~NOTTINGHAM~

Workshop on Aggression 2004

CYBERHATE THAT TARGETS PEOPLE WHO ARE PLUS-SIZE IN THE NEWS: ONLINE EXPERIMENT ON BYSTANDERS' ASSESSMENTS AND BEHAVIOURAL INTENTIONS

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WHAT AFFECTS BYSTANDERS' RESPONSES TOWARDS CYBERHATE IN SOCIAL MEDIA NEWS? AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY OF HATE AGAINST PLUS-SIZE PEOPLE

CYBER PLUS⁺

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MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, YOUTH AND SPORTS

MUNI FSS

Interdisciplinary Research Team on Internet and Society

AdMe Research Group

linktr.ee/cyberplus_2024

CYBERHATE AND SOCIAL MEDIA NEWS

CYBERHATE

Online **hate speech**, **cyberaggression** and **content** motivated by **intergroup bias** and attacking people due to their **group membership**

(Council of Europe, 2022; Kansok-Dusche et al., 2023; Mondal et al., 2017)

Increasingly present on **social media** and in **news discussions**

(Hawdon et al., 2015; Pöyhtäri, 2014; Reichelmann et al., 2020; Zannettou et al., 2020)

Physical appearance and **weight**

(Chandrasekharan et al., 2017; Jaron Bedrosova et al., 2024; Jeon et al., 2018; Puhl et al., 2013; Saleem et al., 2017; Sylwander, 2019)

Weight bias in media and society

(Pearl & Schulte, 2021; Selensky et al., 2021)

ONLINE NEWS

BYSTANDERS' REACTIONS

Their appraisal and reaction can influence the whole incident

Joining in and proliferating hate

Engaging in **counter-speech** or **supporting victims**

Staying **passive**

(Domínguez-Hernández et al., 2018; Rudnicki et al., 2022; Wachs & Wright, 2018)

What influences bystanders' appraisals and active behavioural intentions?

Individual characteristics

Media-related factors

HATE

Appraisal

Reaction

STUDY CONTRIBUTION

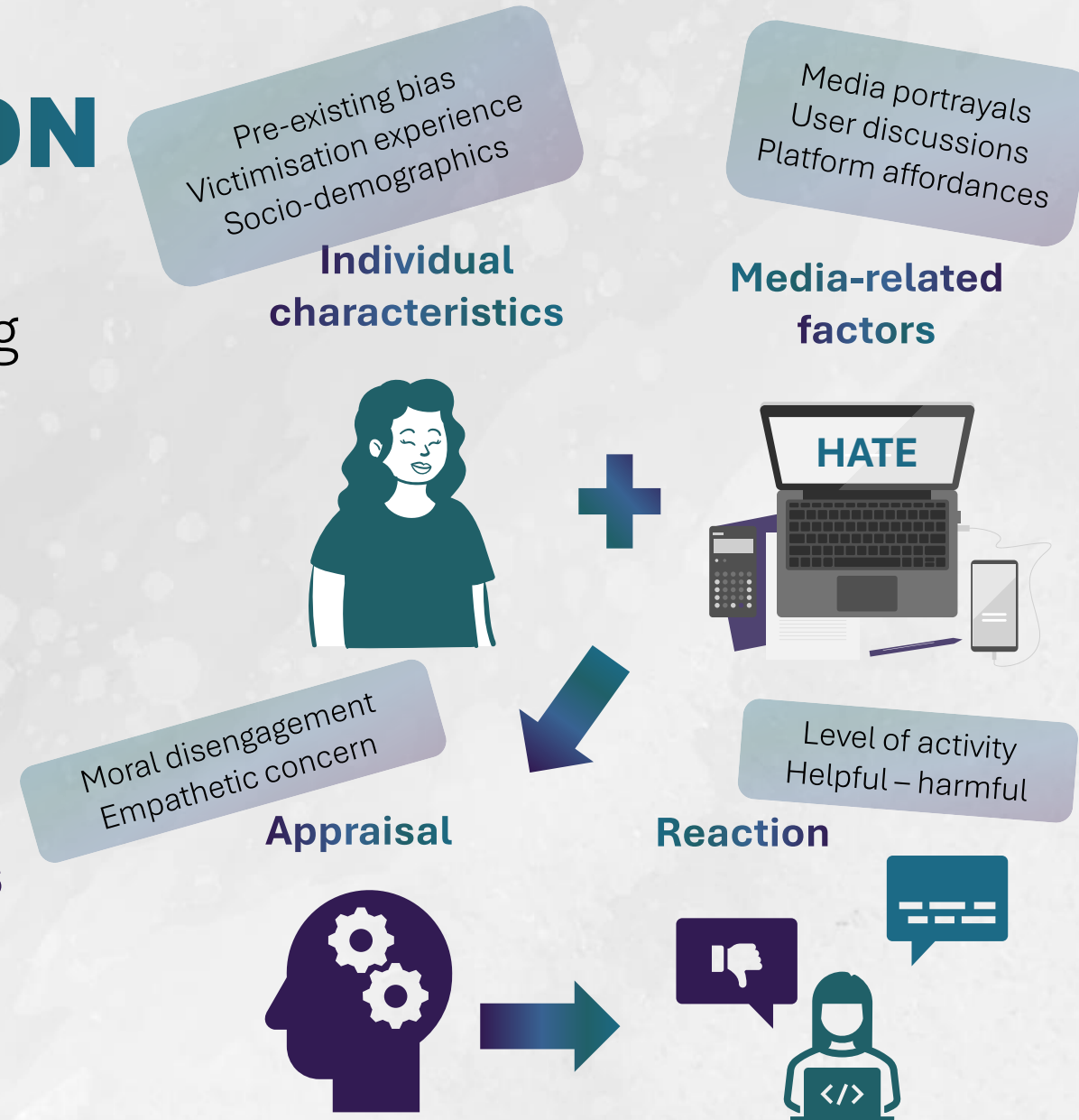Complex model of factors influencing bystanders' behavioural intentions

