

OCCUPATIONAL SEXISM IN WORKPLACE CULTURE: A TRADITION OF OVERBEARING MASCULINITY

By

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Abstract

This paper examines the issue of sexism in workplace culture and the manifestation of overbearing masculinity in that culture. It identifies and discusses the problem of overbearing masculinity in traditional workplace culture. This masculinity manifests in such issues as stereotyping, gender pay gap, glass ceiling, sexual harassment, lack of representation and even in the tradition of masculine titles and official designations for everyone, including women. The paper's aim is to show that sexism is fundamentally interconnected with gender inequality, in particular in the workplace. From a positional perspective, the paper concludes that a workplace culture dominated by overbearing masculinity may resist diversity and the quest for inclusivity. Such resistance, the paper argues, can hinder the professional growth and advancement of individuals who do not conform to traditional gender norms.

Introduction

Sexism describes a form of discrimination or prejudice based on an individual's sex or gender, typically with a bias against women. It involves treating individuals differently or unfairly because of their gender, and it can manifest in various aspects of society, including the workplace, education, politics, and everyday interactions. While sexism can affect both men and women, it has historically been more pervasive and damaging to women. *Matsumoto (2001: p.197)* writes that sexism is linked to gender roles and stereotypes. Sexism in the workplace describes any discrimination or prejudice based on an individual's gender, usually against women. *Cudd and Jones (2005)* observe that historically, sexism refers to a globally pervasive form of oppression against women. It can manifest in various forms and impact both men and women, although it is often more pervasive and harmful to women. Sexism can occur at different levels, including individual, institutional, and systemic levels.

Sexism in the workplace can either be a product of gender inequality or lead to gender inequality. As a product of gender inequality, sexism reflects and perpetuates unequal power dynamics between men and women. According to *Crawford (2004: p.9)*, gender inequality refers to the unequal distribution of social, economic, and political resources, opportunities, and rights between individuals based on their gender. Sexism arises from and contributes to these disparities, creating a cycle of discrimination and reinforcing societal norms that favor one gender over the other. Sexism is closely linked to power imbalances between men and women. Societal structures, historical norms, and traditional gender roles have historically granted more power and privilege to men, reinforcing a system where women are often marginalized and face discrimination. Gender inequality is evident in economic spheres, where women face wage gaps, limited access to economic opportunities, and barriers to career advancement. Sexism plays a role in perpetuating these disparities by contributing to discriminatory hiring practices, unequal pay, and limited access to resources for women. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2008) employment outlook discovered that while female employment rates have grown, gender employment and

wage gaps have narrowed globally. The report state that on the average, women still have 20% less chance to have a job and are paid 17% less than men.

Sexism as leading to gender inequality often leads to unequal treatment of individuals based on their gender. This differential treatment can manifest in various areas such as education, employment, healthcare, and social interactions. For example, biased hiring practices and gender-based stereotypes can limit career opportunities for women, contributing to economic disparities. Sexism fosters gender stereotypes and societal expectations that dictate how individuals should behave based on their gender. For instance, traditional stereotypes may associate women with nurturing roles and men with leadership, reinforcing a division of labor and limiting opportunities for both genders. Gender inequality can manifest in education through disparities in access to quality education for boys and girls. Sexism may contribute to stereotypes that limit educational opportunities and career choices based on gender, reinforcing traditional roles rather than promoting equal access to education.

Whichever way one looks at it, sexism and gender inequality are deeply interconnected, with sexism serving as a contributing factor to the perpetuation of unequal treatment and opportunities between genders. Sexism encompasses discriminatory beliefs, attitudes, and practices based on an individual's sex, typically favouring one gender over the other. In workplace culture, sexism manifests in overbearing masculinity in almost all spheres of work activity and environment. Be it in stereotyping, gender pay gap, glass ceiling, sexual harassment, lack of representation and even in the tradition of masculine titles and official designations for everyone including women. This paper is an attempt to explore this overbearing masculinity in workplace culture and show its connection to gender inequality and its negatives.

