

Sexist Norms,  
Gender Roles and How They are Perceived in Armenia

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## **Abstract**

Gender inequality and sexism have been an ongoing social issue in every country of the world. This is also very true for Armenia where sexism and gender Inequality are especially prominent in the society. There are different gender stereotypes, gender roles, and sexist ideologies that the Armenian society condones. Thus, it becomes important to find out more on the opinions of Armenian citizens regarding sexism and gender issues. This project focuses on researching and collecting data, through surveys and focus groups, elucidating the assumptions and attitudes in contemporary Armenian society on sexism, gender roles, and gender inequality.

## **Introduction**

Gender Equality is something that unfortunately we haven't been able to fully achieve, yet. There are countless factors that stand as a barrier to fully achieving gender equality. Patriarchy, misogyny, gender stereotypes, sexist behaviors are some of the issues that get in the way of obtaining gender equality. Sexism is very prominent and evident in today's society and it hugely affects gender equality. Firstly, it is very important to be able to understand what sexism actually is. Sexism is prejudice or discrimination based on sex or gender. Sexism can be a belief that one sex is superior to or more valuable than another sex. It imposes limits on what men and boys can and should do and what women and girls can and should do (Masequesmay, 2019).

Sexism is applied to both sexes, however, in today's society, it is most commonly applied against women and girls. It functions to maintain patriarchy, or male domination, through ideological and material practices of individuals, collectives, and institutions that oppress women and girls based on sex or gender (Masequesmay, 2019). An American writer Alix Kates Shulman once said "Sexism goes so deep that at first, it is hard to see; you think it's just reality" (Shulman, 1978). These words are especially true for the Armenian society. People often either do not see sexism or they perceive it as something normal and natural. I had a personal encounter with people who would not believe that such a thing, as "sexism" existed. I was at one of my friends' birthday party and at some point, the topic of sexism came up and immediately after, there was a flood of different questions regarding this matter. When I was describing some sexist behaviors, such as how women in certain cases would get paid less than men for the same amount of work, some would insist that it was only logical, since men are the ones who provide for the family. Furthermore, they would claim that only the mother in the family should take care of the babies, as nature made women that way.

Those were the things that were said by some of my friends. Eventually, by the end of this very heated argument, they concluded that no such thing as “sexism” exists and that the “sexist” behaviors that I described were only natural.

This experience made me realize just how clueless and accepting the Armenian people are of such matters. Arguably, it can even be assumed that not many Armenian people accept sexism to be a real issue. I believe that the first step to solving a problem is recognizing that there is a problem. Thus, If the Armenian society has the mindset that “sexism” is not a real issue, then change will never happen and gender equality will never be achieved in Armenia. Therefore, it is very important to establish the opinion of the Armenian society on sexism. This research focuses on finding out current opinions among Armenians about sexism, to see if they find some sexist behaviors to be normal and what are some of issues or behaviours that the Armenians perceive to be sexist.

## **Literature Review**

This research project is an academic examination to understand the gender situation in Armenia. Deciding the right way to approach this situation and research this matter can help us understand the true reality of the gender situation in Armenia and what are some of the factors that prevent the advancement of gender equality in Armenia. The negative gender stereotypes, traditions and the unfavorable opinion on feminism that is present in the Armenian society are some of the aspects that stand as a barrier in achieving gender equality. Thankfully, there are a number of researchers that tried to get to the essence of this issue and find out why there is gender inequality in Armenia and what are the issues that contribute to the presence of sexism.

In order to understand if sexist ideologies are actually present in Armenian society, we need to first observe the mentality of the Armenian people and see their response to some of

the questions that might reveal the existence of sexist thinking. As we take a look at Vladimir Osipov and Jina Sargizova's (2016) article, discussing the commitment to values and norms of gender equality and equity reflected in the attitudes of the Armenian society, we can observe that the mentality of Armenians is the first and the most important factor that contributes to sexism in Armenia. The two reporters conducted a survey that presents a study of attitudes, perceptions, and practices of men and women regarding masculinity, gender norms, intimate relationships and marriage, sexual practices, health, and household duties in Armenia. The outcome of the survey showed that gender stereotypes are a common occurrence. According to the researchers:

The Study results clearly show that the patriarchal and “traditional” rigid social norms and perceptions regarding masculinity, femininity, gender equality, sexuality, relationship with family members, including children, division of household tasks as well as acceptance of violence against women, intimate partner violence and peer violence are still quite prevalent in the Armenian society. (Osipov&Sargizova, 2016, p. 18)

From this, it can be distinguished that the patriarchal and “traditional” social norms present in the Armenian society are other sources that contribute to the existence of sexism. The main point of the Osipov and Sargizova's research is the survey. In order to find the answer to their research question, the authors conducted a survey. Similarly, it is also important for this research question to conduct a survey, which will illuminate some of the existing opinions of the Armenian society regarding some gender issues.

Feminism is a movement that would contribute to achieving gender equality. However, in Armenian society, there is a prevalent stigma against feminism. It is often seen as something bad, rather than something good. In her article “Manifestation of Women's Movement in Armenia” Nazik Armenakyan (2015) discusses this prejudice against feminism

and the stereotypes associated with it. The author also discusses the way Armenian women and “feminism” are portrayed in the mass media and how this can influence society. The article shows the different prominent gender stereotypes of Armenia and how feminism and feminists are perceived by society. Nazik Armenakyan applied different research methods that would help her understand the idea of feminism present in Armenian society. The author applied a number of methods and approaches to mark out perceptions of feminism in Armenia:

- Content analysis of internet and media publications including blogs and social media publications (over 120 publications).
- Analysis of data collected through eight focus group interviews to detect attitudes towards feminism. The interviews were conducted in Yerevan and Vanadzor. Four interviews were held in each city of which two with women – one group with higher education and the other with secondary, and two with men, with the same educational parameters (Armenakyan, 2015).

