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# Sex, sex-role orientation, personality and sexism in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

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Keywords

Sexism, Sex, Sex role orientation, Personality, Nigeria. Sexism (prejudice and discrimination, usually against women) is a social problem in most societies of the world that undermines the rights and potentials of women in societies. It also impinges development. Thus there is a need to explore its causes. This study was therefore designed to investigate the influences of sex, sex role orientation and personality variables on sexism in Nigeria. With the aid of a set of questionnaires comprising Bem's Sex Role Inventory (BSRI), Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) and the Big Five (Personality) Inventory (BFI), data were collected from 780 research participants drawn from among Nigerians resident in South Western Nigeria. Participants' age range is 15-69 with a mean age of 31.91 years. Using a 4x2x2 analysis of variance (ANOVA) and regression analysis, it was found out that sex and sex role orientation have main and interaction effects on sexism. It was also revealed that sexism is significantly jointly predicted by personality variables. However, the dominant personality trait of an individual was found to determine the type of sexist ideological leanings and behaviors displayed by the person. These findings were discussed in the light of available literature and recommendations were made.

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#### Introduction

Bandura (1977,1986) in his social learning theory asserts that through observations, identifications and internalizations, behaviours are learnt. Unlearning (undesirable) behaviours and changing the society towards more sustainability, however, requires behaviour modifications by various actors and in many domains through a clear understanding of the characteristics of target groups, and of the mechanisms and motives that underlay behaviours.

Societies, generally, thrive and are stable and orderly when conditions and situations that threaten a group's values are effectively and efficiently managed.

Sexism, a social problem, undermines the rights and potentials of women in societies. Since1975, when the world conference of the International Women's Year was held in Mexico City, the discourse on women's advancement process has evolved.

Sexism, around the world, focuses on the prejudice (negative attitudes) and discrimination (negative actions) that males direct at females. This is because, many societies of the world are patriarchal (i.e. the social organization is such that males dominate females) (Harris 1991). Corroborating Harris' submission, United Nations Report (1998) posits that men typically rule, dominating the highest status roles in government, academics, and business across the globe.

The phenomenon of sexism (sex discrimination) in Nigeria, as in most parts of the world, is skewed against women (Adebayo 1992, Akumadu 1998; Olaoye 2004) and it objectively permits or promotes the social and economic exploitations of women and their political marginalization (Enemuo 1999).

Rosenberg and Alaya (1977), for example, reported that Mrs. Horace Tremlitt, who accompanied her husband to Nigeria during the colonial era, remarked that sex discrimination (sexism) was pervasive and prevalent in Nigeria. According to these scholars, Mrs. Tremlitt said :

'I found myself reflecting rather bitterly on the insignificant position of a woman in what is practically a man's country ......If there is one spot on earth where a woman feels no importance whatsoever, it is in Nigeria'.

Even after the colonial era, and up till this day in Nigeria, there is the problem of the old chauvinistic prejudice and discrimination against women. They seem to be limited by their description as the 'weaker sex'; a phrase coined to weaken their meaningful participation in scheme of things. Omede (2004) observed, for example, that only about 2 percent of the population of females in Nigeria is politically involved despite the 1991 population census figures which put the number of females in Nigeria at about 50 percent of the total population. WIN (2001) also reported that in the 1999 elections in Nigeria where there were 11,107 elective positions, women got a paltry 178. This feat was also repeated in the 2007 elections in Nigeria with only a slight change. It is worthy of note too that the first female speaker of Nigeria lower parliamentary house (House of Representatives) was consumed and sacked from office by attritional war from her male colleagues. This is evident because her male successor has been involved in much heavier scandal of purchase of Peugeot cars involving several millions of Naira, yet he is, till this day, holding forth as the speaker of the house because perhaps, he is a male candidate.