Sexism

According to *New Oxford American Dictionary (2010)*, sexism refers to the discrimination, prejudice, or stereotyping based on a person's sex or gender, typically favoring one gender over the other. It can manifest in various forms, including unequal treatment, expectations, and opportunities for individuals based on their gender. Sexism can affect both men and women, although it is often associated with discrimination against women. There are different kinds of sexism, including benevolent sexism, which involves seemingly positive attitudes or beliefs about a particular gender that may still reinforce traditional gender roles. For example, assuming that women are more nurturing and better suited for caregiving roles. There is also hostile sexism which is overt and often includes negative beliefs and attitudes about a particular gender. It can manifest as discrimination, harassment, or violence against individuals based on their gender. Micro-aggressions also represent a form of sexism which is subtle, often unintentional, comments or behaviors that communicate discriminatory attitudes. Microaggressions can contribute to a hostile and unwelcoming environment for individuals of a particular gender. and then, institutional or occupational sexism which is the focus of this paper.

Occupational Sexism

This refers to the systemic and structural practices within institutions and organisations that disadvantage one gender over the other. This can include workplace policies, educational systems, and legal frameworks that perpetuate gender-based inequalities. Institutional sexism, also known as systemic sexism, refers to the ways in which social, economic, political, and cultural institutions perpetuate gender-based discrimination and reinforce gender inequalities. *Zimmer (1988)* states that this form of sexism is embedded in the structures and practices of

various organizations and societal systems. Unlike individual acts of discrimination, institutional sexism operates on a broader scale and can affect large groups of people. Institutional sexism is such a problem that addressing it would require systemic changes, including policy reforms, awareness campaigns, and efforts to promote gender equity within organizations and society at large. Advocacy for inclusive policies, diversity and inclusion initiatives, and challenging gender norms are important steps toward dismantling institutional sexism. Institutional sexism manifests in many forms of negative dispositions and these are briefly examined subsequently.

Sexism and Educational Inequalities

Institutional sexism can manifest in educational settings through biased curricula, gender-based stereotypes, and disparities in resources and opportunities for students of different genders. For example, certain academic fields may be perceived as more suitable for one gender over the other. Sexism and education inequalities are interconnected issues that manifest at various levels within educational systems. These inequalities can impact both male and female students but often disproportionately affect one gender. *Ecklund et al (2012) state that gender stereotypes can shape expectations about academic and career paths. For example, there may be societal biases that discourage girls from pursuing STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields or boys from engaging in activities traditionally associated with females. These stereotypes can influence educational choices and limit opportunities for both genders.*

Sexism in education can be reflected in curricula that reinforce traditional gender roles or omit contributions of women in history, literature, and other subjects. A lack of representation can send implicit messages about the value of each gender's contributions, reinforcing gender-based stereotypes. Gender bias among educators can affect students' experiences in the classroom. Teachers may unintentionally treat students differently based on their gender, affecting expectations, feedback, and opportunities for academic and extracurricular activities. Sexism can contribute to a hostile environment where students, particularly girls, may experience discrimination or harassment based on their gender. This can create barriers to learning and hinder the overall educational experience. In some cases, girls may face barriers to accessing educational opportunities, including enrollment in certain courses or participation in sports and extracurricular activities. These barriers can limit their exposure to diverse experiences and hinder their personal and academic development. Disparities may exist in enrollment and completion rates between genders, particularly in higher education. Efforts to address these gaps include promoting gender-inclusive admissions policies and challenging stereotypes that may dissuade certain genders from pursuing specific fields of study (*Ecklund et al. 2012*).

Sexism and the Judicial System

Laws and legal practices may contribute to gender inequalities. For instance, biased laws regarding marriage, divorce, child custody, or reproductive rights can disproportionately impact one gender. Additionally, the handling of cases related to sexual harassment or violence can reflect institutional biases. Sexism within the legal and judicial system refers to the presence of gender-based discrimination and bias in the formulation and application of laws, as well as in legal processes and institutions. This form of sexism can manifest in various ways and may disproportionately affect individuals based on their gender. Some laws may explicitly or implicitly favour one gender over another, reinforcing traditional gender roles and perpetuating inequality. For instance, discriminatory laws related to marriage, divorce, child custody, or inheritance can disproportionately impact women. *Office of the High Commissioner*

for Human Rights (OHCHR) (2013) has called for the elimination of discriminatory provisions in legislations in Latin American countries, where the prevailing view is that women are property. The OHCHR also calls for the elimination of mitigating factors for “crimes of passion”.

