


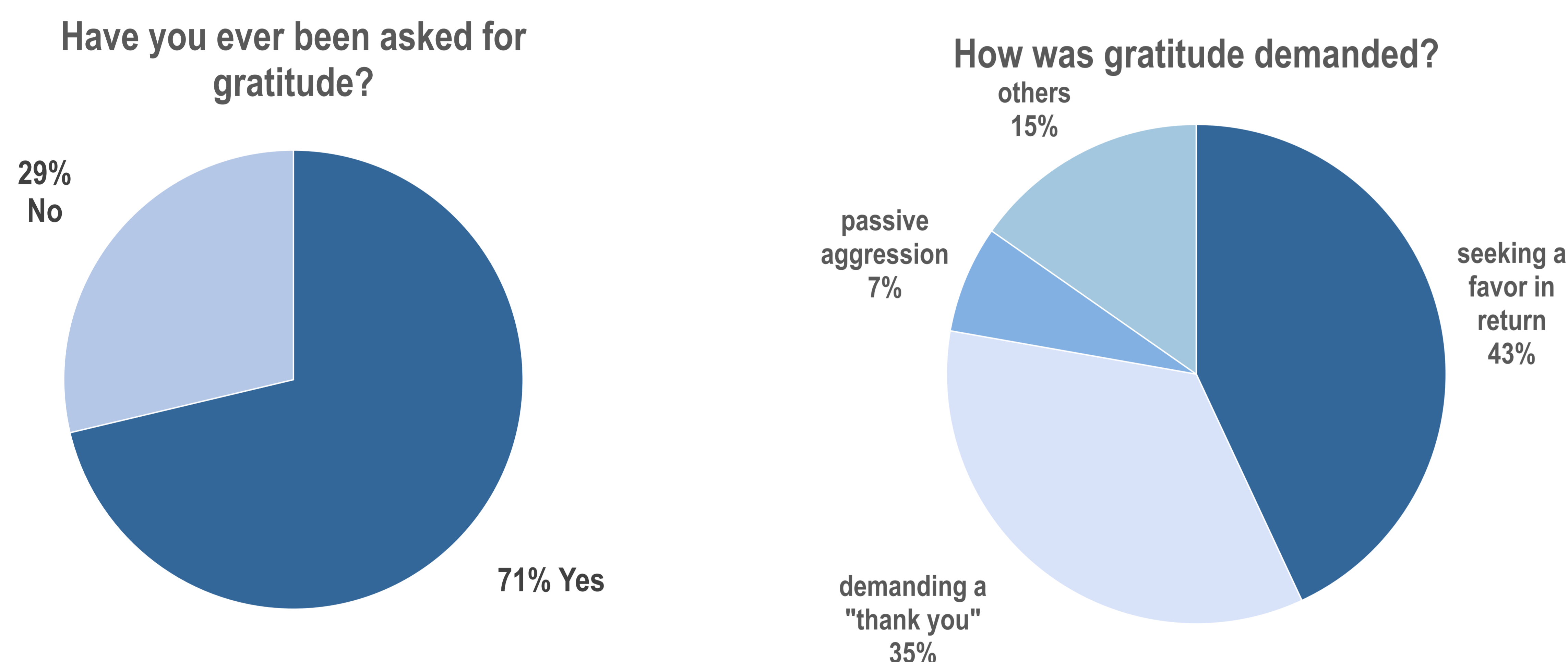
Thank me! Seeking gratitude leads to interpersonal avoidance

Introduction

Trump demands appreciation from governors for coronavirus response

 [Follow](#) Alexander Nazaryan National Correspondent, Yahoo News - March 28, 2020

- Previous literature has mostly agreed that gratitude as a moral emotion is beneficial, especially when it comes to enhancing interpersonal relationships;
- We identify one circumstance under which gratitude undermines interpersonal relationships: when a benefactor actively demands gratitude from a beneficiary, the beneficiary will avoid the benefactor more, and this is explained by perceived self-righteousness of the benefactor (i.e., the benefactor is demonstrating moral superiority);
- To understand the phenomenon of sought gratitude, we ran a pilot study with 101 participants from Mturk:



Methods

Participants: 193 students (126 women, $M_{age} = 27.22$) enrolled in a master's degree program at a European university.

