

Benevolent Sexism Towards Female Teachers in Schools: A Mixed Methods Study*

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Abstract

This study investigates benevolent sexism behaviors directed towards female teachers in primary schools. Utilizing a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, the research was conducted with 226 teachers from public primary schools in Küçükçekmece, Istanbul, during the 2021–2022 academic year. Quantitative data were collected using the Ambivalent Sexism Scale, while qualitative insights were gathered through an open-ended question. Descriptive statistics, independent samples t-tests, and one-way ANOVA were applied for the quantitative analysis, and qualitative data were analyzed through document analysis. The quantitative findings revealed that teachers tended to “somewhat agree” with statements related to heterosexual intimacy (HI) and gender-complementary differentiation (GCD), while they “somewhat disagreed” with protective patriarchy (PP). No significant differences were found in sexism scores based on gender, age, or professional experience. Qualitative findings showed that female teachers predominantly encountered protective sexism through themes of protective patriarchy and gender-complementary differentiation. Protective behaviors aimed at easing women’s workload—such as flexible scheduling, reduced responsibilities, and facilitated leave—were commonly reported. The integration of findings indicated that protective patriarchy emerged as the most observable and normalized form of protective sexism in school settings.

Key words: Sexism, benevolent sexism, educational administration, female teachers, lifelong learning

Introduction

Sexism is an attitude used for “accepting traditional gender roles and evaluating genders within the framework of stereotypes and prejudices” (Sakallı Uğurlu, 2002). Sexism is a concept that involves placing women in a lower position than men in social life due to the existence of negative attitudes towards women in a society dominated by men. It is a social discrimination problem (Alptekin, 2014). These negative attitudes can sometimes make discrimination invisible by ignoring the needs of women (Bora, 2018). Because if individuals in society do not comply with the norms and rules created by society, they are subjected to various sanctions such as exclusion.

Benevolent sexism is the gentle justification of men's oppressive roles. It consists of protective roles and behaviors against women (Ayan, 2014). Although it may seem like a good attitude, it supports male dominance; it shows that women are weak and need men to protect them, that they cherish them, and that helping women is glorified (Sakallı Uğurlu, 2002). According to this attitude, women are dependent on men. She expects to be protected by the man. The aim is to perpetuate male dominance and not to see the 'weak' woman who is a wife and mother as competent enough (Glick & Fiske, 1996). He categorizes women using words such as innocent, pure, compassionate. They are not explicitly characterized as misogynistic, but as

protective of women. It is a prejudice against women (Sakallı Uğurlu, 2002). There is respect for stereotypical roles of women such as motherhood and wifehood (Jha & Mamidi, 2017).

Problem Statement

Benevolent sexism consists of protective roles and behaviors against women (Ayan, 2014). According to Glick and Fiske's (1996) Ambivalent Sexism Theory, there are two types of power in benevolent sexism. The first one, structural power, is about being economically, politically and religiously superior, while dyadic power is about meeting the needs of others. While men exhibit negative behaviors against women to maintain their structural power, they also try to protect them to benefit from their dyadic power. Therefore, men display hostile and benevolent attitudes towards women. While hostile sexism shows its effect explicitly, benevolent sexism shows its effect implicitly by emphasizing that women are weak and in need of protection (Alptekin, 2014). While benevolent sexism emphasizes that women should be more moral and purer, hostile sexism has open hostile attitudes towards women who are thought to use their femininity (Sakallı Uğurlu & Glick, 2003).

There are three main elements that make up the benevolent sexism. These are heterosexual intimacy, protective paternalism, and complementary gender differentiation. According to protective patriarchy, in benevolent sexism, the woman is weaker than the man. She should be supported by the man, especially economically. According to complementary gender differentiation, women and men are pitted against each other. Men work at work and contribute to the home economy, while women create a certain order. Thus, they complement each other. The last element, heterosexual intimacy, is the dependence of men on women because of their sexual needs. They experience romantic feelings with women (Alptekin, 2014; Ayan, 2014; Glick & Fiske, 1996).

Benevolent sexism attempts to rationalize aggressive attitudes towards women (Glick and Fiske, 1996). Women are often seen as inadequate in roles other than housework (Dardenne et al., 2007). Women interpret these condescending behaviors not as prejudiced behaviors but as protective and caring behaviors (Glick and Fiske, 2001). Often, men are less able to detect sexism than women (Drury & Kaiser, 2014).