Stereotypes about gender roles and behaviors can influence legal decisions. Judges, lawyers, and other legal professionals may hold unconscious biases that affect their judgments, potentially leading to unfair outcomes for individuals based on their gender. The handling of cases related to sexual assault and harassment can be influenced by gender biases. Victims, often women, may face skepticism or victim-blaming, and the legal system may not always respond appropriately to allegations of gender-based violence. Research has shown that gender can influence sentencing outcomes. For similar offenses, women may sometimes receive more lenient sentences than men, or conversely, may be treated more harshly. These disparities can reflect societal perceptions of gender and may not always align with principles of justice and fairness. Gender imbalances within the legal profession, with fewer women in positions of power such as judges or partners in law firms, can contribute to systemic biases. The lack of diverse perspectives in decision-making roles may perpetuate gender inequalities within the legal system

Sexism and Media Representation

Media institutions can perpetuate gender stereotypes and contribute to sexist attitudes through the portrayal of individuals in movies, television shows, advertisements, and other forms of media. This can influence societal perceptions and expectations related to gender roles. Sexism in media representations refers to the presence of gender-based discrimination, stereotypes, and biases in various forms of media, including television, film, advertising, literature, and online platforms. *Douglas (2010)* writes that media has a significant influence on shaping societal perceptions and expectations, and when sexism is perpetuated in media, it can contribute to the reinforcement of traditional gender roles and inequalities. Media often portrays stereotypical roles for men and women, reinforcing traditional and narrow views of gender. For example, women may be depicted as primarily caregivers, while men are portrayed as assertive or dominant figures.

Goh-Mah (2013) observes that objectification involves reducing individuals, often women, to their physical appearance and disregarding their intelligence, skills, or character. Advertisements, movies, and other media forms sometimes objectify women, reinforcing harmful beauty standards and contributing to the commodification of the female body. Again, gender biases can lead to underrepresentation or misrepresentation of certain genders in media. This can include limited roles for women in leadership positions, reinforcing the notion that certain careers or roles are not suitable for particular genders. Media content may use language and narratives that reinforce gender stereotypes. This can include the use of demeaning language or the portrayal of certain gendered behaviors as normal or acceptable. Media representations, especially in the fashion and beauty industries, can contribute to unrealistic beauty standards. This can lead to body image issues and low self-esteem, particularly among women and girls who may feel pressured to conform to these ideals.

Sexism and Health Disparities

Institutional sexism can be present in healthcare systems through unequal access to medical services, research biases, and gender-based discrimination in treatment. Women, for example, may face challenges in receiving proper healthcare for reproductive issues. *Amnesty International (2023)* maintains that sexism contributes to health disparities between genders,

affecting individuals' access to healthcare, treatment, and overall well-being. Health disparities based on gender may result from social, economic, and cultural factors that intersect with sexism. Sexism can lead to disparities in access to healthcare services. Societal norms and biases may influence healthcare-seeking behavior, with women, for example, sometimes facing challenges in accessing reproductive healthcare or being taken less seriously when reporting certain symptoms. Sexism can affect women's reproductive health, including limited access to family planning services, maternal healthcare, and comprehensive sex education. Stigma around reproductive health issues may hinder open discussions and preventive measures.

Historically, medical research has not always been inclusive or representative of both genders (*Douglas, 2010*). This can result in gaps in understanding how diseases manifest differently in men and women and how treatments may affect them differently. Such biases can lead to misdiagnoses and inadequate treatment plans. Gender stereotypes and societal expectations can contribute to the stigma surrounding mental health. Men, for example, might face pressure to conform to traditional masculine ideals, making it difficult for them to seek help for mental health issues. Sexism can contribute to gender-based violence, which has significant physical and mental health consequences. Survivors of gender-based violence may face barriers in accessing support services and may be reluctant to report incidents due to fear of stigma or retaliation. Occupational segregation, where certain industries or professions are dominated by one gender, can lead to disparities in occupational health. For example, jobs traditionally held by women may have lower pay and fewer workplace safety measures.

