Developing a Notion on Sexism in the English Language

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Abstract

The main aim of this study is to identify the causes of gender discrimination the co and solve the issue by rebuilding English language. The various beliefs of the society plays a crucial role in creating a difference between the genders. The females are exclusively illustrated in the language that everybody uses to communicate with each other. This initiates a superiority of the male persons than the females. The limitations that the females are facing is due to the fact that they are solely dependent on the male persons in the family. The domination and aggressiveness of the male members in the family creates an essence of inferiority in the female members. The illiteracy, dependency and patriarchism are a barrier for the females which is causing them to not avail many privileges. The structure of the language needs to be rebuilt to remove the sexism in the English language.

Keywords

Domination, inequality, patriarchism, sexism.

INTRODUCTION

Background and rationale

The term sexism refers to the superiority of one sex with respect to another in any form. This type of discrimination is of no significance as it has no logical implication in life. There are generalized conceptions that the male person rules the society as it has been followed from the prehistoric times. The male members in a family are enjoying numerous privileges that include staying with the family members for lifetime [1]. The female members are not able to stay in their own home as they have to stay in their husband's dwelling after marriage. This inferiority of the females is causing them to suffer miserably in their lifetime. The limitations that the ladies are facing are due to the discrimination based on genders.

Figure 1: Confidence of handling sexism

The above figure illustrates the percentage of males and females who handle sexist comments or harassments in different situations. There is a survey taken to analyze the confidence of both the genders in tackling any comments related to sexism in the public place, in family or any friends [2]. The survey depicted that 66 percent of females would tell off their family or friends for making a sexist comment whereas 61 percent of males tell off their family or friends regarding sexism comments.

Significance

The significance of this study is to design an ideology on the matter of sexism in the English language. The primary objective of the study is to describe the concept of sexism in a language that every person uses to communicate together. The individual words are identified that are responsible for causing sexism in the English language. This study also evaluates the role of society that induces gender discrimination. The presence of sexism in the English language needs to be rebuilt to remove sexism in the language.

Literature review

Sexism denotes the differentiation between the males and the females on the basis of the beliefs that have been passed on from generation to generation. The superiority of the men over the women has been included in the English language that we use to communicate with each other [3]. There is an increase in aggressiveness in the behavior of the male persons which is an outcome of the prevalent male domination in society. The violence that is caused by the male members of the family upon the female members is due to the beliefs of the society. Every male member in the family is getting the facility of being the independent decision makers [4]. The female members of the family are restricted from getting many facilities which makes them completely rely on the male members. The initial step that is significant for every girl is the inclusion of education in their curriculum.
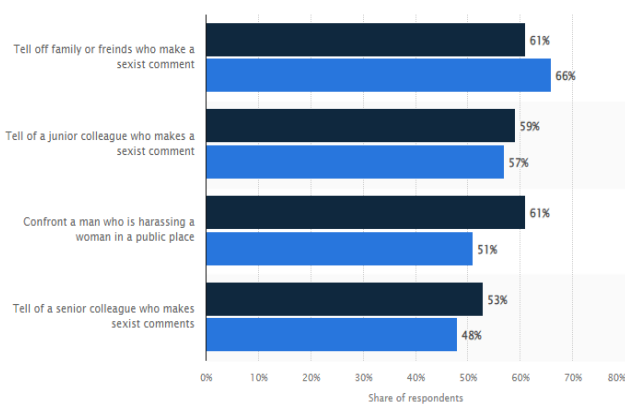
Knowledge is the powerful weapon that can put light on the aspects that enable everybody to make the correct decisions [5]. There is a huge superstition that is blindly followed as it has been the trend from decades for many unknown reasons. The illiteracy and the dependency of the females on the male family members is causing the injustices to them. These inequalities lead to abusive behavior and the male dominance in society [6]. The male persons are also discriminated against in the society by saying that they are not manly when they do any work that is against the beliefs of the society. When a male person expresses their feelings in any form of emotions then the society blames them for possessing womanly traits. The generalized belief of the society is that men should be stronger physically without any feelings that will imply the weaker aspect of a person [7]. The females are believed to have a weaker and kinder behavior as they are being dominated. The differentiation of the males and the females can also be seen present in the language everybody speaks. The special notation is that the females are being allocated to make their appearance difference from the rest of the section in the society. The females are addressed in a different way that will bring to the notice of everyone as they are a unique and rare part in the existence of humans [8]. The term such as actor refers to the male gender which is modified by adding the suffix -ess to it. Similarly, the term goddess also refers to the female deity whereas the word god refers to a male deity.

OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study is to develop a notion on sexism in the English language.

The objectives of the study are:
- To determine the concept of sexism in a language
- To identify the words and sentences that are responsible for sexism in the English language
- To evaluate how culture is related to sexism in the English language
- To analyze the possible ways of reducing sexism in the English language

METHODS

Research design

In this method of research, the design of the research is depicted. The way in which a research is performed determines the data which are presented for the given research topic [9]. By this method, the different perspectives of research can be analyzed. There are various research design types that can be classified as descriptive, exploratory, experimental, correlational, diagnostic, explanatory designs of research. The design that is chosen for this research purpose is an explanatory method of research design. The explanatory design refers to analyzing the study by using the researchers' ideas in correlation to the available data from various sources.

Research type

The research type that is chosen for his study is qualitative research. It involves gathering and analyzing data that are non numeric such as text, video, and audio. The collected data is then used to interpret the ideas that the given study is about. The insights that this research method provides, helps in analyzing the given study [10]. The related issues of the topic are taken into consideration and each of them is individually analyzed for finding their solutions. This type of research methodology is used for generating new ideas that are centered on the topic of research.

Research duration

The duration of research that is taken for this study is around four months. The research techniques that are used for this study are qualitative analysis that focuses on the non numeric data. The time interval that this particular research is carried out is from September 2022 to December 2022. The collection of data that involves various articles and journals considering a wide variety of themes of data that has been searched.

Inclusion/exclusion criteria

The articles that are chosen as a reference are not present till 2017 and the related articles only from the year 2018 are chosen to be used for this study. The reason for choosing the proposed publishing date for the articles is reliability and validity of the data sources. These two parameters are followed throughout the study where a detailed thematic analysis has been done. Thus the quality of data for this study is highly maintained with efficiency in this research process.

Data collection

There are majorly two types of data collection process that are primary and secondary methods of data collection. Primary method of data collection includes directly gathering the responses from the sources which is a highly valid source of information. Secondary method of data collection is used in this study, where the major sources of data are journals, scholarly articles and other authentic data sources [11]. Some other data sources that are considered authentic in this method are newspaper articles and government websites.

Data analysis

For the given study various aspects of gender discrimination are analyzed in relation to the English language. The roots of sexism are broadly discussed in detail which can be traced back in prehistoric times. The gender stereotypes are analyzed as it is compared to the structure of language that we follow [12]. The rebuilding of sexism in the English language is discussed which would help in removing the discrimination.

RESULTS

The term sexism refers to the faith that one sex is preferable or important than another in terms of a specific task that is performed by them. This comparison imposes a

great limitation as to what a person is able to do in regard to their gender. A vast section of the society believes that men are able to hold positions of power more efficiently than women [13]. The main reason for considering men to be superior to women is that their physical build is stronger than women. About millions of years ago there was inhabitation of chimpanzees who were the ancestors of human beings. These creatures have taken a long duration to evolve into modern humans. These ancestors followed a social behavior that relates to the domination of males in present society [14]. The males are aggressive in behavior and physically torture them due to many invalid reasons. These chimpanzee groups are patriarchal and they stay in their groups whereas the females leave them at the early stages of their life. In modern society also the women leave their own family and stay in their husband's abode which shows that men are having more facilities and power than women [15]. The male line in the family which includes grandfathers, fathers, uncles, and sons passes their property along this line which resulted in the female inferiority and they became devoid of such privileges.

