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## A STUDY OF THE LINGUISTIC SEXISM IN DAWN NEWSPAPER

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### ABSTRACT

*This study which is titled as the study of the analysis of the linguistic sexism in newspapers has an analysis of the sexist instances present in the newspaper articles. The online platform of Dawn news "IMAGES" which is dedicated to the news regarding the show business, food, cultures, music and arts was chosen for this purpose. 10 articles from the dates 26, March 2021 to 29, March 2021 were selected from 'celebrities' section to apply Sarah Mill's feminist stylistic model. The nature of the study was qualitative. The results obtained showed that various degrees of sexist language, not every article had every factor but at the same time there was no such article which was completely void of sexist language. The only absent feature was the generic use of pronouns.*

**Keywords:** Gender biased, investigating, prevalent, biased attitude, neutral language

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### INTRODUCTION

The study of language and gender actually surrounds the idea how various genders specifically men and women use language to generate different ideologies about certain things and their linguistic choices regarding one another (McConnell-Ginet 1989:198). And this research targets this particular area (linguistic sexism) of the study of language and gender. According to Mary Vetterling-Braggins (1995:83), when an inappropriate, unjust distinction between the genders or sexes is encouraged by the language used in the speech, then that statement is known to be sexist. For example; in the English language the differentiation between the use of gendered words like spokesman and chairman in a very general manner proves the fact that language is influenced by the notion of masculine dominance (Mills 1995:87). Adjectivizing and explaining males and females on the basis

of their appearances happens to be another type of sexism in language use as described by Mills (1995:162).

### **Significance of research**

This research is important in the sense that it points out the gender biasness in language at a formal level, allows us as a society to reflect the socio-linguistic flaws that we have and provides a chance to correct the socio-linguistic concepts about genders and the expression of gender using language.

### **Research objectives**

The research objectives of the study are:

- To examine linguistic sexism in newspapers showed at the word level.
- To examine linguistic sexism in newspapers showed at the discourse level.

### **Research questions**

The research questions are:

- How is sexism in language use of the newspapers showed at the word level?
- How is sexism in language use of the newspapers showed at the discourse level?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The sexist language in the newspaper the Jakarta post was analysed on three levels parallelism, generic pronouns and lexical asymmetry. Most of the sexism that was found, was related to the occupations and the job titles. In the articles that were analysed there were 2 non-parallel structures, 21 data lexical asymmetry, 97 generic pronouns through which the male dominance was clearly visible. (Wulandari, Purwaningsih, & Hawasi, 2016)

An analysis of the novel *Man O Salwa* written by the Pakistani female author studies the representation of women through the method of feminist analysis where it was analysed that the Pakistani woman is shown as a passive, distorted and weak personality of the society. The results show that the female authors are also influenced by the social stereotypes of portraying women as weak and dependent. (Shah, Zahid, Shakir, & Rafique, 2014)

In the Pakistani context Yasmin (2019) analysed the depiction of women in four Pakistani newspapers of the English language which are Dawn, The Nation, Daily Times and the News where a multimodal corpus linguistic and content analysis approach was applied along with the amalgamation of Feminist analysis and critical discourse analysis to conclude that there was a lot of female representation in entertainment news and there was an unequal representation of males and females at the discourse level. (Yasmin, Masso, Bukhari, & Aboubakar, 2019).

An analysis of the conversation of 20 female ministers in 1244 news headlines during the years 2006, 2008, 2011, 2013 was conducted and it was concluded that there was an evident presence of various degrees of linguistic sexism depending on different time periods. The newspapers showed a secondary role of women and restricted their active contribution in politics. (Sensales, Areni, & Secco, 2016).

Sexist attitudes regarding sports like football were also documented using case studies by Attenborough (2013, 2014) and Toffoletti (2007). It was thus found that the language used by media often weakened the validity of the complaints regarding the sexist misconduct. Other researches reported the sexist attitudes of media towards women and minors like the elimination of female voice and opinions regarding online sexual harassment from the digital public sphere (Megarry; 2014).