In the study on the ways in which feminist teachers struggle against sexism in schools, it was reported that teachers who are subjected to sexist jokes and ridicule by their colleagues' question whether they are responsible for their situation. This situation, which also threatens teachers' self-confidence, reveals "how sexist schools are". It puts education in the mold of sexism and puts it in the position of constantly reproducing sexism (Coulter, 1995). This makes education a tool through which sexism is constantly reproduced, relived countless times and perpetuates itself permanently.

Benevolent sexism is also supported by religion if it is defined as a positive behavior. Sexist roles shaped by referring to traditions also ensure that women are appreciated (Bozkurt, 2017; Hallinger, 2004). The acceptance and support of benevolent sexism by belief systems that have a great influence on society reinforces its constant and reappearance in society. (Mikołajczak & Pietrzak, 2014). Some men state that they do not harbor negative feelings towards women by placing women in a group they consider inferior, such as housewives. Similarly, sexist men have more negative feelings towards housewives than non-sexist men. This situation, which does not appear to be prejudice, may cause difficulties in its identification. In addition to all these, men may exhibit hostile sexist attitudes towards a woman who does not fully meet the wishes and expectations of a benevolent sexist man (Glick et al., 1997). This shows that both dimensions of ambivalent sexism support each other.

In benevolent sexism, there are two forms of power. The first, structural power, is about being economically, politically and religiously superior, while dyadic power is about meeting the needs of others. While men exhibit negative behaviors towards women to maintain their structural power, they also try to protect them to benefit from their dyadic power (Glick and Fiske, 1996).

Women are disadvantaged in labor markets (Cengiz & Özdemir, 2020). Men's attitudes towards women that women need to be protected appear as an obstacle to women's professional life in the workplace (King et al., 2012). However, benevolent sexism has more negative effects on women's cognitive performance than hostile sexism (Dardenne, 2007). In addition, the benevolent sexism thoughts that women have about themselves cause them to stay behind in their careers and cause problems in creating career goals and advancing their careers (Moss Racusin & Rudman, 2010). From this perspective, it is possible to say that sexism consists not only of men's attitudes and behaviors towards women, but also of women's attitudes and behaviors towards themselves.

Danış et al. (2020) state that education plays an important role in the formation of ambivalent sexism. There is no ambivalent sexism study conducted for female teachers working in educational institutions. However, since sexism is a concept that can be demonstrated empirically instead of measurements (Sakallı Uğurlu, 2003), the model of the study is an appropriate model to investigate the concept.

Aim

The purpose of this study is to examine benevolent sexism behaviors towards female teachers in primary schools. To achieve this aim, the following questions will be answered:

1. What are the benevolent sexism scale scores of teachers?
2. What are the benevolent sexism practices towards female teachers in schools?
3. What are the similarities and differences between teachers' benevolent sexism scores and benevolent sexism practices towards female teachers?

Significance

This study is significant because it addresses a critical yet often overlooked aspect of gender inequality in educational institutions. By focusing on benevolent sexism, it contributes to understanding how gender roles are subtly enforced and perpetuated in schools. The findings are expected to provide insights for educational leaders and policymakers aiming to foster gender-equitable school cultures.

Method

This study is a mixed method study in which teachers' benevolent sexist behaviors are examined. In studies where only quantitative or qualitative data are used, some deficiencies remain, and since both types of data are used in mixed method studies, qualitative and quantitative data cover each other's deficiencies to a certain extent (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Convergent parallel mixed design, one of the mixed method designs, is used in the study. In the convergent parallel mixed design, data are collected simultaneously or at very short time intervals and answers to different dimensions of the same questions are sought in the qualitative and quantitative stages of the research (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2015). In the research process, in accordance with the selected design, the qualitative and quantitative data are collected and analyzed during a similar timeframe. In other words, while the participants' benevolent sexism behaviors will be revealed quantitatively, the details of these behaviors and in which practices they manifest themselves will be tried to be revealed qualitatively. Based on these, the design formulation of the study was determined as QUAN+QUAL. The visual representation of the design is as below.