The principal reason for gender discrimination is illiteracy which refers to insufficient education among women. The ideas and beliefs that are causing this stereotyping is mainly because of the age old beliefs and tradition that stays without knowing the importance of education [16]. Knowledge is the power that can change the mentality of the society. Apart from illiteracy another factor that is most vital in the condition that women are facing is monetary dependency that is arising as they are depending on their male counterparts for spending their expenses. The crucial factor that is causing other limitations to occur is the patriarchal structure of society that prevents women from taking authority. The male dominance is spreading greatly due to the neglect of the language that everybody speaks. Thus there is inequality in all aspects of discrimination on the basis of sex of these individuals. There is a lot of abusive behavior towards women which brings injustice to them [17]. There is discrimination in the work field sometimes as men are considered to be suitable for certain situations. Physical stature of men is causing them to get varied options in their work culture where rules are strictly set by the work authorities. Hence the usage of words relates to referring to women as a weaker and more vulnerable section of society. Gender discrimination is also causing the differentiation of earning as men are considered more potential for a common job position in certain cases. The stereotypes that are based on gender also draw a line of limitation over the males. It is a general belief among many cultures that means cannot express their feelings and emotions as they are considered to be stronger in nature without any behavior that weakens them.

Sexism is the terminology that deals with the inferiority of women and is similar to other types of discrimination. In the prevalent society, male domination is being gradually accepted. The main authority of the family is considered as men as the major source of earning is the senior male member in the family. The dominating behavior of men provides them power to control the family requirements on a daily basis. The final decision maker is the male member who takes the major responsibilities as the male is independent economically [18]. Several reasons that account for the appearance of sexism are historical influence, different ideologies in different cultures, influence of society for their views. Sexism has gained significance in the English language due to many reasons such as adoption of male's language, regarding women as an exception, positive male and negative female words. Female words are marked which look different than the male words such as actor and actress, god and goddess, hero and heroine which symbolizes the excess of -ess, -ine attached to the male word. The male terms are leading the female terms such as Mr. and Mrs., boys and girls, men and women, prince and princess, his and hers. These are ordered in such a way that the male domination is quite noticeable. The change of the orders of the terms is uncomfortable for the majority of people. There is rebuilding of the sexism in English required to prevent such discrimination in the English language [19]. There are numerous terms assigned to male persons when referring to them which end with a positivity. The ending of such words are many times considered to be the general word applicable to everybody which also supports sexism. Some of the examples of the terminologies that implies to both male and female persons are chairman, congressman, foreman, postman, mankind and many more. The female counterpart word to these is chairwoman, congresswoman, forewoman, post woman, womankind that is proving the exception of these names that are only applied for the females. The rebuilding of gender can be done with the changes in these terminologies that will enable the establishment of equalities between females and males. The neutral terms that remove sexism in the language of the above mentioned terms are chairperson, congressone, supervisor, postworkworker, and people respectively. Some of the other terms or phrases can replace the term man to the highest extent possible to remove distinction. The terms that relate to the term man such as mankind, manmade, manpower should be replaced with generalized terms such as human being, person, individual, humankind, humanity, artificial, staff respectively. The suffixes that are used to denote females must be modified and replaced with a neutral term that would stop them from being more identifiable and noticed. The words that are used as suffixes for females are waitress, stewardesses, aviatrix, poetess, and usherette. These suffixes can be replaced with a more usual term such as server, flight attendants, aviator, poet, usher respectively. The words that show disrespect to women must be avoided such as soft, weak, second sex and the word little woman should not be referred to the wives. The usage of parallel words is essential to not discriminate between the gender such as husband and wife must be used in place of man and wife and similarly men and women should be used in the position of men and girls. It has become common to say he or him on a general basis but it should be

