



Feminisms And Sociology: A Data-Driven Analysis Of Gender Inequality In Contemporary Society

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Abstract

The present research employs empirical data to examine gender inequality in major social spheres such as education, labour, politics, and unpaid care. The research is positioned within the theoretical nexus of feminist approaches and sociological studies. Through the lens of women's experiences and the underlying dynamics of power, feminist sociology challenges and problematizes traditional sociological approaches that have traditionally relegated gender as a major conceptual category.

The research is based on secondary data and uses a sociological interpretive methodological framework to explain how different feminist theoretical approaches, such as liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, radical feminism, and intersectional feminism, offer different explanations for the same phenomenon of the reproduction of gender inequality. The quantitative data is presented in graphical form to highlight the trends, which are then critically interpreted to explain their implications.

Keywords: Feminism, Gender Inequality, Patriarchy, Inter-sectionality

Introduction

Sociology is the social science of human relationships as well as how institutions function. It is also the social science of power structures as far as human interactions are concerned. Feminism is the social science of power structures as far as human interactions of the genders are concerned. There was, of course, the issue of men as far as sociology was concerned, to the point where the contributions of the feminine side of the human equation were totally forgotten. That is where feminist sociology was meant to fill the gap.

Though significant legal developments have been made, coupled with unrelenting social efforts towards gender equality. Gender inequality exists as a global issue as well as an Indian issue, as is evident from this article, and thus makes an empirical attempt to illustrate how feminist sociologies uncover the processes by which gender inequality is perpetuated.

Objectives of the Study

1. To evaluate the role of feminist theories in the discipline of sociology
2. To analyze patterns of gender inequality using sociological data
3. To interpret empirical trends through feminist theoretical perspectives
4. To highlight the importance of intersectional feminism in modern society

Review of Literature

Simone de Beauvoir's (1949), *The Second Sex* is regarded as an important early text in feminist theory for its discussion of the concept of gender as a social construct rather than a biological phenomenon. One of the major points de Beauvoir made in this text is that "one is not born but becomes a woman," suggesting that women are socially and historically constructed, not defined by biology. The manner in which she made these points about women being marginalized as "the Other" in patriarchal societies has significantly contributed to later discussions of social construction and forms a significant component of feminist social theory.

Marxist feminists investigate how economies support or deny oppression for women through capitalism, such as by examining the role of domestic labour done by women on a non-paid basis, as well as how the unpaid labour of women can assist in supporting the capitalist system. **Lise Vogel's** (1983) book "*Marxism and the Oppression of Women*" is a work which examines the interaction of women's gendered labour and social ties within capitalism, which provides a materialistic explanation for women's subjugation both in the public and private spheres.

Radical feminists believe that the root cause of oppression experienced by women can be traced back to the system of patriarchy, which is characterized by an entrenched form of male supremacy within societal structures and cultural norms and has led to the inequality seen in gender relations. Radical feminist writings, such as **Shulamith Firestone's** (1970) *The Dialectic of Sex*, advocate for the significant restructuring of society as a means to eliminate the patriarchal power structure that governs both the private and public spheres of society.

Crenshaw K. (1989), Intersectionality originally articulated by Kimberlé Crenshaw in her research states that gender cannot be understood alone, and also must consider the interconnections between race, class and other sources of inequality. Therefore, the intersectional theory posits a distinct experience of oppression for women from multiple marginalised communities due to the intersecting oppressing axes of race, class and caste and various other systems of inequality. In feminist theory, the importance of caste as a fundamental axis of analysis within Indian feminist scholarship has profoundly impacted feminist theory as a whole.

Methodology

Research Design

For the exploration of gender inequality trends in major social sectors, the research adopts a descriptive and analytical research design. The descriptive part attempts to identify the current situation regarding education, engagement in the workforce, and political representation, while the analytical part of the research explains the gaps and underlying structural causes. By adopting this research design, it becomes possible to achieve a systematic understanding of gender differences and their social implications.

