

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF GENDER EQUIVALENTISM

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Abstract. Feminism stems from the desire of equality for females and to enhance their rights within society. While being a noble endeavour, the original purpose of and search for a higher ethic which was promised by feminism have both been derailed by undesirable elements. Further, more traditionally conservative countries are resistant to the idea due to these undesirable elements being viewed as an affront to traditional values and an attack on the culture itself. The argument in such cultures is that both genders are inherently different and therefore cannot be equal. Antiquated as this viewpoint may be, there is a need to educate people in a way that is more acceptable and appealing to the general society and not merely to force feed a concept in the manner that many feminist ideologies have insisted on. To promote the equal rights of girls and women a concise and universally acceptable core or theoretical framework is required, one which embraces the differences between genders whilst demeaning neither for any such difference and going further to accept that such differences may not apply to every individual. “The theoretical framework of gender equivalentism” provides a compendious framework for ethical behaviour to ensure the equal treatment of women without the need for a strictly feministic interpreted approach.

Keywords: feminism, chauvinism, gender equality, women’s rights, children’s rights, equal pay, #MeToo

INTRODUCTION

The gender equality movement likely had its ideological beginnings as early as 1405, when *The Book of the City of Ladies* was published by the female medieval author Christine De Pizan (Eisler 2007, 72). Later, various movements around the world, such as women’s suffrage movements, attempted to highlight some of the many disparages suffered by them. In 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft published *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, which attacked the double

standards that were practised especially in the area of modesty and morals (Sunstein 1975). It should, however, be noted that Wollstonecraft was not in the same line of thinking as many modern feminists and her style was less aggressive in its tone, rather plainly pointing out the unfairness of imposed social systems that pardoned men and condemned women for the very same action.

In 1809, Connecticut was the first state in the United States of America that permitted married women to execute their wills (Chused 1983, 1359, 1366). Several years later, India gave women legal protection by eradicating the debased, barbaric and outright idiotic practice of Sati, in which a widow was expected to immolate herself on her deceased husband's funeral pyre or commit suicide in another equally flamboyant manner (Arvind 1988, 6-7). In the same year, Midwives became recognized as medical practitioners and were permitted the use of surgical instruments, hence elevating their status within society (Hadenius 1996, 352). The year 1841 saw Bulgaria introducing the first secular girls school and the profession of teaching was opened not only for men but also for women from that point forward (Smith 2008, 189). The next year, Sweden introduced compulsory schooling for both sexes (Florin 1987, 53), with the Netherlands following suit in 1857 (Schirmacher 2010, 67)

Perhaps the most empowering stroke of support for women came in 1960 when UNESCO enacted the Convention against Discrimination in Education. This convention, at least in theory, protected women from being discriminated against and deprived of equal educational opportunities. The great disappointment with the Convention is the lack of implementation by member states which have their own overriding ideologies or non-member states which have little or no commitment to improving the education of girls and young women. This issue has not been correctly addressed and is likely the source of larger societal discrimination which poisons the ability of women in many countries and cultures from progressing academically.

The actual feminism movement (First Wave) began along with

the Suffrage movement and was aimed primarily at securing the same legal rights for women as those enjoyed by men. The Second Wave caused a broader field of discussion to arise such as legal inequalities, de facto inequalities and reproductive rights, and drew attention to the sexual violence experienced by women both inside and outside of the family context.

The Third Wave of Feminism was coined by Rebecca Walker in her 1992 article entitled “Becoming the Third Wave”, which encouraged women to use political means in an attempt to force a change of direction. Her article pleads:

So I write this as a plea to all women, especially women of my generation: Let Thomas' confirmation serve to remind you, as it did me, that the fight is far from over. Let this dismissal of a woman's experience move you to anger. Turn that outrage into political power. Do not vote for them unless they work for us. Do not have sex with them, do not break bread with them, do not nurture them if they don't prioritize our freedom to control our bodies and our lives. I am not a post-feminism feminist. I am the Third Wave (Walker 1992, 39–41).

An underlying problem with this third-wave concept of feminism is the aggressive nature that it undertakes, which undermines its support from those who consider themselves to be part of the Second Wave. Walker goes on to state:

Young Women feminists find themselves watching their speech and tone in their works so as not to upset their elder feminist mothers. There is a definite gap among feminists who consider themselves to be second-wave and those who would label themselves as third-wave. Although the age criteria for second-wave feminists and third-wave feminists is murky, younger feminists definitely have a hard time proving themselves worthy as feminist scholars and activists (Walker 1995).