Olaoye (2004) remarked that females' participation in Nigeria politics at the gladiatorial level in the modern era has been somewhat negligible in terms of decision-making. He observed that the bulk of their political participations are at the spectatorial and apathetic levels and he blamed these on valuerelated and social structural factors. According to him, the fact that Nigeria is patriarchal and hence male dominated infringes on the freedom and free-will of females to actively participate in politics and decision makings. Hence, their marginalization in

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policy formulations. It must be noted however that social structural factors alone are not accountable for sexism. Leaper and Tenenbaum (2002) and Akrami, (2005) have classified some of the variables of sexism as person centered characteristics or as contextual characteristics. Thus, it is expedient that the person centered characteristics be explored in addition to the social structural factors that had been indicted.

Researches (e.g. Kirk 1982; Aina 1998) have demonstrated that the impediments on the part of women in their quest to assert and distinguish themselves in various spheres of life throughout the world have result in their ignorance and tenacious hold unto, and teaching of traditional sexist ideologies and behaviour to their off springs.

Adewumi (2003) remarked that either overtly or covertly, women are discriminated against in Nigeria. He argued that customs in many places in the North and some areas in the South prevent women from owing and inheriting landed properties. As such, many women do not have collateral for accessing credit facilities and hence operate their business on a low scale. This exacerbates their impoverishments and infringes on the national development process because women are not empowered to initiate, mould and execute public policies and legislations; most especially as they include discriminatory laws, policies, programmes and oppressive cultural practices; mass poverty and low social status.

The world's bias against women calls for a change in behaviours and attitudes towards them for equality, economic prosperity, social advancement, and political emancipation to engender mutual co-existence and more sustainability. This study thus, attempts to find out the effects of sex, sex-role orientation and personality on sexism (sex discrimination).

It is hope that findings from this study will constitute an addition to existing literature on the phenomenon of sexism and give an insight to understanding the causes of sex discrimination with a view to devising a mechanism for its combat to engender sustainable development and economic growth.

This study therefore seeks to ascertain whether:

i. Males and females will differ in their sexist ideologies and behaviour.

ii. That sex role orientation will significantly influence sexism;

iii. That there will be a significant interaction effects of sex-role orientation and sex on sexism; and

iv. That the personality dimensions of extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, openness to experience and conscientiousness will independently and jointly influence sexism.

#### Method

Research Participants: Seven hundred and eighty research participants were used for the study. They comprised 428 males and 352 females drawn from among the residents of Ekiti State, Nigeria. Participants mean age is 31.91 with a range between 15 and 69 years.

Variables: The influence of personality, sex and sex-role orientations on sexism were considered. Thus, the independent variables are:Personality, Sex, and Sex-Role Orientation.

The dependent variable, therefore, is sexism. Glick and Fiske (2001) in their ambivalent alliance postulated two dimensions of sexism as being hostile and benevolent. According to them, hostile sexism combines dominative paternalism (the belief that men ought to have more power than women), competitive power differentiation (the belief that, as a group, women are inferior to men on competence related attributes), and hostile heterosexuality (the belief that women's sexuality is dangerous to men's higher status and power); while benevolent sexism comprises protective paternalism (the belief that men should protect and provide for the women on whom they depend), complementary gender differentiation (the belief that women are the better gender, but only in ways that suit conventional gender roles), and intimate heterosexuality (the belief that men can achieve true happiness in life only when involved in romantic relationships with women). Therefore the effect of each of the independent variables on each of the dimensions of sexism was considered in this study.

Research Design: A 4x2x2 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) design was used for the study. This made it possible to answer questions regarding the main and interaction effects of sex role orientation (masculinity, femininity, androgyny and undifferentiated) and sex (male and female) on sexism (hostile and benevolent).

The correlation design was also employed and it made it possible to test for the relationships between the personality dimensions (openness to experience, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and neuroticism) and sexism. Research Instruments: A questionnaire tapping research participants' biographic information was used to determine participants' sex while standardized psychological measures were used to measure personality variables, sex-role orientation (independent variable) and sexism (dependent variable).