Procedure: participants played a dictator game with an ostensible partner, and all participants were assigned to the role of *receiver*. Out of \$10 the allocator assigned \$7 to participants. Next, we manipulated sought gratitude in the message participants received from the allocator.

Sought gratitude condition: "Here is my allocation for you: \$7. I could have given you \$0 as well. Perhaps, you should express your gratitude for me!"

Control condition: "Here is my allocation for you: \$7."

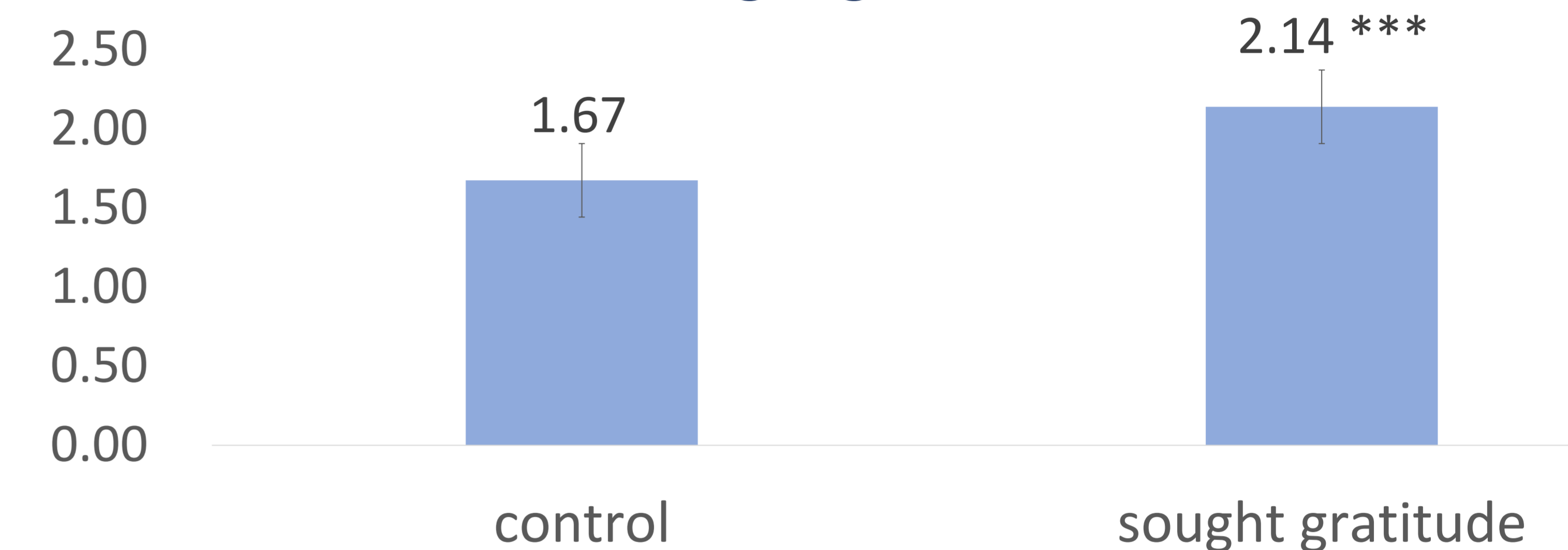
Dependent variable – avoidance: Participants were prompted to imagine that they knew the allocator outside of this study and responded to the avoidance subscale developed from McCullough et al. (1998);

Mediator – perceived self-righteousness: Three items from Adams et al. (2015) measured perceived self-righteousness of the benefactor;

