

# STUDENT'S EXPOSURE TO SEXISM AND THEIR SELF-ESTEEM

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## ABSTRACT

*This study looks into the impact of sexism on the self-esteem of students in schools, with the understanding that self-esteem is very important for mental and social well-being. It acknowledges the fact that sexism continues to exist in society, and hence, in schools, the study examines the influence of both the overt and covert types of sexism on the students' beliefs and attitudes. This study wants to give new facts and deeper understanding about the way sexism affects the students' lives and their attitude towards school, taking into account the previous research that pointed out the mutual relationship between sexism, self-esteem, and academic achievement. This research takes personal characteristics like confidence and self-esteem into account to grasp how students perceive, experience, and react to discriminatory conduct and eventually, to guide measures that could facilitate the development of a more inclusive and supportive learning atmosphere.*

*Results indicated that students mostly indicated low exposure to sexism with an overall average of 2.15, which means that they have rarely met with gender-based bias. Besides, self-esteem scores showed that students had low levels of positive self-image with an overall mean of 2.80, which means that students do not often feel like they have a strong sense of worth.*

*The correlation analysis revealed that exposure to sexism was weak but positively and insignificantly correlated with self-esteem ( $r = .180$ ,  $p = .699$ ), which suggests that in the present situation, a greater exposure to sexism does not lead to a corresponding increase in self-esteem. Therefore, it seems that the self-esteem of Junior High School students in this area is affected more by cultural factors, parental expectations, and social values rather than by direct encounters with sexism. It should be noted that the self-esteem of these Junior High School students is affected more by cultural factors, familial expectations, and social norms than by direct experiences of sexism.*

**Keyword:** Sexism, self-esteem, educational environment, correlation, well-being

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality and gender norms are still present in today's world and are influencing a lot of people. It is a problem that is very hard to get rid of even in areas where the educational environment is the main focus. Sexism is executed in various ways such as schools and universities, where it is seen as a problem that is still widely talked about and accepted.

Students' experiences can vary greatly within the school due to such inequalities. Sander and Brown (2016) point out that such experiences may have a negative impact on the mental and emotional health of a student, especially considering that self-esteem, which is an important aspect of a person's psychological health, is affected the most.

There is a strong connection between self-esteem, academic performance, and social interaction. The low self-esteem of a student can cause a number of unpleasure situations such as loss of confidence, interest, and motivation; therefore, it is probable that the student will be less involved in academic activities and his or her learning performance will suffer. (Acosta-Gonzaga, 2023). Thus, it can be argued that sexism in schools is a major contributing factor to the formation of students' self-esteem which is ultimately a determinant of their academic success.

Sexism is found everywhere—it is in the way people are treated at work, in the way society expects them to act or dress, and even in the laws (Sexism is Everywhere, 2023). It is still a problem that the whole society has to deal with, which

includes the education sector, where the students' experience and well-being are directly affected.

As stated by Igbo, J. N., Onu, V. C., and Obiyo, N. O. (2015) gender stereotypes in secondary schools significantly shape students' self-concept, closely linked to self-esteem, and negatively affect academic performance. Their study revealed that when learners internalize biased expectations, their confidence and motivation decline, leading to poorer outcomes. They emphasized that schools, often seen as equalizing institutions, can perpetuate subtle forms of sexism, and recommended educator training to counteract these biases, thereby fostering more equitable and supportive learning environments in basic education.

According to the study by Sales et al. (2022), sexism in advertisements and media in the Philippines exposes views that can lower self-esteem by shaping social perceptions of what a woman or a man "should" look and act like. These statements show stereotypical representations of gender, which negatively affect how people view themselves.

Furthermore, Fee and Pugion (2019) emphasized that in order to truly understand the impact of sexism, it is necessary to consider the different levels of understanding and personal characteristics of an individual, such as confidence and self-esteem. These play a significant role in how a person accepts, experiences, and responds to forms of discrimination.