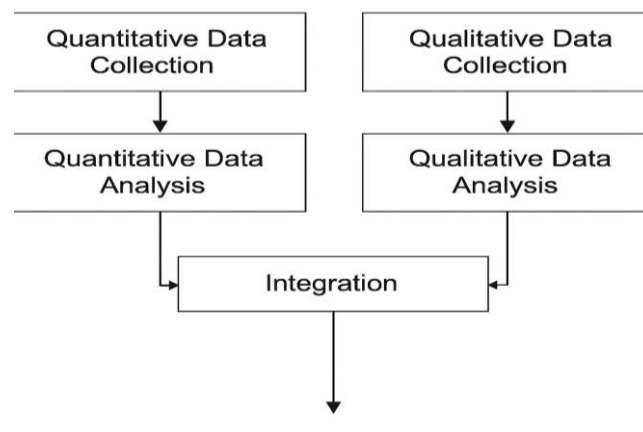


Figure 1: The visual representation of the design

Study Group

The study group consisted of 226 teachers working in public primary schools located in the Küçükçekmece district of Istanbul, where the total population of teachers in these schools is 1357. For the quantitative dimension of the study, the teachers were selected using a simple random sampling technique. To evaluate whether the sample size of 226 was sufficient, a post hoc power analysis was conducted using the G*Power 3.1 program (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009). When the effect size was set at 0.5 (medium level) for the independent samples t-test (Cohen, 1988), the power of the test was found to be 96%; and when the

effect size was set at 0.25 (medium level) for the ANOVA, the power was found to be 95%. These results indicate that the sample reached is statistically sufficient. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the participating teachers.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the participating teachers in quantitative study

Demographic Characteristics	Category	N	%
Gender	Female	166	73.5
	Male	60	26.5
Age Range	21-30 years	84	37.2
	31-40 years	93	41.1
	41 years and above	49	21.7
Professional Seniority	1-5 years	80	35.4
	6-10 years	56	24.8
	11-15 years	38	16.8
	16 years and above	52	23
Total		226	100

When Table 1 is analyzed, 73.5% of the teachers who participated in the quantitative study were female and 26.5% were male. 37.2% of the teachers were 21-30 years old, 41.1% were 31-40 years old and 21.7% were 41 and over. When the seniority of the teachers was analyzed, it was determined that 35.4% of them had 1-5 years, 24.8% had 6-10 years, 16.8% had 11-15 years and 23% had 16 years or more.

The study group for the qualitative dimension of the research consists of 54 people who answered yes to the qualitative question out of 166 people who answered yes and explained their answer appropriately. 112 of the participating teachers stated that there was benevolent sexism in their school, but since they did not explain the practices related to benevolent sexism in their schools, these data were not analyzed.

Table 2. Information about the teachers participating in the quantitative research

Demographic Characteristics	Category	N	%
Gender	Female	38	70.4
	Male	16	29.6
Age Range	21-30 years	22	40.7
	31-40 years	18	33.3
	41 years and above	14	26
Professional Seniority	1-5 years	17	31.4
	6-10 years	13	24.1
	11-15 years	11	20.4
	16 years and above	13	24.1
Total		54	100

When Table 2 is analyzed, 70.4% of the teachers who participated in the qualitative study were female and 29.6% were male. 40.7% of the teachers were between the ages of 21-30, 33.3% between the ages of 31-40 and 26% between the ages of 41 and above. When the seniority of the teachers was analyzed, it was determined that 31.4% of them had 1-5 years, 24.1% had 6-10 years, 20.4% had 11-15 years and 24.1% had 16 years or more.

Process

To collect the data collection tools for teachers working in secondary schools in Küçükçekmece district, the researchers first made appointments with school administrators and then went to the schools in April and May of the 2021-2022 academic year. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected at the same time. Participating teachers were given information about the scale and were asked to answer the open-ended question at the end if they thought that there were benevolent sexist practices in their school.

Data Collection Tool for Quantitative Dimension

In the study, the Ambivalent Sexism Scale was used to collect quantitative data to examine benevolent sexist behaviors toward female teachers in primary schools. The Ambivalent Sexism Scale was developed by Glick and Fiske (1996) and adapted into Turkish by Sakallı-Uğurlu (2002). The scale consists of 22 items, 11 of which measure hostile sexism and the other 11 measure benevolent sexism. The subscale used in the study, the Benevolent Sexism Scale (BSS), includes three factors: Heterosexual Intimacy (HI), Protective Paternalism (PP), and Complementary Gender Differentiation (CGD). Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the entire Ambivalent Sexism Scale range between .83 and .92, while for the benevolent sexism subscale, they range between .73 and .85.

