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**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Understanding the Nuances of Feminist Theory and Gender Analysis

In the realm of social sciences, feminist theory and gender analysis stand as critical lenses through which we examine the complex interplay of gender, power, and society. These interconnected fields challenge traditional notions of gender as a binary construct and delve into the diverse experiences and perspectives of individuals across the gender spectrum.

Feminist theory emerged as a response to the patriarchal structures that have historically marginalized and oppressed women. It seeks to understand the root causes of gender inequality and advocates for the empowerment and liberation of women. By critically examining gender roles, stereotypes, and power dynamics, feminist theory aims to dismantle the barriers that hinder women's full participation in society.

Gender analysis, a subset of feminist theory, specifically focuses on the social construction of gender. It explores how gender is shaped through societal norms, expectations, and institutions, rather than being solely determined by biological sex. By understanding gender as a social construct, we can challenge the rigid gender binary and recognize the fluidity and diversity of gender identities.

Feminist theory and gender analysis are not merely academic pursuits; they have profound implications for real-world issues. These fields inform policies and practices aimed at achieving gender equality, addressing gender-based violence, and promoting inclusive workplaces and societies. They also provide a framework for understanding the intersectional experiences of individuals who face discrimination based on their gender, race, ethnicity, class, or sexual orientation.

In essence, feminist theory and gender analysis are transformative tools for understanding and addressing gender inequality. They empower individuals to challenge gender stereotypes, advocate for their rights, and work towards a more just and equitable society where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

**2.0 GENDER ROLES AND STEREOTYPES**

This examines the socially constructed roles and expectations in relation to being a man or a woman. It explores how these roles and stereotypes shape individuals' identities, experiences, and opportunities.

**2.1 UNRAVELING THE THREADS OF GENDER ROLES AND STEREOTYPES**

Gender, a fundamental aspect of human identity, has long been associated with a set of prescribed roles and expectations, shaping our perceptions and interactions with the world around us. These roles, often rigid and binary, have evolved over time, influenced by cultural norms, historical context, and societal power dynamics.

Gender roles refer to the behaviors, attitudes, and expectations associated with being a man or a woman. These roles are often socially constructed, meaning they are not innate or biological but rather learned and reinforced through various means, including socialization, education, and media representations.

Gender stereotypes, on the other hand, are oversimplified generalizations about the characteristics, abilities, and behaviors of men and women. These stereotypes are often inaccurate and harmful, perpetuating limiting beliefs about individuals' potential and reinforcing gender inequality.

The traditional gender binary, which divides society into two distinct categories – male and female – has been challenged by feminist theory and gender analysis. These fields emphasize the fluidity and diversity of gender identities, recognizing that gender is a spectrum rather than a rigid binary.

**2.2 THE IMPACT OF GENDER ROLES AND STEREOTYPES**

Gender roles and stereotypes have profound implications for individuals and society as a whole. They can influence choices in education, careers, relationships, and personal expression, limiting opportunities and reinforcing gender inequalities.

Gender stereotypes can lead to unconscious bias, where individuals make decisions based on ingrained assumptions about gender rather than on objective criteria. This bias can manifest in various forms, from hiring practices to performance evaluations, perpetuating the underrepresentation of women in certain fields and leadership positions.

Stereotypes and gender roles can also be a factor in gender-based violence, which includes emotional, sexual, and physical assault. The notion that men are inherently dominant and women are submissive can normalize aggression and control, leading to the justification of violence against women and girls.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Area of Impact** | **Description** |
| Education | Gender stereotypes can influence educational choices, leading to underrepresentation of women in certain fields and perpetuating gender disparities in academic achievement. |
| Careers | Gender roles and stereotypes can limit career opportunities for both men and women, channelling individuals into specific professions based on perceived gender norms. |
| Relationships | Gender stereotypes can influence relationship dynamics, reinforcing traditional gender roles and limiting communication and emotional expression. |
| Personal Expression | Gender stereotypes can restrict personal expression, discouraging individuals from pursuing activities or expressing themselves in ways that contradict traditional gender norms. |
| Unconscious Bias | Gender stereotypes can contribute to unconscious bias, leading to unfair treatment and discrimination in various aspects of life. |
| Gender-Based Violence | The likelihood of gender-based violence, such as physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, is increased when aggressiveness and control are normalized by gender norms and stereotypes. |
| Self-Esteem and Mental Health | Gender stereotypes can negatively impact self-esteem and mental health, particularly for individuals who do not conform to traditional gender norms. |

**2.3 CHALLENGING GENDER ROLES AND STEREOTYPES**

Recognizing and challenging gender roles and stereotypes is crucial for achieving gender equality and empowering individuals to reach their full potential. Here are some steps that can be taken:

1. **Education and Awareness:** Promoting education and awareness about gender roles and stereotypes is essential for dismantling harmful beliefs and fostering a more inclusive society.
2. **Critical Media Analysis:** Critically analyzing media representations of gender can help identify and challenge gender stereotypes that perpetuate harmful norms.
3. **Challenging Gendered Language:** Recognizing and avoiding gendered language that reinforces stereotypes can create a more inclusive and equitable environment.
4. **Encouraging Diverse Role Models:** Exposing individuals to diverse role models from various backgrounds can broaden perspectives and challenge traditional gender norms.
5. **Supporting Gender Equality Initiatives:** Actively supporting initiatives that promote gender equality in education, employment, and leadership can contribute to a more just and equitable society.