Sex Role orientation: Shaffer (1994) defined sex role orientation as sex typed behaviour which individuals learn in interpersonal relationships as they are socialized into their environment. According to Bem (1974), sex typed behaviours are masculinity and femininity characteristics which are biologically associated with male and female gender respectively. They are learned in interpersonal relationships and they usually include: Masculine, Feminine, Androgyny and Undifferentiated sex role orientations. For the purpose of this study, sex role orientation is measured as a respondent's masculinity and femininity, which are higher than norm as set using Bem's Sex Role Inventory (BSRI). The norms for this study are 47.22 (masculinity) and 53.73 (femininity) (n=780).

BSRI is a 40 item inventory containing a list of adjectives that describes an individual person developed by Bem (1974). It measures individual's sex typed behaviours in interpersonal relationships which includes: Masculine, Feminine, Androgyny and Undifferentiated. Whereas Androgyny is characterized with high masculinity and high femininity, Undifferentiated is characterized with low masculinity and low femininity.

Personality variables: Personality, according to Burger (1997) refers to consistent behaviour patterns and intrapersonal processes originating within an individual. It is a person's unique pattern of traits (Guilford, 1959). In the present study, this variable is measured as a respondent's scores on the Big Five Inventory. The Big Five Inventory (BFI) is a psychological test developed by John, Donahue and Kentle (1991). BFI is a 44 item inventory that assesses personality from five dimensions. The dimensions are:

- i. Extraversion
- ii. Agreeableness
- iii. Conscientiousness
- iv. Neuroticism and
- v. Openness to experience

A respondent's score that is higher than the mean score for a personality dimension indicate that the respondent is high on the particular personality dimension and a lower score than the mean score indicates that the participant is low on the particular personality dimension.

Sexism: Sexism refers to individuals' prejudice toward, and discrimination against members of the opposite sex on the basis of sex difference. An individual is sexist in the case of this study, when his average scores on the sexism scale (Ambivalent sexism Inventory) are above 54.8. Such individual have the trait of both hostile and benevolent sexism (Ambivalent Sexism Inventory subscales) and tend to have polarized or extreme reaction to women depending on which aspects of their attitudes is activated. Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) is a 22 item self report measure developed by Glick and Fiske (1996) to measure sexist ideologies, behaviour and attitudes of men and women and their relationships in contemporary society. ASI is a likert type measure with separate eleven items each for hostile and benevolent sexism scales.

## **Results of Data Analyses**

The results presented on the table above showed that sex has a significant main effect on hostile sexism [F (1,771) = 6.414, P <.05] and on benevolent sexism [F(1,771)=26.660,P<.01].

Similarly, sex role orientation has significant main effect on hostile sexism [F (3,771)=12.983, P<.01] and on benevolent sexism [F (3,771)=43.713, P<.01].

Sex and Sex Role Orientation also have significant interaction effect on hostile sexism [F (3.771)=3.456, P<.05] and on benevolent sexism F(3,771)=3.203,P<.05].

Post hoc comparison of the mean scores (x) using the Least Significant Differences' test (LSD) are shown in the tables below.

As shown in Table II above, sex role orientation significantly influenced hostile sexism [F(3,771)=12.98,P<.o1] and benevolent sexism [F(3,771)=43.71,P<.01]

A comparison of the mean scores, as shown in Table IIa based on the post Hoc Test (Least Significance Difference Test performed) showed that respondents with masculine sex role orientation were more hostile (x=37.03) in their sexist ideologies than their feminine (x=34.66) counterpart. In the same way, respondents with feminine sex role orientation were less hostile (x=34.66) in their sexist ideologies than the androgynous respondent (x=37.44).

With regard to benevolent sexism, it can be seen from Table IIb above based on Post Hoc Test that the mean scores of the masculine respondents (x=39.20) is less than the mean scores of their feminine (x=40.33) and androgynous (x=42.31)counterparts, depicting that respondents with feminine or androgynous sex role orientation are more benevolent in their sexist ideologies than their masculine (x = 39.20) and undifferentiated (x=34.71) counterparts.

Table 1 above also reveals that the male respondents who are androgynous in their sex role orientation are more hostile(x =39.41) in their sexist ideologies than their counterparts who are masculine (x =37.08), or undifferentiated (x=32.44). In a similar vein, female respondents who are masculine in their sex role orientation are more hostile in their sexist ideologies (x=36.91) than their feminine (x=33.60), androgynous (x=34.71), or their undifferentiated (x =32.48) counterparts.