Third Wave feminism has become a proverbial hydra, with more extensions than can be counted and more target issues than can be realistically covered or managed. While core concepts such as motherhood support, the issue of the glass ceiling and prejudiced

maternity leave policies benefit many women, it also needlessly waded into the quagmire of transgender rights and sexual liberation, which only served to polarize itself and in effect remove the wind from its own sails. This lack of basic cohesion in ideologies has been a self-destructive blow to the development of the movement itself (Rowe-Finkbeiner 2004, 85).

It should be strongly noted that the concepts discussed here are not the leanings of chauvinist ideals but rather, much of the content itself is derived from the thoughts of female scholars. Katherine Iannello critiques the actual mission of this Third Wave Feminism:

The conceptual and real-world "trap" of choice feminism (between work and home) has led women to challenge each other rather than the patriarchy. Individualism conceived of as "choice" does not empower women; it silences them and prevents feminism from becoming a political movement and addressing the real issues of distribution of resources (Iannello 1998, 321).

Radical forms of feminism much in the manner of other forms of radicalism lack balance and continually undermine themselves by their hate-filled rhetoric. Alice Echols draws attention to the de-ranged nature of the radical feminism expounded by Valerie Solanas:

Solanas's unabashed misandry - especially her belief in men's biological inferiority - her endorsement of relationships between "independent women", and her dismissal of sex as "the refuge of the mindless" contravened the sort of radical feminism which prevailed in most women's groups across the country (Echols 1989, 104-105).

This notion is supported by other feminist writers such as Cathy Young, who proposes that such forms of feminism, which are based in misandry, are damaging to feminism (Young 2016).

While feminism has enabled society to change in many aspects, it is now in a state of suspended affectivity after having veered dramatically from its original aim; hence, something simpler is needed for the rights of women to be recognized and treated in a manner

free of prejudice but which is neutral. Rather than having an all-encompassing umbrella with a plethora of aims that are goals with no pure mission, a new system must be implemented, one that addresses the core of area of concern and eradicates the main features in which women still face ritual discrimination. This is the theoretical framework for gender equivalency.

LITERATURE

The aim of this literature review is not to provide a basis for a feminist approach in modelling solutions, rather it is an attempt to understand the fundamental core issues that cause damage to female persons in our society. It is important to understand what the actual issues are and what are mere “fluff” issues that are born from selfish pursuits and an overly self-righteous and misapplied tendency toward extreme political correctness.

EDUCATION

An overwhelming support in evidence shows that female education reduces poverty and the total fertility of the woman in question (Subbarao 1992, 105-128). Interestingly, the total population is not affected by the loss of fertility. While educated females have the tendency to have fewer children, there is a strong decreasing in the overall mortality rates of children born to educated women. Educated women have literacy skills that enable them to practice self-development, read about child care, identify diseases or problems with greater speed and, as these women are less likely to live in extreme poverty, there is a greater chance that they will have access to medical facilities or have the needed skills to avail themselves of these. A lack of education, therefore, puts women in greater physical danger and limits their rights by restricting their ability to make use of health care and other services.

A study in 2000 reporting on North Africa and the Middle East found that of persons aged over 15 years, 43% of Algerian, 56% of Egyptian, 77% of Iraqi and 75% of women in Yemen were illiterate (Roudi-Fahimi & Moghadam 2006, 4-11). Not surprisingly, the general rights of women in these countries are disgracefully below the internationally expected standards.

In reality, however, both genders benefit of female education. A research made by Tulasidhar indicated that children were protected by female education, as educated women were three times less likely to consider letting their children serve in labour in order to assist the family in economic difficulties (Tulasidhar 1993, 181). Interestingly, the same study found that a women's education had a more powerful effect on her choice than her actual participation in the workforce. Given this evidence, female education cannot be viewed as something that is optional but as an imperative to a healthy society and the first step to empowerment against gender discrimination.

