**CARIBBEAN ADVANCED PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION**

**(C.A.P.E)**

**CARIBBEAN STUDIES**

*Title: The Effects of Sexism on Female Advancement in the Workplace*

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**Name of Candidate: Lisa John**

**Candidate Number: 0900410833**

**School: Queen’s College**

**Centre Number: 090041**

**Territory: Guyana**

**Teacher’s Name: Mrs. Stewart-Johnson**

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**Introduction**

The purpose of this research is to examine the effects of sexism on female advancement in the workplace. Sexist practices can be directed both at men and women however this research will focus on those against the female population. Through research and surveys the researcher aims:

* to discover whether sexism exists in the Caribbean workplace
* to examine the extent of sexism in the workplace
* to examine its various effects
* to discover whether sexual discrimination hinders (or motivates) promotion and advancement of females in the society

In the conclusion of this Internal Assessment it is desired that ways and means of dealing with sexism be established. This may be based on personal experiences of other persons who were/are victims and/or it may be based on the opinions of authoritative figures, the researcher’s personal opinion will also be included.

The particular types of persons who are expected to benefit from this Internal Assessment include: female individuals who may or may not experience sexism but are a part of the working population of the Caribbean, female individuals who may not be included in the working society but who also face sexual discrimination.

**Key terms:**

* **Sexism**: prejudice or discrimination or unfair treatment of people based on their sex; behaviours, conditions or attitudes that foster stereotypes of social roles based on sex.
* **Workplace**: a place [as a shop or factory] where work is done.
* **Advancement**: the act of moving forward; the act of making something better, more successful etc; the act of being raised to a higher rank or position.
* **Effect**: a change that results when something is done/happens.

**Literature Review**

“Take it from years of behavioural research: implicit biases have an overwhelmingly negative effect on women in traditionally male professions”-Eric Jaffe. In his (Eric Jaffe’s) research he mentioned that gender bias still exists in society however it is more disguised, and it is particularly towards women in male dominated professions, he refers to this fact as the “soft war on women”. His research includes a statement made by psychologist, [Madeline E. Heilman](http://www.psych.nyu.edu/heilman/) of [New York University](http://www.fastcompany.com/organization/new-york-university). She says that there is a "lack of fit" between the personality that a woman is supposed to possess and the attributes considered necessary for the job. The descriptive biases of others are that the traits of women which include: being caring, emotional, sensitive become harmful when a woman performs a job which was/is traditionally held by men. Eric Jaffe’s research shows a perspective which is held towards working women (Fast Company, 2014).

The Gleaner Newspaper (Jamaica, 2009) has an article written which states that sexism exists in our society but it has become quite noticeable and evident in our workplace: unfair recruitment practices, unequal pay and intimidating behaviour. The writer continues: females are traditionally recruited as housekeepers, cooks and kitchen assistants in the industry. In the year 2009 (June) 5,539 males were employed compared to 351 females. The article highlighted some of the actions which hinder advancement for females in the workplace. This research proves the existence and extent and effects of Sexism in Caribbean workplaces.

An article in Barbados Today (September, 2014) mentions that women should support each other in the fight against sexism; this was opined by Lynette Holder, chief executive officer of the Small Business Association. Although this is a general statement and not specifically related to sexism in the workplace, it does highlight a solution. Lynette Holder desires for women to understand the value of association; as she believes that it is important and critical. She continues to say that sexism is very prevalent in our society, therefore resources need to be pooled and women should unite to realise their objective; for if sexism will be fought against, women ought to join together their efforts so that the voice of female entrepreneurs could be strengthened and heard. This researcher infers from these statements that Sexism hinders female advancement in the workplace.

Vidyaratha Kissoon, Guyanese, considers the West Indian cricket team (rather than the workplace) and its development over the years. She states that both gender used to relish in the cricket games together but in these present times women are expected to be mere sideliners who cheer as the men play. V. Kissoon then concludes with an open question: Would Limacol (sponsors) find it fit to have a women CPL with the male population being the ones to cheer on the cricketers and entertain the crowd?

It can therefore be said that sexism has become quite noticeable in the world of work, and there exists individuals who have strong opinions about the topic. The characteristics of females are labelled as inferior for the workplace and there is biasness in the treatment towards them. Women are therefore being encouraged to unite so their voices can be heard.

