

Feminism and Psychology

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Abstract: *Feminism and psychology have a long history of influencing each other. Feminist psychology is focused on feminism's ideals and beliefs. It takes into account gender and how women are influenced by problems that occur as a result of it. Gender issues can include how people define their gender (male, female, or transgender), how they've been influenced by gender-related social constructs, the role of gender in one's life, and any other gender-related issues. Social equity and women's rights are central themes of feminist psychology. In the first part we discuss the theoretical framework in which the concept developed, as well as some of the types of Feminism. We also discussed some of the researches done by Feminist Psychologists that supported its relevance for gender studies. Feminist Therapy helps to motivate women by aiding them in recognizing the consequences of gender problems. Shift, not adjustment, is the purpose of therapy. The objective of this article is to comprehend the individual in the sense of broader social issues.*

Keywords: *Feminism, Gender-related issues, Feminist Therapy, Social issues.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Feminist psychology is a branch of psychology dealing with issues of gender, sexuality, and sex categories. It is made up of both scholars and practitioners (i.e., psychotherapists and counselors). A dedication to social justice is also at the heart of feminist scholarship. Cultural assumptions about inherent female nature, as well as invidious perceptions about different classes of women, have been questioned by feminist psychologists. It has shed light on the lives and experiences of women and girls from all walks of life. Feminists have also looked at the role of gender in power distribution in society. Feminists in clinical psychology have emphasized the connection between psychological trauma and social context, with some focusing on sexual harassment and intimate violence experiences.

First Wave of Feminism: The 'suffragette campaign' is the name given to the struggle for women's right to vote in elections. By the end of the nineteenth century, it had grown into a global movement, and the terms "feminism" and "feminist movement" began to be used. Women had gained the right to vote in most European countries and North America by the 1920s. Women were first able to attend university and have both a job and a family in the early twentieth century. When nationalist parties came to power in some countries, the feminist movement was outlawed.

Second Wave of Feminism: By the 1970s, the feminist movement had resurrected in Western Europe and the United States. While the goal of the second wave of feminism was to achieve "women's liberation," various groups had different ideas on how to achieve it. Liberal feminists pushed for more equal rights legislation and reform of institutions like schools, churches, and the media. Women's studies became a university discipline, and books started to be published about women's achievements in literature, music, and science, as well as capturing women's previously unwritten past, as a result of the second wave of feminism.

Third Wave of Feminism: Increased understanding of overlapping categories such as race, class, gender, and sexual orientation characterises the third wave of feminism. Ethnic concerns, like the status of women in other parts of the world, were also given more attention (global feminism). This wave makes extensive use of media and popular culture to spread its theories and carry out its activities. It aims to bring feminism closer to people's everyday lives. Sexual abuse, domestic violence, the wage disparity between men and women, eating disorders and body image, sexual and reproductive rights, and honour crimes are among the major concerns of third wave feminism.

2. TYPES OF FEMINISM:

The various manifestations of feminism that have emerged since the 1960s can be defined in a variety of ways, with many of them overlapping on key points. Types of Feminism are:

Liberal Feminism: This form of feminism works to incorporate women into mainstream society and make it more responsive for individual women's rights, but it does not explicitly question the framework or the philosophy that

underlie women's oppression. It emphasizes women's ability to uphold their independence through their own acts and decisions.

Radical Feminism: The most fundamental factor in women's oppression, according to radical feminism, is patriarchy and misogyny, which cuts through all other factors such as ethnicity, age, tradition, caste, and class. It calls into question the whole framework and culture that has led to women's enslavement. Women's liberation movements emerged out of civil rights, peace, and other liberation movements at a time when people were gradually challenging various systems of oppression and power. Radical feminists have provided the major theoretical understanding that has served as the foundation for the motivation and research driving women's movements around the world, as they attempt to explain the origins of women's subordination.

Marxist and Socialist Feminism: Feminists, based on Marxist and socialist analysis, blame women's oppression primarily on the capitalist economic system, which is dominated by multinational corporate power. Many other feminists agree that the class system's form of power is a critical element in women's subordination, but that patriarchy is the primary cause of women's subjugation.