Focus groups and analyzing the media were the primary method that the author applied to get an answer to her research question. The methods used in this article have also been used in this capstone.

Several factors contribute to sexism and gender inequality. Some of these factors seem to be engraved in Armenians’ minds and they further establish a strong foundation of gender ideologies and sexism present in Armenia. It is important to distinguish exactly what factors contribute to sexism. Overall, the above-mentioned sources helped lead in the right direction of approaching this research question.

### **Key Terms and Definitions**

**Sexism:** Sexism is a prejudice or discrimination based on sex. Behavior, conditions, or attitudes that foster stereotypes of social roles based on sex (Masequesmay, 2019).

**Gender Equality:** Gender Equality (GE) is the state of having the same rights, status, and opportunities as others, regardless of one's gender. The act of treating women and men equally: Gender equality does not imply that women and men are the same, but that they have equal value and should be accorded equal treatment (Dictionary.com, n.d.).

**Gender Roles:** Gender-Role ideology (GRI) refers to an individual's attitudes and beliefs about the proper roles of men and women. In other words, how a person judges the appropriateness of behaviors and characteristics of men and women in our society (Ayman, Velgach & Ishaya, 2005).

**Feminism:** Feminism is the belief that women should be allowed the same rights, power, and opportunities as men and be treated in the same way, or the set of activities intended to achieve this state (Dictionary.com, n.d.).

**Misogyny:** Feelings of hating women, or the belief that men are much better than women. (Dictionary.com, n.d.).

**Patriarchy:** Patriarchy is a social system in which men hold primary power and predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and control of property. (Masequesmay, 2019).

## **Research Questions**

This research is aimed to find answers to several questions. The main question is the following: “How do men and women in Armenia each perceive sexism, gender inequality and gender stereotypes?”

Sexism seems to be something that is almost embedded in the Armenian culture. This research aims to find whether the Armenian society considers sexism to be an existing issue. Furthermore, this research also tries to examine whether some sexist behaviors are considered to be “sexist” in the Armenian society or are perceived as something normal. Through this

research, some of the existing opinions of the Armenian society on sexism will be found and whether some sexist ideologies are deeply rooted in the mentality of Armenian people. The research focuses on gender perceptions of the Armenian society, their behavior towards different genders and their opinion on gender equality. The secondary questions are, “To what extent do men and women in Armenia each view sexism as a serious problem in the country?” Other secondary questions try to investigate participants’ views about feminism, women’s rights, and gender equality held by Armenian men and women.

### **Methodology**

To find the answers to the research question a survey needs to be conducted. The initial plan for this research was to conduct face-to-face and online surveys with different age and gender groups of Armenian people. However, due to the situation with the COVID-19 pandemic it was impossible to conduct face-to-face surveys, so only an online survey was completed. Next, focus groups were also conducted to be able to gather a more in-depth opinion of the participants on “sexism” and some sexist ideologies. The research also includes analyses of the outcome of the survey in comparison with another survey done in Armenia in 2016. This is done in an attempt to find out whether opinions have changed or progressed throughout the years. The desired outcome was to have the survey reach a wide demographic, so several methods were used to achieve this. Firstly, an online survey was created both in English and Armenian. The survey was shared through different social media platforms. Initially, the plan was to put the QR codes in different parts of the city so that the passers-by could also participate in the survey. Additionally, the survey was planned to be printed out and handed to people in various parts of the city, so that a wide range of people could participate. However, this could not be done due to the lockdown of the pandemic.

For this research, focus groups were used as well, with the aim to identify participants' emotions, feelings, and opinions regarding different sexist issues. Through the focus groups, it was a lot easier to find out the in-depth opinion of the participants. The focus groups were varied as well, one all-female, one all-male. They also varied by age, consisting of mixed groups of younger people and older people, to be able to pick up on generational differences and attitudes toward gender. Through the research, the participants' opinions about sexism were revealed. Some certain questions were prepared that were used in the surveys as well as during the focus groups. Certain statements were provided to the participants, with which they had to either agree or disagree:

- There is a need for more work to promote gender equality
- Gender Equality fully exists in Armenia
- Sexism is prominent in our society
- Men make better political leaders than women
- Women are too emotional to be leaders in their communities
- A woman with the same qualifications can do as good a job as a man
- A woman should tolerate violence to keep her family together.
- There are times when a woman deserves to be beaten.
- When a woman is raped, she usually did something to put herself in that situation.
- Men have the main responsibility for providing for the family
- Women have the main responsibility for taking care of the children
- Men's role in caring for children is mostly as a helper

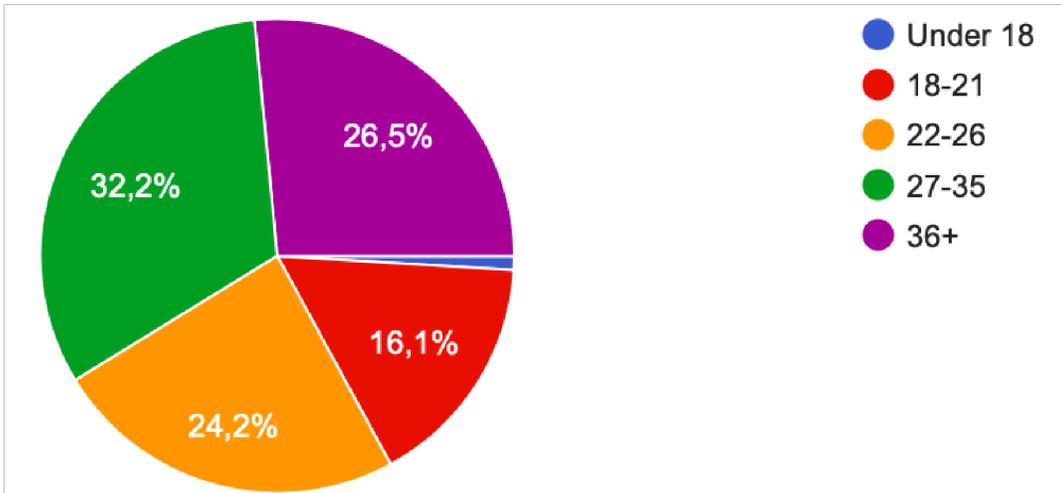
During the focus groups, the participants were asked to elaborate on different questions. The participants were also asked to describe some experiences that they had whether they think that they experienced it just because of their gender.

