

WOMEN AND FEMINISM: IMPACT OF FEMINISM ON WOMEN IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

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ABSTRACT

A woman's rise to prominence in society came after she overcame several challenges and hurdles on her way there. When women had no rights, they were ostracised and abused by men in the past. Feminism has drastically transformed the profile and image of women, making them queens, presidents, artists, and teachers instead of mere puppets in the hands of men. In many aspects, the feminist movements were effective in changing the status and role of women dramatically. They were able to get rid of stereotypes and raise her social and political status because they gave her full political, social, and economic rights. The aim of this paper is to see the impact of feminism on women in the contemporary world.

Keywords: *Feminism, Women, Waves, Political, Movements.*

Introduction

Half of the human society has always been female, but that fact seems clear until you examine how few women are included on lists of "great individuals" who have had a significant impact on human history. Some feminists refer to history as "His-story," meaning the tale of men and their deeds. When women do show up, it's usually as a support for the males in their lives or as victims of war and natural disasters. Male historians have described them as possessing special viciousness and brutality, traits inherent to males but seen "unseemly" in women, when they emerge as rulers in their own right. If women aren't capable of making significant contributions to society, then something else must be at play.

One of the most recent ideologies is feminism, and it tries to look at the social position of women, explain why they have been thought to be less than men in the past, and lay the groundwork for positive social change and advancement for women in all fields. Feminists think that men and women are engaged in a fundamental power struggle. This has the potential to be revolutionary, as have the fights over race and class in the past. In fact, this is one of the oldest power struggles, one that isn't very visible, and one that has a lot to do with the whole community.

Women's rights have been debated since the Middle Ages and even ancient antiquity, but it makes sense to focus on the end of the eighteenth century and France's Revolution. Women all around Europe were impacted by the Enlightenment and the Revolution because of the hope for freedom and equality they felt. An notable early 'feminist' writer is "Mary Wollstonecraft, author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792)". She maintained that because of their equal humanity, moral value, reason, and freedom, women should have the same legal rights as men. To deny women their right to equal opportunity in all of these areas because of their gender was wrong. It will be a good thing if equality is reached. The status of men and women as equals will change. For as rational as they may appear, these ideas shook the male-dominated power structures that ruled society in general in the nineteenth century.

Feminism's Origins

As Hunburtine Auclert attempted to condemn male dominance and assert women's rights alongside the freedom promised by the French revolution, she coined the word "feminism" in her journal *La Citoyenne* in the late 1880s as *La Féminité*.

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"The phrase initially arose in English in Britain in the first decade of the twentieth century, then in the United States in the 1910s, and finally in the Arab World in the 1920s as *Niswia*. From the Latin term *femina*, which means women's difficulties, Feminism was born". Many feminists believed that women's oppression was inextricably linked to their sexuality because feminism is concerned with females as both a social and biological category. Women have been viewed as less important than men because of biological differences that have been reflected in social structures for a long time. As a social or political movement or a philosophy, feminism emphasises the struggles of women and the different types of oppression to which women have been subjected throughout history.

Feminism, whether it is seen as a political or social movement, focuses on the everyday realities of women and the oppression they face in society. In Patriarchal civilizations, Feminists understand what it is to be a "woman" because they can feel and experience the sorrow and suffering of women. Because of this, feminists work to eliminate all obstacles that prevent women from achieving equal social, political, and economic status with men. That a woman is only valuable because of her gender doesn't make sense to them. They also don't think that women are "inherently inferior, subservient or less intelligent than men".

Three Waves of Feminism

There were two different waves of historical feminism in France during the 19th and 20th centuries (Michel 1979; Gaspard 2002). (Fougeyrollas-Schwebel, 2000; Gaspard, 2002; Picq, 2002). Emancipation and economic rights were the goals of the first wave of feminism. There were no accommodations made for the fact that men and women are born with different physical and mental characteristics. For example, in the 19th century, Marxism saw the freedom of the proletariat as a necessary condition for the liberation of women. Because of this, women had to start their own publications and movements to attract attention. As a point of reference, "La Citoyenne was launched in France in 1881 and was the first public forum for *suffragettes* (the name assigned to women fighting for the right to vote)". Women's liberation and economic empowerment may be discussed openly in these publications.