VIOLENCE

The term *violence* is often confused as being something limited to a physical assault when, in reality, it includes such things as threatening to do violence, emotional abuse and sexual abuse in all its forms. Current legal definitions of violence, however, often fail to provide a full legal outline and understanding of what violence actually consists of (Bachman & Saltzman 1994). Women and children (but especially girls) feature disproportionately strong in terms of high percentages for all types of violence. Such figures only serve to reiterate the grotesque injustices faced by women and girls in multiple facets of society (Mardorossian 2014, 90-112). This trend, while being somewhat less in developed societies, is by no means insignificant and is likely proliferated by a culture of shaming or that victims feel powerless against their attackers. Weak sentencing laws

principally for those convicted of serious offences such as sexual assault or the sexual predation of minors send not only a less than an appealing message of support to victims but also embolden perpetrators into committing their first offence or for that matter repeat offences (Herman 2005, 571-602). In some countries in Africa, the Middle East and Asia the entire judiciary is comprised only of male staff and support for female victims is oftentimes insufficient or else, completely non-existent. A further trend in these countries is that of victim blaming (Herman 2005, 571-602). Social stigmas may confine the blame of an attack on the victim and that the victim brought it upon themselves. In many cases, the fear of such a social stigma is actually worse than death for the victims, meaning that they become cast out of their social sphere and many are then subject to further abuses (Mehdi 2007, 98-108). Perhaps it is true that certain circumstances contributed to the victim being accessible to the perpetrator at the time of an attack. Yet, blaming a victim for the deranged actions of a criminal is itself the action of a deranged mind. Judicial systems that hold to victim blaming not only damage the quality of life for all women under their jurisdiction but also undermines the credibility of the entire judicial system, causing further societal instability (Baxi 2014). It stands to reason that recent movements, such as the Me Too Movement (#MeToo), which spread through social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, provides evidence of the systematic abuse suffered by women in even so-called “higher society” (Smartt 2018). In recent times, high profile figures in Korean society from politicians to professors have been shown to have abused their positions of power for their own selfish sexual gratification and victimized either those working under them or their students. Society seems to have permitted this kind of deranged behaviours to proliferate to pandemic proportions. In Korea, the Me Too Movement (#MeToo) continues to grow and it is hoped that this will help to eradicate vile behaviours that have proliferated in the “boys club” mentality of higher society.

PHYSIOLOGY

The physiological differences between genders are undeniable biological facts. Attempting to pretend that such differences do not exist is merely childish. Our species is sexually dimorphic from the genetic level upward as can be seen from the clear difference in the sex chromosomes, which define only two biological genders (regardless of sexual preference or gender self-identification). Further differences arise in the structure and mass of the brain the average weight being about 1370 g in men and about 1200 g in women (Harrison 2003, 25-34). However, drawing conclusions about the volume, mass or structure of the brain to either bolster or disclaim intelligence of either gender has no scientific basis whatsoever. In one Oxford study, it was shown that several sexually dimorphic characteristics are notable in the human brain. Females were found to have “relative to cerebrum size, greater cortical grey matter volume, larger volumes of regions associated with language functions (e.g. Broca's area) (...) and white matter involved in interhemispheric connectivity. The number of neurons per unit volume, in the planum temporal, was also greater in women than men”. The same research reported that “compared to women, men have been found to have larger volumes, relative to cerebrum size, or differences in neuronal densities in other limbic and paralimbic regions (i.e. amygdala) (...) and overall white matter volume.” (Goldstein 2001, 490-497). Hence, the actual predisposition for aptitude in certain skills may be greater within a certain gender based on brain structure, however, this would not define the gender as being restricted to any particular activity set, only potentially having physiological advantages. Examples of sexual dimorphism can be seen across human anatomy even as far as the mandibular ramus flexure which differs among males and females, sexual dimorphism is an undebatable fact (Loth & Henneberg 1996, 473-485). It cannot, however, be stated that any of the physiological attributes which are common to a particular gender completely define it. Individuals that do not conform to specific gender norms are numerous.

WORK RIGHTS

As far back as 1922 (Edgeworth 1922, 431-457), the ethical issues pertaining to equality in pay for women were raised and this issue has not been corrected in many countries for over 95 years. Dumbfounding as it may seem, despite the advances made in science and sheer knowledge over this period, a seemingly simple ethical conclusion, although technically in legal existence, has not been implemented. Even in seemingly socially advanced countries such as the United States, “primarily female-dominated occupations are likely to pay lower wages than agencies with primarily male-dominated positions” (Alkadry & Tower 2006, 888-898). This trend becomes more dramatically noticeable and unethical in countries where there are fewer regulations covering gender discrimination and may degenerate into virtual slavery when regulations are absent or go unenforced (Appleton 1999, 289-312). It would then not be unreasonable to state that the degree of a given country’s social progress can be measured by the equality of pay given to both genders, especially when said task is proportionately corresponding. In many parts of the world, in academia, there is a greater degree of equal pay for both genders owing to more transparency. A glass ceiling can, however, be identified as women are generally slower to advance in academia and this problem exists over various fields such as science, medicine, business and even law (Valian 2005, 198-213). Small points of discrimination accumulate over time to create a culture of undervaluing women in academia as academic professionals who are on par with men in their skills and education, not to mention intellectual capability.