## **Research Findings and Analysis**

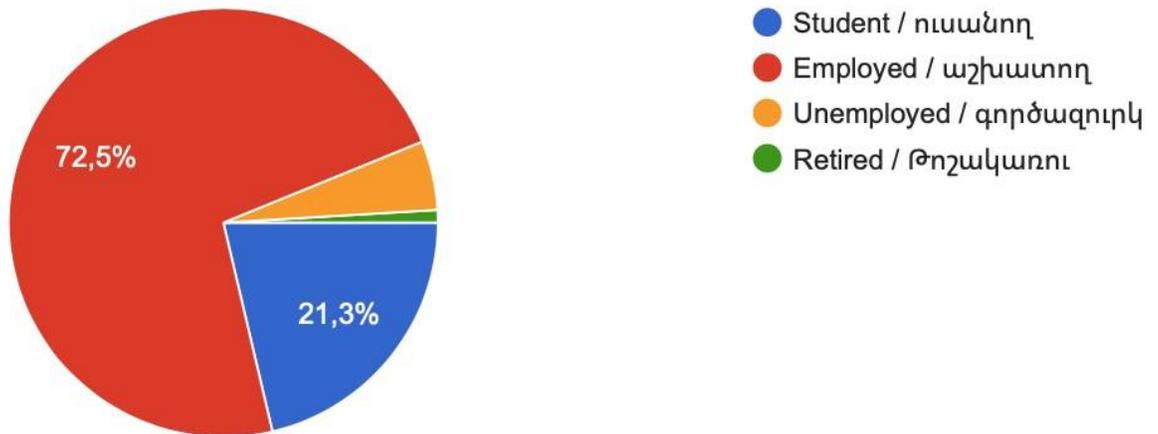
The primary importance of this research was to collect as much data as was possible so that the clear mindset of the Armenian society on sexism would be revealed. This section shows the data that was collected during the online surveys and the two separate focus groups. Firstly, the results of the surveys are shown and they are compared with the results of other surveys conducted in Armenia in 2016, where participants were asked the same questions. Next, the findings of the two separate focus groups are revealed, which allow having more insightful and thorough information about the mentality of the Armenian people regarding certain “sexist” behavior and ideologies. The participants of the focus groups have also completed the online survey and during the focus groups’ discussions, they have gone more in-depth on why they agreed and disagreed with some statements of the online survey. The research findings help apprehend what the current gender situation in Armenia is, how much has the Armenian society internalized sexism and whether it would be possible for the next generations to overcome gender stereotypes and achieve gender equality.

### ***Online Survey***

Although the survey was shared throughout different social media sites, the link was also personally shared to some participants. It is very important to note that not a lot of men filled out the survey. Out of the 211 participants, only 19% were male the other 80,6% consisted of females and 0,5% of others, the others category was for people, who identified as non-binary. The participants of the survey had a wide age range and had different occupations. So, the occupational and age demographic of the participants varied greatly. Thus, the data collected by the survey reached a wide demographic of people and through it, it becomes evident whether the opinion on certain gender roles and stereotypes varies depending on age, gender and occupation.



What is your age?



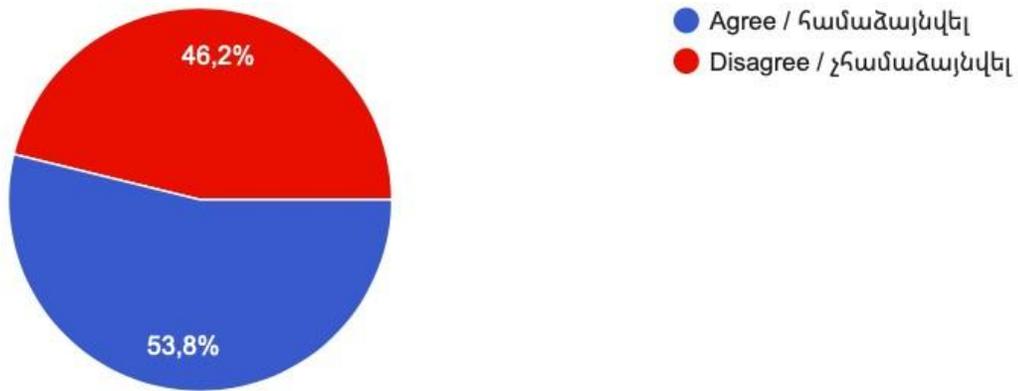
What is your occupation?

