

Gender and equality essays example

[Sociology](#), [Feminism](#)



The issue of gender equality stands is a major concern on the global agenda although there has been a significant progress towards gender equality in most parts of the world. Women in many societies have limited access to healthcare and suffer pervasive threats from domestic violence. There is a substantial gender gap in the division of responsibilities, access to education and employment due to legal and political barriers . Effective strategies in achieving development and improvement of the status and living conditions of women lack due to injustice and ignorance towards women. The most important concern of achieving gender equality is through the eradication of endemic problems, such as poverty, occupational segregation, participation and representation in the political system. It is important to facilitate freedom to women in the form of expansion of healthcare and nutrition, schools and housing, employment and social protection, and laying the foundation for the consolidation of a civic society with gender equality .

The feminist theory concerns about the well-being of women, while being critical of the unequal treatment and violence that afflict the women. The theory concerns with understanding the fundamental inequalities between men and women and the male dominance over women. In the past, the feminist theory focused on elements, such as housework, inequalities in the labor market and male violence . However, in the contemporary period, the feminist theory emphasizes on the issues concerned with representation and subjectivity of women. The establishment of a vicious circle adds to the disadvantage of women in the labor market constraining them into dependence on marriage for survival. While housework and childcare become the major responsibilities of women post marriage, the burden of

such responsibilities makes women incompetent with men compounding to their disadvantage .

In a philosophical perspective, feminism is a critique of the approach to ethics, which primarily focuses on autonomy, impartiality and neutrality as patriarchal values, distinctively stressed by male dominant culture. The approach of feminist care ethics includes an account of how caring relationships are important from the standpoint of evolution. The male moral perspective contrasts with the feminist ethics of care as men take a universal and impartial standpoint of view as to what is good and bad . While women place their morality on concerns about personal relations establishing themselves as a separate entity of the society, men base their morality on the rules that reconcile the competing individuals in the society. While the feminist theory does not deal adequately with the historical change and cultural variations, it is important to attribute to uni-causal analysis rather than the concept of patriarchy .

The feminist theory with respect to politics sets certain limits to governance by analyzing the relevant concepts, such as equality, rights, freedom, justice and obligation. It looks at how legitimate governance is possible through the analysis of various concepts and phenomenon, such as law, power, authority, judgment and decision-making . The major task of feminist theory in politics exposes the theory of gender that is implicit for the most part, but explicit in the classic and modern texts. Gender equality in politics involves the scrutiny of connections between changes in the governmental institutions and policies, and changes in laws and social relations . The fundamental challenges of the contemporary feminist theory revolve around the

argument that an ideal society is an anti-feminist. The basic issue is the tension between the reclaiming and revaluing aspects of femininity that denigrate in the context of masculine dominance, rejecting the masculine ideals, values and practices.

On the other hand, the queer theory is an approach that aims to deconstruct the traditional norms of thinking about gender and equality. Philosophers who explore feminist ethics often focus on analyzing the causes of women's subordination, oppression and systematic violence against women, while ignoring the strategies for eliminating such violence and oppression .

Traditional moral philosophy has never favored women as it tends to support the view that women should develop virtues, such as modesty, subservience and humility, which are often detriment to women. Aristotle held that women are inferior to men not only due to their biological phenomenon, but also due to the lack of certain elements of rationality. The relationship between feminist theory and queer theory is not easy as certain degree of anti-feminist thought resonates in the queer theory.

Tackling old models, traditional interpretations and biased assumptions is an approach shared by several feminists in regards to queer theory. Queer theory exposes the established positions and allows not only the reordering of gender, but also various forms of knowledge, regimes of logic, modes of self-destruction and practices of community . Furthermore, queer theory approaches gender equality as a normative category, which holds feminism as deviant and abnormal. Queer theory offers a critical analysis on gender, which adds to the feminist focus on gender and deploys the feminist critique of ideological construction of women. While the tendency to see queer

theory as an extension to the feminist theory is problematic, efforts to incorporate the queer insights into the feminist practices has the effect of defusing the questions queer theory asks of feminism . The expansion of queer theory poses a threat to feminism and its future. Viewing men and women as opposites in the society perpetuates the status quo and leads to the separation of various spheres of men and women.

In the early 1980's Carol Gilligan and other feminists advocated new norms of feminist qualities, which the society pathologized, devalued and ignored to a great extent. The theory proposed by Carol Gilligan views women's qualities as strengths rather than deficiencies. Gilligan emphasized the moral differences between men and women and claimed that women prefer an orientation of care rather than an orientation of justice. Justice and care are two distinct frameworks with origins in childhood that are equally valid moral orientations. Based on the interview of 36 males and females between the ages of 6 and 60, Gilligan described three levels and two transition periods of care orientation . While the first level concerns with the survival of the self, the second level involves an increased concern for the feelings of others and the possibility of inflicting hurt. In the second transition, an individual begins to recognize a responsibility to care for others as well as self while making moral decisions . In the third level, care and non-violence become the equal priorities to self and others. The main controversy in the work of ethic care concerns Gilligan's claims about gender differences.

Though several studies and theories investigated the gender differences in moral orientation in the past decades, the studies found minimal differences in moral reasoning between men and women. There are various other labels,

such as age and education that closely relate to moral reasoning than gender. The complexity of gender and equality attributes care to women and justice to men. The feminist theory accurately captures the complexity involved in the moral reasoning process of the individuals. Individuals within the schools, justice and healthcare systems must be capable to take decisions based on moral judgment entailing the moral ideal course of action. The individual differences and contextual factors of the feminist theory play a major role in impacting the moral decision making of women. The feminist theory requires attention to the context that affects and limits the options of women. The theory also needs the active participation of women to achieve equal justice by removing the social barriers in the society.

References

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