

# Role of Ambivalent Sexism in Westernisation

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**Abstract:** Indian culture has seen a tremendous and drastic change especially after the colonial rule. In the last century, one could witness India adopt umpteen number of western cultural practices both as part of the colonial rule as well as globalization. During the British rule, acceptance of western cultural element was not appreciated by Indians. But social reformers and activists introduced radical changes in Indian society by adopting western ideas and ideologies. After independence western cultural elements have gained social sanction and western values are rapidly being absorbed into Indian culture and life style. Westernisation has brought many benefits in the areas of public health, labour, education etc. which helped in the development of India. But certain sexist attitudes of people constitute one of the factors that does not allow optimum development of the country in many ways. To some extent, sexism has knocked down the economic growth of the country and also contributed in decreasing the per capita income. The present study examined the role of ambivalent sexism in westernisation. The sample of the study comprised of 60 participants who were individuals above 18 years from different parts of Kerala. The data was collected directly from the participants and online questionnaires were also circulated through online mode. The tools used were, the 'Westernisation' scale and the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory. For analysing data, correlation and regression have been used. It was found that ambivalent sexism (hostile sexism and benevolent sexism combined) and hostile sexism alone are negatively correlated to westernisation. Regression suggests that hostile sexism and ambivalent sexism influences the extent of westernisation.

**Keywords:** Westernisation; Ambivalent Sexism; Hostile Sexism; Benevolent Sexism.

## INTRODUCTION

Westernisation is a process whereby societies come under or adopt western culture in areas such as industry, technology, politics, economics, lifestyle, law, norms, customs, traditions, values, mentalities, perceptions, diet, clothing, language, alphabet, religion and philosophy. The term westernisation is ethically neutral so it doesn't carry the value of good or bad. Various thinkers suggest various meanings for westernisation. The famous Indian sociologist M.N Srinivas used the concept of Westernisation in his book *Religion and society among the Coorgs of South India*, published in 1952 to characterize the changes brought about in the Indian society and culture as a result of over 150 years of British rule. Westernisation has benefitted many areas, which facilitated the increase in the literacy rate of our country. Enhancement of media was also possible due to the westernisation. All these contributed to the overall progression of our country. Even though as part of westernisation, many Indian conservative ideologies and though processes have changed, people still tend to judge, stereotype others people on the basis of their sex and the roles performed by them. These sex stereotyping can not only bring a negative impact on the natural development of the individual but

also affect the advancement of our country. Efforts are being made to eliminate gender inequality and sexism from various parts of the world. However, despite enduring attempts, it has not yet been fully established. Discrimination on the basis of sex still exists. Modern ethics like secularism, humanism, egalitarianism, have also entered our value systems as part of British rule and westernisation, which has helped reduced hostile sexism to an extent. Yet, the male-female discrimination persists today.

## WESTERNISATION

The phenomenon of Westernisation does not follow any one specific pattern across societies as the degree of adaption and fusion with Western customs will occur at varying magnitudes within different communities. Kishore Mahbubani in the book entitled 'The Great Convergence (2013) optimistically proposes that a new global civilization is being created as the majority of non-Western countries admire and adhere to Western living standards.

Changes that have occurred due to westernisation include introduction of industrialization and urbanization; introduction of new institutions like election system, Christian missions, etc.; modification in the old institutions through reform movements, for example, putting

introducing British Procedural law; introduction of new judicial system on the basis of principle of equality; giving importance to humanitarianism through the establishment of hospitals, orphanages; changes found in behavioural level like taking food to the floor to dining table rather than sitting on the floor; weakening of customary diet, from vegetarian to non-vegetarian among the Brahmins; introduction of new educational system which contains modern scientific world view; change of giving importance to ascribed status to achieved status; introduction of wider national network of transportation and communication; growth of nationalism through establishment of national congress; introduction of new ideas such as 'welfare state', 'parliamentary democracy' etc.

On the basis of influence on both little and great tradition, we can see westernisation occur in two phases, i.e. primary westernisation and secondary westernisation. Primary westernisation has occurred due to the emergence of westernized sub-cultural pattern limited to a specific group of Indians within an area like the use of new technology, dress, food, language, changes in habits and way of living and secondary westernisation started towards the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century referring to the changes which have contributed to the growth of various forms of cultural structures extending over the whole of the country like education, law, science, technology, facilities of transport and communication and so on.

On the other hand, westernisation has greatly affected our traditions, lifestyle, customs, our family and our respect and love for others. A study led by Harrell, Ussery, Greene-Cramer, Ranjith, Shreela V, Monika (2015) on the influence of westernisation on nutrition and physical activity behavior of adolescents in New Delhi, India, investigated the relationship between westernisation and obesity among older adolescents in 8th and 10th grades in Delhi. The results suggest that westernisation was not directly associated with weight status or BMI. However, adolescents' identification with western ways of living was consistently related to both unhealthy consumptions. Westernisation also lead to an increased usage of tobacco among young people in Delhi, India, according to a study by Stigler, Dhavan, Van Dusen, Arora, Reddy, Perry (2010).