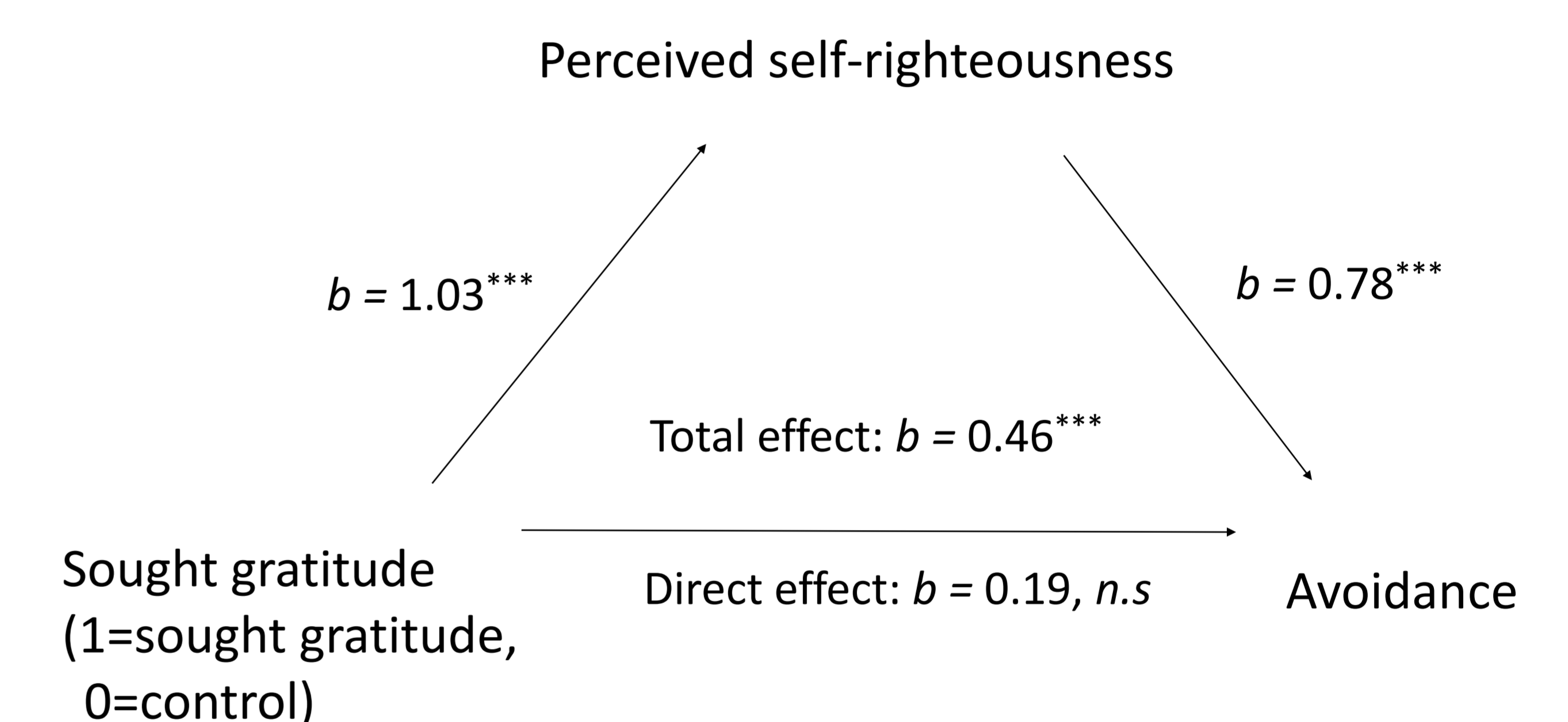
Moderator – beneficiary's dispositional gratitude: Six items from McCullough et al. (2002) assessed dispositional gratitude.

Results

The effect of sought gratitude on avoidance



The mediation model



The moderating effect of beneficiary's dispositional gratitude



Conclusions

- Benefactors' behavior of seeking gratitude after providing help is practically prevalent yet theoretically understudied;
- We demonstrate that gratitude-seeking prompts beneficiaries to avoid the benefactor;
- The relationship between sought-gratitude and avoidance is explained by perceived moral superiority (i.e., perceived self-righteousness) of the benefactor;
- This mediation effect is stronger for beneficiaries high in dispositional gratitude.