**Data Collection Sources**

In order to gather data for the completion of this Internal Assessment the researcher used both primary and secondary data sources. The secondary sources included textbooks and the Internet. The textbooks used had a limited amount of information on the topic area and the internet had inadequate information concerning sexism in Guyana nevertheless it was possible to gather information for the completion of this research.

The researcher used questionnaires as the primary data collection source. The questionnaires were cost effective and easy to analyse however it was impossible to tell how truthful a respondent was and how much thought was put into answering.

The researcher distributed forty (40) questionnaires to females in her local church. The reason for choosing such a place is that the church gathers people from different areas of the country making it possible to survey the female population of the country by using the women from the church as representatives. The questionnaires were distributed by simple random sampling method meaning they were distributed without any predetermined selection or speculation. The respondents were all given one week to respond after which they were collected.

The following pages contain the data collection instrument used.





Queen’s College,

Camp and Thomas Road,

Georgetown.

24th December, 2014.

Dear Respondent,

The researcher is a student of Queen’s College and hereby desires your participation in this questionnaire which is necessary for the completion of an Internal Assessment. Please be assured that all information collected will be kept confidential. The questionnaire focuses on the topic Sexism [discrimination against an individual based on their gender] against females and contains sixteen [15] questions: fourteen [14] close-ended questions and one [1] open-ended question.

To answer, simply tick the circle which is on the left of the answer you wish to choose [e.g ○ yes] and/or write on the space provided. Thank you for your cooperation!

Sincerely,

…………………………

Lisa John

**Presentation and Analysis of Data**

**Figure 1**

Figure 1 shows the affirmative answers of individuals who stated that they were victims of and/or know of persons who are/were victims of Sexism. The responses serve as proof/evidence that Sexism does actually exist in the country; the aim to discover whether sexism exists or not in the country is thus fulfilled.

**Figure 2**

Figure 1 establishes that Sexism exists; Figure 2 shows the extent of sexism in work environments as well as respondents’ view on its extent in the country (some respondents were not exposed to an occupational life but were still able to give a general view on sexism in the country).

**Figure 3**

Figure 3’s diagram shows how sexism is viewed by each of the thirty seven respondents- 84% of the respondents (more than 50%) see sexism as destructive and damaging; however 11% viewed sexism as motivating (next favoured option) and the minority viewed sexism as not affective.

**Figure 4**

Figure 4 shows general effects of sexism on females in the working environment. The greatest effects were that victims were not able to give their full potential (32%) and the self esteem of women were lowered (30%) and women were not positioned fairly, based on their qualifications but on bias, sexist judgments of those in charge.

33%

**Figure 5**

The graph above shows the responses of those who affirmed to have (or know persons who have) been hindered from promotion. 57% (majority) of the responses were that persons were never in situations where sexism prevented them from being promoted. 43% stated that it did play a part in their inability to be promoted.

**Analysis of Data**

The results in Figure 1 prove that the issue of sexism exists within the country of itself and that the citizens have been personally exposed and/or know of victims. Based on the results in Figure 2 sexism appears to be very prevalent. A total of 35% of responses indicate that sexism does not exist either in the workplace or country however 65% of the responses show that sexism is either disguised or very evident both in the workplace and the country. The researcher can therefore safely say that sexism is an existing issue in the country’s professional institutions; its extent is alarming and measures ought to be taken to reduce/stop sexism against women.

The researcher infers from the results in Figure 3 that sexism takes more of a negative toll on female individuals rather than a positive, even though there are few individuals who are intrinsically motivated by sexism- this, though the figure is small, says a great deal about the strength and stamina of Guyanese women.

From the results in Figure 4, the researcher notices that sexism emotionally shatters the victims and prevents them from performing at their best level in the workplace. This not only affects the victims but the organisation which they are a part of as well as that institution/ business’s productivity is not maximised and this may result in losses rather than profits.

45% of the respondents (Figure 5) stated that sexism has been a contributing factor that hindered their promotion. This highlights the biasness in the Guyanese workforce and ought to be gotten rid of as soon as possible. All working women deserve an equal chance, like men, to prove themselves at various professional levels.

