

Womens perspectives on the issue of gender inequality



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Men and women are considered as social actors (Erickson & Murphy, 2010). An actor makes his own responses based on his understanding, ability, and resources by giving meaning to every event that happens in the scene (Buota, Frerks & Bannon, 2005). While they may be forced by the demands of the given situations of the film or scenes, later on they will try to adjust their responses based on their strategies and agendas. Thus, gender plays an important role in this perspective. Gender is a kind of concept created in the society which has various differing attributes created for men and women (Giddens, 2006). It contains a very critical factor in determining the kind of opportunities for individuals or groups as it strongly influences the nature of roles these people play within social institutions such as the household and the state. Once it is assigned, individuals are expected to behave according to whether they are ' male' or ' female.' It differs from ' sex' in the sense that ' sex' refers to the biological femaleness or maleness of an individual as determined by their sex chromosomes and physical appearances (Crooks & Baur, 2010).

Socialisation is defined as the acquisition of roles and norms in a specific society that are expected of people (Weiten, et al., 2008). This involves the efforts whereby members of society are trained how to behave appropriately in every occasion. Corollary to this is the concept of gender roles which is defined as the cultural expectations regarding appropriate behavior attributable for each gender. According to Alice Eagly in her so-called social theory, gender differences occur because there are different cultural expectations in men and women in a particular society regarding their roles (Lippa, 2005). The theory does not focus mainly on biological differences;

although, it does not deny that they exist. Rather, it focuses more on behavioral differences than femininity and masculinity. Gender differences are culturally produced and not biologically determined (Giddens, 2006).

This paper aims to explore the concept of gender differences and analyse whether there is a justification on the resulting gender inequality, if any. First, it will trace back the traditional view of female roles in society so do men's roles. Second, it will analyse the historical impact of such roles on the current situation of gender equality and/or inequality. Finally, it will compare the functionalist approach of social roles and female response to gender inequality. It is the hope of the writer that this paper will create a significant contribution to the world's views on how men and women can excel by their biological and cultural given capabilities.

DISCUSSIONS

Gender is not a new topic in archaeology (Nelson, 2004). Gender construction and gender relations are within the ambit of archaeology (Hamilton, 2007). Archaeologists examine certain group responses to both the natural and social environments. Human bone is one of the options archaeologists resort to in order to detect patterns of gender differences. By assessing the human bones, archaeologists can determine the indicators of division of labour between genders, if such gender-based category exists, and they can evaluate the changes in work patterns during significant cultural changes such as adoption of agriculture (Meade & Wiesner-Hanks, 2006). For instance, in a gold-mine exploration in Zimbabwe, nine out of 16 skeletons were identified to be females, implying that miners were women (Nelson, 2006). The question thus arises: Is it only the males who built all <https://assignbuster.com/womens-perspectives-on-the-issue-of-gender-inequality/>

those stone tools? A society is established by having both male and female. How they interact is another thing. By focusing on constructed roles as well as behaviours, instead of sexual bodies per se, there is a clear demand to balance attention for both male and female (Geller & Stockett, 2006). There are different sociological interpretations whether gender differences would result to gender inequalities (Giddens, 2006). This paper will approach the question by first examining some biological bases and second, by analysing sociological theories regarding gender roles. Finally, this paper will consider scholarly ideas that believe in equality between the two sexes.

No one can dispute the biological differences between the male and female. Women have two “ X” chromosomes and men have one “ X” chromosome and one “ Y” chromosome (Gardner, 2005). Researchers discovered scientific findings regarding sex differences that the cerebral cortex of the right hemisphere—a structure responsible for higher mental processes such as thinking, perception, memory and ability to recognise objects—is thicker in male than in female brain (Crooks & Baur, 2010). In addition, men tend to use only one brain hemisphere when performing verbal tasks while women tend to use both hemispheres. That is why it is believed that men score better in mathematics and spatial problems while women are better in language and other verbal tasks (Carroll, 2009). Although this might not be true all the time, for some females score higher in mathematics than males; the statement refers to the males as collective body since average scores of males as a group are somewhat higher than the average score of females as a group (Gardner, 2005). There are other numerous biological differences between men and women; however, these differences should not be used to

discriminate either of the two sexes; rather these researches should be used to enhance the health and well-being of men and women (Savic-Berglund, 2010).