This study aims to examine the impact of exposure to sexism on students' self-esteem, and to recognize self-esteem as an important factor in the overall mental and social health of students. Furthermore, this research also aims to contribute data and understanding regarding how experiences related to sexism affect the academic experience and overall well-being of students.

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between students' exposure to sexism and their level of self-esteem among Grade 10 (Junior High School) students at Bukidnon National School of Home Industries (BNSHI) in school year 2025-2026. Specifically, it will seek to answer the following:

1. What is the level of exposure to sexism among Grade 10 students?
2. What is the level of self-esteem among Grade 10 students?
3. Is there a significant relationship between sexism and self-esteem among Grade 10 students?

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

This chapter discusses the methods and procedures used to gather and treat the data. It includes the research design, locale of the study, respondents of the study, and data gathering procedure and ethical considerations.

### **2.1 Research Design**

The research design used in this study is a descriptive correlational research design. It aims to describe a population and investigate the relationship between variables without the researcher controlling or manipulating them. The variables examined are the level of exposure to sexism and the level of self-esteem of Grade 10 students at Bukidnon National School of Home Industries (BNSHI).

### **2.2 Locale of the Study**

The study was conducted at Bukidnon National School of Home Industries (BNSHI), a public secondary school managed by the Department of Education (DepEd), located in the town of Maramag, Bukidnon.

Bukidnon National School of Home Industries (BNSHI) is one of the 21 established schools for craftsmen and home industries in the country. It was established under Republic Act No. 5068 and began operations in 1970. It is located in the southern part of Bukidnon, where a large portion of the province's population resides. As a result, it is easily accessible to students from barangays and remote areas.

The school consists of Junior and Senior High School and offers two academic tracks and technical-vocational tracks. The school has also added special programs. These are the Special Program in Journalism (SPJ), Special Program in the Arts (SPA), Special Program in Sports (SPS), Special Program in Science, Technology and Engineering (STE), and Special Education (SPED).

### 2.3 Respondents of the Study

The participants in this study consist of 210 selected Grade 10 students from the special programs in (SPJ), (STE), and Main Stream of Bukidnon National School of Home Industries (BNSHI) who are formally enrolled in the School Year 2025–2026. This study aims to examine whether exposure to sexism has an effect on the self-esteem level of the students.

The participants were selected through simple random sampling based on their gender and section. They were given two sets of Likert Scale questionnaires specifically designed to measure their level of exposure to sexism and level of self-esteem.

To maintain the privacy of the participants, their names were not disclosed and are considered strictly confidential.

### 2.4 Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted ethically, with the rights and welfare of respondents protected at all times. Permission was granted by the principal of Bukidnon National School of Home Industries (BNSHI). All participants were informed of the study's purpose and their right to voluntary, risk-free participation, including the option to withdraw without penalty. Data confidentiality was strictly maintained, with all information used solely for academic purposes.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the data gathered from the questionnaires distributed to the respondents to determine the relationship between sexism and their self-esteem among Grade 10 (Junior High School) students of Bukidnon National School of Home Industries (BNSHI) for the school year 2025–2026.

**Table 1.**

*Table 1. Mean Score and Standard Deviation of Students' Exposure to Sexism*

| Question   | Mean | SD    | Description |
|--|------|-------|-------------|
| Experience In Sexism Questionnaire   |      |       |             |
| Have you experienced unfair treatment because of your sex or gender?                         | 2.06 | 1.012 | Rarely      |
| Have you ever received negative jokes or comments because of your sex or gender?             | 1.96 | 0.945 | Rarely      |
| Have you ever been pressured to act according to your sex or gender?                         | 2.25 | 1.410 | Rarely      |
| Have your ideas or opinions been ignored because of your sex or gender?                      | 3.15 | 1.652 | Sometimes   |
| Have you been told that your interests or hobbies are inappropriate for your sex or gender?  | 1.92 | 1.067 | Rarely      |
| Have you ever been discouraged from doing an activity because of your sex or gender?         | 2.14 | 1.205 | Rarely      |
| Have you ever been discouraged in pursuing a career you want because of your sex and gender? | 1.60 | 1.199 | Never       |
| Overall Mean   | 2.15 | 0.714 | Rarely      |