For the reliability of the data in the study, the Cronbach Alpha coefficients of the BSS and the individual items were analyzed. Two items with Cronbach's Alpha coefficient lower than .60 were removed and the number of scale items was determined as 9.

After the removal of items, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted. The fit indices obtained as a result of the analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Goodness-of-fit indices for the CFA of the BSS

Fit Index	Acceptable Value	Reference	CFA
Sample Size	Items (31*5=155)	Kass ve Tinsley (1979)	226
χ^2/sd	$0 \leq \chi^2/sd \leq 3$	Sümer (2000)	1.48
RMSEA	$0.05 \leq RMSEA \leq 0.08$	Hooper vd. (2008)	.05
NFI	$0.90 \leq NFI \leq 0.95$	Schermelleh-Engel ve Moosbrugger (2003)	.93
CFI	$0.90 \leq CFI \leq 1.00$	Hu ve Bentler (1999)	.98
IFI	$0.90 \leq IFI \leq 0.95$	Baumgartner ve Homburg (1996)	.99
GFI	$0.95 < GFI$	Uslu (2015)	.99
TLI	$0.90 \leq TLI \leq 1.00$	Schermelleh-Engel ve Moosbrugger. (2003)	.97

According to Kass and Tinsley (1979), the sample size for conducting a CFA should be at least five times the number of items in the scale. As shown in Table 3, data were collected from 226 participants for the CFA. The obtained χ^2/df value of 1.48 is within the acceptable range. According to Hooper et al. (2008), an RMSEA value of .05 or below indicates a good model fit. In the present study, the RMSEA value of the scale was found to be .05, suggesting a good level of model fit.

The model's fit indices were also found to be within acceptable ranges, with NFI = .93, CFI = .98, IFI = .99, GFI = .99, and TLI = .97 (Tucker & Lewis, 1973; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003; Steiger, 2007; Uslu, 2015). These results indicate that the structure of the scale, which consists of three dimensions, has been confirmed.

The Cronbach's Alpha values for the overall scale and its sub-dimensions are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Reliability analysis

Sub-Dimension	Cronbach's Alpha Value(α)	Number of Items
PP	.73	4
CGD	.65	3
HI	.61	2
Total BSS	.80	9

According to Table 4, the number of items in the CA sub-dimension is 4, the number of items in the CGD sub-dimension is 3 and the number of items in the PP sub-dimension is 2. The Cronbach Alpha value of the CA sub-dimension was .73, the Cronbach Alpha value of the CGD sub-dimension was .65, and the Cronbach Alpha value of the HI sub-dimension was .61. The total Cronbach Alpha value of all items in the KCS was found to be .80. According to George and Mallery (2003), a reliability coefficient between .60 and .70 indicates that the reliability of the items in the sub-dimension is at an acceptable level. According to Özdamar (2002), a reliability coefficient between .61 and .80 indicates that the reliability of the items in the sub-dimension is at a moderate level.

In the light of these results, the BSS is a valid and reliable measurement tool that can be used in this study.