"Anti-feminism," the hostility to women's liberation, was a thriving attitude at this period, as noted by Bard (1999). Since its inception in the late 19th century, it has taken many forms, from shaming women painters for their inclusion in shows to making fun of women who wear pants in the 1920s, to justifying the use of rape as an excuse. There were a lot of people who were against anti-feminism. This included politicians, military, and police, as well as film-makers and journalists.

In spite of the fact that these efforts started in the 19th century, most current women's rights in France are less than a century old, they had a long road ahead of them. For example, it wasn't until 1907 that married women were granted the ability to retain and spend the money they earned while working. Incapacity for women was finally abolished in 1938. Nevertheless, husbands had the ability to impose the family's location, to permit or deny their wives' employment, and to exercise entire control over their children, and it was not until 1944, that women in France gained the right to vote. As a reminder, it is important to know that many feminist groups went away after these rights were given.

A new difficulty arose, however: women desired complete authority over their own bodies, even when economic and political rights had been gained. However, for their refusal to be understood solely as a method of reproduction, the second generation of feminists were concerned with maternal choice, domestic violence, and equality in a paternalistic society. The second wave of feminists arrived long after the first; curiously, and crucially for our argument, they thought they were the first feminists (Gaspard, 2002). In spite of the inevitable conflicts (Michel, 1979; Gaspard, 2002), feminists succeeded to secure certain rights. In 1966, for example, women were granted the freedom to work without their husbands' permission. Parental authority was renamed "paternal authority" in 1970. In 1972, the concept of equal pay was established. In 1975, both parents had the option of choose where they wanted to live. In 1984, women and men were given equal rights to manage their families' assets and educate their children.

The second-wave feminism of the 1980s and 1990s was considered a little outmoded by some feminists by the 1990s. Progress in women's rights and freedoms had been made. The responsibilities of unwanted childbirth and the drudgery of housekeeping that had held back previous generations have been lifted for women thanks to technological breakthroughs such as the contraceptive pill and home labor-saving technologies. *Sex and Destiny* (1985) was Germaine Greer's first book in which she talked about how important family life and childrearing are for women. In "*Sex, Art, and American Culture* (1990), Camille Paglia" talked about how feminist literature makes women "victims."

Feminists of the so-called "third wave" or "new" feminism argued that the 1990s were the ideal moment to build on the gains made before. The idea of gender equality, which has been generally acknowledged and reinforced by law, has to be made a greater reality in practical terms rather than theoretical ones in contemporary society. "Only around 75 percent of British women's salaries are equal to those of men's; women are more likely to work part-time and in low-skilled employment than men; few women are at the top of the major professions of law and medicine, academia, or the media; and few women are in the senior civil service". Some of the more pervasive forms of gender inequality have not yet been addressed. According to the FTSE report, it's estimated that 40 percent of FTSE Index companies had no women on their boards after 2000, compared to 69 percent before 2000.

Similarly to its second-wave antecedent, new feminism may be criticised. Most of the focus is on white middle-class women who are well-educated and working. They are also Christians, and the great majority of these women are heterosexual. Gender inequality is significantly greater in underdeveloped countries than in the West, where women have far less resources and are less likely to get assistance in their fight.

For most Western women, the term "feminist" conjures up images of an empowered woman who is free to make her own decisions about her own future rather than relying on a man for everything. The radical or political left isn't the only place where feminist ideas have a home. Women of all political stripes advocate for basic gender equality. It's not only a trend in the developed world, though. Growing numbers of women in developing nations believe that they can contribute significantly to "social and economic advancement, population control, and environmental protection". They are right. A mix of their own cultural traditions and Western feminist thought is what makes them want to do what they do now.

Types of Feminism

- **Liberal Feminism**

In order to achieve gender equality, liberal feminism relies on a certain method. It highlights the individual's ability to change discriminatory behaviours against women. One of the most fundamental forms of feminism, it strives to integrate women into society by working inside the framework of it. Its origins may be traced all the way back to the American Revolution and the social contract idea of governance.

The goal of liberal feminism is to assist women and men achieve equality in the eyes of the law and society by encouraging them to use their own strengths and the democratic process. Those who take a liberal feminist approach will make use of our society's resources and capabilities to advocate for change by forming larger organisations of women who can speak at a "higher level, lobby for legislation, and raise awareness of concerns".