## AMBIVALENT SEXISM

Ambivalent sexism is atheoretical framework which posits that sexism has two sub-components: "hostile sexism" and "benevolent sexism". Hostile sexism reflects overtly negative evaluations and stereotypes about a gender (e.g., the ideas that women are incompetent and inferior to men). Benevolent sexism represents evaluations of gender that may appear subjectively positive (subjective to the person who is evaluating), but are actually damaging to people and gender equality more broadly (e.g., the ideas that women need to be protected by men). However, theorists using the theoretical framework of ambivalent sexism have found extensive empirical evidence for both varieties. The theory has largely been developed by social psychologists Peter Glick and Susan Fiske(1996,2001).

Theoretically, each form of sexism is composed of three subcomponents: paternalism, gender differentiation, and heterosexuality. Paternalism reflects views of women as underdeveloped adults, providing justification for men to be authoritative and monitor, protect, and make decisions on women's behalf. Gender differentiation promotes the assumption that biological differences between males and females justify the strict adherence to socially prescribed gender roles. Heterosexuality, described as the most prominent cause of men's ambivalence toward women, reflects a tension between genuine desires for closeness and intimacy and a fear of women attaining power over men through sexual attraction. Within hostile sexism and benevolent sexism, the three subcomponents serve distinct functions. Hostile sexism and benevolent sexism are usually seen together in individuals in varying degrees which influence their behaviour, attitudes and beliefs.

Within hostile sexism (HS) and benevolent sexism (BS), the three subcomponents serve distinct functions. Dominative paternalism (HS) suggests that men should control women, while protective paternalism (BS) implies that men should protect and care for women. Competitive gender differentiation (HS) bolsters men's self-confidence (e.g., men are superior to women). Complementary gender differentiation (BS) places importance on traditional gender roles for women (e.g., mother & wife) and assumes that men depend on women to fulfill these roles. Lastly, heterosexual hostility (HS) views women as sexual objects for men's pleasure and promotes

the fear of women's capacity to manipulate men by engaging in or withholding sexual activity. Intimate heterosexuality (BS) romanticizes women as having sexual purity and views romantic intimacy as necessary to complete a man. Women experienced about one to two impactful sexist incidents per week, consisting of traditional gender role stereotypes and prejudice, demeaning and degrading comments and behaviors, and sexual objectifications than men. These incidents affected women's psychological well-being by decreasing their comfort and self-esteem, increasing anger and depression (Swim, Hyers, Cohen & Ferguson, 2001). Study findings across many nations have found that both types of attitudes are negatively associated with national indicators of gender equality (Glick et al., 2000, 2004). That is, the higher average levels of sexist attitudes in a nation, the lower this nation's score on gender equality measures.

## RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Westernisation has brought about umpteen number of advantages that enhance the gross development of societies. The perks of westernisation include transmission of modern, scientific, knowledge and education; universal communication media; administrative reforms; egalitarianism based judicial system; wider network of transportation and communication; industrialisation and what not.

Sexism has proved detrimental to the optimal development of a society, for a long time. Women, are the frequent victims of it. Sexism, be it benevolent or hostile, has only restricted women's potential to grow and be productive, thus, tampering the overall development of a country. Ambivalent sexism manifests itself through gender roles, gender based pay gap, language and communication, sexual harassment, injustice etc.

Sexism produces feelings of worthlessness, self-censorship, changes in behaviour and deterioration in health. This in turn affects creativity, efficacy, productivity, and can even lead to many mental health issues. These factors significantly hamper development of societies or even countries, in terms of technology, art, administration, gross happiness and many other

westernising processes that has led to India's development.

Not many studies have been conducted in India that analysed the impact of sexist attitudes on westernisation and development. Hence, it is important to study and analyse how the different aspects of ambivalent sexism influences westernisation. The present study aims to do the same, thereby enhancing the significance of the issue. The study hopes to throw light on the detrimental effects of ambivalent sexism that may hinder the advantageous growth brought about by westernisation.

## METHOD

### Participants

The sampling technique used in this study was purposive sampling. The data was collected directly through questionnaires as well as online forms. The purpose of the assessment was explained to the participant and the questionnaire was given to them only after they expressed their willingness to participate. The instructions for completing the questionnaire were given and clarifications were also given when required. The participants were allowed to finish the questionnaire at their own pace.