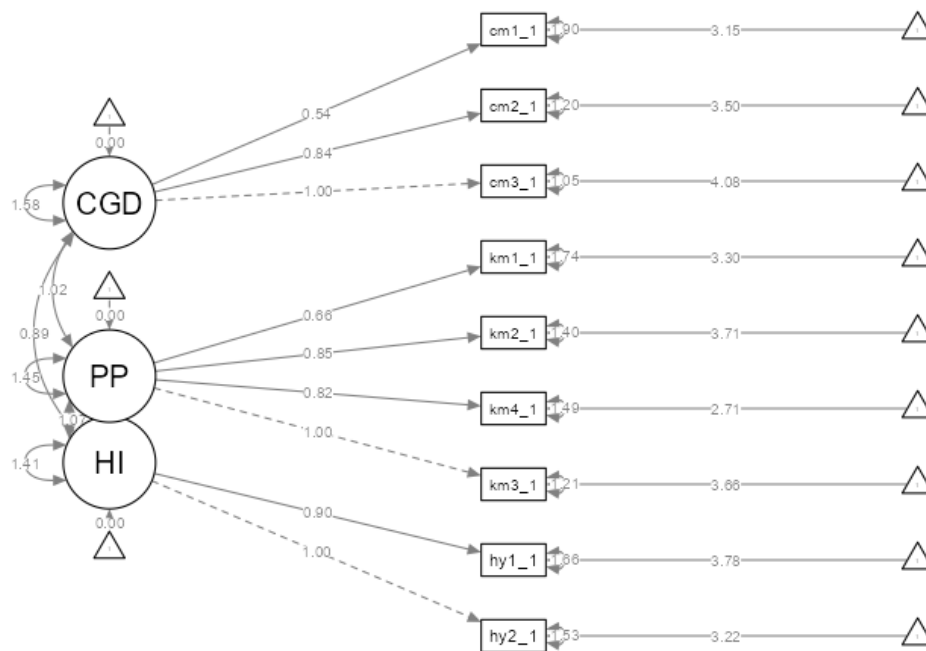


Figure 2. Relationships Among Variables Identified Through the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) of the Benevolent Sexism Scale

Data Collection Tool for Qualitative Dimension

In the qualitative dimension of the study, an open-ended question was written at the end of the items in the BSS to determine the forms of protectionist sexism. This question is "In the school where you work, are there any practices that make you think that female teachers are privileged, that they should be treated more kindly and protectively, and that they should be helped? If there are, could you explain them in detail, giving examples from the practices (in the preparation of lesson programs, on duty, extracurricular activities and commission assignments, leave practices, communication style, administrative duties etc.)?" To ensure the reliability of this question, an expert in the field of education management, an expert who does academic studies on gender equality, and a teacher were consulted. The experts made suggestions to make the question more understandable and the question was finalized according to these suggestions. The question was included under the Benevolent Sexism Scale.

Data Analysis and Integration

Frequency, percentage and standard deviation statistics were selected for descriptive statistics. Normality was tested with the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test by looking at skewness and kurtosis values. Normality tests were performed for the analysis of quantitative data, and it was determined that the data exhibited a normal distribution (see Table 5). Descriptive statistics, independent groups t-test and ANOVA were used in statistical analysis.

Table 5. Normality tests

	Shapiro-Wilk	Skewness	Kurtosis
Scale	.989	-.227	-.207

Qualitative data were analyzed using document analysis with the content analysis technique. In the first stage, raw data were organized; then, repetitive codes, subthemes and themes were determined through

content analysis. Similar data obtained from the interview forms were grouped under common concepts and themes and tabulated in an understandable manner.

To ensure the validity of the research, themes were created based directly on the participants' statements and were also associated with the theoretical framework. The two main themes determined in this process—protective patriarchy and complementary gender discrimination—overlap with the sub-dimensions of the “benevolent sexism” theory. The theme creation process was supported by both a data-based and theoretical approach; it was also reinforced with highly representative quotes from the participants' views. To ensure the reliability of the research, the data were analyzed separately by two researchers. The agreement between the coders was calculated using the formula suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) and the reliability coefficient was found to be 89%. This rate shows that there was a high level of consensus among the coders.

Findings

This section presents the study's findings in two parts. First, the results of the quantitative analysis are outlined, followed by the qualitative findings obtained through content analysis.

Findings for Quantitative Data

In this section, the findings obtained from the interviews with teachers and administrators are tabulated, the tables are explained and then sample statements are given.

Table 6. Descriptive statistics of the participants regarding the sub-dimensions of the BSS

Sub Dimensions	\bar{X}	Ss	Lowest Value	Highest Value
HI	6.99	2.88	2	12
PP	13.37	4.71	4	24
CGD	10.73	3.61	3	18
BSS	31.10	9.03	9	52

When Table 6 is examined, it is seen that the arithmetic averages of the BSS vary between 6.99 and 13.37. It was found that the arithmetic mean of the HI dimension of the scale was 6.99 and the standard deviation was 2.88. In the PP dimension, the arithmetic mean was found to be 13.37 and the standard deviation was 4.71. The arithmetic mean of the CGD dimension was found to be 10.73 and the standard deviation was 3.61. It was determined that the scores obtained from HI and CGD sub-dimensions were at the level of “Somewhat Agree”. The score obtained from the PP sub-dimension was at the level of “Somewhat Disagree”. Levene's test was conducted to determine whether the scores obtained in the sub-dimensions of protective sexism varied according to the gender of the teachers participating in the study. The preliminary results were deemed suitable for conducting an independent samples t test because the assumption of homogeneity of variances was met ($p>.05$).