Compound role of **individual-** and **media-related aspects**

Cognitive and **affective** appraisals
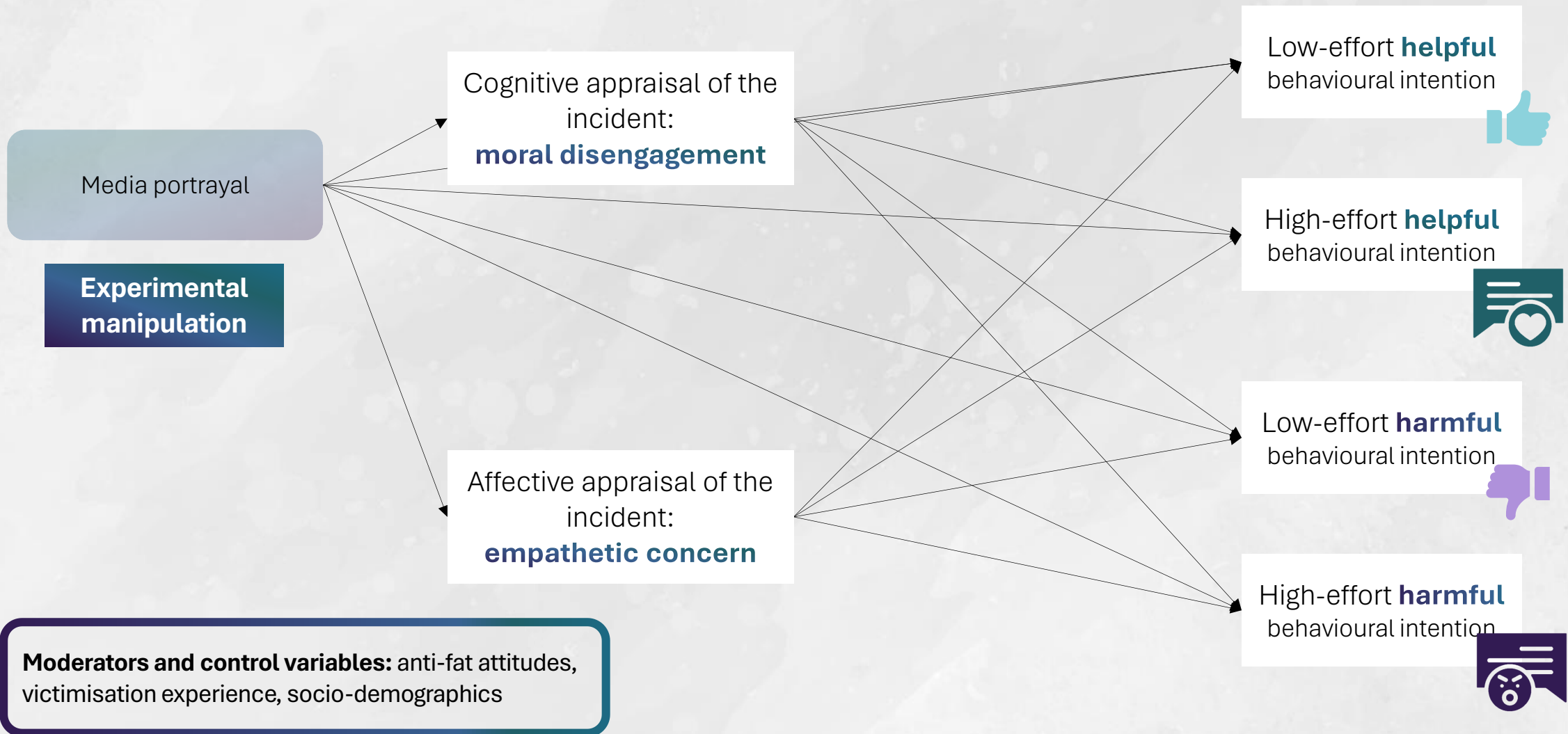
Complexity of **behavioural intentions**