Data Sources:

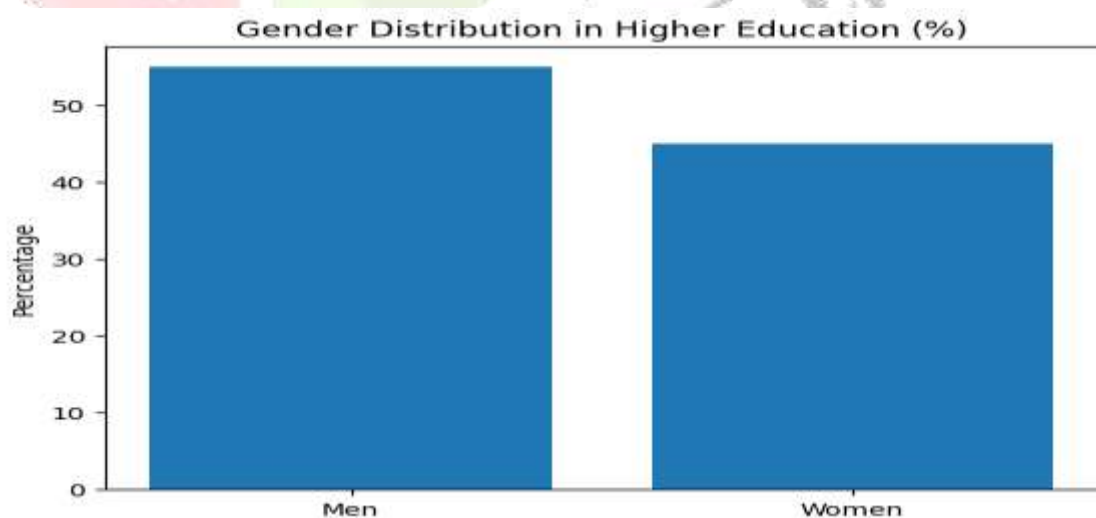
The research only uses secondary data, which is collected from published reports, government publications, academic journals, and official institutional databases. The data includes indicators associated with political representation, educational enrollment, and labor force participation. In addition to that, the use of illustrative datasets helped to enhance academic analysis and interpretation. The application of secondary data enables a wider comparative focus and enhances the academic validity of the research.

Limitations

However, by using secondary data, there is a limit to the information being given, as it truly reflects the real-life situation of the individuals, including the current trends.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table.No.1: Gender Distribution in Higher Education (%)



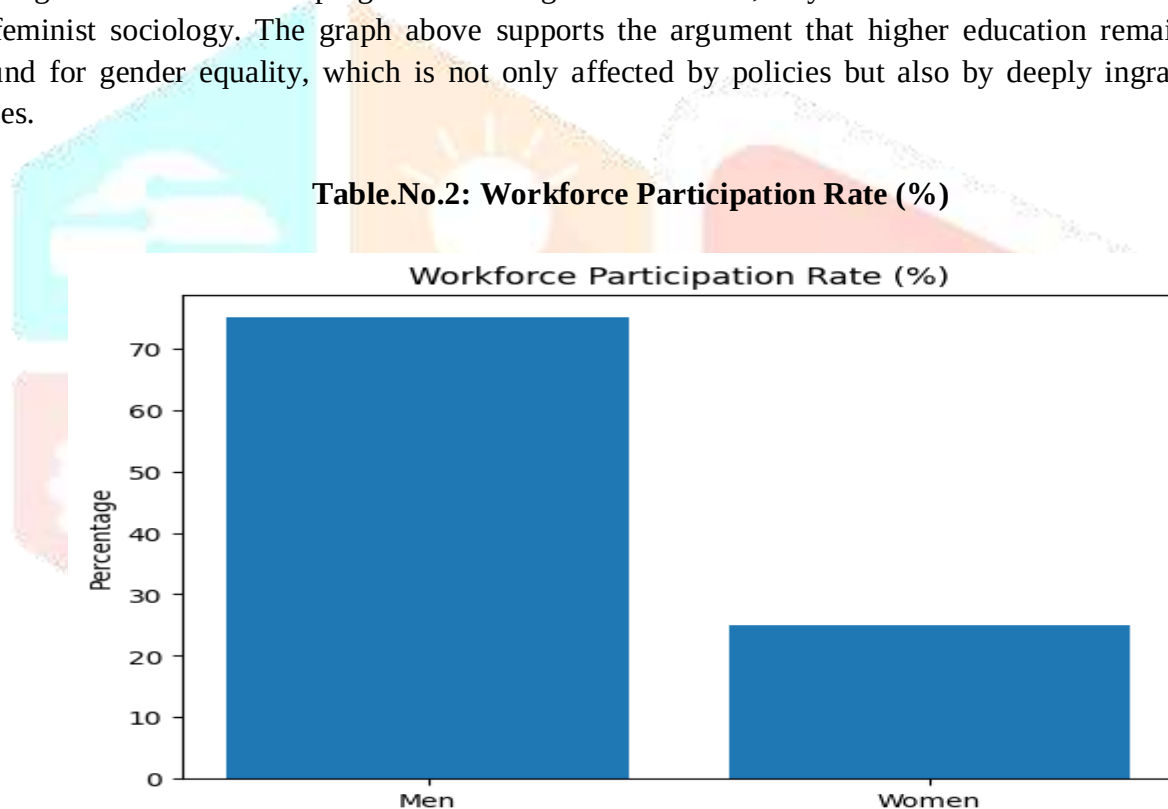
If we discuss the enrolment of students in the next level of education, we could see a gender gap between the students who chose to major in professional and technical courses. From the graph, we see that the number of females is at 45% in higher education, while males remain at 55%. This already means that the current situation is still not at the level of gender equality, despite the significant increase in the number of females in higher education.