Also, regarding benevolent sexism, mean score comparisons based on least significant differences test (Post Hoc Test) reveal that the male respondents who are androgynous in their sex role orientation are more benevolent in their sexist ideologies (x =40.74) than either masculine (x =38.21), feminine (x =37.46), or undifferentiated (x = 34.44) counterparts. In all, the undifferentiated respondents (irrespective of sex) are generally less sexist in their ideologies than their masculine, feminine, and or androgynous counterparts.

From this matrix, all personality dimensions are related to both hostile and benevolent sexism. However, neuroticism is negatively related to both hostile and benevolent sexism.

Table 3b shows that the personality dimensions jointly predict hostile sexism [F (5,773) = 12.52, <.01]. Moreover, Extraversion (B =. 116) and Openness to experience (B =.179) independently predict hostile sexism.

Table 3c shows that the personality dimensions jointly predict benevolent sexism [F(5,773) =29.47, P< .01]. Nonetheless, extraversion (B =.059) and conscientiousness (B =.051) do not significantly contribute to benevolent sexism.

#### **Discussion of results**

In looking at the effects of sex role orientation and sex on sexism, it was expected that sex role orientation and sex would significantly independently and jointly influence sexism. This expectation, which informed the formulation of hypotheses 1, 2, and 3, was informed by the following:

a. Lytton and Romney<sup>'s</sup> (1991)thesis that parents treat their sons and daughters differently in accordance with the children'<sup>s</sup> sexes;

b. Goldner's (1991) submission that on the basis of parental treatment, children are forced to disown thoughts, acts and self conception that are not congruent with their gender; having been socialized into differential gender roles and experience of division of labour that allocates different work and responsibilities to male and female;

c. Tenenbaum and Leaper's (2002) observation that parents gender schema is related to the offspring's gender related cognition;

d. Grusec and Kuezynski's (1997)position that parent –child concordance in values may be moderated by the quality of the parent –child relationship as influenced by the local cultural community;

e. Williams and Best's (1990) submission that males are more positively evaluated than females, and

f. Bem's (1993) submission that children evaluate behaviours in terms of whether they are gender appropriate according to cultural definition and will reject behaviours that are inappropriate for their own gender.

The result of the test of main and interaction effects of sex role orientation and sex on sexism showed that sex had significant main effect on sexism (hostile and benevolent) with males being more hostile (x=36.46) in their sexist orientation while the females were significantly highly benevolent in their ideologies (x=40.53).

Similarly sex role orientation had significant main effect on sexism. And sex role orientation had significant interaction effect on sexism. A comparison of the mean scores of the four sex role orientation based on Post Hoc Test (Least Significant Different test performed) showed that respondents with masculine sex role orientation were more hostile in their sexist ideologies than their feminine counterparts. With regard to benevolent sexism, a comparison of mean scores (x) based on Post Hoc Test showed that respondents with feminine or androgynous sex role orientation were more benevolent in their sexist ideologies than their masculine or undifferentiated counterparts. These findings suggest that once an individual identifies himself/herself as a male or female, there comes a tendency to internalize gender appropriate behaviour as spelt out by his/her social environment while socializing so that a 'deviance' label can be avoided and ostracism escaped. The internalization interpretation is also consistent with Pence's (1985) argument that the society teaches men to love and trivialize women while the women are taught to love and resent men. Thus males internalize assertiveness, dominance, competitiveness, and leadership behaviours while their female counterparts internalize expressiveness, sensitivity, compassion, co-operation and yielding behaviours.

Gray's (1992) position that men are task-oriented, dominant and concerned with status and independence, whereas women are expressive, responsive, supportive and concerned with intimacy and connection seems to be justified by this study. Also the gender schema theory's argument that children learn to judge themselves according to the traits or construct considered to be relevant to their gender and thus have their self concepts blended with the gender schema of their culture is most relevant to the findings of this study.