Level of **activity** (low-effort/high-effort activity)
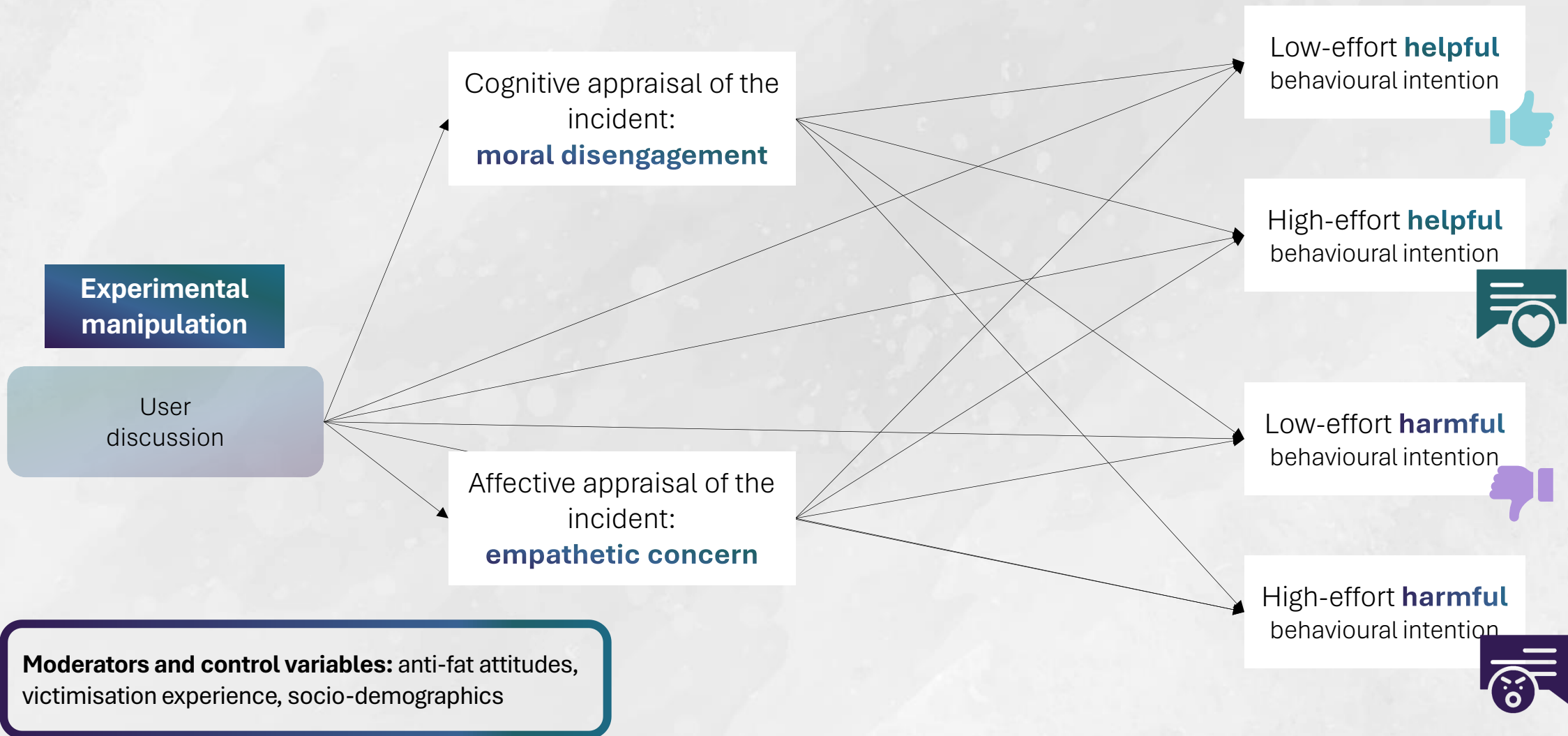
Level of **valence** (helpful/harmful)

Pre-existing bias
Victimisation experience
Socio-demographics

Individual characteristics

Media portrayals
User discussions
Platform affordances

Media-related factors

HATE

Moral disengagement
Empathetic concern

Appraisal

Level of activity
Helpful – harmful

Reaction

THEORETICAL MODEL – 2×2×2 EXPERIMENT

Exposure to **cyberhate targeting people who are overweight** in **news posts** on social media

Media portrayal

Experimental manipulation

Cognitive appraisal of the incident:
moral disengagement

Affective appraisal of the incident:
empathetic concern

Low-effort **helpful** behavioural intention

High-effort **helpful** behavioural intention

Low-effort **harmful** behavioural intention

High-effort **harmful** behavioural intention

Moderators and control variables: anti-fat attitudes, victimisation experience, socio-demographics

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METHODS

Online survey (CAWI)

July 2024
Czech Republic

N = 1,030
51.5% women

16-25 yo
M_{age} = 20.4
SD = 2.8

Online experiment 2×2×2
3 experimental manipulations

Multiple-message design
3 social media posts = a series of articles on the same topic

PRE-REGISTRATION

OSF
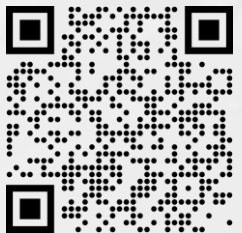
osf.io/9wcfg

STIMULI
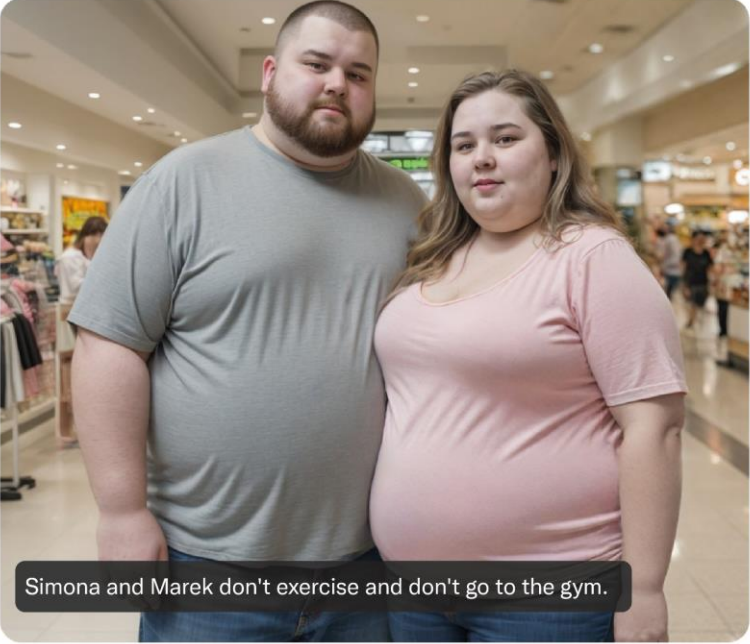
Names, age and personal information vs. „obese people"

Photo with faces vs. only body

STIMULI

Bias reinforcing vs. bias contradicting
user comments

„Helpful" vs. „hurtful"
comments by other
users in the discussion

Post

STORY: Plus-size measurements or giant size? There are a growing number of plus-size people around us, yet all they would have to do is look in the mirror and do something about themselves instead of watching TV. But that's not happening. Roommates Aneta (24) and Dominik (25) have trouble finding clothes, but the extra pounds don't bother them. They invited us into their home and showed us their typical day.

Aneta and Dominik are over-sized, but don't care about the extra pounds.