The main important point of this research was to find out the opinion of the Armenian public on whether they believe in the existence of “sexism” if it is prominent in our society

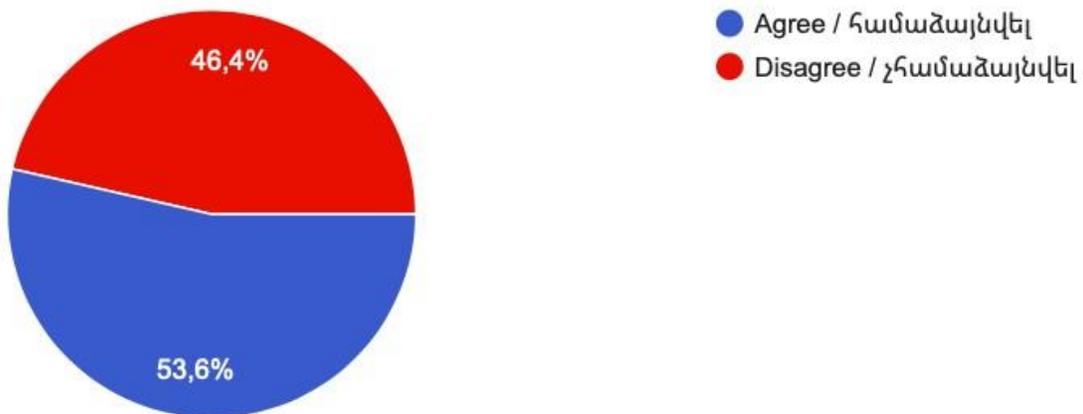
and if Armenia has achieved gender equality. Hence, the partakers of the survey were asked if they agree with the statement that gender equality fully exists in Armenia. The overwhelming amount of the respondents, 87,2% disagreed with this statement. To the statement “sexism is prominent in our society” 78,7% of participants agreed and 21,3% disagreed. Furthermore, 86,7% of participants believe in the existence of “sexism” as an issue, while the other 13,3% do not believe that “sexism” exists. Finally, to the proclamation whether there is a need for more work to promote gender equality with the apparent advantage 78,7% of participants decided to agree with, whilst the former 21,3% disagreed. The answers of the respondents to these statements indicate that the majority do believe in the existence of sexism and that gender equality is not evident in Armenia. Nonetheless, 25 respondents agreed with the statement that “sexism” exists, but they did not agree that sexism is prominent in Armenia. So, there are people that believe in the existence of “sexism”, but they reason that Armenia does not have that issue. Furthermore, out of the 87,2% of respondents that did not think that gender equality fully exists in Armenia the 8,5% still did not agree that there is a need for promotion of gender equality.

The next statements that were given to the partakers of the survey were statements that would illustrate if the participants agree with certain sexist ideologies and gender roles beliefs. To the statement that men make better political leaders than women the majority of participants 68,2% disagreed with. However, 28% of the participants thought that women are too emotional to be leaders in their communities. The majority of the male respondents 60% agreed with this, whereas 20,59% of women participants agreed with the statement that women are too emotional to be leaders in their communities. Following, the participants were given a statement that a woman with the same qualifications can do as good of a job as a man and the overwhelming majority, 93,8% agreed with this statement and the same amount of people disagreed that it is normal for men to be paid more than women for the same job.

Through this, it becomes very evident that the majority of the Armenian people that participated in the survey are disapproving of the gender pay gap and think that men and women should be paid equally. The results also show that the majority of male participants think of women to be too emotionally for the roles of leaders. This could be because of stereotypes that men have imposed on women and the results of the survey show that some men believe in these stereotypes. Misogyny creates beliefs that femininity is weak, dramatic, and fragile. Thus the stereotype of female gender being an emotional gender is engraved in many people's minds. Moving forward, 90,5% of the respondents do not agree that there are times when a woman deserves to be beaten and 96,2% also do not agree that there are times when a woman deserves to be raped. The results show that the majority of the participants do not justify violence towards women, nor sexual relationships without consent. The opinions of the participants of the survey were more divided regarding the following statements. The participants were asked to share whether they think that men have the main responsibility for providing for the family and women have the main responsibility for taking care of the children. The opinions were divided regarding these two statements. Only 53,6% of people agreed with the statement that men have the main responsibility for providing for the family. Additionally, almost the same percentage of people 53,8% agreed that women have the main responsibility for taking care of the children. Likewise, 57,3% of the respondents believe that men's role in caring for children is mostly as a helper. The next statement that received mixed responses was that women should do the house chores. 51,2% of the participants disagreed with this statement, while the other 48,8% agreed. The results regarding these statements show that when it comes to statements that regard gender roles, the participants have varied opinions, which could be the result of gender roles being very embedded and accepted by the Armenian society.



Women have the main responsibility for taking care of the children.



Men have the main responsibility for providing for the family.

In order to see each gender's perception of gender roles, it is also important to take a look at what percent of males or females have agreed or disagreed with the previous statements. An overwhelming number of male respondents 82,5% agreed with the statement that women should do the house chores, while 41,18% of women agreed with this statement. Likewise, 87,5% of male and 45,88% of female participants think that men have the main responsibility for providing for the family. It is interesting to notice that such a great number of male respondents believe that they are responsible for providing for their existing or future families. Additionally, with the statement that women have the main responsibility for taking

care of the children 70% of males and 49,41% of female respondents agreed. However, regarding the following two statements the percentages of male and female participants that agreed with are very close to each other. 58,24% of females and 52,5% of male respondents agreed that men's role in caring for children is mostly as a helper. Likewise, 45,29% of females and 47,5% of male participants agreed with the statement that a woman is the primary caretaker of the family. The results show that Armenian people live by certain gender roles' beliefs. Men believe that they are responsible for providing for the family and women believe that they are responsible for child care and house chores. Gender roles have become rooted in Armenian people's mentality since childhood, growing up men are told that they need to work hard to be able to get a good job and earn money for their families and women are taught how to house chores or take care of their siblings. So, it is only natural for when they grow up they think they have certain responsibilities and tasks that they should do because of their gender. Moreover, in a lot of Armenian families, men go to work and women stay at home to take care of the house responsibilities and so when their kids see this, they naturally adapt to this mentality that certain genders have to execute certain roles.