Cultural Feminism: Cultural feminism highlights the biological, psychological, and behavioural disparities between men and women. Women are seen as possessing unique and superior qualities that serve as the basis for a common sense of belonging, unity, and sisterhood. Since women are considered to be kinder and gentler than men by nature, it follows that the world would be a better place if women had power.

Eco-feminism: This version of feminism sees patriarchy, with its emphasis on power and dominance, as not only a source of women's oppression, but also as harmful to humanity, as well as to all living things and the planet itself. Eco-feminists see women's rights and empowerment as being linked to political, economic, social, and cultural factors that benefit all living creatures and Mother Nature herself, often combining a more comprehensive analysis of power with a greater spiritual vision.

Transitional or Global Feminism: This feminism is largely concerned with how globalisation and capitalism impact people of different nationalities, races, ethnicities, genders, ages, and sexualities and has bolstered a variety of global movements. It acknowledges differences among various groups of women, as well as the importance of intersectionality in recognizing and engaging differences. Because of these disparities, global problems do not affect women in the same way as they do men, but the impact of these issues and power structures is seen as critical to feminist social justice agendas. To ensure long-term social change, this vision acknowledges the need for systemic approaches that incorporate various problems and movements to find common cause across agendas.

Visionary Feminism: The concept of visionary feminism incorporates the need to confront patriarchy, class, race, and other aspects of oppression such as imperialism and corporate power. The commitment to ending patriarchal dominance over women, men, and children is at the heart of feminist politics. Any relationship built on dominance and manipulation cannot be defined as loving. In patriarchal culture, males are unable to love themselves because their entire self-definition is based on obedience to patriarchal laws. Men's emotional well-being would be improved if they follow feminist theory and practice, which stresses the importance of mutual development and self-actualization in all relationships. True feminist politics still leads us from enslavement to liberation, from loveless-ness to passion.

3. PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE:

Karen Horney, a neo-Freudian psychologist who developed a psychology based on gender and exploring how gender influenced the person, coined the term 'Feminist Psychology'. Horney discusses previously held ideas about women, relationships, and the influence of culture on women in her book, **Feminine Psychology**, which is a series of articles Horney wrote on the topic from 1922 to 1937. Horney founded this branch of psychology in response to **Sigmund Freud's "penis envy" theory**. In psychoanalytic philosophy, she flatly dismissed ideas like penis envy and other forms of male bias. Instead, she proposed that most female psychological distress stems from the male-dominated society that gave birth to Freudian theory. She coined the term "womb envy," implying that male envy of pregnancy, breastfeeding, and motherhood—primary women's position in the creation and maintenance of life—led men to assert their dominance in other areas.

Feminist Therapy

Feminist therapy focuses on inspiring women and assisting them in discovering how to mold expectations and associated with certain conventional female roles that may be inhibiting their development and growth. Women's assertiveness, communication, relationships, and self-esteem are all fields where feminist psychology needs to

concentrate more. One of feminist therapists' key objectives is to promote equitable, reciprocal caring and support relationships.

Consciousness-raising, social and gender role analysis, resocialization, and social advocacy are **four main approaches** that are specific to feminist therapy.

- **Consciousness-raising-** met in small groups without a leader, with an emphasis on women's individual and shared experiences. Women in these communities don't have to feel isolated, and they can listen to and help one another. These people look at how inequality and socialization play a role in psychological suffering and dysfunction. Raising women's consciousness empowers them to take action against injustice by engaging in social action.
- **Social and Gender Role Analysis-** involves evaluating the client's psychological distress and coping strategies. Clients will first hear about the effect and consequences of societal and cultural norms and perceptions, as well as how these problems negatively impact society. The therapist supports the client in becoming conscious of both covert and overt sex roles that he or she has played in his or her life. This aids the client in identifying the cause of his or her psychological distress. Together, the therapist and the client devise strategies for implementing improvement and gaining self-awareness.
- **Resocialization-** the client's value system is reorganized. They learn to see things in new ways and build new coping skills and techniques as a result. Self-esteem, assertiveness, and self-views are taught through various methods. One of the key objectives of resocialization is to enhance one's overall well-being.
- **Social Activism-** This implies that the fundamental causes of a client's problems are rooted in culture and politics. Feminist therapy should benefit not only the client, but all individuals. Both the therapist and the client may be involved in social advocacy. Speaking out, coordinated marches, and letter-writing campaigns are all successful ways to do this.