There have been various waves of change in liberal feminism's growth and strength throughout time. Civil rights activism in the United States sparked an uptick in energy in the early 1960s, which culminated in The Famous March on Washington. The liberal feminists' views and principles gained new traction as a result of this march. There are many civil rights movements that have embraced the spirit and value of their beliefs as a means of realising and recognising the necessity of speaking and expressing their thoughts. It was important to ensure that personal experiences and knowledge about the problems of the day that touched the group were transferred from person to person in order to raise awareness. Because of this, individuals were able to keep their focus on the movement's goal of improving circumstances because of this.

Liberal feminism argues that women should be allowed to choose their own social roles with the same degree of autonomy as men. In order to implement feminism, it has been necessary to dismantle the patriarchal legislation that denied women's civic rights in the past. Equality in the "legal system, educational and professional possibilities for women, changes in marriage laws and property rights, equal pay for equal labor, and protection from rape and domestic violence" are some of the most important aspects of the movement. People in this movement want to make sure that women and men are treated the same, but they don't want to change the very foundation of their oppression.

- **Radical Feminism**

Radical feminism believes that the only way to eradicate sexism's pervasiveness in society is to do away with the idea of gender altogether. T. Grace Atkinson and Shulamith Firestone, two well-known women's rights activists, kicked off its emergence in the late 1960s. It doesn't believe that women are oppressed because they don't have enough political or civil rights.

Focusing on the concept of patriarchy, which is a structure of power that organises society into complicated interactions based on the claim that male dominance oppresses women, is a position within feminist theory. By rejecting traditional gender norms and the oppression of women, radical feminism seeks to confront and overturn patriarchy. It also asks for a fundamental reorganisation of society. For this group, the oppression of women is a form of man's dominance at its most basic, one that transcends race, culture, and economic status. This is, in reality, a movement that aims to bring about societal change of a somewhat revolutionary kind.

Pregnancy and childbirth are two of radical feminism's most fascinating statements since they are seen as the most difficult and terrible events a person can go through. That technology should be employed to alleviate all misery, especially from the basic inequity of child carrying and that it is what they feel is most urgently needed. Because they feel that childbearing and childrearing duties are at the core of women's oppression, this must be the primary goal.

Radical feminism asks why women are forced to assume certain responsibilities based on their biology, why men are forced to assume certain other roles based on gender just as it questions. These researchers are trying to figure out where the line is between biological and culturally influenced behaviour so that men and women can be freed from their old gender roles.

- **Socialist Feminism**

In the history of women's liberation, the socialist feminist movement, sometimes known as Marxist feminists or materialist feminists, played a significant role. It advocates a socialist economic reform to put an end to capitalism. Feminist socialists think that capitalism, which makes a lot of money off of women's unpaid housework and underpaid work in the workplace, is to blame for the long-term gender inequality in society. Capitalism, according to socialist feminism, only serves to perpetuate the sexist situation since males now own the power and money. Because males are more eager to share their power and money with another guy, women have less alternatives and resources. It was thus their goal, in an effort to abolish capitalism and replace it with socialism, which distributes the wealth generated by human work and has no financial interest in preserving oppression. Capitalism profits from sexism because of the low cost of female labour. Women often labour in low-wage, low-status jobs with little or no benefits. Socialist feminists do not believe that childbearing is necessary for women's freedom. Their goal is to relate oppression of women to other forms of oppression and to unite socialists and feminists in their struggle for equality and freedom.

In a socialist society, Marxist feminism sees the possibility of restoring women's to autonomy. To begin this freedom of women, modern manufacturing forced working-class women to work for wages. Socialist feminists' main priorities and objectives were to achieve parity in pay for men and women.

- **Society and Women**

In our culture, when males still rule and have the greatest power, the place of women is critical. As a result, women's function in society has been largely overlooked in the past few years, when they were seen primarily as housewives and their only duty was to take care of children and follow men's commands. Furthermore, they were not allowed to do any jobs that required them to leave their "homes, like voting, learning, or writing". More than a century ago, women began to question the significance of their social positions and responsibilities. As a result, women all over the world took to the streets in a series of protests to show their equality to men. In the 1st and 2nd world wars, women were more involved in society because they took the position of men who had gone to war both at home and abroad. She also worked two jobs to supplement her little income and help support her family.

- **Education and Women**

Women were prevented from learning and education because they feared that it would challenge the beliefs and customs that held them in their place; it would also educate them how to gain their independence and even inspire women to seek leadership roles. To show how important education can be to a woman's life, some Feminist academics and authors, like Mary Wollstonecraft, have written about the importance of education for a woman's life.