12:46 · 19 Jun 2024 · **991** Views

💬 3   🔁 11   ♡ 29   🔖 1   ⬆

👤 Post your reply   **Reply**

Bára Sv. @barborasvo · 3 h
Shall we buy them a mirror so they can see how ugly they are?? 🤣🤣
💬   🔁   ♡   �签 173   🔖 ⬆

Štěpán Král @step_kral · 1 h
I hate these whales in the summer. 😫😫 Fat people have no judgment 👤
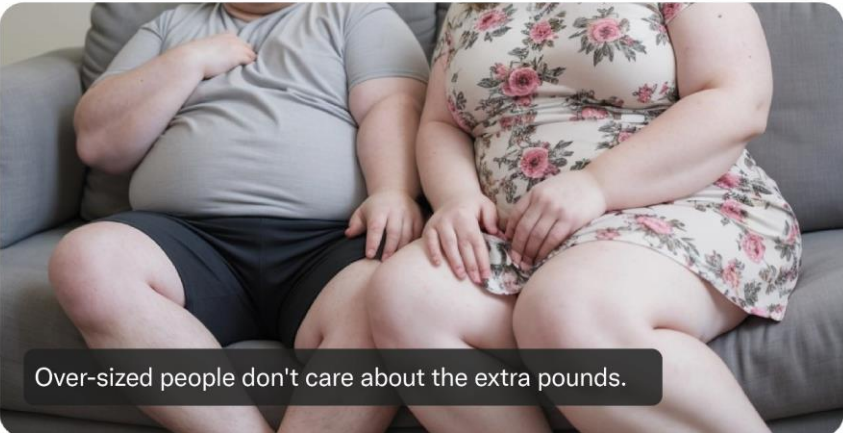💬   🔁   ♡   �签 246   🔖

Post

STORY: Plus-size measurements or giant size? There are a growing number of plus-size people around us, yet all they would have to do is look in the mirror and do something about themselves instead of watching TV. But that's not happening. Oversized people have trouble finding clothes, but the extra pounds don't bother them. Read how obese people spend their days.

Over-sized people don't care about the extra pounds.

12:46 · 19 Jun 2024 · **991** Views

💬 3   🔁 11   ♡ 29   🔖 1   ⬆

👤 Post your reply   **Reply**

Bára Sv. @barborasvo · 3 h
aha, another article that insults overweight people... I don't understand that you write such nasty things about overweight people 😔
💬   🔁   ♡   �签 173   🔖 ⬆

Štěpán Král @step_kral · 1 h
Giant size?! You guys have really hit rock bottom. All bodies are beautiful, don't judge people
💬   🔁   ♡   ⽈ 246   🔖 ⬆

STIMULI

AI writing assistant included and turned on vs. not included

Try out the new user feature and write your posts, comments and messages more easily!
The AI feature that helps you generate texts or improve your wording is ON. Precede your instructions with a slash /.

MEASURES - MEDIATORS

MORAL DISENGAGEMENT

Victim blaming and minimising consequences dimensions

(Garland et al., 2017; Weber et al., 2013)

4 VB items + 7 MC items, 7-point response scale

E.g., *It's overweight people's fault these articles were written about them; No one has ever died because of such articles.*

ω = .85. *M* = 2.88, *SD* = 1.16

Cognitive appraisal

EMPATHETIC CONCERN

(Knauf et al., 2018; Wachs e al., 2023)

6 items, 5-point response scale

E.g., *Seeing these articles affected me deeply; I could well imagine how bad it must be for overweight people.*

ω = .91. *M* = 2.87, *SD* = 1.14

Affective appraisal

MEASURES – DEPENDENT VARIABLES

BEHAVIOURAL INTENTIONS

(based on DIGIHATE, 2024)

9 items

People who see such articles on social media may behave differently. Below you can see a list of some possible reactions to them.

How likely would react in these ways?

(1) definitely not – (5) definitely yes

OPEN-ENDED QUESTION

Could you please indicate the main reasons you considered when choosing your reaction?

M = 1.82, *SD* = 1.07

1) Writing a hurtful comment
2) Sharing and writing a hateful post
3) Writing a hurtful message

M = 2.89, *SD* = 1.16

4) Writing a helpful comment
5) Sharing and writing a helpful post
6) Writing a helpful message

HIGH-EFFORT

HARMFUL   HELPFUL

M = 2.17, *SD* = 1.21

7) Liking the hateful post

M = 3.04, *SD* = 1.22

8) Reporting the hateful post
9) Blocking or muting the author

LOW-EFFORT

STAYING PASSIVE   *M* = 3.78, *SD* = 1.15

MEASURES – MODERATOR

ANTI-FAT ATTITUDES

(Lewis et al., 1997)

6 items, 7-point response scale

E.g., *Most overweight people are lazy; If overweight people really wanted to lose weight, they could.*

ω = .85. *M* = 4.07, *SD* = 1.13

CONTROL VARIABLES

Socio-demographic variables (gender, age, SES)

Cyberhate victimisation due to being overweight

Time spent online

Frequency of online news consumption

RESULTS – EXPERIMENTAL MANIPULATIONS

Manipulations checks ☑

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Manipulations checks ☑

Media portrayal

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User discussion

Cognitive appraisal of the incident:
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Low-effort **helpful**