Feminist Therapy is based on **five principles**:

1. The personal is political, and it is this that brings about social change.
2. The therapy arrangement is egalitarian, which allows the therapist and the client to be on an equal level. The client should understand that she has the ability to improve and describe herself, and that the therapist is merely a source of fresh knowledge and perspective.
3. Women's experiences are valued, and they can connect with their instincts and personal experiences.
4. Distress and mental illness definitions are reformulated to include both internal and external causes of distress. Rather than being seen as weak, pain and resistance are seen as a constructive confirmation of the ability to live and hardships.
5. Feminist therapists use an integrated study of inequality, which recognizes that oppression and prejudices influence both men and women, and that these patriarchal interactions have a significant impact on attitudes and expectations.

Some researches were done by Feminist Psychologists on various topics regarding Gender Differences:

- **Emotion:** Emotion is culturally regulated, according to feminist psychology, and the variations are in the presentation of emotion rather than the actual experience. Feminist psychologists point out, however, that women are only seen as feeling stronger passive emotions like depression, pleasure, anxiety, and surprise. Men, on the other hand, are thought to be more likely to display dominant emotions like rage. Girls and boys are socialized more by their peers, with girls being praised for their sensitivity and emotional expression and boys being rewarded for their superiority and lack of emotional expression. [nine] Women, on average, are better at decoding emotion using nonverbal signals, according to psychologists. Facial expression, voice tone, and posture are examples of these signals.
- **Leadership:** The patriarchy defines women as "nourishing facilitators," suggesting that they are not physically capable of functioning in an aggressive male-dominated world without suffering psychological and emotional consequences. When women first start working at a business, their progression can be hampered by the lack of a senior level employee who is actively involved in their growth and career planning. Since there are less women in higher-level company roles than men, there are fewer female mentors to support new female workers. A woman with a male mentor may have trouble bonding and receiving guidance from outside of work experiences. Women are stereotyped as too

sensitive if they display even a slight amount of sensitivity. Employers usually do not recognize sensitive, gentle people as capable of making important decisions or performing leadership positions. A woman who exhibits male characteristics, on the other hand, is depicted as mean, butch, and violent.

- **Violence:** Domestic violence, sexual harassment, childhood sexual exploitation, sexual assault, and rape are all manifestations of gender-based violence, according to feminists. Physical or psychological violence against women is not limited by race, economic status, age, ethnicity, or position. Women may be influenced by violence in both the short and long term, and they respond to it in a number of ways. Fear, anxiety, and rage are all feelings that some women convey. Others tend to deny it happened and keep their emotions hidden. Psychological disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder and depression are common among victims of abuse.

4. CONCLUSION:

Feminism is essentially the belief that all genders should have equal rights and opportunities. It's about honouring the diverse backgrounds, cultures, skills, and abilities of women, and working to motivate all women to realise their full potential. It all comes down to the gender playing field and making sure that women and girls have the same opportunities in life as boys and men. Feminism isn't about drawing a line between who is better off and who is worse off; it's about knowing and realising how injustice affects both men and women, and recognising that we're all in this together. True equality should not leave anybody behind. Feminists have raised a number of issues that should be discussed by psychological research. Over the last half-century, psychological research has mirrored and answered the significant shifts in women's status, as well as the many concerns that these changes have posed. Feminism acted as a catalyst for this field of study, which expanded beyond feminist psychology to include a wide range of theories, methods and topics.

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