The results of this study, moreover, revealed that the personality dimensions of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience jointly predict sexism (hostile and benevolent). However, it is only extraversion and openness to experience that independently significantly predict hostile sexism. Also, extraversion and conscientiousness do not significantly predict benevolent sexism.

These findings suggest that individuals who are highly dominant, sociable, and aesthetical in orientation are more amenable to learning hostile sexist ideologies than their counterparts who are tender-minded and highly irritable. A naturally dominant character might be authoritarian and traditional (rather than egalitarian); and thus be more hostile in his sexist ideologies than his pro-social and modest counterpart. These findings are consistent with the submission of Pratto et al. (1994). These scholars submitted that high SDO (social dominance orientation) people tend to rank social group in superior-inferior hierarchy.

Furthermore, from the correlation matrix computed in this study, it is evident that all the personality dimensions are related to both hostile and benevolent sexism. However, neuroticism has a negative relationship to both hostile and benevolent sexism while agreeableness has a negative relationship with hostile sexism. This depicts that neuroticism (i.e. anxiety or nervous tension characteristic) decreases as one become more sexist; and hostile sexist ideologies decreases as one gets more pro-social, altruistic, modest and tender-minded owing, perhaps, to enlightenment and expositions from interpersonal relationships. All other personality characteristics increase with increasing sexist ideologies and behaviour acquisition. This suggests that as one socializes within the environment, more things are learned and more experiences garnered to help in the navigation through the world. Such experience may include the acquisition of sexist ideologies and behaviours, which inadvertently may impact on the individual's later life profligacy with regards to sex role orientations given to younger generations.

#### Conclusion

Findings from this study corroborates the postulations of earlier scholars, e.g. Bem (1974,1993), Kohlberg (1966), Pratto et al (1994,1996) with regard to the process of acquisition of

sexist ideologies and behaviour. Personologists and personality psychologists are therefore needed to help in the processes of enlightenment, exposition and change of people's perception, personality and structure of the mind for the appreciation of value judgments.

It is, however, suggested that further studies be conducted on equality, equity, fair-play and justice between sexes for integration and sustainable national development, most especially as these have to do with people, their perception and their behaviours towards one another.

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Table 1. Descriptive Statistics Table Showing the Mean and Standard Deviation Scores of Male and
Female Participants along Sex Role Orientation on Sexism

	Sex	Sex Role Behaviour	Mean	Standard Deviation	Ν
		Masculine	37.0750	7.67171	80
		Feminine	35.9275	7.60286	69
Hostile	Male	Androgyny	39.4088	8.08954	159
		Undifferentiated	32.4417	8.09481	120
		Total	36.4579	8.69066	428
		Masculine	36.9063	10.53828	32
		Feminine	33.6024	8.97278	83
	Female	Androgyny	34.7130	10.98225	11:
		Undifferentiated	32.4793	8.00010	12
		Total	33.8808	9.57541	35
		Masculine	37.0268	8.53869	11
		Feminine	34.6579	8.43212	15
	Total	Androgyny	37.4380	10.07726	27
		Undifferentiated	32.4606	8.03064	24
		Total	35.2965	9.18410	77
		Masculine	38.2125	7.90881	80
		Feminine	37.4638	7.18777	69
BENEVOLENT	Male	Androgyny	40.7421	8.33037	15
		Undifferentiated	34.4417	8.34628	12
		Total	37.97.43	8.44416	42
		Masculine	41.6563	8.29539	32
		Feminine	42.4870	7.61182	83
	Female	Androgyny	44.4870	6.61652	11
		Undifferentiated	34.9835	8.27948	12
		Total	40.5328	8.62875	35
		Masculine	39.1964	8.13494	11
		Feminine	40.3289	7.84855	15
	Total	Androgyny	42.3139	7.86586	27
		Undifferentiated	34.7137	8.29991	24
		Total	39.1271	8.61699	77

 TABLE II. Summary of 4 x 2 ANOVA Showing the Main and Interaction Effects of Sex Role Orientation and Sex on Sexism

