

Sexist Behaviors and Sex Discrimination as Predictors of Trust in Leadership: The Effect of Gender



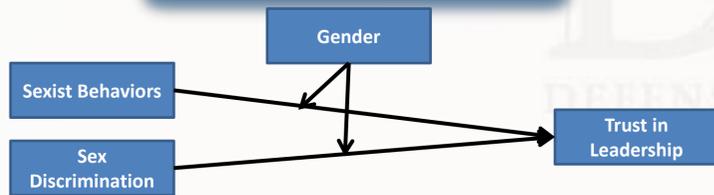
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Introduction

- Sexism is an individual's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that stereotype or discriminate men and women on the basis of sex (Swim & Hyers, 2009).
- Hostile sexism** is an antagonistic attitude towards women that is seen as controlling men through feminist ideology or sexual seduction (e.g., "A woman's place is in the kitchen.").
- Benevolent sexism** is a subtle type of sexism that seems favorable but is actually sexist because it paints women as weak individuals who need to be protected by men (e.g., "Men should always pay for a date.").
- Ambivalent sexism** is "hostile" + "benevolent" sexism towards women (Glick & Fiske, 1997; e.g., "Women – you can't live with them, you can't live without them.").
- Sex discrimination is the unequal treatment of men and women in organizations and institutions in regards to equal opportunity and equal employment opportunity (Swim & Hyers, 2009).
- Example: A female employee not being promoted to a management position because of the belief that it would be too much for her to handle.
- If sexism and sex discrimination are perceived in the workplace and are not addressed by leadership, this could create a lack of trust.

Hypothesized Model



- H1: Sex discrimination will be negatively related to trust in leadership.
- H2: Sexist behaviors will be negatively related to trust in leadership.
- H3A: Gender will moderate the relationship between sex discrimination and trust in leadership such that the relationship will be stronger for women than men.
- H3B: Gender will moderate the relationship between sexist behaviors and trust in leadership such that the relationship will be stronger for women than men.

Methods

- Design:** Cross-sectional survey
- Survey:** Archival data from the DEOMI Organizational Climate Survey (DEOCS). A 4-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree) was used to indicate level of agreement with statements.
- Sample Size:** 37,957 Active Duty Service Members (SMs) from across all 4 Services.

Results

Table 1. Items from DEOCS for Key Variables

Sexist Behaviors	Sex Discrimination	Trust in Leadership
Sexist slurs are <u>not</u> used in my work area.	Qualified members of both genders can expect the same training opportunities.	I trust that my organization's leadership will represent my best interests.
Sexist comments are <u>not</u> used in my work area.	Qualified members of both genders can expect similar job assignments.	I trust that my organization's leadership will treat me fairly.
Sexist jokes are <u>not</u> used in my work area.	Qualified members of both genders can expect to be treated with the same level of professionalism.	I trust that my organization's leadership will support my career advancement.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Moderate levels of sexist behaviors, sex discrimination, and trust in leadership were found. Low responses are unfavorable while high responses are favorable.

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
Gender	85% male	.36	---			
Sexist Behaviors	3.11	.69	-.062**	(.87)		
Sex Discrimination	3.21	.66	-0.79**	.612**	(.90)	
Trust in Leadership	2.79	.79	-.044**	.416**	.526**	(.89)

Note: N=37,957. Cronbach's Alpha are in the diagonal. **p<.01 (2-tailed), correlation is significant.

Table 3. Dependent Variable Model: Trust in Leadership Regressed on Predictors

Moderate levels of sexist behaviors, sex discrimination, and trust in leadership were found. Low responses are unfavorable while high responses are favorable.

Predictors	B	SE	t
(Constant)	.59***	.02	32.409
Sexist Behaviors	.20***	.02	10.31
Sex Discrimination	.49***	.02	25.43
sexistXgen	-.03	.02	-1.57
sexdiscXgen	.03	.02	1.62

Note: R² = .29, F(4, 37952) = 3887.649***
***p<.001

Summary of Results

- H1: This was supported in that perceptions of sex discrimination are negatively related to trust in leadership.
- H2: This was supported in that perceptions of sexist behaviors are negatively related to trust in leadership.
- H3AB: There are no significant differences in how men and women perceive sexist behaviors and sex discrimination and how it influences their perceptions of trust in leadership.

Best Practice Recommendations

- Leaders should foster an environment with zero tolerance for sexism and sex discrimination where such behaviors, if they occur, can be reported in a timely manner.
- Implementation of diversity training can assist in recognizing and reporting unequal treatment of women (Ehrke et al., 2014).
- More men should advocate on behalf of women since they are less likely to experience any costs as a result of confrontation (Drury et al., 2014).

Limitations and Future Research

- Self-report data were used.
- Future analysis should replicate this study while accounting for other variables such as rank and intentions to stay.
- Research which analyzes comparisons between perceptions and actual prevalence of these behaviors would be useful in evaluating and building upon existing prevention strategies.
- Investigate how these behaviors can lead to abuse along the continuum of harm.

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