From a sociological point of view, the gap that has been noted is a result of the continued impact of gendered social structures. There have been efforts to provide women with opportunities to join higher education through policies, scholarships, and social movements. This is consistent with the views of liberal feminists, who believe that social and institutional changes will improve the opportunities for women. However, the fact that there is still a gap shows that equality in access does not necessarily mean equality in outcomes.

Some of the underlying factors that can be pointed out through a feminist sociological analysis are:

- In resource-poor families, it is a general practice that patriarchal values give importance to the education of males.
- The capability of women to continue with higher education is affected by factors such as caste, class, rural women, and child marriage.
- Female students are often advised against pursuing technical and professional education, which leads to segregation in the next labor market.

Although the statistics show progress towards gender inclusion, they also reveal the limitations pointed out by feminist sociology. The graph above supports the argument that higher education remains a battleground for gender equality, which is not only affected by policies but also by deeply ingrained social values.



The hold of gender imbalance in the labor market is still strong, reflecting the same weight of unpaid care giving responsibilities and the same patriarchal traditions. This is made clear in a graph that shows the breakdown: men comprise about three-fourths of the labor force, while women comprise about one-quarter. This gap is dwarfed by the one we observe in higher education, reflecting a real disconnect between what women accomplish in higher education and their role in the labor market.

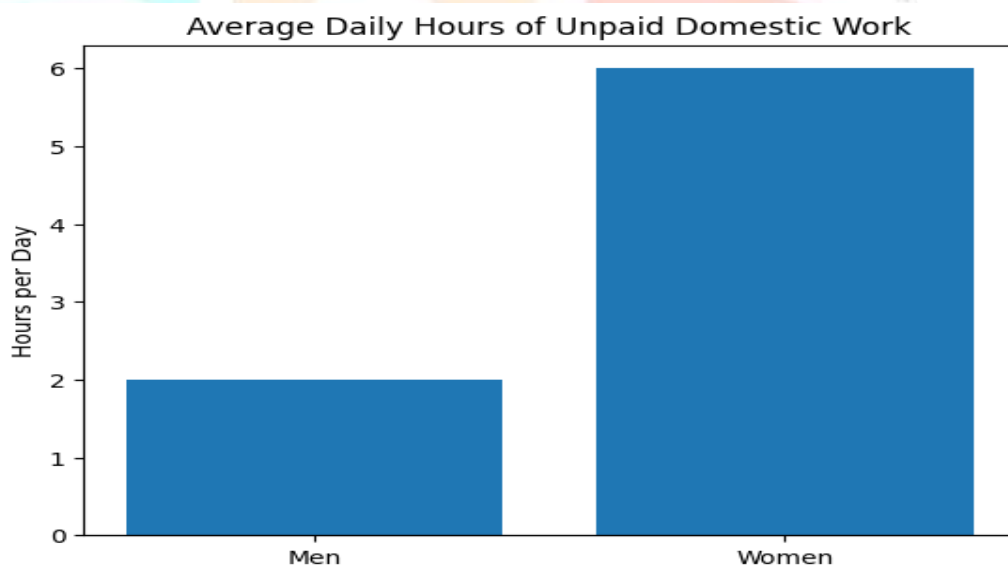
From a sociological perspective, the division shows the structural obstacles that have been constructed into social institutions, such as family dynamics, the labor market, and social expectations, that impede women's entry into the labor market and their retention in it, even as opportunities in higher education are improved.