avoided and plural should be used to refer to any groups such as we, us, our, them. Replace the term man that is referred for any general causes by the term you or by using the second person. When the term he is used, then the sentence should be changed into passive voice. English is the language that is widely spoken across the world and sociolinguistic research illustrates that the English language has preferred masculine gender to the feminine gender. Gender discrimination is occurring mainly due to the sexism that a language is allowing. The structure of a language is built in such a way that women are objectified and made them feel inferior in the society when compared with their male counterparts. Some elements of sexism in the English language are semantics, morphology of the language, syntax, and many more. Sexism is included in semantics of the language that is the different connotation that is given to both the genders. For example when a male is referred to as a professional then he is interpreted to be a doctor, lawyer or a footballer while the female counterpart is interpreted as a prostitute. In a similar way when the word tramp is referred to a male person then it means the person who is a wanderer, while in case of a woman she is immorally referred to as a prostitute. Another similar example that refers to a woman and a man differently is the word loose that implies a casual person for man while it refers to a sexually promiscuous woman. The morphology or the structure of the English language has certain suffixes such as -ette, -ess, and -trix which makes the woman more noticeable than males. In case of the sports that both the genders play differs a lot in terms of the referring to the match they have played. The sport golf and cricket when played by men are simply denoted as golf and cricket. The female's match is referred to as specifically women's golf and women's cricket that is creating gender discrimination. The usage of he, his and him has become rampant in various sentences which is causing the women to be invisible. The generic usage of man in the sentences is also causing the disappearance of the women thus causing sexism in the language.

DISCUSSION

The differentiation between males and females is the cause of the restrictions that are being imposed on any of the genders by society. The generalized belief that most people have is that the professions that a person is suitable for depends on their genders. The misconception that the majority of the society has is that the physical build is stronger in men than women. This is the reason for the different work and capabilities that these persons are able to do. These behavioral patterns of human society can be traced back to the ancient times where there were ancestors of human beings. The chimpanzees were the creatures who later transformed to the modern human beings due to evolution for many decades. The society during these times was led by the male members which also resulted in the male domination that is also prevalent in modern society. The males are having many facilities in modern days as they are the controllers in a

family. These types of powers are majorly due to the reason that the males are the only income source among the family members. This also causes the women to abide by the rules that are decided by the senior male member of the family. These types of restrictions that are being imposed mainly on the female members can be removed by getting monetary independence. Apart from this reason, there is a trend that has been followed for many decades that is patriarchies [20]. The male members in the society are deriving the powers and facilities from their grandfathers and fathers as the generation is passed.

The term sexism has attained an important position in the English language. The words that are being referred to the females are not generalized so that they are more prone to discrimination. The male terms in the English language are applicable to both the males and females. This emphasizes on the fact that the males are included in mostly every word which also implies their dominance factor. The words related to describe a female tends more towards increasing the negative of their presence in the society. The extensions that are added at the end of the generalized words marks an additional existence of the womanly terms. The arrangements of the denotation of the genders also illustrate the male superiority than the females [21]. These depictions include the stereotypes that are believed to be maintained in that specific order only. There is an uncomfortable of the people when they hear the reverse order of the pairs of words such as prince and princess, Mr. and Mrs., men and women. The profession that a person is pursuing does not depend on the gender but the denotation is majorly based on gender discrimination. The generalized terms are foreman, congressman, chairman, mankind, postman that are referred to the male as well as the female persons. The generalizations include the male people so they are portrayed as the crucial factor to be included in every terminology. The female terms are not referred to as an entity that can be considered by any generalized terms. The females are differentiated and referred to as separate terms such as forewoman, congresswoman, chairwoman, womankind, post-woman and many more. There should be terminologies that would only indicate a particular position for both males and females. The generalized terms that should be applied for removing the differentiation of the men and women are rearranging the words. The rebuilt words can be built by adding words such as person in place of man such as people, chairperson, humankind and many more. This will not make the females invisible by the usage of more manly terms in the English language.

CONCLUSION

There is a presence of sexism in the English language which is a huge cause of differentiating the genders. This discrimination is also making the women invisible as they are referred to as an inferior section of the society. The presence of words that emphasizes the power of male persons is creating their domination. The language is built in such a way

that the terminologies that are referred to both males and females are centered around the male persons. The extensive addition of suffixes in the denotations of the female persons is displaying the females as additional beings. The patriarchal form of society is another reason for the inclusion of sexism in the language from the prehistoric times. The male members in the family are getting facilities that the females are restricted to. The solution to this type of issue lies in the structure of language that is built. The rebuilding of the English language is essential and will not cause any discrimination on gender basis.

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