Education for both men and women is essential to a country's economic, social, and environmental progress and sustainability. Investing in women's education and literacy is one of the most effective ways to increase female production and improve the well-being of families and children. The issue is to make greater use of women's credentials in areas where they are increasingly more educated than males. To help people in poor countries and speed up economic growth, governments in developing countries need to reduce gender differences in literacy and basic and secondary education.

Worldwide, governments have begun to see the value and need of educating women for their own well-being as well as the advancement of society as a whole. In an effort to lower the literacy rate, they began urging parents to let their children, particularly females, attend school, particularly in rural areas. In recent years, African governments have begun to assist rural youngsters in their efforts to attend school. In "2005, the World Bank determined that for every 100 males in primary school in Sub-Saharan Africa, there were 83.6 girls".

- **Women and Health**

Healthcare, education, and employment, among other necessities, are the building blocks of every prosperous nation. The first tier of significance may be attributed to good health. Feminism has always emphasised the need to take care of women, not only by providing them employment or allowing them to vote, but also by prioritising their health since they have the most delicate and fragile physical structure, in addition to their role as mothers.

Women's health is promoted in the United States via gender-specific initiatives, such as teaching "health professionals on gender implications for prevention and treatment and encouraging behaviour change through the wider distribution of gender-based health information". One of the most notable examples is Norway's National Centers of Medicine for Women and Older People, which are dedicated exclusively to women's health. Gender issues like gender inequality and male violence against women have an impact on women's health, so it's important that Sweden's new public health strategy include a gender lens in order to raise awareness of these issues.

According to a recent study, women are more concerned about their health than men are. Feminists are often heard emphasising the importance of developing new and effective health care solutions for everyone, not just women and children.

- **Women and Economics**

"*Women and Economics* author Charlotte Perkins Gilman" said that humans are one of just a few animals that need both genders to survive. This is why she urged women to shift their cultural identities and be self-reliant. In addition, mothers who give up their time and energy to raise their children will have superior offspring. Gilman is of the opinion that other people can help with this work or maybe do it better. First, she proposed that women should employ housekeepers and chefs so that they might free themselves from the burden of housekeeping. As a result, more women would have the opportunity to work and have a more global existence. Gilman believed that while women may want to be at home with their families, they should not be forced to take full responsibility for them, and that these changes would eventually lead to better "motherhood and fatherhood, better babyhood and childhood, better food, better homes, and a better society".

Due to discriminatory policies that always gave precedence to men, women's involvement in the workforce was left unfinished. While males worked six hours a day, females worked 12 hours a day throughout the 19th century. It was because of this that feminists didn't like how women were kept apart from men in the workplace, so they started groups and institutions to fight for more equality for women in the workplace.

When laws began to eliminate obstacles to women's participation in the workplace in the late 19th century, it provided better working conditions with less time and a higher wage.

Despite the efforts of governments around the world to help more women get jobs, not all countries have increased their gender quotas.

- **Politics and Women**

Speaking of women in politics, it's fair to state that the situation has improved in recent years. In today's world, women are filling every sphere and position, particularly in politics. President, minister, diplomat, and member of parliament are all titles she now holds.

When discussing the role and status of women in any nation, we will always discover that they are always second to men. For decades prior to this time, a woman had no role in any social, political, or religious rites; she was completely under the jurisdiction of men in her culture (as father, husband, and brother). A woman's only role in the home was to clean, cook, and raise children, and that was it.

In one of his works, Sapero states: "There is already a body of academic work which suggests that women politicians across the world are stereotypically seen as mothers, housewives, or sex objects, and that none of these roles is viewed as compatible with political leadership." Now she is a leader in her community as well as a respected mother and wife.

The Need for Women in Politics

It's an often asked question: why do we need more women in government? She is also capable of making a significant contribution to the political growth of any country. Many political and sociological studies have tried to show how important it is for women to be able to vote or be in charge of politics in order to deal with all of these problems.

When it came to being a good political or good leader participant, women were under a lot of pressure. More than 100 parliamentarians from 110 countries participated in the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) survey on women's most successful initiatives between 2006 and 2008. It was observed that women are more involved in women's concerns, "gender equality, social and community affairs, and family-related issues". As a result, women legislators have a reputation for being more in tune with constituent needs and concerns.