Legend:

| Score | Range       | Description | Qualitative Inter. |
|-------|-------------|-------------|--------------------|
| 5     | 4.21 - 5.00 | Always      | Very High Exposure |

|   |             |           |                   |
|---|-------------|-----------|-------------------|
| 4 | 3.41 – 4.20 | Often     | High Exposure     |
| 3 | 2.61 – 3.40 | Sometimes | Moderate exposure |
| 2 | 1.81 – 2.60 | Rarely    | Low Exposure      |
| 1 | 1.00 - 1.80 | Never     | No Exposure       |

The results, as shown in Table 1, indicate that students generally experience a low level of sexism, with an overall mean of 2.15 (SD = 0.714), falling within the "Rarely" category of the scale. This suggests that, overall, students do not frequently encounter sexist situations, though specific instances vary in frequency. The scores across most questions fall within the "Rarely" range (1.81-2.60), showing a generally consistent perception among students. There are no extreme inconsistencies, suggesting the students' experiences are relatively stable across different facets of sexism.

Among the questions, students scored highest on the item "Have your ideas or opinions been ignored because of your sex or gender?" (M = 3.15), placing it in the "Sometimes" category. This suggests that while outright sexist acts may be infrequent, having one's opinions dismissed due to gender is a more common experience. This is consistent with studies highlighting subtle forms of gender bias in academic and social settings. However, the relatively lower mean for the remaining questions indicates that students generally do not experience overt forms of sexism as frequently.

Students generally indicated low exposure to experiences such as unfair treatment, negative jokes or comments, pressure to conform to gender norms, and discouragement from activities based on gender, as evidenced by their responses to the respective questions (M = 1.92–2.25). The lowest mean was observed for the question "Have you ever been discouraged in pursuing a career you want because of your sex and gender?" (M = 1.60), indicating that students rarely face discouragement in their career aspirations due to their gender. Literature suggests that while overt barriers to career choices may be declining, subtle biases may still influence students' perceptions and decisions.

The findings suggest that while students generally experience low levels of sexism, targeted efforts to address specific issues such as gender bias in communication and opportunities can further

enhance the learning environment. Strengthening awareness of subtle biases and promoting inclusive practices can significantly improve students' experiences and foster a more equitable atmosphere.

In conclusion, the study reveals that while students are largely free from frequent experiences of sexism, deliberate efforts to address specific forms of gender bias can significantly improve both the learning environment and overall student well-being.

**Table 2.**

*Table 2. Mean Score and Standard Deviation of Students' Self-Esteem*

| Statement  | Mean | SD    | Description |
|--|------|-------|-------------|
| Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale  |      |       |             |
| On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.                                  | 3.14 | 0.667 | Rarely      |
| At times, I think I am no good at all.                                     | 2.46 | 0.827 | Never       |
| I feel that I have a number of good qualities.                             | 2.91 | 0.581 | Rarely      |
| I am able to do things as well as most other people                        | 2.78 | 0.698 | Rarely      |
| I feel I do not have much to be proud of.                                  | 2.51 | 0.728 | Rarely      |
| I certainly feel useless at times  | 2.74 | 0.738 | Rarely      |
| I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others. | 2.75 | 0.611 | Rarely      |
| I wish I could have more respect for myself.                               | 2.93 | 0.815 | Rarely      |
| All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure                      | 2.57 | 0.829 | Rarely      |
| I take a positive attitude towards myself.                                 | 3.17 | 0.672 | Rarely      |
| Overall Mean   | 2.80 | 0.233 | Rarely      |

Legend:

| Score | Range       | Description | Qualitative Inter.    |
|-------|-------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| 4     | 4.01 – 4.75 | Often       | Very High Self-Esteem |
| 3     | 3.76 – 4.00 | Sometimes   | High Self-Esteem      |
| 2     | 2.51 – 3.75 | Rarely      | Low Self-Esteem       |
| 1.    | 1.75 – 2.50 | Never       | Very Low Self-Esteem  |