The next statements that were given to the participants were regarding the belief that men can forbid their partners certain things. The statements were "It is normal for a husband/boyfriend to forbid their significant other certain things" and "It is normal for a husband/boyfriend to tell their significant other what to wear." It is nice to notice that the majority of the participants 56,4% disagreed with the first statement and even more people 74,9% disagreed with the second statement. Nevertheless, out of people who agreed with the first statement the vast majority 77,5% were male. Similarly, 60% of male participants also agreed that It is normal for a husband/boyfriend to tell their significant other what to wear. The results show that the majority of the participants disagreed with the two statements and that illustrates that in the relationship the majority of the participants do not perceive women

to be submissive to men, as a normal occurrence. However, the majority of men agreeing with these statements demonstrates that in romantic relationships men expect themselves to be an authority over women, where they can forbid women certain things, and women have to be obedient to them. Patriarchy has led people to believe that men are the authority even in relationships and the results of the survey show that the majority of men hold this belief. Unfortunately, women are the ones who have to bear the consequences of these beliefs. In most cases when men dominate, command and control women in relationships women become resistless and start to believe that they have no control over the choices that they make in their lives.

Overall, the results of the survey indicate that the majority of the participants do believe in sexism and think that gender equality does not fully exist in Armenia. Although some believe that gender inequality is apparent in Armenia, they still do not think that there is a need for the promotion of gender equality. The results also indicate that the vast majority of male participants agree with the statements that indicate that men have some type of control over their partners. Nonetheless, the survey also revealed that the opinions in the Armenian society seemed to vary regarding certain gender role beliefs and responsibilities, however, it is very nice to notice that the majority of the participants did not agree with the statements that included very sexist ideologies.

The report "Men and Gender Equality in Armenia" (Osipov&Sargizova, 2016) conducted a similar survey and some of their survey questions were also included in the survey conducted for this research. It is also important to note that the results of this research survey differed from the report's survey. In the "Men and Gender Equality in Armenia" report's survey out of the 1,617 participants, only 51,3% agreed that there is a need for more work to promote gender equality. While in the survey conducted for this research an overwhelming number of 78,7% of respondents agreed with that statement. The difference

can also be seen with the responses given to these two statements ``Men make better political leaders than women” and “Women are too emotional to be leaders in their communities”. While 58,3% and 69,7% of participants of the report’s survey agreed with each statement respectively, a great amount of the respondents of the survey conducted for this research disagreed with the two statements. 68,2% of the participants disagreed with the first statement and 72% of the participants disagreed with the second statement. Although the survey conducted for the report “Men and Gender Equality in Armenia ” had more participants than this research survey and it also reached people in different regions and cities of Armenia and it overall had a much wider demographic, however it still shows that the majority of people have different opinions now. The survey for the report was conducted in 2016. It is very refreshing to see progress and development in the mentality of Armenian people regarding this issue in a 4-year time.

### ***Focus Groups***

The results of the focus groups allowed us to have a more in-depth look at the public opinion in Armenia. Two focus groups were conducted; one consisted of all females and the other of all males. Each group consisted of 5 participants. Firstly, the participants of each group were asked to define sexism and whether they believe that “sexism” exists as an issue. The respondents defined sexism in their words and each participant believed in the existence of sexism. Contrary to that, the same opinion was not shared when the participants were asked if they think that gender equality exists in Armenia. The all-female focus group’s participants all expressed that in their opinion gender equality does not exist in Armenia, however, some of the participants of the all-male focus group stated that they had a different opinion on the state of gender equality in Armenia. One of the male participants stated that they do not think that gender inequality exists in Armenia, later they corrected themselves and said that “There is

more gender equality than inequality” (personal communication, April 3, 2020). Some of the female and male participants said that gender inequality is very apparent in Armenia and a male participant noted that sexism is even more apparent in the regions of Armenia. To the question of why they think that sexism and gender inequality are more apparent in the Armenian regions, they answered that people that live in the regions and rural areas most likely think that gender inequality is a normal thing. They indicated that in the regions Armenian women think that it is normal for gender inequality to exist, that women think that they shouldn’t leave the house, do the house chores and do everything for their husbands. Then the other participant of the allmale groups said that he believes if people think that it is the right way to live then no one should tell them that it is wrong or sexist (personal communication, April 3, 2020). So, in their opinion, if a certain person believes that they should fit into certain gender roles and that gender roles are a normal occurrence then it should not be considered sexist. Some of the male and female participants have also agreed that “gender roles” are a natural occurrence. Women should do the house chores, take care of the children, and men should earn money to provide for the family. The opinions on gender roles were mixed in both focus groups. The results of the survey showed the same as well. It is very apparent that for the most part gender roles are seen as something normal in Armenia. The Armenian public strongly believes that certain activities, responsibilities, and functions are suitable for men or women. One of the participants of the focus group stated “ If I do not want to do housework, I won’t do it, but I know for sure if I don’t clean the house my husband won’t do it, either, because he thinks it’s my responsibility.” (personal communication, April 5, 2020). According to Armenia Country Gender Assessment (2015):

In both urban and rural areas, men spend about 3.0 hours per day more than women in formal jobs. In contrast, women spend up to 4.5 hours more per day on housework and have about 2.0 hours less free time than men per day. Regarding child care,

women spend on average close to 3.0 hours per day caring for children as a primary activity, as compared with men, who spend 25 minutes on average. (Bank, 2015)

It is also important to note that some people may agree with particular gender roles, however, they themselves may not conform to those gender roles. One of the male respondents stated that even if people think that it is wrong for women to not do house chores, then it is just their opinion (personal communication, April 3, 2020). So, according to him if people have certain gender role beliefs then it should just be considered as part of their opinion. This shows how gender roles are perceived as a natural occurrence and more like a personal opinion. Many people believe that gender roles should not be considered as an issue, not realizing that gender roles almost get assigned to men and women, since the day they are born. When a certain gender is raised by being told that a certain range of behaviors and attitudes is the most suitable for their gender, then consequently they are going to grow up to fit those roles. When a person thinks that women are responsible for doing house chores, that is not just simply their opinion. That is the belief that society has made them have, since a very young age.

