


## Ageism and Sexism: The Double Jeopardy Affecting Older Women's Mental Health

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### ABSTRACT

Older women face unique psychological challenges that stem from the intersection of ageism and sexism, phenomena that together pose a double jeopardy to their mental health and overall well-being. This article explores the implications of these biases, the social and personal impacts they engender, and the need for a more supportive societal framework. The intersection of ageism and sexism creates a complex landscape of challenges that significantly affect the mental health and quality of life of older women. This double jeopardy not only impacts their personal and professional lives but also limits their visibility and representation in society. As research continues to shed light on these issues, it is crucial for policymakers, practitioners, and society at large to develop strategies that address these biases comprehensively. This involves creating supportive workplace environments, providing accurate and empowering health information, and fostering a culture that celebrates rather than stigmatizes aging and femininity. Only through a concerted effort can we hope to dismantle the barriers that older women face, paving the way for a more inclusive and equitable society.

**Keywords:** Sexism, Ageism, Double Jeopardy, Older Women, Mental Health.

### 1. Introduction

Older women face unique psychological challenges that stem from the intersection of ageism and sexism, phenomena that together pose a double jeopardy to their

mental health and overall well-being. This article explores the implications of these biases, the social and personal impacts they engender, and the need for a more supportive societal framework.

Ageism, the stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination against individuals based on their age, significantly affects older adults, particularly women. When combined with sexism, the effects can be particularly detrimental. Gillooley (2023) highlights the importance of acknowledging subjective age identity to combat stereotypes in marketing to GenX women, suggesting a broader need to validate the identities of older women across various social contexts (Gillooley, 2023).

The mental health of older women is disproportionately affected by the dual stigmas of ageism and sexism. Reynolds et al. (2022) argue that the lack of balanced mental health information tailored to older adults impedes their ability to seek help effectively, compounding feelings of isolation and invisibility (Reynolds et al., 2022). Additionally, Lindström, Ansio, and Steel (2022) discuss how maintaining meaningfulness and self-integrity at work can buffer against the negative impacts of these biases among older, self-employed women entrepreneurs (Lindström et al., 2022).

The workplace is a primary arena where double jeopardy is evident. Jaakson (2023) explores how ageism and sexism can lead to increased instances of workplace bullying, particularly among older women and ethnic minorities (Jaakson, 2023). Wang and Li (2022) further examine how limited job autonomy and traditional spousal gender ideologies exacerbate mental health issues for employed older women, highlighting the need for workplace policies that recognize and mitigate these intersecting biases (Wang & Li, 2022).

In their personal lives, older women often experience a redefinition of their desires and intimacies, as Vuyst (2022) describes in her study of ageing femininities in graphic novels. This reimagining challenges prevailing narratives about older women's aspirations towards happiness and fulfillment (Vuyst, 2022). Luke and Poulin (2023) discuss the stigmatization of single women in midlife, emphasizing the need for theoretical and practical shifts in how society views older women's sexual and romantic needs (Luke & Poulin, 2023).

The experience of older women is not monolithic and varies significantly across cultural contexts. Shabir and Khan (2023) provide insights into the health challenges faced by elderly women in Kashmir, illustrating how local cultural conditions exacerbate the impacts of ageism and sexism (Shabir et al., 2023). Similarly, Ng and Indran (2022) highlight how older adults, including women, use platforms like TikTok to challenge and reframe societal perceptions of aging, suggesting a powerful avenue for empowerment and

resistance against ageist and sexist norms (Ng & Indran, 2022).

The intersection of ageism and sexism creates a complex landscape of challenges that significantly affect the mental health and quality of life of older women. This double jeopardy not only impacts their personal and professional lives but also limits their visibility and representation in society. As research continues to shed light on these issues, it is crucial for policymakers, practitioners, and society at large to develop strategies that address these biases comprehensively. This involves creating supportive workplace environments, providing accurate and empowering health information, and fostering a culture that celebrates rather than stigmatizes aging and femininity. Only through a concerted effort can we hope to dismantle the barriers that older women face, paving the way for a more inclusive and equitable society.

#### **Authors' Contributions**

Not applicable.

#### **Declaration**

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

#### **Transparency Statement**

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#### **Declaration of Interest**

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#### **Ethical Considerations**

None.

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