Table 7. Independent samples t test results in terms of gender

Sub Theme	Groups	N	X	ss	t test			Cohen's d
					t	sd	p	
HI	Female	166	6.95	2.95	-.333	226	.597	.052
	Male	60	7.10	2.70				
PP	Female	166	13.09	4.89	-1.483	226	.139	.226
	Male	60	14.15	4.12				
CATF	Female	166	10.81	3.68	.530	226	.739	-.08
	Male	60	10.52	3.42				

When Table 7 is examined, the genders of the teachers participating in the study do not differ significantly in the sub-dimensions of benevolent sexism behaviors, namely HI, PP and CGD sub-dimensions. In other words, it can be said that the gender of the teachers participating in the study does not have a significant effect on the benevolent sexism behaviors of the teachers. As a result of the Levene's test carried out to determine the age and professional seniority of the teachers participating in the study, it was determined that the variances were homogeneously distributed ($p > .05$). For this reason, one-way ANOVA test was applied.

Table 8. One-way variance analysis of benevolent sexism behaviors towards female teachers in schools according to age and professional seniority

Sub Theme	Year	P	Professional Seniority	p
HI	21-30 years	.188	1-5 years	.338
	31-40 years		6-10 years	
	41+ years		11-15 years	
			16+ years	
PP	21-30 years	.142	1-5 years	.418
	31-40 years		6-10 years	
	41+ years		11-15 years	
			16+ years	
CGD	21-30 years	.463	1-5 years	.113
	31-40 years		6-10 years	
	41+ years		11-15 years	
			16+ years	

When Table 8 is examined, teachers' benevolent sexism behaviors towards female teachers in their schools do not differ significantly in the sub-dimensions of HI, PP and CGD according to teachers' professional seniority and age.

Findings for Qualitative Data

Table 9. Table on teachers' views on benevolent sexism practiced in schools

Theme	Subtheme	Code	f
PP	Facilitating Work Life	Preparation of an optional course program	34
		Easy assignment of guard posts	15
		Making it easier to obtain permits	10
		Less assignment in extracurricular activities	10
		Not offering difficult classes	3
		Not assigning out-of-hours tasks	1
CGD	Contact	Using language that is kinder to women	7
	Physical Facilitation	Assigning jobs requiring physical strength to male teachers	2
		Repair and renovation works	2

When Table 9 is analyzed, it is determined that the benevolent sexism practices encountered by the participant teachers in their schools are concentrated in the protective patriarchy dimension, which is one of the two sub-dimensions of benevolent sexism. This sub-dimension also constitutes the first theme of the findings. The practices under the theme of protective patriarchy were categorized under the sub-theme of facilitating work life. Under the sub-theme of facilitating work life, it was determined that there were practices such as preparing a course schedule according to the request, assigning easy duty shifts, making it easier to take leave, assigning less duties in extracurricular activities, not assigning difficult classes and not assigning duties outside of working hours. Sample statements related to these codes are as follows:

“(Female teachers) take leave easily by using their children's illnesses as an excuse.” E27E5

“While the programs for women who give birth are very well prepared, unmarried women and men are wild cards in our school.” KA29B7

“Since women have to maintain both home and work life, we help the women in my school, especially when preparing the syllabus.” ER32E9

“Assigning men instead of our female colleagues on the floors where the so-called more problematic groups are located.....” ER30B6

“Male teachers take the garden watch and 8th grade floor watch” ER27E5

“Early and late assignments or if there is a weekend job, it is assigned to men.” ER29B7

“Male teachers should manage classes labeled as problematic by teachers, and female teachers are not competent in disciplining these classes...” KA46E12

Under the sub-theme of physical facilitation, it was determined that there were practices of assigning tasks requiring physical strength to male teachers and assigning repair and renovation tasks to male teachers. Sample statements related to these codes are as follows:

“When there is a physical work to be done, female teachers are shown sensitivity.” KA24B2

“... works such as mounting are done by male teachers because of insufficient financial means.” KA32B11

“If a male teacher is late for class, the principal warns him harshly, but if a female teacher is late, he warns her gently.” E27E5

Results, Integration and Recommendations

In this section, the quantitative results and qualitative results of the study are presented first. Then, the integration section, in which quantitative results and qualitative results are evaluated together, is included.