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Reproductive rights are often seen as a triumph of sexual liberation when, in reality, they had caused great setbacks in the overall rights of women. In India alone, it is estimated that selective abortions of girls totalled about 4.2–12.1 million from 1980–2010 (Kesler 2011, 1921-1928).

Appallingly, these abortions are performed not for the safety of the mother or for reasons linked to medical complications but rather are a direct result of discrimination against women, as male children (especially firstborn) are seen as more desirable or valuable than female children. The same is true of China, where it is estimated that 44 million women are “missing” or sacrificed on the altar of selective abortion in favour of “superior” male children (Jha 2011, 1921-1928). Rather than give women more freedoms and rights, abortion has permitted women to be further victimized and subjugated (Sen 2008, 1297). In addition, how can any self-respecting woman, who claims to respect the rights and freedoms of others, impose a “right to choose” as being more important than the right to life of a defenceless human being who is, for the most part, inseparable from her essence (the context being abortions performed for reasons other than medical complications or endangerment of the woman’s life) (Warren 1973, 43-61). It is, then, a paradox, where radical feminists rally around the call for abortion and, thereby, not only contribute to the violation of the most basic human right - “the right to life” but a demand based on having a self-idealized and imaginary higher moral ground without taking responsibility for their own life-style choices. This is, in reality, a hypocritical *façade* and attacks the very fibre of equality. Women in many countries are denied basic human rights and are not treated as human beings because they are viewed by those societies as weak, inferior or defenceless. How, then, can it be permissible for the ones who are fighting for equality to infringe of the rights of another human, the foetus, who is relatively more defenceless than themselves? Any human being who uses basic logic or reasoning skills can clearly see that this is a glaring example of gross double standards.

THE PRINCIPLES OF GENDER EQUIVALENTISM

The concept of equality is merely a veneer and the desire for humans to classify life into measurable units. The most problematic of concepts is the understanding of the word “equality”, which is often

mistaken as a synonym for “the same”. In reality, there is no need for something to be the same for it to also be of equivalent value. An equivalent is, by nature, not the same in essence or consistency but of equal value. Take for example currency exchange. One currency is not the same as the other but can be equal to its equivalent value. It is therefore not necessary for genders to be the same, either biologically or in general tendencies for them to be of equivalent value, nor is it necessary to discriminate one in favour of the other. Feminism has left a sour taste in the minds of conservative countries, meaning that an alternative (Gender Equivalentism) is required for societies that are more conservative and this will act as a springboard for greater human rights development in such lands. The defining principles of Gender Equivalentism can be summarized in eight precepts for ethical governance of behaviour and conduct in interacting with any member of society.

1. Both genders have equivalent value and are not superior to each other.
2. Differences and/or lack of differences between genders are to be respected.
3. Characteristics common to a gender may not define all members of that gender.
4. All humans, regardless of gender, are to enjoy the same freedoms, rights and protection. All humans have the same responsibilities for their actions regardless of gender.
5. Women and girls have the same right as men and boys to education at all levels.
6. Payment should be equivalent to the task, work type, education or intellect, and not biased by gender assumptions: the same pay for the same work; no double standards.
7. Females should have the same access to career advancement opportunities.
8. Stronger penalties are required for those who exploit, abuse or commit other violent crimes against women and girls.

Further, there is a need for these crimes to be recognized as human rights violations.

First precept: *Both genders have equivalent value and are not superior to each other.*

No biological gender is superior in general qualities. Each individual has the same value in society and this value is diminished only through crimes on the part of the individual. They may exclude the individual from participation and, therefore, deny his positive value for society.