The sample of the present study comprised of 60 participants who were either married or committed individuals. 27 participants belonged to the age group 18-30, 23 participants belonged to the age group 31-55 and 10 participants belonged to age group above 55 years. Of the 60 participants, 25 were males and 35 were females. 38 were married, while 22 were committed individuals among the 60 participants.

### Measures

#### *Westernisation*

The "westernisation" scale (Stigler et al., 2010), is a 12-item questionnaire that measures the extent of westernisation, i.e.; identification with the new culture being introduced (i.e., Western). It is an Indian adapted of the 'The Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans-II (Cuellar, Arnold & Maldonado, 1995).

All of the questions were asked from a western perspective. Four domains of culture were measured: preferences for (a) language; (b) media; (c) food; and (d) consumer goods. It is an

instrument that includes 12 questions, in total, with a 4 point Likert Scale: (1) never, (2) sometimes, (3) often, (4) very often.

The score of the 12 items were considered the total score as it denoted the extent of westernisation. The least score possible is 12, which shows low westernisation and the highest possible score is 48, which shows high westernisation. The reliability of the scale was found to be 0.84.

### *Ambivalent Sexism*

Ambivalent sexism was measured using Ambivalent sexism inventory scale (ASI scale)

by Peter Glick & Susan T. Fiske, 1996, which is a 22 item questionnaire that measures hostile and benevolent sexism. The ASI includes 2 positively correlated components of sexism that represent opposite evaluative orientations toward women: sexist antipathy or Hostile Sexism (HS) and a subjectively positive (for sexist men) orientation toward women, Benevolent Sexism (BS). It is a 5 point Likert scale with response categories ranging from 0 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The reliability of the scale was found to be 0.75, that of hostile sexism is 0.82 and benevolent sexism is 0.65.

## RESULT

**Table 1: Show Regression Analysis of Westernization as Dependent Variable**

Model	Predictors	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	S.E	$\beta$		
1	Hostile sexism	-0.361	0.091	-0.461	-3.953	.0001
	Hostile sexism	-0.286	0.092	-0.365	-3.122	0.003
2	Benevolent sexism	-0.271	0.103	-0.308	-2.640	0.011

Predictors: Hostile and Ambivalent Sexism, Dependent Variable; Westernisation

Step1:  $R^2 = 0.212$ ,  $F(59) = 15.624$ ,  $p = 0.000^b$ ; Step2:  $R^2 = 0.298$ ,  $F(58) = 12.101$ ,  $p = 0.000^c$

Statistical Package for Social Sciences was used for the analysis of the data. It was seen that hostile sexism is negatively related to westernisation ( $\beta = -0.461$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) and that hostile and benevolent sexism together, is also negatively related to westernisation ( $\beta = -0.308$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Step-wise regression analysis shows that hostile sexism accounts for 21.2% of the variation of westernisation. It also shows that hostile and benevolent sexism together accounts for 29.8% of the variation in westernisation.

## DISCUSSION

Hostile sexism refers to the overtly negative evaluations and stereotypes about a gender. Through the study it is understood that hostile sexism is negatively correlated to westernisation. It implies that as hostile sexism increases, westernisation decreases. Hence, Hostile sexism may make people ignorant of and dismiss new liberated ideas or ideas of autonomy, widely practised in western culture, especially for women. Low hostile sexism may imply greater acceptance of individual freedom and autonomy for women, thereby encouraging women to practise independence and autonomy in all

aspects of their lives. This may help in the betterment of societies at large.

It is also understood that ambivalent sexism (hostile sexism and benevolent sexism combined), is also negatively correlated with westernisation, implying that with an increase in ambivalent sexism, westernisation decreases. With increased ambivalent sexist attitudes, people may become more unaccepting of western influences that promotes autonomy, independence and self-reliance, particularly for women that may pave way to better living standards at societal or national levels.

Step-wise regression analysis puts forth two implications: hostile sexism accounts for 21.2% of the variance in westernisation and ambivalent sexism (hostile sexism and benevolent sexism combined) accounts for 29.8% of the variance in westernisation. It suggests that hostile sexism influences the extent of westernisation upto 21% and ambivalent sexism influences westernisation upto 29.8%. It suggests that both hostile and ambivalent sexism has considerable influence on determining westernisation happening in the country, making it a relevant topic to be addressed particularly with regard to development that is led by westernisation.

## Implication of the study

These findings of the study imply the significance of westernisation in the Indian context. It throws light on the changes that has been brought about by westernisation and how it played a prominent role in leading India to the developing country that it is today. This study will also prove helpful and insightful to those who study areas related to the significance of westernisation and impact of sexism, in future.

The findings of the study may be useful for the purpose of cross-cultural studies as well. The present study also provides the scope for extended study and analysis related to the topic.

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