Moving forward The participants were asked if they know what feminism is and if they would consider themselves feminists. The female participants said either yes or partially yes, while the male respondents answered with either no, not sure, or partially yes. When the people who responded with no or partially yes were asked to elaborate, a participant claimed that “feminism does not have limits and it is not constructive” (personal communication, April 3, 2020), but when they were asked if they would have considered themselves, as someone who fights against gender inequality they said yes. A male participant responded that gender inequality does not affect them much and they are okay with the way things are. Then continued by adding that there may be some things that they do not think are fair,

however, they will not resist it. One participant when asked why he does not fight for equal rights, responded with “Well, I’m not a woman, so it is not something that’s very important for me” (personal communication, April 3, 2020). Another male participant, who answered that they would partially consider themselves to be feminist explained by declaring “I do not long for feminism to flourish”, however they would partially consider themselves as a feminist stating “I also want women's rights to prosper” (personal communication, April 3, 2020). The reason for so many of the participants not wanting to fully associate themselves with the term “feminism” might be because there is a stigma against feminism in Armenia. People stereotype feminists as “crazy”, “wild” and “outrageous”. In most cases, in Armenia the phrase a “crazy feminist” can be noticed being used to describe a person who fights for equal rights. So, when the participants were asked if there is a “crazy feminist” stereotype in Armenia most of them said yes. They commented by saying that there are some unfortunate women, who turn feminism into hating men rather than fighting for equality. Another male participant claimed that he associates feminists with “Femen” women, who would “flash their breasts at Putin” (personal communication, April 3, 2020). “Femen” is a Ukrainian feminist activist group intended to protect women's rights (Femen, n.d.).

By these answers, it becomes very clear that Armenian people very often categorize feminists into bad stereotypes, that might be the reason why so many Armenian people avoid calling themselves feminists, as they do not want to be either misunderstood or judged. Sadly, we can also notice that some male participants, who consider gender inequality to be an issue, still would not fight or take measures to achieve gender equality. Some men selfishly think that, since feminism is the fight for women’s rights and it does not directly concern them, then they do not have to take measures against it. This is a very bad outlook, however, the reality is that most men in Armenia think like this. One of the great quotes of Desmond Tutu is “If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.”

(Tutu). By being silent, by not taking measures to fight gender equality makes you the oppressor. No injustice has even been destroyed by staying silent. If men realize that their silence further oppresses women's rights, maybe they will start to take action against gender inequality.

Armenia Country Gender Assessment reports that when nine civil society organizations working on women's issues were asked to identify the primary obstacles to improving the status of women in Armenia, 88% named "cultural beliefs, social attitudes or patriarchal mentality" (Bank, 2015). So, the participants of the focus groups were asked whether they think that Armenian cultural beliefs or traditions have any contribution to sexism or gender inequality. The answers to this question were mixed, some agreed with it and some disagreed. Mostly, people thought that sexism was prominent in Armenia not because of our culture or traditions, but because of illiberal thinking of some Armenian people.

Lastly, the participants were requested to share some things that have happened to them, that they think they experienced because of their gender. A respondent shared a story of her university peer, who was smoking in their university yard and everyone was looking at her and judging her, but if a male student smoked no one would have said anything (personal communication, April 3, 2020). After hearing the question, a male respondent said that if he was a girl, his family would not have allowed him to go out at 12 am. When he was asked why his family would forbid their daughter to go out at night he replied: "Because the guys of the block could hurt her." Another male participant claimed that he was brought up more strictly because he is a man his family expects more from him (personal communication, April 3, 2020). Contrary to that, a female participant declared that her family was always stricter with her than with her brother "They either don't let me go out much or when I go

out, they call me a thousand times.” (personal communication, April 5, 2020). Some female participants also shared that they think that society not only judges girls for the things that guys would have never been judged for, but that boys would have been praised for the same deeds (personal communication, April 5, 2020).

To conclude, the results of the focus groups showed that men and women face different approaches since their childhood. Parents raise girls and boys in different ways, which further inserts the idea that men and women are different in these children's minds. The results also showed the existence of bad stereotypes on feminists and that because of these stereotypes a lot of people shy away from the term “feminist”. Furthermore, some men are also not willing to fully fight against gender equality, as they think that their gender does not necessarily have a loss from it. Through the focus groups, it has also become apparent how different society's attitude is towards men and women, which further puts discrimination between the two genders.

### **Limitations and Avenues for Future Research**

The results and the data collected for this research can be perceived with several limitations in mind. Primarily, the data that was collected through the surveys should not be considered to be the exact opinion of the Armenian society, as the number of people who were surveyed was very limited. The initial plan to collect data for this research was to do both online and face to face surveys with as large a number of people as possible, however, because of the current situation with COVID-19, it was impossible to do face to face surveys. Thus, it was very difficult to survey a large number of people.

It was also hard to gather the participants of the focus groups to have a discussion. Furthermore, during the discussion, the participants seemed stressed and unmotivated. So,

this could have affected their engagement in the discussion and their openness to share some of their opinions.