Sexism and Workplace Discrimination

Gender bias in hiring, promotion, and compensation practices can contribute to workplace inequalities. This may involve the existence of glass ceilings that limit the advancement of women to higher positions in the corporate hierarchy. Sexism in the workplace refers to the unfair treatment, discrimination, or bias based on an individual's gender. This can manifest in various forms and affect both men and women, although it is often associated with the discrimination against women. *Zimmer (1988) avers that* workplace sexism can occur at different levels, including hiring, promotion, compensation, and day-to-day interactions. A gender wage gap often exists, where women may earn less than their male counterparts for performing the same or similar work. This wage disparity can result from factors such as gender-based discrimination, occupational segregation, and differences in negotiation practices. The glass ceiling refers to an invisible barrier that prevents women from advancing to top leadership positions within an organization. Despite qualifications and experience, women may face obstacles in reaching executive or board-level roles.

Sexist stereotypes can influence hiring decisions, promotions, and evaluations. For example, women may be stereotyped as less assertive or competent, while men may face biases when entering traditionally female-dominated fields. Workplace sexism can involve harassment, including unwanted comments, gestures, or actions based on gender. A hostile work environment may emerge when sexist behavior is tolerated or ignored, creating discomfort and affecting productivity. In some industries, there is a lack of representation of women in certain roles or sectors (*Zimmer, 1988*). This underrepresentation can contribute to the perpetuation of stereotypes and limit opportunities for women to advance in their careers. Women face discrimination related to pregnancy or maternity leave, including bias in hiring decisions, denial of promotions, or negative attitudes toward taking time off for family-related reasons. Because this paper focuses on sexism in workplace culture, it is not out of place to discuss some of these manifestations of sexism in the workplace.

The Gender Wage Gap

A gender wage gap often exists, where women may earn less than their male counterparts for performing the same or similar work. This wage disparity can result from factors such as gender-based discrimination, occupational segregation, and differences in negotiation practices. The gender wage gap refers to the difference in average earnings between men and women in the workforce. It is often expressed as a percentage, representing the earnings of women relative to men. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2008) maintains that despite progress in many areas of gender equality, the gender wage gap persists in various countries and industries. Women and men often work in different occupations and industries. Some fields dominated by women may have lower average wages compared to male-dominated fields. Occupational segregation contributes to disparities in earnings. Even when women and men work in the same occupation and have similar qualifications, women may be paid less than their male counterparts. This form of wage gap is often attributed to discriminatory pay practices.

Women are often underrepresented in leadership positions and executive roles. This lack of representation can contribute to the persistence of the wage gap, as women may face barriers in accessing higher-paying positions. Women may experience a reduction in earnings due to the motherhood penalty. This penalty occurs when women are penalized in the workforce for taking time off for maternity leave or adjusting their work schedules to accommodate family responsibilities. Research indicates that women may be less likely to negotiate their salaries compared to men. Additionally, gender stereotypes and biases may influence employers' perceptions of women's negotiation skills and leadership potential (OECD, 2008). Choices in education and career paths can contribute to the wage gap. Women may be underrepresented in certain high-paying fields, and societal expectations may guide career choices.

Glass Ceiling

The glass ceiling refers to an invisible barrier that prevents women from advancing to top leadership positions within an organization. *McKay (2006) writes that despite qualifications and experience, women face obstacles in reaching executive or board-level roles.* Glass ceiling refers to an invisible barrier or set of barriers that prevents a specific group, often women, from ascending to higher positions within an organization or profession. It implies that while individuals from marginalized groups may be able to see the upper echelons of leadership, there are systemic and often invisible obstacles preventing them from reaching those positions. The glass ceiling is associated with limitations on career advancement, particularly in reaching top-level executive or leadership positions. Women and other marginalized groups may find it challenging to break through to the highest levels of organizational hierarchy.