Second precept: *Differences and/or lack of differences between genders are to be respected.*

Both genders have unique characteristics as based on the chromosomes and base pattern of human sexual dimorphism. Any given advantage produced by physiology may only be applicable to a given situation and does not prove superiority of one gender over the other. All differences, strengths and weaknesses are to be respected.

Third precept: *Characteristics common to a gender may not define all members of that gender.*

Genetics and sexual dimorphism may create patterns that are measurable or visible and reflect a trend within a gender population. Human genetics does, however, provide for a wide range of phenotypes the meaning that a particular individual may not fall under specific commonly perceived gender norms.

Fourth precept: *All humans, regardless of gender, are to enjoy the same freedoms, rights and protection. All humans have the same responsibilities for their actions regardless of gender.*

Humans are all to be considered equal according to the Universal declaration of human rights. This basic right also brings basic responsibility for both genders as to their behaviour and the impact that it may have on society.

Fifth precept: *Women and girls have the same right as men and boys to education at all levels.*

The education levels of girls and women are disgraceful at a global level. Such a lack of education has led to the institutionalized discrimination and lack of educational opportunities for girls and women. As previously stated, female education and the overall health and progress of society are linked to women's education. Therefore, female education is not an option. It is a must, along with being one of the most basic human rights. Globally, basic education should, therefore, not only be primary education but of secondary level, with more opportunities for continuing studies and self-improvement for female students of all ages. If a female wishes to study a culturally perceived "non-traditional" work field such as engineering, she should not be discriminated for doing so.

Sixth precept: *Payment should be equivalent to the task, work type, education or intellect and not biased by gender assumptions: the same pay for the same work; no double standards.*

In many countries, there are standard payments which are received by workers in specific field of employment. Both males and females should be provided with the same rates of pay, especially when the nature of the work is the same. Two different pay sets for the same type of work based on gender is clearly discriminatory and a breach of ethics. Hence, rather than equating payment to gender, payment should be equated to the task at hand regardless of the gender involved and should follow the local laws concerning standard and minimum wages. A female in a "non-traditional" work field for women should be paid the same as any man with the same education, qualifications and/or experience.

Seventh precept: *Females should have the same access to career advancement opportunities.*

In the West, more women have joined the professional work force and are employed in starting to high intermediate company posi-

tions. Yet, a glass ceiling exists in virtually every profession. Professional advancement is often hampered by a “boys club” mentality and women are often not taken seriously in the upper ranks. This fact causes a glass ceiling whereby progression is not possible, even though females attempting to gain access to these positions may have equal or greater experience and/or education than male candidates.

Eighth precept: Stronger penalties are required for those who exploit, abuse or commit other violent crimes against women and girls. These crimes should be recognized as human rights violations.

The simple application of the eight precepts of “gender equivalentism” and the inculcating of these principles from a young age will help to dissuade undesirable behaviours, especially those rooted in aggressive chauvinist tendencies, in the next generation. Re-education for mature aged males and a change of education values for school aged male children is needed to promote social values of tolerance and respect for females. Girls and women are often seen as “soft targets” and stronger penalties are required for those who exploit, abuse or commit other violent crimes against women and girls.

Disclaimer

The content of this research defines male and female as naturally occurring biological genders and does not recognize any other inferred or perceived genders by the individual. The genders are defined by their chromosomal composition.

Biological Genders

Female (♀): Having XX chromosomes

Male (♂): Having XY chromosomes

Chromosome Mutations

The following chromosomal mutations may have mild to severe signs and symptoms depending on the specific mutation but are nonetheless genetically members of either gender.

Female (♀): 45,X (Turner's syndrome)

Male (♂): 47 XXY (Klinefelter syndrome) or (KS), also known as 47 XXY or XXY. It is the set of symptoms that result from two or more X chromosomes in males.

Male (♂): 47 XYY (XYY syndrome): XYY syndrome is a genetic condition in which a male has an extra Y chromosome. Symptoms are usually few.

Female (♀): 47 XXX (XXX syndrome). Triple X syndrome, also known as trisomy X and 47 XXX, is characterized by the presence of an extra X chromosome in each cell of a female.

Male (♂): 48 XXYY (XXYY syndrome). XXYY syndrome is a sex chromosome anomaly in which males have an extra X and Y chromosome.

Female (♀) or Male (♂) dependant on disorder type: 46 XX/XY mosaic. Different types of mosaicism exist, such as gonadal mosaicism (restricted to the gametes) or tissue or somatic mosaicism.

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