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Low-effort **harmful**

High-effort **harmful**

Platform affordance
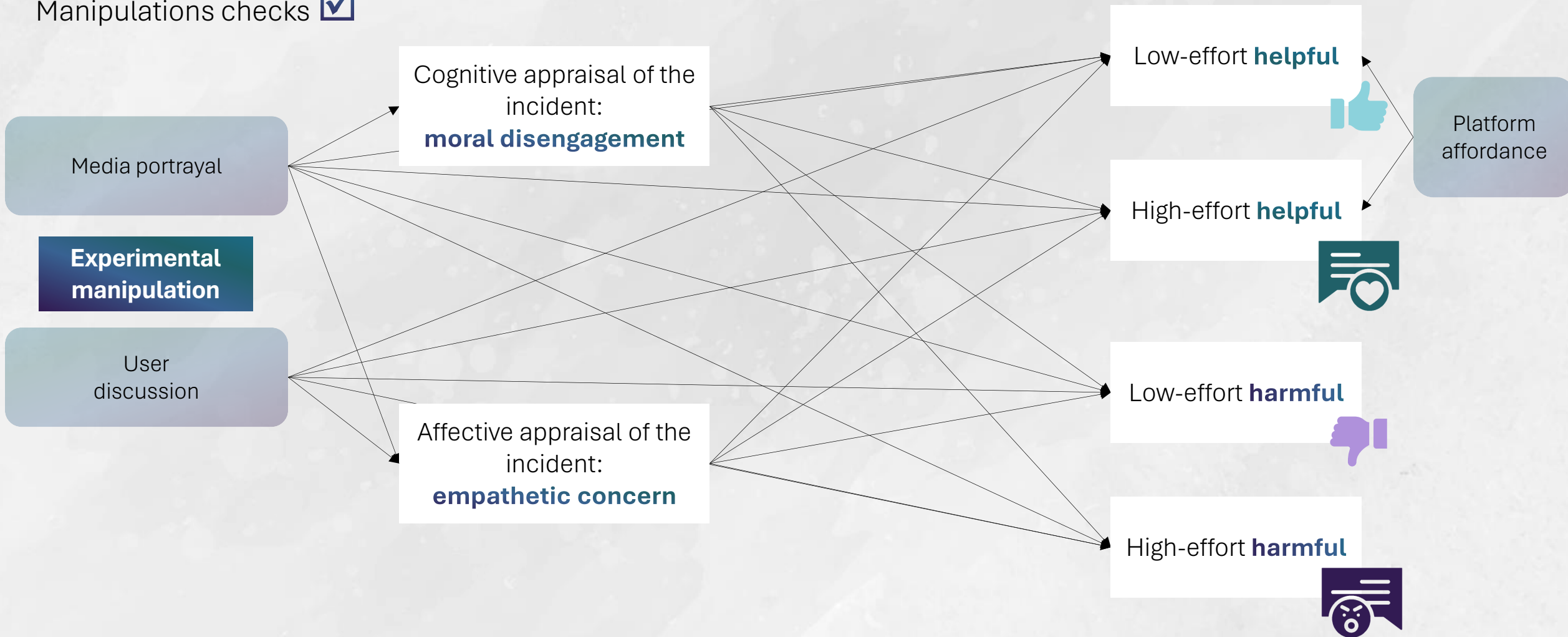
Manipulations had **no significant effects** (direct or indirect)