The results, as shown in Table 2, indicate that students generally demonstrate low self-esteem, with an overall mean of 2.80 (SD = 0.233), falling within the "Rarely" category of the scale. This suggests that, overall, students infrequently hold positive views about themselves, although there are specific aspects of self-esteem that vary. The scores across all statements consistently fall within the "Rarely" range (2.51-3.75), showing a coherent and aligned self-perception among the students. There are no wild inconsistencies, suggesting the students' understanding of their self-esteem is stable across different facets.

Among the statements, students scored highest on "I take a positive attitude towards myself" (M = 3.17) and "On the whole, I am satisfied with myself" (M = 3.14), both still within the "Rarely" category. This indicates that while students do not frequently express strong dissatisfaction, their positive attitudes are not consistently high. This aligns with findings from Orth et al. (2015), who noted that self-esteem tends to be relatively stable over time, suggesting that students' feelings about themselves are not fleeting but rather reflect a more enduring self-evaluation.

Students generally demonstrated low agreement with positive statements about themselves, as evidenced by their responses to items such as "I am able to do things as well as most other people" (M = 2.78) and "I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others" (M = 2.75). The lowest mean was observed for the statement "At times, I think I am no good at all" (M = 2.46), which is reverse-scored, indicating that students infrequently feel entirely worthless, but their self-perception is not strongly positive.

Students' responses to negative statements such as "I wish I could have more respect for myself" (M = 2.93) and "All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure" (M = 2.57) reflect a general lack of strong positive self-perception. These means suggest that students often do not feel a strong sense of self-respect or success. Nevertheless, the item "I feel I do not have much to be proud of" scored slightly lower (M = 2.51), indicating that students may still find some aspects of themselves to be proud of.

The findings suggest that students possess low self-esteem, particularly in their overall satisfaction and positive self-perception. Addressing these issues through targeted

interventions and support can help students develop a more positive self-image, enhancing their academic performance and overall well-being. Strengthening self-esteem through activities that promote self-compassion, positive self-talk, and a focus on personal strengths can further enhance students' sense of self-worth.

In conclusion, the study reveals that while students may not express extreme negative feelings about themselves, deliberate efforts to improve their self-esteem can significantly enhance both their academic performance and overall well-being.

**Table 3.**

*Table 3. Correlations between the Students exposure to Sexism and their Self-Esteem*

**Correlations(a)**

|                 |   | sexism       | selfestee<br>m |
|-----------------|---|--------------|----------------|
| Sexism          | Pearson<br>Correlation<br>Sig. (2-tailed) | 1            | .180<br>.699   |
| Self-<br>Esteem | Pearson<br>Correlation<br>Sig. (2-tailed) | .180<br>.699 | 1              |

The results of the correlation analysis indicate a "very weak positive relationship" between students' exposure to sexism and their self-esteem ( $r = .180$ ). Although the positive value suggests that students with slightly higher exposure to sexism tend to have slightly higher self-esteem, the p-value of .699, which greatly exceeds the 0.05 significance threshold, demonstrates that this association is not statistically significant. This means that the relationship observed in the data cannot be confidently attributed to a real effect; instead, it is likely that other factors, beyond exposure to sexism, play a more substantial role in shaping students' self-esteem.

The weak and insignificant relationship found in this study aligns with several scholarly discussions on the complex nature of self-esteem. According to Orth and Robins (2022), self-esteem development is influenced by a complex interplay of genetic predispositions, environmental factors, and individual experiences, suggesting that the

impact of specific stressors like sexism may be moderated by broader resilience factors.

In the Philippines context, local researchers have explored the factors influencing self-esteem among students. Studies have pointed out that Filipino students commonly experience pressure to conform to societal expectations, which can influence their self-perception. Additionally, cultural values emphasizing collectivism and family support may buffer the negative effects of external stressors, such as sexism, on self-esteem. These findings resonate with the current study's results, indicating that students' self-esteem is more heavily driven by cultural and social factors than by their direct experiences with sexism.