Other than this Feng (1998) also pointed out that the media gave more coverage to the male speeches in newspapers rather than the females. The comparative analysis of the two Chinese newspapers (China Daily, Xinmin Evening news) with The New York Times resulted in the conclusion that the Chinese newspapers portrayed female politicians just as the spokespersons of the state ignoring their female features while the New York Times presented women as strong-willed and educated females but it sometimes puts a lot of light on their appearance. The author also pointed out that the three newspapers portrayed males as the more dominating sex (Wu, 2011).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The research approach applied was qualitative where an analysis of newspaper articles was done through Sara's Mills feminist stylistic toolkit. Ten articles were chosen from the IMAGES section of Dawn newspaper. The articles selected for analysis are taken from the celebrities' section. The procedure for analysis consists of three steps. Step 1 consisted of the name of the article and introduction, after which the lexical Level analysis of the article was done followed by the discourse level analysis of the article was done. Moreover, the analysis includes the words and language used by the writer and all the linguistic instances that are utterances other than the writer have been ignored for example the tweets quoted in the articles were not included in the analysis. The results have been compiled in theoretical form and completely explained how the sexism in the language occurs at various instances.

### **Research Framework:**

Feminist stylistic model that has been chosen for analysis and it is a collection of concepts that can be applied to any text to determine the amount of linguistic sexism that it retains. Mills (1995:21) pointed out that sexism in language can be mainly evaluated at three particular levels which are word, sentence and text/discourse level.

The word level analysis consists of the identification of the features which include generic forms (nouns and pronouns), naming strategies, titles associated with different genders, firstness when it comes to mentioning males and females together, occupation stereotyped with genders, adjectivization and affixation.

The sentence level consists of the phrases, metaphors and idioms related to the females looks which show females to be dumb. For instance: a woman preaching is like a dog walking on his hinder legs, grow some balls, don't be a pussy. Jokes and Humour, Irony, sarcasm are also included in it.

The discourse level includes the examination of how the women are described in relationships, with the help of appearance or the fragmentation of their body parts. Focalisation is another feature where only males are described as a source of intellect, strength and personality.

## RESULTS

### Article 1: Dramatist Haseena Moin passes away in Karachi.

#### Word-level analysis:

The article focusses on the Haseena Moin, who was Pakistan's legendary dramatist and script writer. While talking about her on the article the **second or the last name** is mostly used as the reason behind it can be to pay respect and homage to the late personality. Considering the two ladies named in the article both of whom are actresses by profession, one of them is referred by the first name as well as the full name because she is mentioned twice (Neelofer Aleem). While the other one is mentioned only once therefore her full name is used (Zeba Bakhtiar). The name of the male artist used consists of the full name of both the artists. **'Iftikhar Ali'** was mentioned with the full name while **'Shakeel'** is itself a complete name and accompanies no second name along. Haseena Moin is whom the article is about and she is described to be a **'writer', 'dramatist'** and **'script writer'** of Pakistan. These terms that are described seem to be quite gender inclusive but succeeding in one of these professions requires a lot of intellect and intelligence which is very clearly associated with men and therefore these gender inclusive terms are stereotyped to be male-centric and women are again taken to the back hand. Although, Moin is very clearly described to be **Pakistan's pioneer dramatist** and a **prolific script writer**, even this doesn't stop in stereotyping the profession she has given her lifetime to. There are various other professions like **'actors'** which face the same issue. Like some actresses prefer to be called actors due to similar reasons. If we consider firstness the female artist was given firstness when used along with the male name. For instance, in the article **'Neelofer Aleem'** and **'Shakeel'** was written instead of writing vice versa.

#### Discourse level analysis:

Another point to ponder here can be the introduction of 'Iftikhar Ali' as the script editor for Moin's script. Which clearly shows the inherent patriarchy in the society where appointing men above women is norm. Moreover, the writer's use of the sentence that **'the script writer encouraged her into writing'** seems to be an instance of focalization where a male is shown to have dominance over the female and is shown to have the power to encourage her into pursuing what she can do better than everyone else. Other than this the **factor of age** that has been described in the article can be taken into **fragmentation or objectification** because a female's age is stereotyped to be one of main topics for objectification and judgements. There were no kind of relationships discussed in the article and everyone was given their own individual space for representation.