Gender bias and discrimination contribute to the existence of the glass ceiling. Stereotypes and preconceived notions about gender roles may influence decision-makers, affecting promotion opportunities and leadership appointments. Certain industries or sectors may be characterized by a lack of diversity in leadership, contributing to the glass ceiling effect. Occupational segregation can limit the visibility and access of underrepresented groups to key leadership roles (*McKay, 2006*). The glass ceiling is often linked to the gender wage gap, where women in leadership roles may receive lower compensation compared to their male counterparts. This unequal pay can be both a cause and a consequence of the glass ceiling. The underrepresentation of women and other marginalized groups in leadership positions contributes to the perpetuation of the glass ceiling. Limited role models and mentors in leadership can make it more difficult for individuals to envision and pursue career advancement.

Stereotyping

Sexist stereotypes can influence hiring decisions, promotions, and evaluations. For example, women may be stereotyped as less assertive or competent, while men may face biases when entering traditionally female-dominated fields. Manstead, *et al* (1999) describe stereotyping and bias as cognitive processes that involve making assumptions, generalizations, or judgments about individuals or groups based on their perceived characteristics, often without considering their individual differences. These processes can be influenced by cultural, social, or personal factors and can manifest in various forms, including gender bias, racial bias, age bias, and more.

Stereotyping involves categorizing individuals or groups based on preconceived and oversimplified ideas about their characteristics, behaviors, or attributes. Stereotyping is a cognitive process in which individuals categorize and make assumptions about others based on certain characteristics, traits, or attributes. These assumptions are often generalized to an entire group of people and may not take into account the diversity and individuality within that group. Stereotypes can be based on a variety of factors, including but not limited to race, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. Stereotypes involve simplifying complex characteristics or behaviors of individuals or groups into a set of general traits. This oversimplification can lead to biased and inaccurate perceptions. Stereotypes often involve applying characteristics observed in some members of a group to all members of that group. This generalization can contribute to unfair and unjust assumptions about individuals (Thoman, *et al*, 2008). Stereotyping is closely linked to prejudice, which involves preconceived opinions or attitudes about individuals or groups based on their perceived characteristics. Stereotypes can contribute to the formation and reinforcement of prejudiced beliefs.

Stereotypes are shaped by societal and cultural influences, including media portrayals, historical narratives, and interpersonal interactions. These influences can reinforce and perpetuate certain stereotypes. Stereotypes are often inaccurate because they do not account for the diversity and variability within any given group. Individuals within a group can have unique experiences, perspectives, and characteristics that defy stereotypical expectations. Common stereotypes include assumptions about gender roles, racial or ethnic characteristics, occupational roles, or personality traits associated with certain groups

Bias

Bias refers to a preference, inclination, or prejudice for or against an individual or group. Bias can influence decision-making, perceptions, and behaviors. Bias refers to a systematic and often unconscious preference or inclination for or against a person, group, or thing. It involves the application of preconceived notions or opinions that may influence judgment, decision-making, and behavior. Bias can manifest in various forms and across different contexts, including but not limited to race, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. Bias is closely related to prejudice, which involves preconceived opinions or attitudes about individuals or groups based on certain characteristics. Bias can contribute to the formation and reinforcement of prejudiced beliefs.

Thoman, et al (2008) observes that bias introduces subjectivity into decision-making processes, often deviating from objective and impartial considerations. It can result in unfair treatment and judgments. Bias can be explicit, meaning it is conscious and intentional, or implicit, meaning it operates at an unconscious level, influenced by societal and cultural factors. Bias is rooted in cognitive processes, including mental shortcuts and heuristics that the brain uses to simplify complex information. However, these processes can lead to inaccurate and unfair

judgments. Bias can be explicit or implicit, affecting attitudes and actions in various contexts, such as hiring decisions, educational assessments, or interpersonal interactions. Another example of bias is the tendency to seek, interpret, and remember information in a way that confirms one's preexisting beliefs or attitudes. Categorizing individuals or groups based on perceived characteristics and making assumptions about them, often leading to unfair generalizations.