A **feminist sociological interpretation** offers deeper insight:

- Women are less likely to work because they perform the majority of unpaid domestic work and care giving, which supports and sustains the capitalist economy.
- By framing work as male, Radical Feminism also reinforces male power relations and encourages women to remain confined to the domestic sphere.
- Institutional barriers, such as lack of childcare, unequal wages, unsafe workplaces and lack of maternity leave, also prevent women from remaining employed.
- Women in the lower classes, the lower castes and those from rural areas face many disadvantages that contribute to low rates of workforce participation.

Research carried out in sociology has shown that the main basis of inequality between sexes in today's society is found in the social structure in which men form the dominant social group, while women form the subordinate group. Feminists have stated that, until there is change in society brought about by legislation or changes in roles, one of the areas where inequality between the sexes is bound to be found is in their involvement in jobs. The chart offers compelling evidence for this.

Table.No.3: Unpaid Domestic and Care Work (Hours/Day)



In addition, women are required to contribute 3 times more hours than men to domestic work in their homes and in caring for children, which supports the argument of Marxist feminists that these former activities are examples of an invisible form of labor.

The difference between the amount of time devoted to unpaid work by men and women listed on the chart demonstrates how substantially unequal it is: Women spend approximately 6 hours per day on housework and care for children, while men spend approximately 2 hours. Thus, this 3-to-1 ratio indicates one of the longest-lasting and least visible forms of gender inequality.

From a sociological perspective, unpaid domestic work is a core mechanism through which gender roles are reproduced within the family as a social institution. Tasks such as cooking, cleaning, childcare, and elder care are socially constructed as “women’s work,” reinforcing the private–public divide.

A **feminist sociological interpretation** provides critical insights:

In the Marxist and Socialist Feminist views, the unpaid labour is essential to the capitalist economy because women are responsible for rearing the future workforce, thus making their economic contribution invisible to the rest of the world. In the Radical Feminist view, the unpaid labour is a result of patriarchal society where men have control over women's time and labour in order to maintain their dominance in the home and in society.

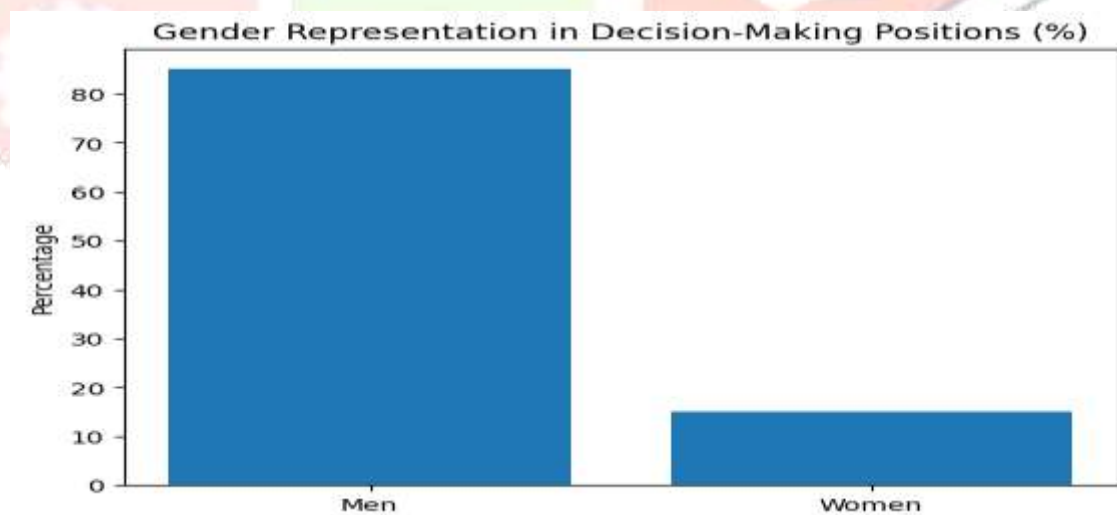
The Liberal Feminist ideology holds that if institutions that support shared unpaid labour, such as day care and parental leave, were more accessible, and then the unpaid labour would be more evenly divided between men and women.