### Article 2 : Pakistan's first TV host Kanwal Naseer passes away

#### Word-level analysis:

While talking about Kanwal Naseem, her **full name** was used in the first instance as well as the last time when her name was used. The referent was named only thrice and there is no misuse of the pronouns in it. When it comes to firstness the referent **'Kanwal Naseer'** was given preference as compared to the male mention Tariq Aziz as both of them were used in the same sentence. But when it came to discussing her four off-springs her son was given firstness over her three daughters which can be assumed as a sign of ignorance by the writer. The article describes the legend's profession as a **host, anchor** and **artist. Host,**

**anchor** and **artist** are generic words which are mostly used for males and most of them have negative connotations attached to them as well. Discussing the first one in detail which is the 'host'. According to the Cambridge dictionary, '**a host is a person who has guests over**' or '**a person who introduces guests on a television or radio show**'. A host is a generic noun which is used for both males and females but represents only males. The feminine form of host is **hostess** which according to the Cambridge dictionary is defined as '**a woman who has guests over**' or '**a woman who entertains costumers at a night club**'. It is clearly visible that a negative connotation has been attached to the female version of a word which we know as affixation. And this might also be the reason the writer has used the male version of the noun but it focuses on male members of the society. The second generic noun is **anchor** which is another word for **broadcaster** and this also is a generic noun as it is stereotyped to represent males mostly. The feminine of the word is '**anchorwoman**' according to dictuonary.com which has been specified for women. The solution for this is to have variants of both genders for the word or mark the word to be gender inclusive. Same is the case for **artist** which presents a **negative connotation** as well. Although according to dictionary.com artist means '**a person who performs different forms of art**' but another meaning for artist given there are '**a person who is expert at deceit or trickery**'. Thus, the word has been stereotyped into having a negative meaning and using such a word which has negative social constructs attached to it, are not okay to be used for legends especially.

#### **Discourse level analysis:**

The discourse level analysis includes the description of the relationships and the body fragmentation which has been done in the text. The article is mainly about a female personality who is highly regarded and is considered as a pioneer in the Pakistani television industry. Therefore, there were no such utterances which could be considered as an instance of body fragmentation or objectification. Even when it comes to describing relationships that are named in the article, they are mentioned with reference to her be it male or female.

#### **Article 3: Arrested Development, Archer actor Jessica Walter dies at 80**

#### **Word-level analysis:**

Jessica Walter is described to be a strong-headed female who chose tough roles and played '**difficult**' **women**, this is what adjectivises her choice very well. The choice of the word 'difficult' for women who is strong-headed and knows how to make life decisions comes from social constructs where a women needs to be submissive and polite. The writer used several adjectives to describe the actress and her performance like she is told be **photogenic**. Connecting the quality of being photogenic to the idea of female lead has a lot to do with what is known as body objectification because when a woman is casted for a lead role this becomes a requirement for her to be photogenic and beautiful. Coming towards the naming strategies used in the article it is observed that only once while introducing the subject upon whom the article is written (Jessica Walter), her **full name** is used. Other than this at all times in the article the **last name** of the referent is used. Considering the reason for using the full name in the first incidence is that it introduces the audience with the person without any confusion. The last name is mostly used in formal settings as a sign of respect for the people who are thought to be in a higher position and status. Other than this **Brooke Bowman** and **Sidney Lumet** were introduced with the full

names and further their last names were used for the reference. There were a couple of times in the article when the names of the referents were mentioned together and in most cases females were given firstness in the mention like when Walter's **parents** were discussed her mother was discussed first and then her father. Similarly, when her marriage with her husband **Ron Liebman** was discussed she was mentioned before him. Jessica Walters was known to be an **intelligent** woman who chose to play roles far from the concept of body fragmentation and objections. Her **daughter** is explained to be an **entertainment industry executive** while her husband an **actor**. She was the daughter of a teacher and bass player and herself grew to become an established **actress**. All the professions in the articles are correctly used according to their gender, there can be no biasness viewed in the article regarding this aspect.

#### **Discourse level analysis:**

The discourse level analysis includes the analysis of the body fragmentation in the text that has been done. Mentioning a female's **age** is also not appropriate as it may somehow result in fragmentation as well. Jessica Walter in the article is described as being **photogenic**, in my opinion this is an explanation of the beauty standards that are kept by the society and it aggravates the concept of '**pretty privilege**'. The article is about Jessica Walter but there are a lot of other people mentioned in the article. Some of them are close family members and some are relatives. Everyone who is mentioned in the article is mentioned with reference to Walter be it her father, husband or male co-stars. Her daughter and mother were also mentioned in relation to her, which can be viewed in a perspective that a woman is taking dominance over another. And other women are described in relation to them which can be a sign of dependence but when Brooke Bowman, her daughter and her mother were discussed they were given enough individuality by the writer by describing their professions along with them being mentioned in Jessica Walter's relatives.