Harassment

Workplace sexism can involve harassment, including unwanted comments, gestures, or actions based on gender. A hostile work environment may emerge when sexist behavior is tolerated or ignored, creating discomfort and affecting productivity. Harassment refers to unwelcome and offensive conduct, comments, or behavior directed at an individual or a group based on protected characteristics such as race, sex, religion, disability, or other legally protected factors. Harassment can take various forms, including verbal, physical, or visual conduct. Harassment in the workplace is a form of unwelcome and offensive behavior, conduct, or communication directed at an individual or group. It often involves behavior that is intimidating, hostile, or creates a hostile work environment. Harassment can take various forms, and it is important to note that it is generally rooted in discrimination against a person based on factors such as race, sex, religion, disability, age, or other protected characteristics (*Thoman, et al, 2008*).

Harassment can be sexual with unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature; racial harassment with offensive remarks, slurs, or discriminatory actions based on race or ethnicity; bullying with persistent and harmful behavior intended to intimidate, degrade, or humiliate an individual; and age, disability and religious harassment with discriminatory behavior based on age, disability, or religion that creates a hostile work environment. Harassment is characterized by conduct that is unwelcome or unsolicited. It is essential for the recipient to communicate that the behavior is unwanted. Harassment can contribute to the creation of a hostile work environment, where the behavior is severe or pervasive enough to alter the conditions of employment.

Employers should have clear reporting mechanisms for employees to raise concerns about harassment. This may involve a designated person, a human resources department, or a specific reporting system. Consequences for engaging in harassment can range from disciplinary actions, including termination, to legal consequences. Employers are generally held accountable for addressing and rectifying harassment issues.

Hostile Work Environment

A hostile work environment is created when the workplace becomes permeated with discriminatory intimidation, ridicule, or insult that is severe or pervasive enough to alter the conditions of an individual's employment and create an abusive working environment. For a work environment to be considered hostile, the behavior must be discriminatory, frequent, and severe, creating an atmosphere that is intimidating, offensive, or oppressive. A hostile work environment is a term used to describe a workplace in which unwelcome and offensive behavior creates an intimidating, hostile, or abusive atmosphere for employees. This can negatively impact an individual's well-being, job performance, and overall work experience. A hostile work environment is typically characterized by persistent and severe behavior that interferes with an employee's ability to perform their job duties.

A hostile work environment often involves unlawful harassment, which can be based on factors such as race, sex, religion, disability, age, or other protected characteristics (Organisation for

Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2008). Harassing behaviors may include offensive jokes, slurs, insults, ridicule, or other forms of verbal or physical conduct. A hostile work environment is not based on isolated incidents. It requires a pattern of behavior that is frequent, severe, and pervasive enough to create an intimidating or offensive working environment. The behavior in question must have a significant impact on the employee's ability to perform their job duties. It may create a situation in which the employee feels compelled to alter their work behavior or environment to cope with the hostility. Hostile work environments are often linked to discrimination based on protected characteristics, such as race, gender, age, religion, disability, or other factors recognized by anti-discrimination laws.

Employers have a legal responsibility to prevent and address a hostile work environment. This includes implementing policies, conducting training, and taking corrective action when necessary. Anti-discrimination laws, such as Title VII of the Civil Rights Act in the United States, prohibit a hostile work environment based on certain protected characteristics. Employees have the right to work in an environment free from discrimination and harassment. Employers who fail to address a hostile work environment may face legal consequences, including lawsuits, fines, and damage to their reputation.

Lack of Representation

In some industries, there is a lack of representation of women in certain roles or sectors. This underrepresentation can contribute to the perpetuation of stereotypes and limit opportunities for women to advance in their careers. The lack of representation for women in the workplace, particularly in leadership and decision-making roles, is a significant issue that reflects broader gender disparities. This underrepresentation can be observed across various industries and sectors and is influenced by a combination of societal, cultural, and organizational factors. Women are often underrepresented in leadership positions, including executive roles and board seats (*Kittilson and Fridkin, 2008*). This phenomenon is commonly referred to as the “glass ceiling,” which represents the invisible barriers that hinder women's progression to top leadership roles.