Quantitative Results

According to the quantitative results of the study, it was determined that the scores of the teachers in the HI and CGD sub-dimensions of the BSS were at a moderate level and it can be said that the participants had a moderate level of benevolent sexism. In the PP sub-dimension, it was determined to be at the level of slightly disagree with a lower score. Although the scale scores are not at a very high level, teachers are asked to have lower scores when it comes to a concept such as sexism. The total scores of the scale correspond to the response of slightly disagree and are at a moderate level.

Dincer (2016) achieved similar results in her study on guidance counselors. In the study conducted by Kimzan and Arıkan (2021) on prospective teachers, it was concluded that HI and CGD scores were similar, and PP scores were higher. In the study conducted by Erdol et al. (2019) on prospective teachers, it was determined that the scores of the candidates' understanding that makes women dependent on men and considers men superior to women were at a moderate level and support the results of the study.

Another result of the study is that the benevolent sexism levels of teachers do not differ according to gender, age and professional seniority. The result that benevolent sexism does not differ according to gender may be that benevolent sexism is not seen as discrimination and women accept this sexism. In terms of the sub-dimensions of protectionist sexism in Sakallı Uğurlu's (2002) study, male participants received higher scores from protectionist patriarchy than female participants with lower scores in the factor of complementary differentiation between genders. Alptekin (2014) found that female students had higher levels of benevolent sexism than male students. Uysal Çelik and Demir (2021) did not find a significant difference between benevolent sexism and gender. The reason for this difference between the results may be due to the difference in the study group. Daniş et al. (2020) and Kimzan and Arıkan (2021) also found that there was no significant difference between age and benevolent sexism score in parallel with the results of this study.

Qualitative Results

According to the qualitative findings, benevolent sexism in schools manifested primarily through two interrelated themes: protective patriarchy and complementary gender differentiation. Among these, protective patriarchy was particularly salient and often took the form of easing female teachers' work-related responsibilities. Participants reported practices such as tailoring lesson schedules to women's preferences, assigning them lighter supervisory duties, facilitating leave requests, and excluding them from extracurricular responsibilities. While these actions were generally framed as supportive, they also reflect gendered assumptions about women's roles and capacities in professional settings. These findings align with Argon's (2016) research, which found that female teachers were frequently assigned fewer formal

responsibilities by school administrators, suggesting a pattern of institutionalized favoritism under the guise of consideration.

CGD, another sub-dimension of benevolent sexism, emerged as a theme in the form of using softer or more delicate language toward women in school settings. This reflects a broader cultural tendency to associate women with characteristics such as kindness, sensitivity, and aesthetic refinement—traits historically reinforced through educational discourse and literary traditions (Çolak, 2018). While courtesy and politeness can indeed foster healthy communication and motivation in both social and organizational environments (Eriş & Kocabıyık, 2022), the implicit assumption that such traits are inherently feminine is problematic. This essentialist view reinforces gendered expectations and may lead to unequal standards in professional communication and behavior.

Integration

The integration of qualitative and quantitative data was achieved through narrative integration, as described by Fetters, Curry, and Creswell (2013). This approach enables researchers to combine and interpret both types of data within a unified narrative. Specifically, the weaving approach was adopted, in which qualitative and quantitative findings are presented together around common themes or concepts. For instance, under the theme of “facilitating work life,” survey results and teacher statements were interpreted in relation to one another, allowing for a richer understanding. This method of integration enhanced the depth of analysis by making points of convergence, divergence, and expansion across data types more visible (Fetters et al., 2013).

When the qualitative and quantitative results of the study are evaluated together, it is seen that the most common benevolent sexism practices in the qualitative dimension overlap with protective patriarchy. In the quantitative findings, unlike the qualitative findings, the lowest score among the benevolent sexism sub-dimensions belongs to the protective patriarchy dimension. In this case, while the view that women should be protected, supported, and helped due to their weakness is the sub-dimension of sexism with the lowest level of agreement among teachers, it is understood that when it comes to practice, they behave differently than what is known. In other words, it is understood that women perceive themselves as different beings from men and are satisfied with protection, while male teachers see female teachers as employees who need protection and support and behave accordingly. This discrepancy suggests that while participants may not explicitly endorse protectionist attitudes on Likert-type scales, such behaviors are commonly enacted and accepted in practice. This paradox may reflect a cultural normalization of benevolent sexism: female teachers may internalize these practices as support, while male teachers interpret them as necessary accommodations.