RESULTS – MEDIATION MODELS

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User discussion

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-.06

.01

-.02

-.01

-.06

.07

.42

.51

.21

.27

.62

.67
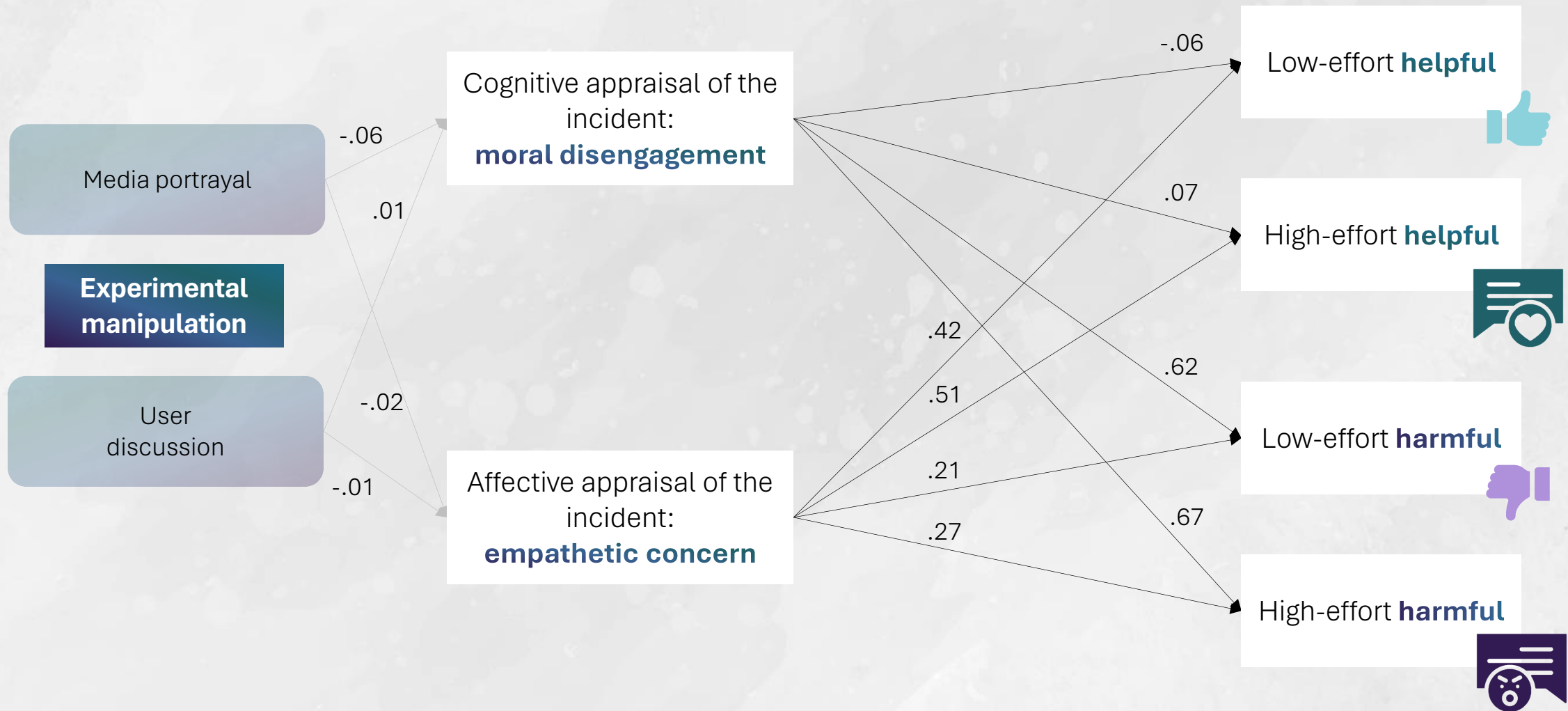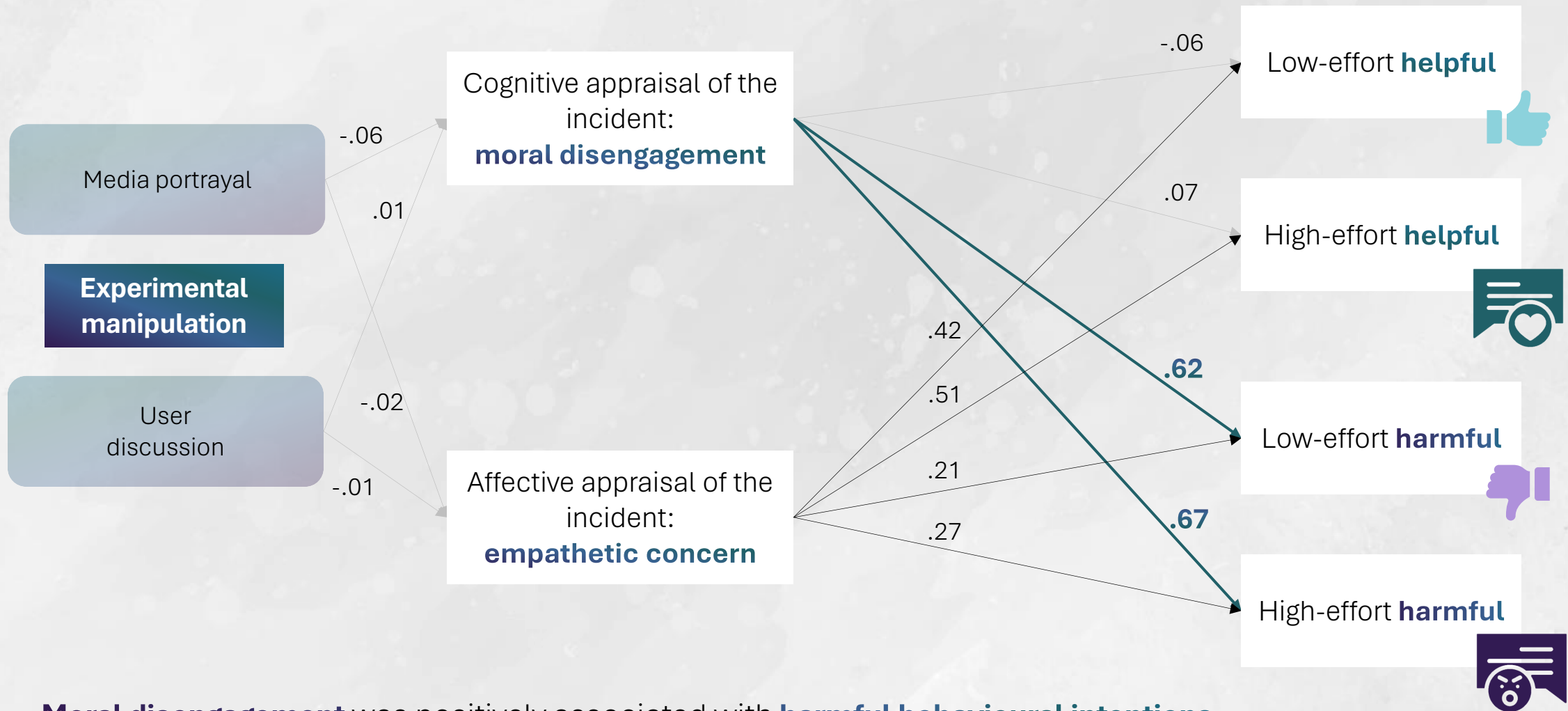
Moral disengagement was positively associated with **harmful behavioural intentions**