Another limitation could be regarded as the fact that certain people may not be comfortable or confident enough to share their true opinions publicly on certain issues, for fear of being judged. It is also important to note that people can give certain answers about gender inequality and sexism and all of their answers be against gender inequality, however in real life, they themselves can condone a lot of sexist behaviors and actions.

So, an idea for future research can be giving people certain sexist scenarios or sexist actions and ask the participants whether they have done those in their life. This could give an idea of how many people believe that sexism is wrong, while they themselves may have been sexist towards someone in their life.

## **Conclusion**

Through this research, it became obvious that the majority of Armenian people do believe in the existence of "sexism" and the majority perceive Armenia to not be a gender-equal country. After comparing the answers of this study's survey to the answers of a survey that was conducted in 2016, it became apparent that through the years Armenian people may have started to have a more open-minded and progressive mentality on gender issues. Though there has been development in the way Armenian people perceive sexist issues, there is still a very long way to go before gender equality is achieved in Armenia. The results of the survey showed that even though there are people who are aware of the existence of gender inequality, they are still not willing to strive for gender equality. This was mostly true with male participants, as most of them thought that gender inequality does not affect them directly and does not inconvenience them.

Furthermore, it also became obvious that gender roles are widely spread and normalized in Armenia. Most people accept gender roles and do not see it as "sexism". They see it as a normal aspect of life and not as an issue. The survey results also showed that in real life a lot of sexist behaviors can be observed being used. Moreover, there are also different ways that Armenian families raise their daughters and sons. So, evidently, the difference between females and males is marked since their childhoods in the way they are brought up.

Thanks to the data collected for this research the mentality of Armenians became a little more apparent. Although the presence of different gender stereotypes and roles can be noticed, it is also good to see that throughout the years the thinking of Armenians on gender issues has grown and advanced considerably. One could only hope that future generations will be able to achieve full gender equality in Armenia.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1

#### CONSENT FORM

Consent to participate in a capstone project conducted at the American University of Armenia (AUA). This is to state that I agree to participate in the capstone project conducted by Yeva Melikyan . The capstone director is Dr. Hourig Attarian of the College of Humanities & Social Sciences at AUA (tel.: 060 612769, email: [hourig.attarian@aua.am](mailto:hourig.attarian@aua.am)).

**PURPOSE:** I have been informed that the purpose of the project is to establish the opinion of the Armenian's society on sexism. Within the bigger context of the project, the focus group conducted by Yeva Melikyan is meant to focus on the opinion of the participants regarding different sexist behaviors and if they experienced sexism themselves.

**PROCEDURES:** I understand that the focus group will be conducted during an online call, and might be recorded on video. As a participant, I will be asked to express my opinion on sexism. The focus group will last from 30 minutes to an hour, however, the participants are free to stop at any time, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the project at any given point. I understand that if I wish to extend the focus group for more than an hour, I will be provided that opportunity.

**RISKS AND BENEFITS:** I understand that this focus group involves the sharing of my personal views and opinions, which will be treated with the utmost care and consideration. I have been informed that I am free to stop, take a break or discontinue at any time. There are no risks involved in partaking in this focus group.

**CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION:** As a participant, I will have access to all the recorded material for verification purposes. Throughout the project, if and when the material produced is in Armenian, I will have the opportunity to review and verify the English translations.

I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time without negative consequences.

I understand that the data from this project may be published in print or digital format for academic purposes.

In terms of **identification and reproduction** of my participation:

I agree to disclose my identity. I understand that my identity may be revealed in any publications or presentations that may result from this focus group.

I agree to the reproduction of sound and images from this focus group by any method and in any media for academic purposes (which may include webpages, documentary clips, etc..)

**OR**

\_\_ I understand that my participation in this study is confidential. My identity will be concealed. I will be given a pseudonym in any publications or presentations that may result from this focus group.

\_\_ I agree that while data from my interview may be published, no sound or images from it may be reproduced.

I ATTENTIVELY THE FORM AND I FULLY UNDERSTAND THE POINTS OF THIS CONSENT FORM. I AM AGREEING TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

THE NAME OF THE PARTICIPANT:

SIGNATURE:

THE NAME OF THE ORGANIZER:

SIGNATURE:

If you have any questions about your rights at any time, please contact Dr. Hourig Attarian, AUA College of Humanities and Social Sciences (tel. 060 612769, e-mail address: [hourig.attarian@aua.am](mailto:hourig.attarian@aua.am)).

## Appendix 2

### Questionnaire of Online and Face-to-face Surveys

1. What is your gender? / Որն է ձեր սեռը ?

- Female / իգական
- Male / արական
- Other / այլ

2. What is your age? / Ձեր տարիքը

- Under 18 • 18-21
- 22-26
- 27-35
- 36+

3. What is your occupation? / Ձեր աշխատանքային կարգավիճակը

- Student / ուսանող
- Employed / աշխատող
- Unemployed / գործազուրկ
- Retired / թոշակառու

4. There is a need for more work to promote gender equality / Անհրաժեշտ է ավելի շատ աշխատանքներ տանել գենդերային հավասարության խթանման համար (Osipov&Sargizova, 2016, p.19)

- Agree / համաձայնվել
- Disagree / չհամաձայնվել

5. Gender Equality Fully exists in Armenia / Գենդերային հավասարությունը Չայաստանում լիովին գոյություն ունի

- Agree / համաձայնվել
- Disagree / չհամաձայնվել

6. Sexism is prominent in our society / Մեր հասարակության մեջ առկա է սեքսիզմը

- Agree / համաձայնվել
- Disagree / չհամաձայնվել

7. "Sexism" does not exist / «Սեքսիզմ» գոյություն չունի

- Agree / համաձայնվել
- Disagree / չհամաձայնվել

8. Men make better political leaders than women / Տղամարդիկ ավելի լավ քաղաքական առաջնորդներ են, քան կանայք (Osipov&Sargizova, 2016, p.19)