Benevolent sexist practices should be examined within a broader socio-cultural and institutional framework. In Turkish society, deeply rooted traditional gender roles and patriarchal norms shape interpersonal communication and behavioral patterns across both private and public domains. Within schools—institutions characterized by hierarchical structures and rigid role definitions—these gender-based justifications can become normalized and institutionalized. In essence, benevolent sexist practices are not merely sustained by individuals’ behaviors, but also by institutional mechanisms, leadership decisions, and culturally embedded expectations. Therefore, when addressing benevolent sexism in educational settings, it is essential to critically examine not only individual attitudes but also the institutional norms and cultural values that reinforce and perpetuate such practices.

Furthermore, the lack of evidence for Heterosexual Intimacy in the qualitative data supports the idea that this dimension of benevolent sexism may manifest more in personal contexts than in professional ones. The integration of findings thus helped uncover nuanced insights that would have remained hidden in a single-method study.

Limitations

One of the main limitations of the study is that it was conducted solely in a single district located in Istanbul. Therefore, the generalizability of the findings is limited. Another limitation is that the qualitative data were collected through a single open-ended question, which may not have allowed participants to fully express the breadth of their experiences.

Recommendations

This study revealed that while benevolent sexism was moderately endorsed in scale-based assessments, its presence in school practices was both pervasive and normalized. Teachers showed moderate agreement with HI and CGD but less so with PP. However, qualitative data revealed that PP was the most frequently encountered form of benevolent sexism in daily school life. This mismatch suggests that certain sexist attitudes may be internalized or culturally embedded, thus going unnoticed or unchallenged.

The consistency of benevolent sexism across demographic variables such as gender, age, and professional seniority suggests that such views are widespread and not limited to specific groups. This universality underscores the urgent need to address implicit forms of bias in educational settings. The influence of politics, media, and educational institutions on the formation of sexism in general and protectionist sexism in particular cannot be denied. These institutions need to carry out various studies in the context of gender. Policy makers should pay attention to discourses and opinions that reproduce sexist views in the decisions they take and the administrative texts they develop, and care should be taken to prevent the use of sexist language and practices in media channels and in the teaching process.

From a leadership perspective, the normalization of benevolent sexist attitudes can hinder merit-based decision-making, limit women's visibility in leadership pipelines, and perpetuate biased expectations about caregiving and emotional labor. These patterns may go unnoticed by school administrators, especially when such behaviors are misperceived as supportive rather than restrictive.

Benevolent sexism often leads to institutionalized practices that may be perceived as favorable by some women but ultimately undermine their status and opportunities in society. To mitigate this paradox, educational policy frameworks should include mandatory gender-sensitivity training for school leaders, the integration of gender equity indicators into school development plans, and institutional mechanisms for monitoring and reporting everyday gender bias. Awareness-raising initiatives can also be implemented by NGOs and professional organizations, and gender equality education should be systematically incorporated into teacher training programs in faculties of education.

It was determined that women demanded some privileges in educational and administrative practices at school. It is understood that these demands are met, especially when their motherhood roles are taken into consideration. Leadership development programs should embed critical reflections on ambivalent sexism to ensure that well-meaning intentions do not unintentionally reinforce structural inequities. School administrations and teachers can adopt a common language and practice to prevent sexism and spread it starting from their schools.

Sexist attitudes are patterns learned by individuals through the process of socialization starting in early childhood, and the influence of institutions such as the family, politics, media, and education in the formation of such attitudes—particularly of sexist views—cannot be denied. Therefore, these institutions should carry out initiatives that promote lifelong learning in line with the goal of achieving gender equality. Policymakers should avoid using language and adopting perspectives in their decisions and official documents that may reproduce sexist viewpoints. Media organizations and educational institutions should ensure that gender equality is emphasized in lifelong learning activities planned for all age groups. Moreover, incorporating awareness-raising content into both formal and non-formal education processes will contribute to the development of a more egalitarian social culture by counteracting sexist discourse and practices.

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