RESULTS – MEDIATION MODELS

Media portrayal

Experimental manipulation

User discussion

-.06

.01

-.02

-.01

Cognitive appraisal of the incident: **moral disengagement**

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-.06

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Low-effort **helpful**

High-effort **helpful**

Low-effort **harmful**

High-effort **harmful**
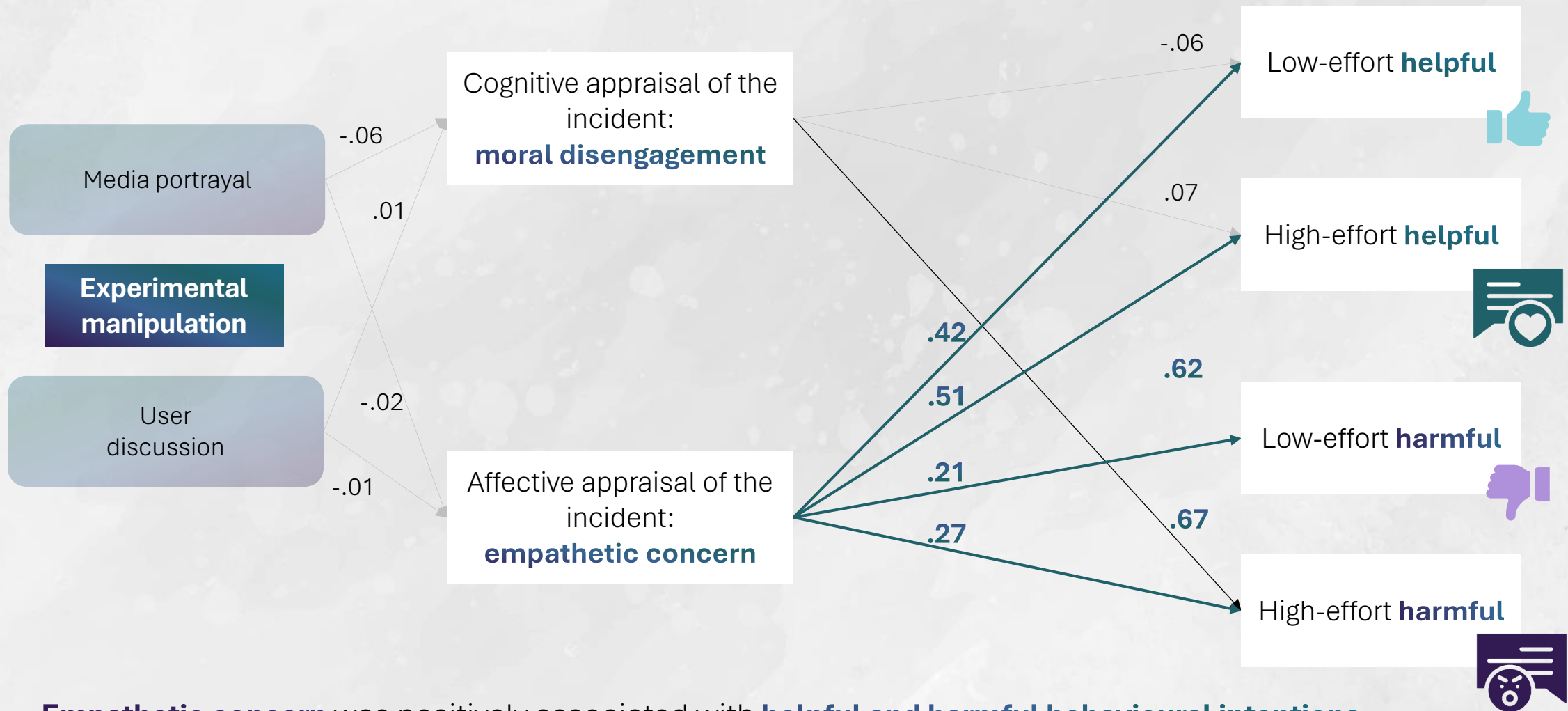
Empathetic concern was positively associated with **helpful and harmful behavioural intentions**

RESULTS – MEDIATION MODELS

Media portrayal

Experimental manipulation

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-.06

.01

-.02

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Cognitive appraisal of the incident: **moral disengagement**

Affective appraisal of the incident: **empathetic concern**

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Low-effort **helpful**

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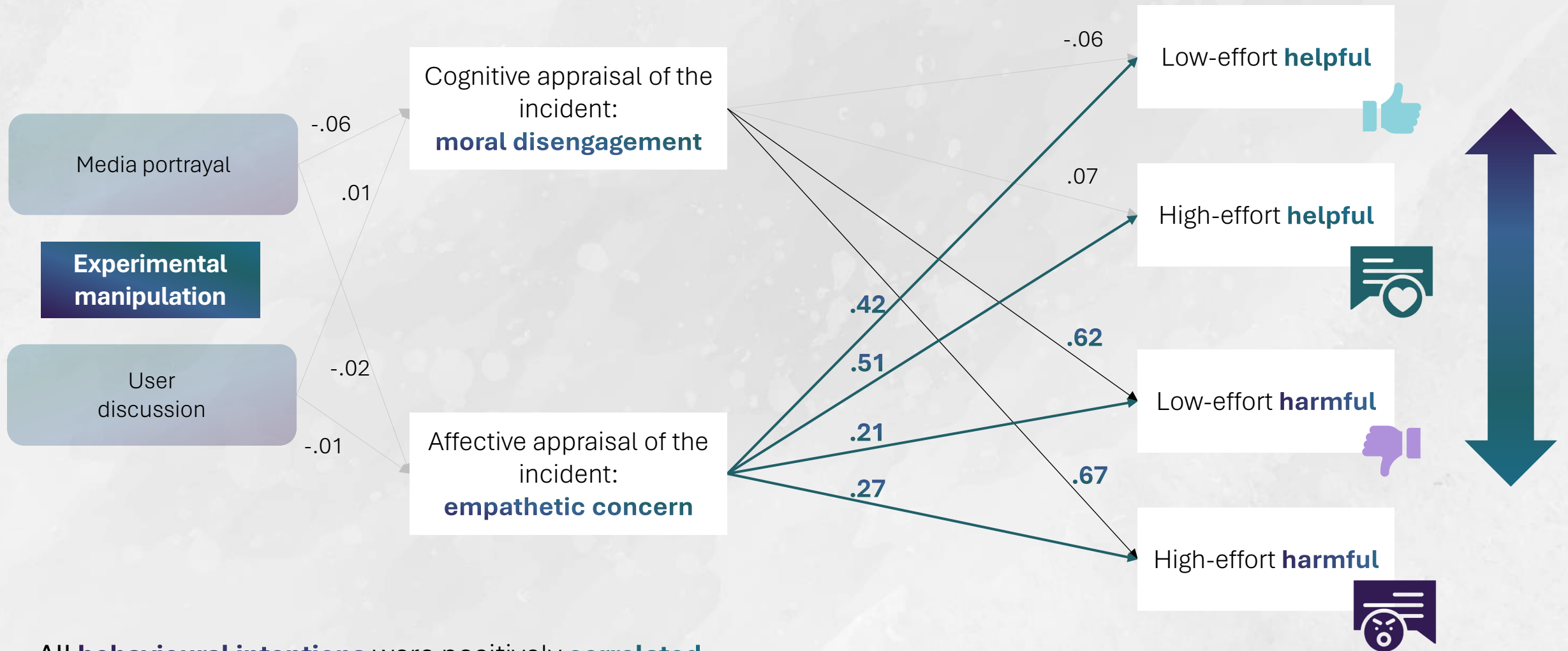
All **behavioural intentions** were positively **correlated**