#### **Article 4: Pakistan reacts to the death of Haseena Moin**

##### **Word-level analysis:**

There are some instances of generic nouns in the article like the use of the word actor for females. The appropriate word for females would have been actress but due to the stigma attached to the meaning of it, some people prefer using the female exclusive noun actor which takes female gender to the back end as compared to the males. Similarly, the occupations of most people mentioned in the article are used along with them like politician, dramatist, script writer, film maker and actor to name a few. Here again the problem to gender exclusivity in the word actor is faced. This article includes a number of people and all of them are mentioned only once because it's their introductory mention. Therefore, their full names are used. The only person whom the article is about is mentioned a number of times and the strategy used for her is the use of the first name and the last name for the introductory mention. And in all the other mentions after that the last name is used without the addition of any kind of title. The article pays a homage to the legendary Haseena Moin and describes her to be a prolific dramatist, and the first original script writer of Pakistan. The other adjectives used for her are truly amazing and legendary.

### **Discourse level analysis:**

The discourse-level analysis of a text includes the analysis of any kind of body fragmentation or objectification in the text which can be a source of sexism but as this article pays homage to a legend so no such thing was present there. Moreover, there were no references to relations and relatives as well and there was no example where men were shown to be a source of all the intelligence and sound opinions.

### **Article 5: Gigi Hadid, Zayn Malik and daughter Khai step out in public for the first time as a family**

#### **Word-level analysis:**

This article that discusses the first public appearance of the star couple Gigi Hadid and Zayn Malik, seems to have gender inclusivity like when the couple names were discussed together the female was given a place of firstness. Referring to a person by their last name in one opinion can be a way of formal address and respect but on the other hand a female being called by her last name shows that she needs a man's name and reference to be addressed. There are no generic use of nouns or pronouns, the professions of both the referents are ignored in the article which may be mainly because it focuses on the personal aspect of their lives and not professional. Therefore, they are described as 'stars' and not as model and singer. Moreover, two people being discussed in the article are being mentioned as a collective unit and their unity is the focus of discussion here. Both of them belong to separate profession but are equally famous which can be a point of co-occurrence for both of them. Other than this, all kinds of adjectivisation is avoided in the article expect Gigi being described by her red hair dye. The particular mention of red hair by the writer can be considered as a discriminatory mention for the red-haired minority who are targeted just on the basis of a natural hair trait they are born with.

### **Discourse level analysis:**

Zayn is described to be wearing a **black outfit** along with a mask while Gigi is said to have a **colourful attire**. Describing a person with help of the clothes or look they support can be a source of materialistic judgements. Moreover, describing Gigi with her **red hair** can arise a sense of rage or discrimination towards the red headed community. And can also be an instance of body fragmentation where a certain part of a body is focused because of its specific shape, size or any kind of physical trait.

### **Article 6: 'Haseena Moin's writing was spontaneous'.**

#### **Word-level analysis:**

At the word analysis we take a view at the naming strategies in which all the names used in the article are full names. The names of **Haseena Moin** and **Anwar Maqsood** are used more than once and them being very senior artists were referred by their last name after the introductory mention. As far as seniority is concerned Anwar Maqsood is one of the most senior people in age as well as their intellect and in their services to the profession. Therefore, in the second mention the writer used the title '**Mr.**' with him which is very appropriate in order to pay respect to him. But if it is taken in comparison to the instance where Haseena Moin, is discussed, there is **no title** used for her. She was an equally intelligent and legendary writer as Anwar Maqsood. Moreover, the propose of this article

was also to pay tribute to the late writer. So, the absence of the title for her can seem a bit unfair in this case.

As mentioned, there are various personalities that are discussed in the article and their occupations and **professions** along with their names are also mentioned. For example, has been Moin was called a **dramatist** and **Javed Sheikh** was called an **actor** which was perfectly apt for his gender.