Dependent Variable	Source	SS	df	MS	F	Р
Hostile	Sex	502.098	1	502.098	6.414	<.05
	Sex Role Orientation	1049.026	3	1016.342	12.983	<.01
	Sex *sex Role Orientation	811.716	3	270.572	3.456	<.05
	Error	60354.534	771	78.281		
	Total	1036136.000	779			
Benevolent	Sex	1653.116	1	1653.116	26.660	<.01
	Sex Role Orientation	9131.859	3	2710.620	43.713	<.01
	Sex *sex Role Orientation	595.768	3	198.589	3.203	<.05
	Error	47809.543	771	62.010		
	Total	1250362.000	779			

# Table IIa. Summary of Least Significant Difference (Post Hoc) Test Showing Difference in Hostile Sexism Based on Sex Role

Orientation									
S/No	Sex Role Orientation	N	Mean	2	3	4			
1	Masculine	112	37.03	2.37*	-0.41	4.57*			
2	Feminine	152	34.66		-2.78*	2.20*			
3	Androgynous	274	37.44			4.98*			
4	Undifferentiated	241	32.46						

 Table IIb. Summary of Least Significant Difference (Post Hoc) Test Showing Difference in Benevolent Sexism Based on Sex

 Role Orientation

Sex Role Orientation	Ν	Mean	2	3	4				
Masculine	112	39.20	-1.13	-3.11*	4.48*				
Feminine	152	40.33		-1.98*	5.62*				
Androgynous	274	42.31			7.60*				
Undifferentiated	241	34.71							

## Table 3a. Correlation Matrix Showing Relationships between Personality Dimensions and Sexism.

	ione cui com ciuno						<i>j –</i>			
		MASCULI NITY	FEMINI	EXTRA VERSION	AGREEA ENESS	CONSN TOS	NEUROTIC	OPENNESS	HOS TILE	BENE VOLT
		NIT Y	NITY	VERSION	ENESS	105			TILE	VOLI
MASCULINITY	Pearson Correlation									
	Sig. (1-tailed) N									
FEMININITY	Pearson Correlation	.467**								
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000								
	N	780								
EXTRA	Pearson Correlation	.373**	.432**							
VERSION	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000							
	N	780	780							
AGREEA	Pearson Correlation	.338**	489**	.456**						
BLENESS	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000	.000						
	N	780	780	780						
CONSNTOS	Pearson Correlation	.450**	.457**	.405**	.653**					
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000					
	N	780	780	780	780					
NEUROTIC	Pearson Correlation	289**	-323**	263**	439**	501**				
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000				
	N	780	780	780	780	780				
OPENNESS	Pearson Correlation	.448**	.421**	435**	.444**	.455**	312**			
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000			
	N	780	780	780	780	780	780			
HOSTILE	Pearson Correlation	.262**	.200**	.261**	152**	.186**	158**	.300**		
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		
	N	779	779	779	779	779	779	779		
BENEVOLT	Pearson Correlation	.285**	.417**	.294**	.342**	.317**	256**	374**	422**	
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	779	779	779	779	779	779	779	779	

\*\* Correlation is Significant at 0.01 level

\* Correlation is significant at 0.05 level

#### Table 3b. Regression Table Showing the Independent and Joint Predictions of the Personality Dimensions on Hostile Sexism

Variables	R	$R^2$	F	р	В	t	р
Constant	.274	.069	12.52	.01			
Extraversion					.116	3.01	.01
Agreeableness					005	18	NS
Conscientiousness					.052	1.19	NS
Neuroticism					023	61	NS
Openness to Experience					.179	4.70	.01

#### Table 3c. Regression Table Showing the Independent and Joint Predictions of the Personality Dimensions on Benevolent Sexism

<b>Dealshi</b>									
Variables	R	$\mathbb{R}^2$	F	Р	В	t	р		
Constant	.40	.16	29.47	.01					
Extraversion					.059	1.61	NS		
Agreeableness					.118	2.93	.01		
Conscientiousness					.051	1.22	NS		
Neuroticism					125	-3.43	.01		
Openness to Experience					.221	6.10	.01		