**Discussion of Findings**

The respondents of the researcher’s local church (Unity Baptist Church) seem to be familiar with the topic of Sexism even though 47% of the sixty two (62) responses given were of persons who were not presently employed and/or were never employed. It therefore means that the majority of the women surveyed were familiar with the professional life and the working environment. As stated before there were 29 responses (from a total of sixty) where persons affirmed to being victims or knowing individuals who have been victims, this therefore is evident that sexism actually does exist in the Guyanese society, moreover the Guyanese workforce. The extent of sexism in the country and its work places is quite alarming; the proportion of sexism being disguised/subtle/prevalent is 65% while 35% are not aware of its existence in the workplace/country. These facts discovered coincides with Eric Jaffe’s statement that sexism does exist though it is more disguised and subtle, Lynette Holder mentioned the prevalence of sexism as well

The effects of sexism are mostly negative. 84% of the respondents view sexism as damaging and destructive (emotionally) and these views are founded on personal experiences and/or the experience of others. Some (11%) see it as motivating; as mentioned before this tells about the courage and stamina of the Guyanese women- not willing to give up on their upward social mobility and advancement. A major effect, as indicated by respondents (32%) was that women find it difficult to give their best performance/use their full potential once they have been downgraded by those who hold sexist views. It is expected that many would be intimidated and as result perform poorly.

The researcher was able to derive information concerning sexism’s effect on on-the-job performance as well. 49% of the respondents indicated that women would perform at a mediocre level at the workplace once they have been affected by sexism while 19% of the respondents felt that women would be motivated to be/do better than before and19% indicated that they would become lackadaisical in attendance. 13% indicated that the women would purposely present sloppy work perhaps as a form of spite. These effects should be considered by organisations and businesses as it can affect overall productivity and organisational goals. No organisation is fond of mediocre performance and output. Organisations therefore ought to take keen interest into the issue especially considering the indirect damaging effects it holds for the business’s image. The other general effects of sexism in the workplace was that it lowered the self-esteem of individuals (30%) and 27% of respondents stated women are positioned unfairly in the workplace- bias placement rather than fair treatment and consideration of qualifications. It is inferred that those involved in recruitment and promotion view females as incapable of doing a job. However, most Guyanese women are just as capable and qualified to do the job which the man was preferred to do. This effect is present not only in Guyana but in Jamaica as we see of it being an issue in The Gleaner Newspaper.

65% of respondents indicated that sexism was a major contributing factor in the struggle for female advancement while 35% stated otherwise, however these may be opinions. The researcher then asked respondents to indicate whether they were ever in situations where they were not promoted due to sexism and the results showed that 43% of the respondents stated that they were hindered by sexism and/or know of persons who have been. Though the proportion is small it is inferred that sexism may not be one of the main reasons as to why women may not be promoted however it does show that sexism poses as an obstacle for females who desire upward social mobility; it therefore ought to be recognized in society and eliminated.

**Conclusions**

The researcher concludes that sexism does exist in the country (Guyana) and its work places and is becoming quite prevalent. There already exist victims of sexism in the country who bore the damaging effects of sexism. Sexism poses as an obstacle in the advancement of women in the workplace and all Guyanese women ought to be aware and equipped with the knowledge and means necessary to stand against sexism.

**Limitations**

The researcher encountered a few drawbacks and shortcomings during the process of data collection, these included: some respondents were not clear on how to answer some of the questions-they indicated more than one answers where it wasn’t necessary and where more than one answers were necessary they indicated less. This resulted in unequal amounts of responses for a few of the questions. Three out of the forty respondents to whom the questionnaires were distributed did not return the questionnaires.

**Recommendations**.

The researcher recommends the following:

1. (Business) Organisations (governmental and non-government) ought to take measures to ensure equality in the professional environment. These measures include: ensuring women are promoted when/where necessary; enforcing rules and sanctions about how women (employees in general) should be treated in the workplace.
2. Females (employed and unemployed) if ever faced with sexism ought to take the matter to higher authorities (join organisations) where they can be supported and represented. Lynette Holder (Barbados) encourages this and feels that association with other women is an important aspect in the fight for female advancement.
3. Social interaction within workplaces should also be encouraged as this allows for development of friendships and workers would desist from any sexist talks against each other.

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