Sociological theories help us understand the impact of the changes in gender roles toward family relationship, workplaces, and academic performances. Gender inequality is defined by sociologists as the difference in the power, status, and prestige the men and women have in society or group to which they belong (Giddens, 2006). There are three main frameworks that explain why gender inequality exists. These are the symbolic interaction, conflict theory and functionalist approach (Andersen & Taylor, 2007). This paper will magnify the functionalist approach and women's response to such.

Symbolic interaction theory stresses the dominance of males over females especially in the verbal skills whereby males tend to talk more aggressively and competently than females who talk more politely (Thio & Taylor, 2011). Conflict theory traces its roots to the study of class conflict by Karl Marx (Lamanna & Riedmann, 2008). Families are viewed as a source of power in a society which is inherently unfair because males dominate over females, the latter being financially dependent on the former (Andersen & Taylor, 2007). According to the functionalist approach, the society is composed of interrelated parts that will work effectively if men and women will perform duties and responsibilities allocated to them by the society (Tischler, 2010). Men will perform the instrumental tasks while women will perform the expressive tasks (Kendall, 2008). This means that men are the providers of economic support and the ones that make decisions in the family, while women are the providers of affection and emotional support. Women will be <https://assignbuster.com/womens-perspectives-on-the-issue-of-gender-inequality/>

dependent on men for food and support, thus men may be viewed to dominate over women (Tischler, 2010). This theory is believed to benefit the society as a whole (Andersen & Taylor, 2007). There are three reasons why this theory of division of labour is beneficial. First, it enhances the expertise of each individual based on his task. Second, it does away with competition between men and women that can damage family relationships. Lastly, it strengthens family ties by making men and women dependent on each other (Brinkerhoff, White, & Ortega, 2007). This pattern became a practice over time and was associated with biological differences.

Critics of functionalist approach argue that such approach has been appropriate for one time, yet it undermined the changes in gender during cultural evolution (Shepard, 2009). They argue that the approach is dysfunctional, and it is for the best interest of society that individuals should be judged and treated based on their abilities rather than instrumental and expressive roles. Functionalists ignore the opportunities of women being highly paid in the corporate world because the latter have to think of their responsibilities of taking care of their homes and children (Browne, 2006). Radical feminism became popular and women's roles now became broader in the sense that dual couple workers are visible in almost every family (Browne, 2006). The radical feminists argue that women are exploited by men sexually by relying on the inherent capability of women to give birth and to render free domestic labour (Giddens, 2006). According to them, in order to decrease gender inequality, there should be revolutionary changes to the cultural order rather than legal remedies to increase opportunities for women (Ryle, 2011).

Another known feminine movement against gender inequality is liberal feminism which advocates that men and women have many similarities which entitle them to equal opportunities (Wood, 2008). While radical feminism focuses on women's rights especially on the smaller social structure in society which is the family, liberal feminism focuses more on the public institutional structure (Aitchison, 2003). These two movements ensure that in all facets of life, women will be treated equally.

CONCLUSION

After examining the biological and sociological differences between men and women, the final analysis of the question whether gender differences should result to gender inequality is not necessarily to be in the affirmative.

Functionalists' inequality of labour may have advantages in some respects, but the reality lets us see that women are discriminated both biologically and socially. Thus, there should be three tests that must be considered in order for gender inequality to be justifiable. First, there should be a strong reason to discriminate as demanded by the nature of the job. For instance, in some places where there is a need to take off all of the clothing for security reasons in visiting prisoners, jail guards should be of the same sex when they inspect prison visitors. This is to protect both sexes from malicious conducts and to preserve their privacies. Second, physical characteristics should not always be viewed as the sole determining factor of one's capability. Instead it should be treated as just one of the areas of concern of managers or employers. The nature of human beings is so complex that there are a lot of factors to be considered in order to measure their true capability. And third, managers or employers should exhaust first all the

possible ways in order to have equality in job opportunities. Inequality or discrimination should be the last resort. In order for equality to be realised, there should be rejection of the traditional models of relationships. This rejection would open new opportunities to develop roles where the subordinate group blends with the superior group. Only then social and even economic harmony will be realised whereby each one is compensated or rewarded based on one's abilities and not based on sexuality.