RESULTS – ANTI-FAT ATTITUDES
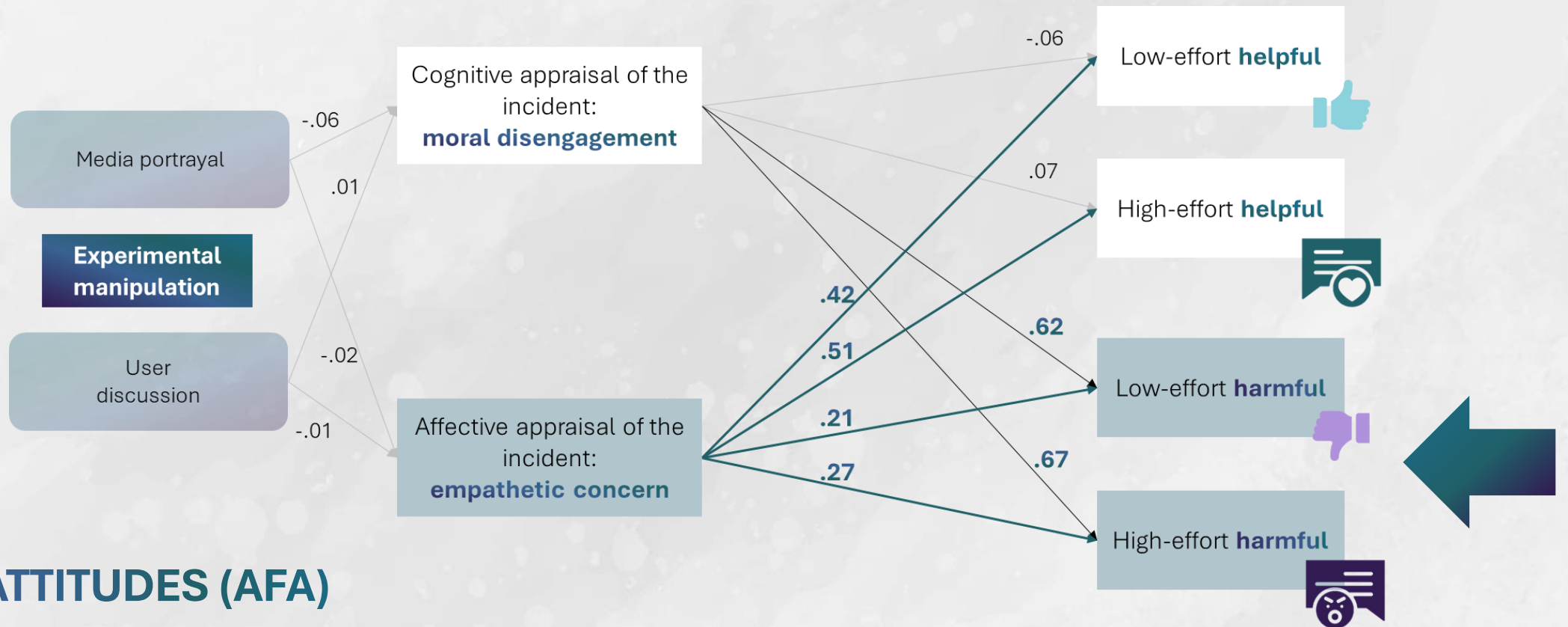
ANTI-FAT ATTITUDES (AFA)

High AFA ⇨ **stronger effect of empathy** on harmful reactions ($\beta_{\text{low-effort}} = .34$; $\beta_{\text{high-effort}} = .31$)

Low AFA ⇨ **lesser effect of empathy** on harmful high-effort intentions ($\beta = .19$); **no effect of empathy** on harmful low-effort intentions (n.s.)
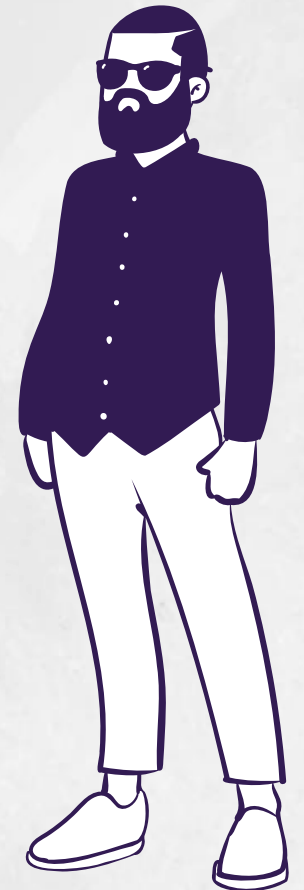
RESULTS – OTHER VARIABLES

GENDER

Men ⇨ less helpful intentions and more harmful intentions

CYBERHATE VICTIMISATION EXPERIENCE

Positively connected to both helpful and harmful intentions

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Cognitive and affective appraisals

Moral disengagement and harmful intentions

A surprising role of empathetic concern – linked to all types of intentions

Nuanced role of empathy

Protective role: negative association with MD

But: when we control for this association in the model, empathy can increase harmful intentions

Harmful and helpful intentions were connected

Cyberhate victimisation experience was connected to both types of intentions

For some people it's an insult, for some it's a motivation to improve.
Man, 19 yo

I was able to change my weight only thanks to these "reminders".
Man, 18 yo

By pointing this out, I think they might realise it and improve their lives.
Man, 25 yo

Such posts can motivate a certain group of people to improve.
Man, 16 yo

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The intersection of appraisals and attitudes – the dual role of empathy

➔ **The role of other attitudes (body diversity, acceptance)?**

Gender aspect of weight-based cyberhate

➔ **Gender of the victim?**

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Bystanders' perspective – limited influence of media portrayals

➔ **Victims' perspective?**

➔ **Stronger forms of manipulation**, e.g.:

      Articles with more photos and information

      Comments made by friends, not strangers

      Simulation of ‚real' reactions or interaction with AI

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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