- Agree / համաձայնվել
- Disagree / չհամաձայնվել

9. Women are too emotional to be leaders in their communities / Կանայք չափազանց զգացմունքային են առաջնորդ լինելու համար (Osipov&Sargizova, 2016, p.19)

- Agree / համաձայնվել
- Disagree / չհամաձայնվել

10. It is normal for men to be paid more than women for the same job / Նորմալ է, որ տղամարդիկ ավելի շատ աշխատավարձ ստանան, քան կանայք նույն աշխատանքի դիմաց

- Agree / համաձայնվել
- Disagree / չհամաձայնվել

11. A woman with the same qualifications can do as good of a job as a man / Նույն որակավորում ունեցող կինը կարող է նույնքան լավ աշխատանք կատարել, որքան տղամարդը (Osipov&Sargizova, 2016, p.19)

- Agree / համաձայնվել
- Disagree / չհամաձայնվել

12. A woman should tolerate violence to keep her family together / Կինը պետք է հանդուրժի բռնությունը՝ իր ընտանիքը միասին պահելու համար (Osipov&Sargizova, 2016, p. 21)

- Agree / համաձայնվել
- Disagree / չհամաձայնվել

13. There are times when a woman deserves to be beaten / Կան ժամանակներ, երբ կինը արժանի է ծեծի (Osipov&Sargizova, 2016, p. 21)

- Agree / համաձայնվել
- Disagree / չհամաձայնվել

14. There are times when a woman deserves to be raped / Կան ժամանակներ, երբ կինը արժանի է բռնաբարության
- Agree / համաձայնվել
  - Disagree / չհամաձայնվել
15. When a woman is raped, she usually did something to put herself in that situation / Երբ կինը բռնաբարված է, նա սովորաբար արել է ինչ-որ բան այդ իրավիճակում հայտնվելու համար (Osipov&Sargizova, 2016, p. 22)
- Agree / համաձայնվել
  - Disagree / չհամաձայնվել
16. Some rape cases can be justified / Բռնաբարության որոշ դեպքեր կարելի է արդարացնել
- Agree
  - Disagree / չհամաձայնվել
17. A woman is the primary caretaker of the family / Կինը ընտանիքի տնային հոգսերը հիմնական հոգացողն է
- Agree / համաձայնվել
  - Disagree / չհամաձայնվել
18. Women should get married before 30 / Կանայք պետք է ամուսնանան մինչև 30 տարեկան
- Agree / համաձայնվել
  - Disagree / չհամաձայնվել
19. Catcalling should be taken as a compliment / Փողոցային ռեպլիկները պետք է ընդունվեն որպես հաճոյախոսություն
- Agree / համաձայնվել
  - Disagree / չհամաձայնվել
20. The husband has the last word in the family / Ամուսինը վճռորոշ խոսքն ունի ընտանիքում
- Agree / համաձայնվել
  - Disagree / չհամաձայնվել

21. It is normal for a husband/boyfriend to tell their significant other what to wear / Նորմալ է, որ ամուսինը/ընկերը ընտրեն, թե իրենց զույգը ինչ պետք է հագնի
- Agree / համաձայնվել
  - Disagree / չհամաձայնվել
22. It is normal for a husband/boyfriend to forbid their significant other certain things. Նորմալ է, որ ամուսինը/ընկերը իրենց զույգին արգելեն որոշակի գործողությունների կատարումը
- Agree / համաձայնվել
  - Disagree / չհամաձայնվել
23. Men have the main responsibility for providing for the family / Ընտանիքը ապահովելու պատասխանատվությունը հիմնականում պետք է կրի տղամարդը
- Agree / համաձայնվել
  - Disagree / չհամաձայնվել
24. Women have the main responsibility for taking care of the children / Կանայք հիմնական պատասխանատվություն են կրում երեխաների խնամքի համար
- Agree / համաձայնվել
  - Disagree / չհամաձայնվել
25. Men's role in caring for children is mostly as a helper / Երեխային խնամելու հարցում տղամարդիկ մեծամասամբ հանդես են գալիս զուտ օգնողի դերում
- Agree / համաձայնվել
  - Disagree / չհամաձայնվել
26. Women should do the house chores / Կանայք պետք է կատարեն տնային գործերը
- Agree / համաձայնվել
  - Disagree / չհամաձայնվել
27. Women, who wear revealing clothes want attention from man / Կանայք, ովքեր "բաց" հագուստ են կրում, տղամարդուց ուշադրություն են պահանջում

- Agree / համաձայնվել
- Disagree / չհամաձայնվել

28. If a woman wears revealing clothes she should be considered a slut / Եթե կինը կրում է «բաց» հագուստ, Ուրեմն նրան կարող են համարել անբարոյական

- Agree / համաձայնվել
- Disagree / չհամաձայնվել

29. Domestic violence cases should be handled in the family, police should not interfere / Ընտանեկան բռնության դեպքերը պետք է լուծվեն ընտանիքում, ոստիկանությունը չպետք է խառնվի:

- Agree / համաձայնվել
- Disagree / չհամաձայնվել

### Appendix 3

#### Focus Group Questions:

- What is Sexism?
- Do you think there is a need for more work to promote gender equality?
- Do you think that Armenia is a gender equally country? If yes or not then why?
- Do you know what “feminism’ is?
- Would you consider yourself a feminist? Why or why not?
- Why do you think there is a “crazy feminist” stereotype in Armenia?
- Have you ever experienced something that you think you experienced because of your gender?
- Would you tell your partner how to dress or where to go?
- Would you listen to your partner if they forbid you something?
- Do you think that Armenian cultures or traditions promote sexism, gender roles?