According to the same IPU survey, in addition to concerns like violence, poverty, and rape, female MPs prioritised childcare, equal pay, and mother's problems. Increasing the number of female legislators in Rwanda and South Africa resulted in laws relating to land ownership and reproductive rights. Human rights and, more specifically, the social, political, and economic rights of women are hot topics among French and other European women.

According to a report from Stockholm University, there has been in the education budget an increase as the women number in Sweden's parliament has risen. Political parties with more female leaders tend to focus on things like health, education, and other things that make life better.

It's hardly surprising that when women are given the authority to govern their nations, they tend to see better living conditions, better transportation, and better healthcare.

As a result of extensive research and studies conducted in a wide range of nations, it is clear that women have a distinct and strong viewpoint to offer at the negotiation table. In addition, women tend to believe in giving one more chance and are more concerned with social issues (family, women, and children) than any other issue.

Studies have also shown that women are more successful than men in some sectors, even if politics isn't something they're particularly interested in.

Political Representation of Women

Women's rights activists and democracy scholars are continually on the lookout for methods to achieve gender parity in all aspects of life, particularly in politics. They feel that providing women the ability to "vote, to be a member of parliament, or even to serve as a minister or president, is essential". They also stress the significance of ensuring that women are represented at all levels of government, both domestically and internationally. For decades, European policy has focused on increasing the representation of women in political and other decision-making organisations that serve the interests of all people. Feminist theory has employed a feminist-critical lens to examine the realities of gender political representation. They demand that more women be elected to public office. They aim to demonstrate that women and men should have equal representation in politics.

For this reason, political scientists have discovered that the greatest way to demonstrate an election's efficacy and legitimacy is to include women as significant parts of society, whether as voters or as candidates. Today's woman is quite different from the woman of a few decades ago. In many nations across the globe, women have gained some measure of political, social, and religious equality, but they still need to be treated equally in all other respects, including their rights as human beings. Stereotypes and beliefs that continue to define individuals and leadership abilities by gender and the existence of inequity, which is one of the original causes for the limitation of the female role, continue to be hurdles for women today.

One hundred and fifty top female executives were interviewed by Catalyst and the Conference Board Europe for the research. Over half of the women surveyed said the most significant obstacle to their career advancement was the lack of role models who could serve as role models, as well as the fact that they had family responsibilities that interfered with their professional development. The remaining third said the biggest obstacle was the lack of mentors who could act as resources for them. There is a strong correlation between the paucity of women in most disciplines and the belief that women have traditionally had a lesser position in society. Even in the most industrialised countries, men still feel that a woman's place is in her home with her children, and that she can simply be replaced by a male who has a better education or a better job.

According to the same report, over 90% of the women polled felt that men are in a better position to grow in their careers since women are under pressure and have family obligations, and that motherhood is a barrier to professional success for them. Two-thirds of the women polled had heard that in the job, women are seen as less trustworthy and persuasive than men. According to the same study, just a few women had heard that women had trouble making choices at work. No matter where she lived, women were and are subjected to oppressive social norms that they have no choice but to comply with. Feminism and women's rights movements have been around for a long time, and they've always been about empowering women and eradicating any negative stereotypes about them. Throughout history, there have been a lot of movements and activities that the world has seen, like Marry Wollstonecraft's work "*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, Black American Feminism, and more recently, Woman and Child Organizations*". They all have the same goals and dreams, which are for all women to have full equality and freedom in any place in the world. When it comes to women's progress and accomplishments today, all those women who were slaughtered, raped, and died for this ideal deserve respect and admiration for what they have accomplished.

Conclusion

When women were not considered equal citizens, they were subjected to harsh treatment, discrimination, and racism at the hands of males who dominated and ruled the world. Even though they had a lot of problems, they were able to get over them and show that they were better than society. In the past, women had an unjust and uneven existence. She is unable to participate in any political, social, or economic activity, and her sole work is as a housewife. A man's sign of authority dominated all areas during that period, and women were subservient to his rule. Women all across the globe began to look for methods to better themselves and alter their place in society after all of those difficulties, hardships, and unhappiness. As a result of their efforts, aspirations, and desires, they created feminism, which is a worldwide ideology that appeals to women throughout the globe. Feminism helped women reclaim their rights and shed the stereotypes that had long plagued them. According to feminist theory, a woman is just as capable as a man of taking on significant positions. And in addition to empowering women, feminism's most significant aims were to ensure that women had equal representation in political and social affairs.

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