|            | 45-54                  | 24 (12.0%)  | 23 (11.5%) | 47 (23.5%)   |
|            | more than 55 years old | 28 (14.0%)  | 21 (10.5%) | 49 (24.5%)   |
| Total      |                        | 105 (52.5%) | 95 (47.5%) | 200 (100.0%) |

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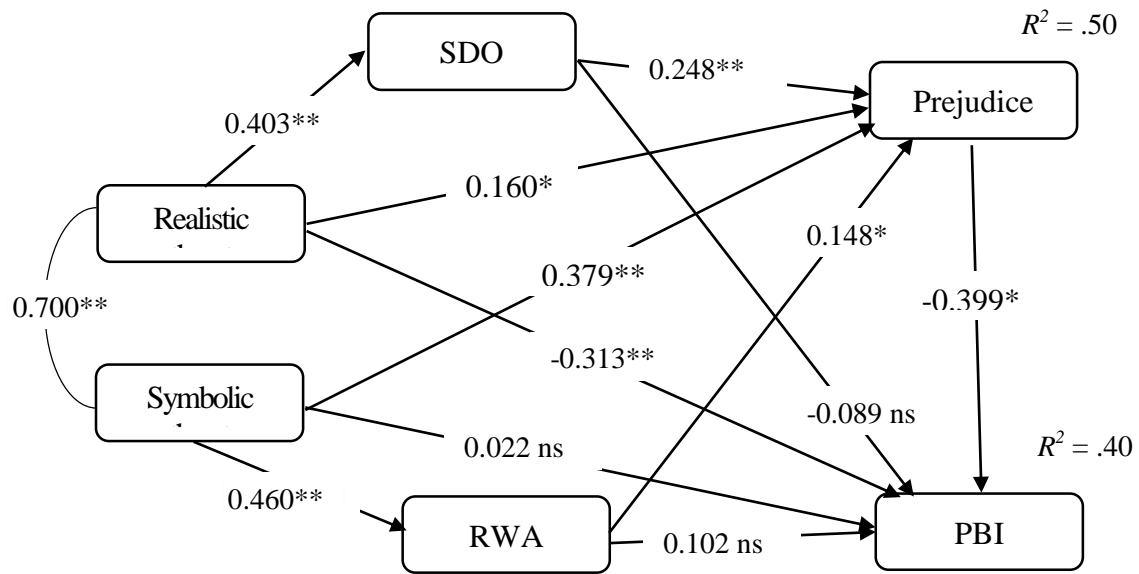
Table 2

*Zero-order correlations, Cronbach's alpha, mean and standard deviation of considered measures*

|              | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | Prejudice |         | Threat (zero-sum) |          |         | SDO     | RWA     |
|--------------|----------|-----------|-----------|---------|-------------------|----------|---------|---------|---------|
|              |          |           | PBI       | (ATAS)  | Realistic         | Symbolic | Total   |         |         |
| PBI          | 2.72     | 1.06      | 0.75      | -0.58** | -0.52**           | -0.47**  | -0.54** | -0.39** | -0.27** |
| ATAS         | 2.71     | 0.72      |           | 0.84    | 0.59**            | 0.67**   | 0.68**  | 0.53**  | 0.46**  |
| Realistic    | 2.94     | 1.05      |           |         | 0.71              | 0.70**   | 0.91**  | 0.40**  | 0.53**  |
| Symbolic     | 2.56     | 0.84      |           |         |                   | 0.78     | 0.93    | 0.52**  | 0.46**  |
| Total threat | 2.71     | 0.86      |           |         |                   |          | 0.84    | 0.50**  | 0.54**  |
| SDO          | 2.14     | 0.99      |           |         |                   |          |         | 0.70    | 0.27**  |
| RWA          | 3.16     | 1.07      |           |         |                   |          |         |         | 0.75    |

Note: \*\* $p < .01$ . Cronbach's alpha on the diagonal; SDO = social dominance orientation; RWA = Right-wing authoritarianism; PBI = prosocial behavioural intention.

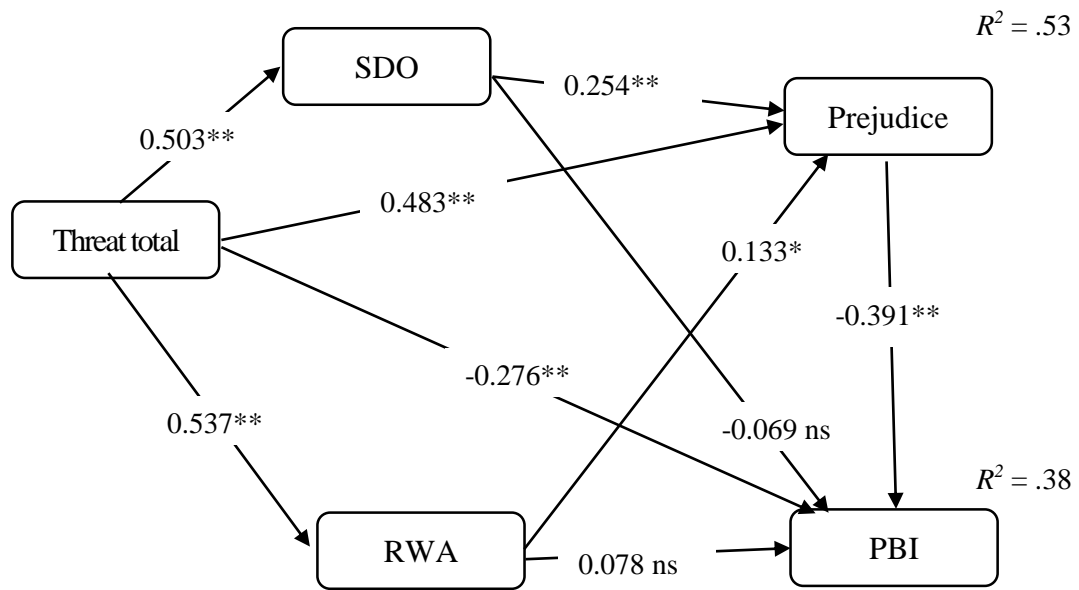
Figure 1. Results from path analysis on the tested model (model 1).



Fully standardized coefficients are reported. \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; ns = not significant.

Overall fit:  $\chi^2(3) = 37.98$ ,  $p < .001$ , CFI = 0.912, TLI = 0.559, RMSEA = 0.241, 90% CI = .185 - .302,  $p < .001$ , SRMR = 0.079.

Figure 2. Results from path analysis on the tested model (model 2).



Fully standardized coefficients are reported. \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; ns = not significant.

Overall fit:  $\chi^2(1) = 0.010$ ,  $p = 0.920$ , CFI = 1.000, TLI = 1.000, RMSEA = 0.000, 90% CI = 0.000 - 0.065,  $p = 0.919$ , SRMR = 0.001.

**The role of perception of threats, conservative beliefs and prejudice on prosocial behavioural intention in favour of asylum seekers in a sample of Italian adults.**

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