**AN ACADEMIC EXPOSITORY ESSAY ON SEXISM WRITTEN BY 19/MHS01/097**

**Anugwu Franklin Chiemelie**

**MBBS**

**Sexism** is prejudice or discrimination based on a person's sex or gender. Sexism can affect anyone, but it primarily affects women and girls. It has been linked to stereotypes and gender roles and may include the belief that one sex or gender is intrinsically superior to another.

Sexism, contrary to popular belief is not a 21st century invention. In fact, sexism has been in existence since the days of ancient Egypt, worming its way across the globe, even in the Christendom of early modern Europe.

The status of women was depended on their fathers or husbands, but they had property rights and could attend court, including as plaintiffs. Women were commonly afforded equal status. Evidence, however, is lacking to support the idea that many pre-agricultural societies afforded women a higher status than women today. After the adoption of agriculture and sedentary cultures, the concept that one gender was inferior to the other was established; most often this was imposed upon women and girls.

Examples of sexism in the ancient world include written laws preventing women from participating in the political process; women in ancient Rome could not vote or hold political office. Another example is scholarly texts that indoctrinate children in female inferiority; women in ancient China were taught the Confucian principles that a woman should obey her father in childhood, husband in marriage, and son in widowhood.

Until the 20th century, U.S. and English law observed the system of coverture, where "by marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law; that is the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage". U.S. women were not legally defined as "persons" until 1875 (*Minor v. Happersett*, 88 U.S. 162). A similar legal doctrine, called marital power, existed under Roman Dutch law(and is still partially in force in present-day Eswatini).

Restrictions on married women's rights were common in Western countries until a few decades ago: for instance, French married women obtained the right to work without their husband's permission in 1965, and in West Germany women obtained this right in 1977. During the Franco era, in Spain, a married woman required her husband's consent (called *permiso marital*) for employment, ownership of property and traveling away from home; the *permiso marital* was abolished in 1975. In Australia, until 1983, a married woman's passport application had to be authorized by her husband.

Women in parts of the world continue to lose their legal rights in marriage.

Abuses and discriminatory practices against women in marriage are often rooted in financial payments such as dowry, bride price, and dower. These transactions often serve as legitimizing coercive control of the wife by her husband and in giving him authority over her; for instance Article 13 of the Code of Personal Status (Tunisia) states that, "The husband shall not, in default of payment of the dower, force the woman to consummate the marriage", implying that, if the dower is paid, marital rape is permitted.

The World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) has recognized the "independence and ability to leave an abusive husband" as crucial in stopping mistreatment of women. However, in some parts of the world, once married, women have very little chance of leaving a violent husband: obtaining a divorce is very difficult in many jurisdictions because of the need to prove fault in court.

In addition, many former British colonies, including India, maintain the concept of restitution of conjugal rights, under which a wife may be ordered by court to return to her husband; if she fails to do so, she may be held in contempt of court. Other problems have to do with the payment of the bride price: if the wife wants to leave, her husband may demand the return of the bride price that he had paid to the woman's family; and the woman's family often cannot or does not want to pay it back.

Gender has been used as a tool for discrimination against women in the political sphere. Women's suffrage was not achieved until 1893, when New Zealand was the first country to grant women the right to vote. Saudi Arabia is the most recent country, as of August 2015, to extend the right to vote to women in 2011. Some Western countries allowed women the right to vote only relatively recently. In addition, there is more emphasis on female candidates' personal qualities, such as their appearance and their personality, as females are portrayed as emotional and dependent.

Sexism in politics can also be shown in the imbalance of lawmaking power between men and women. Lanyan Chen stated that men hold more political power than women, serving as the gatekeepers of policy making. It is possible that this leads to women's needs not being properly represented. In this sense, the inequality of lawmaking power also causes gender discrimination in politics.

Gender stereotypes are widely held beliefs about the characteristics and behavior of women and men. Empirical studies have found widely shared cultural beliefs that men are more socially valued and more competent than women in a number of activities.

Women are often bystanders to sexist remarks directed at other women. Research shows that women often experience a variety of negative emotions when they are the targets of sexism and other women who witness the derogatory remark can also be affected.

Sexism also has the potential to shape how women think, feel and behave towards men in general.

Women are obviously implicated because they suffer direct negative consequences as targets of prejudice and, as the current work demonstrates, indirect consequences as bystanders. But sexism also harms men as well.

“Whenever a single man’s prejudiced actions are attributed to his gender identity, male perpetrators impact how women view and react to men more generally

the link between sexism in the workplace and women’s mental health and well-being. Researchers found that experiencing sexism in the workplace “reduces (a) sense of belonging because it represents a form of bullying, rejection, and ostracism by men against their female co-workers. This reduced sense of belonging then impacts negatively on women’s mental health and job satisfaction due to its association with feelings of loneliness and alienation.”

In conclusion, sexism is prejudice based on biological sex, gender discrimination specifically addresses discrimination towards gender identities, including third gender, genderqueer, and other non-binary identified people. It is especially attributed to how people are treated in the workplace, and banning discrimination on the basis of gender identity and expression has emerged as a subject of contention in the American legal system, same should be considered around the globe and in African societies especially.