#### **Discourse level analysis:**

There are no such instances in the article where a person is mentioned in reference or relation to some other person. Similarly, there is no body fragmentation or objectification in the article as well, as the article pays tribute to one of the biggest and legendary writers the country has ever produced. The main point of discussion in the article is basically how the fellow artists reminisce the work of their colleague and most of them are males. At this time no female colleague has been selected to talk about the deceased and in this sense this article lacks female representation. This can be taken as an example of **focalisation** in the sense that only males are thought to be eligible enough to talk at a platform.

#### **Article 7: Two whacks for everyone not following SOPs in Punjab: Wasim Akram.**

##### **Word-level analysis:**

The reporter describes Wasim akram as a **cricketer** which is his profession and his source of fame and success. So, calling him a cricketer is very apt in every sense although he has been very active in the media industry as well but being a cricketer is what brought him to the limelight. Other than this, while naming him the use of first name and the last name both have been done the first time and when he was mentioned the second time only the last name was used. There is no generic use of nouns or pronouns in the article, all the nouns and pronouns in the text are the correct depiction of the referent they are being referred to. Moreover, there are no affixations in the article.

##### **Discourse level analysis:**

The news article is clearly male- centric and there is not a single utterance where a female is specifically discussed. It revolves around only a male and his opinion regarding the current situation so there is no example of body fragmentation or objectification in the article, neither for males not for females. Similarly, no relations have been described in the article as well.

#### **Article 8: Eddie Murphy inducted into NAACP Image Awards Hall of Fame**

##### **Word-level analysis:**

All the pronouns that were associated with people were correctly associated based on their gender and sex. Moreover, there was no use generic use of nouns as well. There were no titles used with any of the names in the article but when it comes to naming strategies and gender firstness, there was some kind of gender biased behaviour specially in the case of naming people. For example when referring to **Chadwick Boseman's** wife, the name of her late husband was used and she was associated with her late husband's name instead of using her own name. This basically depends on the title she chooses for herself, if she is alright being referred by her late husband's name then there is no point in considering it as a dependence. Even at the instance when **Stacy Abrams** was discussed, her last name



which is the name of her father was used to refer to her. According to one perspective the last name is used in formal settings as a sign of respect but using the last name for a woman who is a social justice icon shows her dependence on her father. Being a huge icon, it seems that she needed a man's reference and name to be known and referred to properly. When it comes to the work and profession of the people who are talked about in the article Stacy Abrams is a politician, author and social rights activist of African Americans but the huge impact she and her profession make was limited into the words "**political force**" by the author. The woman made an impact in shaping the political history of the United States and her powerful presence as lawyer and activist was belittled to the word like "**force**" which can be right in one manner but can also be objectionable in the other manner as her profession was completely ignored. Other than this **Jasmine Sullivan** is a popular African singer and song writer who performed at the NAACP ceremony but her introduction as a singer was ignored completely and more representation and preference was given in mentioning about **Viola Davis** as an actress. Ignoring one occupation and mentioning others creates a sense of competition even between the women. A complete representation should be given to all the professions be it in case of men or women. No one profession should be a source of the societal respect and all professions should be considered equal. The most objectionable thing in this article is use of the word "**black**" which has been done a multiple times. Instead of using the word black, **African origin** could be used which could be a rather respectful way of describing a whole bunch of people who have given their lives for arts, politics and many other races of life as well.

#### **Discourse level analysis:**

The discourse level analysis of this article has the identification of **Mrs. Chadwick Boseman** in relation to her late husband. And is mentioned as "**the actor's wife**" even after the actor's demise. Although it is upon the woman if she wants to be addressed with reference to her late husband, but the reference of a man to introduce a woman is itself a way of subsiding her own identity. Discussing about the appearances, the use of the word black instead of African origin is the one main way of racism that may hurt the sentiments of the group of African origin people.