Taken together, the current study's findings reinforce the perspective that self-esteem is not solely the product of exposure to sexism. Instead, it arises from a combination of personal achievements, social support, cultural values, and individual coping abilities. While addressing sexism remains an important goal, its direct influence on self-esteem may be limited unless supported by broader interventions that promote positive self-perception and resilience.

#### **4.SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION**

##### **4.1Summary**

This study explored the relationship between students' exposure to sexism and their self-esteem, focusing on Grade 10 students enrolled in various academic and special programs at Bukidnon National School of Home Industries (BNSHI) during the school year 2025–2026. Recognizing that self-esteem is a vital component of students' psychological, emotional, and academic development, the research aimed to determine whether experiences of sexism—both overt and subtle—significantly influence students' self-perception and confidence.

Employing a descriptive-correlational research design, the study utilized stratified-random sampling to select 210 participants across gender and program tracks. Data were collected using two sets of Likert-scale questionnaires: one measuring exposure to sexism, and the other assessing self-esteem based on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. Ethical protocols were strictly followed, including informed consent and confidentiality.

Results revealed that students generally reported low exposure to sexism (overall mean = 2.15, SD = 0.714), with most responses falling under the “Rarely” category. Similarly, self-esteem scores indicated low levels of positive self-perception (overall mean = 2.80, SD = 0.823), suggesting that students infrequently express strong self-worth. The correlation analysis showed a weak positive relationship ( $r = .699$ ,  $p = .180$ ) between exposure to sexism and self-esteem, but the association was not statistically significant. These findings suggest that while students may occasionally encounter gender-based biases, such experiences do not substantially affect their self-esteem. Instead, cultural factors such as collectivism, familial expectations, and societal norms appear to play a more dominant role in shaping students' self-concept.

##### **4.2.Conclusion**

Based on the findings and the three stated research questions, the following conclusions are drawn:

##### **1. Level of Exposure to Sexism**

Grade 10 students generally rarely experience sexism in their school environment. While most forms of overt and covert sexism are infrequent, subtle gender bias—particularly having one's ideas ignored due to gender—still occurs sometimes. This suggests that although the school environment is not heavily discriminatory, mild gender biases still exist and may influence students' experiences.

##### **2. Level of Self-Esteem**

Students exhibit low levels of self-esteem, indicating that they do not consistently view themselves positively. Although they occasionally feel satisfied with themselves or take a positive attitude, these positive feelings are not strong or frequent. This shows that self-esteem is an area of concern among students and may affect their academic motivation, participation, and overall well-being.

##### **3. Relationship Between Sexism and Self-Esteem**

There is no significant relationship between exposure to sexism and students' self-esteem ( $r = .180$ ,  $p = .699$ ). While a very weak positive correlation was observed, it is not statistically meaningful. This means that self-esteem is influenced more by other factors, such as cultural

norms, family expectations, social values, peer relationships, or personal experiences, rather than by exposure to sexism alone.

Therefore, sexism—although present at low levels—does not significantly affect the self-esteem of the students in this study.

#### 4.3.Recommendation

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed to address the levels of sexism, self-esteem, and their relationship among students:

##### 1. Addressing the Level of Exposure to Sexism

The school is encouraged to strengthen gender sensitivity initiatives by integrating brief awareness activities or discussions in classes to reduce subtle gender bias—especially situations where students' ideas are disregarded based on their gender.

##### 2. Addressing the Level of Self-Esteem

Teachers and guidance personnel may implement self-esteem-building programs, such as classroom affirmation activities, counselling sessions, or skill-based workshops, to help students develop a more positive self-view.

##### 3. Addressing the Relationship Between Sexism and Self-Esteem

Since sexism was not found to significantly influence self-esteem, future studies may examine additional factors—such as family environment, peer influence, and academic pressure—that may more strongly shape students' self-esteem, to provide a deeper understanding of its determinant

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