- The Intersectional Feminist perspective argues that the burden of unpaid domestic labour is worse for women who come from marginalized castes, classes, and rural backgrounds because their access to domestic help and labour saving technologies has been severely limited.

The previous chart's low representation of women in the labour force is a reflection of the sociological data regarding women's disproportionate take on unpaid work, which limits women's time, mobility, and energy for paid, educational, and public activities.

This evidence, therefore, supports feminist sociological claims that women are experiencing structural gender inequality in the daily activities of their lives. Achieving equality will require not just economic reform, but a complete re-organisation of the way that domestic labour is accomplished and the norms associated with gender roles.

Table.No.4: Women's Representation in Decision-Making (%)



Despite constitutional or policy changes, women's political and institutional representation is still subpar. The chart shows that there is a very high level of gender-imbalance at the level of decision-making and leadership where men constitute approximately 85% of these roles; however, women only approximately constitute 15% even though women have increased their participation in formal education and their engagement in civil society. Therefore, formal equality has not translated to power equality.

Sociologically speaking, decision-making institutions (politics, administration, corporate, academia, governance) serve as important sites of power. Therefore, men dominating these spaces is indicative of the continued existence of patriarchal authority structures encased in the social and organizational fabric.

A feminist sociological perspective on this analysis goes further:

- Radical feminism interprets this disparity as confirmation of a socially constructed patriarchal system which systematically excludes women from positions of authority; thus sustaining male control of resources, policies, and social norms.
- Marxist/Socialist feminist theorist argues that leadership positions are directly attached to economic power and the underrepresentation of working women in paid employment and the disproportionate burden that women are placed in relation to unpaid care work impacts their access to decision-making positions.
- Liberal feminist theory suggests the existence of institutional barriers—such as gender bias in hiring and promotion practices, lack of mentoring, exclusion from informal power networks, the "glass ceiling" phenomenon—which serve as barriers to women's access to decision-making positions.
- Intersectional feminism argues that those women who are marginalised through caste, class, ethnicity and other forms of difference experience multiple forms of exclusion meaning they are denied access to leadership roles.

From a sociological perspective, this evidence demonstrates that representation isn't just symbolic, but has a structural basis. In the absence of women participating in decision making processes, the policies adopted and the practices of institutions are likely to favour male centric priorities leading to the perpetuation of gender inequality in education, employment and family life.

With respect to the previous charts, completing an analytic framework:

- Education demonstrates partial inclusion
- Employment demonstrates significant exclusion
- Unpaid labour illustrates the structural limitations on women's ability to become leaders
- Leadership representation demonstrates the centralisation of power

The above patterns of evidence serve to corroborate the fundamental proposition of feminist sociology that gender inequality is perpetuated through interconnected social institutions.

Feminist Interpretation of Data

Liberal Feminist Perspective

Improvements in educational levels are indicative of advancements made to achieve legal reforms and access policies. On the other hand, evidence indicating inequitable employment outcomes suggests that there is still some way before full equality is reached.

Marxist Feminist Perspective

Unemployment rates and unburdening one's self of responsibilities associated with unpaid work show that capitalism benefits from the unrecognised and invisible domestic duties carried out by women.

Radical Feminist Perspective

Continuing systemic underrepresentation and gendered division of labour illustrate that extreme patriarchy exists in society, beyond just those structures attributed to capitalism.

Intersectional Feminist Perspective

The experience of gender inequality is compounded when gender intersects with caste and class as well as rural-urban divides, especially within the context of India.

Discussion

The data collected provides evidence to support feminist sociological theories regarding the structural nature of gender inequality, which differs from an individualistic basis for understanding this phenomenon through social institutions such as family, economic and political institutions that continue to perpetuate patriarchal norms. Through an exploration of both explanations as well as critiques feminism provides a means for connecting theory and social reality.

Conclusion

The value of feminism in sociology cannot be overstated in that it adds an entirely new dimension to sociology as the study of humanity i.e., gender as the primary unit of analysis. The data analysed based on sociological research will provide validation to the feminist theories regarding systemic inequalities. Thus, incorporating feminist perspectives into sociological research is critical for promoting social justice and equitable access to development.

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