#### **Article 9: Prince William just got voted the sexiest bald man alive and Dwayne Johnson wants a recount**

#### **Word level analysis:**

The generic pronouns and nouns in the article are missing because the article mainly revolves around men. The only thing talked about in the article is men and their handsomeness. And this itself is a sign that it completely omits the female gender, not only at all the analytical levels but also when it comes to the subject of discussion. When it comes to the naming strategies most of the names used in the article were a combination of the first name and the last name at all times of being used. "**Stanley Tucci**" was named twice and for once the combination of both the first and the last name was used and the other time only last name was used for it. While "**Prince William**" had his first name along with the title being used for his introduction at all times. Although the article seems to talk about the attractiveness of the bald men but this has been done by not so right choice of words. And one such example is the use of the word "**sexy**" instead of attractive, handsome or other alternatives for the word. The word sexy roots from the word sexism

which this study is all about. This word can be a bit offensive to a certain group of people as it creates a sense of partiality and biasness towards one while ignoring the other.

#### **Discourse level analysis:**

The discourse-level analysis includes the analysis of the relationships and the references with which a personality is introduced. This phenomenon is particularly kept for the females as they are not thought to have their own identity. This article under the subject of analysis for discourse level is completely male centric and males are thought to have their own identity and do not need to lend others names to introduce themselves. But another thing which is a point of object and has been previously discussed as well is the use of the word 'sexy' even to introduce men. It can be offensive towards a particular gender and group of people. The word sexy is taken in the meanings of being **sexually attractive** and this can be taken in the terms of body fragmentation in one way because a person be it a man or a female is seen no more than a sexual entity who is responsible for sexual pleasures only. This article in this way subjects men into the circle of objectification while completely ignoring women at the same time.

#### **Article 10: What is the Tuk Tuk March and why did celebrities take part in it?**

##### **Word level analysis:**

The word level analysis of the article includes the identification of generic pronouns and generic nouns in the articles. The gender of the referent and gender of the pronoun being used correctly corresponded with one another. The generic use of nouns was also not visible. The naming strategy used in this article by the writer is the use of the full name of the person without any company of any kind of title. Since all the names used in the articles are of celebrities therefore just the use of names was enough for the introduction of the person being referred to. Only once in the article at the very initial position where the introduction to the article is given, the first name of the female was used to refer to her while all the males which accompanied her had their first names and surnames being used in order to refer to them. Even then the female name was given firstness as compared to all the male names that accompanied her name. There were no such adjectivisation techniques that could objectify women, only a single female name was used without any adjectivisation or any kind of affixation for her.

##### **Discourse level:**

There is only one female name mentioned in the text which is mentioned independently without any reference to the male relative. She is mention independently and no male reference was named along her as a support. Moreover, when it comes to talking about the appearances none of the characters discussed in the article were the subject of the discussion of appearances or body fragmentation. When it comes to focalisation there was no such instance in this article that brings only men's intelligence, views and logically educated opinions to forefront while ignoring female opinions at the same time.

#### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Yasmin (2019) analysed four different Pakistani newspapers Dawn, the nation, Daily Times and The News. The results which she gained were that there was an unequal representation of males and females in the analysed content. If this research is to be compared with my

research, there were instances where males were given more representation than females. Like the use of generic nouns (actor) and occupations.

Moreover, in some other articles like 'Dramatist haseena moin passes away in Karachi' males were seen to be more vocal about the subject of discussion. This shows males to have a more sound perspective about general things in life and women can be taken to the back foot as a result. Which means that women can't have logical opinions about things. This finding exactly corresponds to the analysis of 'Man O Salwa' where women are framed to be passive natured, submissive and distorted personels of the society (Shah, Zahid, Shakir & Rafique, 2014).

A research by Talosa and Malenab found out that 'he' is most used generic pronoun in the analysed sample while 'man' is the most used generic noun. If it is to be compared with this research it can be said that there was no use of generic pronouns in any of the articles, all the writers were mindful of the correct usage of the pronouns. But if occupations and nouns are considered there were some ignorances like the use of the word actor for both males and females. This is almost similar to the use of the word 'freshmen' as mentioned by Fajardo, Ligaya and Hann in their study conducted on workplace memorandums where they concluded the generic use of masculine terms and observed the presence of gender associated work positions (Fajardo, Ligaya& Hann, 2020).

Therefore, to conclude that there was the absence of sexism in the articles would be completely wrong. Instead there was the presence of different instances of sexist language in different articles.

The only absent feature was the generic pronouns in all of the articles. All other features like associating occupations with genders, affixation, generic nouns and different naming strategies were present but they varied from article to article. Same is the case with discourse level factors, not every article had every factor but at the same time there was no such article which was completely void of sexist language.

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