Certain industries and sectors continue to be heavily male-dominated, leading to occupational segregation. Women may face challenges accessing and advancing in fields traditionally perceived as male-oriented. The gender pay gap is often linked to the lack of representation for women in higher-paying roles. Women, on average, earn less than their male counterparts, reflecting disparities in access to leadership positions and opportunities. Gender stereotypes and biases can influence perceptions of women's capabilities and suitability for certain roles. These stereotypes may contribute to the underrepresentation of women in fields that are stereotypically associated with male qualities. Societal expectations regarding caregiving responsibilities often disproportionately affect women. Balancing career aspirations with family obligations can impact women's ability to pursue and maintain leadership positions. Networking plays a crucial role in career advancement. Women may face barriers in accessing the same networking opportunities as men, which can affect their visibility and ability to build professional relationships. Unconscious biases in hiring and promotion processes can disadvantage women. Preconceived notions about leadership qualities or traditional gender roles may influence decision-makers, contributing to the underrepresentation of women in leadership.

Masculinity of Official Titles and Designations

Masculine official titles and designations refer to job titles, honorifics, or other official terms that traditionally use masculine forms of language. In many languages, including English,

certain titles have historically been gendered, reflecting traditional societal norms and gender roles. Over time, efforts have been made to promote gender-neutral language to foster inclusivity and recognize the contributions of individuals irrespective of their gender. Examples of this masculinity include such things as: “Chairman” - The traditional term for the leader of a committee or board of directors. “Fireman”/ “Policeman”: These terms have traditionally been used to refer to police officers and firefighters. Other examples include addressing a female judge as “Your Lordship.”

Overbearing Masculinity in Workplace Culture

The problem of overbearing masculinity in the workplace refers to the presence of exaggerated or harmful masculine behaviors that can create a challenging and unwelcome work environment. Overbearing masculinity can manifest in various ways, including dominance, aggression, sexism, and the suppression of emotions, even in language (Mills (2008)). This behavior not only negatively impacts the individuals affected but also contributes to a toxic workplace culture. Overbearing masculinity may be characterized by a strong emphasis on dominance and authoritarian leadership. This can stifle collaboration, hinder open communication, and create an atmosphere of fear or intimidation. Some manifestations of overbearing masculinity include aggressive communication styles, where individuals may use forceful language, interrupt others, or engage in confrontational behavior. This can undermine teamwork and hinder effective communication.

Overbearing masculinity often involves sexism and gender stereotyping, where traditional male attributes are valued while stereotypically feminine qualities may be dismissed or ridiculed. This can contribute to gender inequality and discrimination in the workplace. Traditional notions of masculinity may discourage the expression of vulnerability or emotions, leading to a workplace culture that suppresses emotional well-being. This can negatively impact mental health and hinder authentic relationships among colleagues. Overbearing masculinity can contribute to the creation of a hostile work environment, where individuals may feel uncomfortable, excluded, or unable to express themselves authentically. This can lead to high levels of stress and reduced job satisfaction.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, one may conclude that a workplace culture dominated by overbearing masculinity may resist diversity and inclusion efforts. This resistance can hinder the professional growth and advancement of individuals who do not conform to traditional gender norms. Overbearing masculinity can disrupt team dynamics by promoting individualism over collaboration and discouraging the contributions of team members who may not align with traditional gender expectations.

Addressing the problem of overbearing masculinity in the workplace requires a comprehensive approach that involves leadership commitment, cultural change, and ongoing efforts to create a more inclusive and respectful workplace environment. Organizations that prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion are better positioned to cultivate a positive and productive workplace culture. There is need to encourage leadership styles that prioritize collaboration, empathy, and inclusivity rather than dominance and authoritarianism and implement training programs that address biases, stereotypes, and promote awareness of the value of diversity in the workplace.

There is need to foster a workplace culture that values emotional intelligence, encouraging individuals to express themselves authentically and acknowledging the importance of empathy and understanding. Women may face discrimination related to pregnancy or maternity leave,

including bias in hiring decisions, denial of promotions, or negative attitudes toward taking time off for family-related reasons. Efforts must be made to develop and communicate clear policies regarding workplace behavior, emphasizing respect, inclusivity, and the consequences of engaging in overbearing or discriminatory behavior.

Leadership training must emphasize the importance of inclusive leadership and the benefits of diverse teams. There is to establish support networks and resources for employees who may be affected by overbearing masculinity, providing avenues for communication and resolution. And above all, foster an environment where open communication is valued, allowing employees to express concerns or report inappropriate behavior without fear of retaliation.

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