By challenging gender roles and stereotypes, we can create a society where individuals are valued for their unique qualities and contributions, regardless of their gender identity.



A Public Health Malaysia Facebook post went viral on February 7, 2022, stating that a husband will feel "less comfortable" and even "more stressed" if his wife earns more than 40% of the home income and the family is entirely dependent on her income.

Siti Zailah Mohd Yusoff, the Deputy Minister of Women, Family, and Community Development, shocked us in a video that was released less than a week later when she suggested that husbands use "gentle but firm physical touch (sentuhan fizikal yang lembut tapi tegas) that educates lovingly" to correct their wives' behavior. Wives should equally refrain from confronting their husbands and remain silent in order to "not make things worse."

**3.0 PATRIARCHY AND GENDER INEQUALITY**

This delves into the system of male dominance and female subordination that underpins gender inequality. It analyses the social, political, and economic structures that perpetuate patriarchal power dynamics.

3.1 THE ENDURING GRIP OF PATRIARCHY: UNDERSTANDING AND COMBATING GENDER INEQUALITY

Throughout history, human societies have been structured around a system of male dominance known as patriarchy. Patriarchy is a complex and deeply entrenched system that manifests in various forms, including political and economic inequalities, gender-based violence, and the marginalization of women's voices and experiences.

At the core of patriarchy lies the belief in the inherent superiority of men and the subordination of women. This belief is reinforced through social norms, cultural practices, and institutional structures that uphold male power and privilege. As a result, women have historically been denied equal rights, opportunities, and access to resources.

3.2 THE IMPACT OF PATRIARCHY

The consequences of patriarchy are far-reaching and pervasive, affecting women's lives in every aspect. Gender inequality manifests in various forms, including:

1. Political and Economic Inequalities: In addition to continuing to be paid less for doing the same work as males, women are disproportionately underrepresented in leadership and political roles.
2. Gender-Based Violence: Women are disproportionately victims of violence, including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse.
3. Reproductive Rights: Women's access to safe and legal abortion services is one of the reproductive choices that are restricted.
4. Unpaid Care Work: Women shoulder a disproportionate share of unpaid care work, such as childcare and eldercare.
5. Gender Stereotypes: Gender stereotypes perpetuate harmful beliefs about women's roles and capabilities, limiting their potential and opportunities.

3.3 CHALLENGING PATRIARCHY: THE PATH TO GENDER EQUALITY

Achieving gender equality requires a comprehensive approach that addresses the root causes of patriarchy and dismantles its oppressive structures. This involves:

1. Challenging Gender Stereotypes: Education and awareness-raising are crucial to dismantling harmful stereotypes and fostering a more inclusive society.
2. Promoting Gender Equality in Education and Employment: Ensuring equal access to education and employment opportunities is essential for empowering women and reducing gender disparities.
3. Addressing Gender-Based Violence: Implementing effective prevention and intervention strategies is critical to combating gender-based violence and protecting women's safety.
4. Empowering Women's Leadership: Encouraging and supporting women's leadership in various sectors is crucial for achieving gender equality and representation.
5. Promoting Gender-Sensitive Policies and Practices: Incorporating a gender lens into policies and practices can help address gender inequalities and promote equitable outcomes.

The struggle for gender equality is a long and ongoing one, but the progress made in recent decades demonstrates that change is possible. By challenging patriarchy and promoting gender-equitable practices, we can create a more just and equitable world for all.



Gender inequality occurs when the male kid of the family is prioritised above the female child, whether purposefully or accidentally. It occurs when boys are expected to perform worse than girls in school. It occurs when a girl is ordered to let her brother ride the swing before she may. When a young girl is taught that she is weak and that her brother is there to protect her, gender inequity takes place. It occurs when a girl must ask her school-age brother to drop her off at college. I have nothing against brothers doing these things for their sisters as long as it does not imply that the brother is in any way superior to the sister. Unfortunately, modest actions can lead to larger problems in the long run.

People frequently believe that the youngest child in a family with multiple female children but just one male child is a boy. It depicts how individuals continue to attempt for a male child and end up getting daughters. It shatters the trust of these female youngsters, who, despite being loved and cared for, realize that their parents would have preferred them to be a boy.

**4.0 INTERSECTIONALITY**

Intersectionality is a powerful idea that helps to analyse gender as well as other aspects of social identity. Many feminist theorists strive to go beyond the accusation that feminist theory focuses solely on the experiences and values of white, middle-class, Western women.

Intersectionality is the recognition that numerous power dynamics within society effect people in different ways and to varying degrees. These power dynamics are intertwined with concerns of gender, ethnicity, class, ability status, citizenship status, and a variety of other identification variables. It emphasizes the importance of considering these intersecting identities when analysing gender inequality.



**4.1 KEY AREAS IN INTERSECTIONALITY**

**4.1.1 Race and Gender:**

* **Black feminism:** Examines the unique experiences and struggles of Black women, considering the intersection of racism and sexism.
* **Latina feminism:** Analyzes the specific challenges faced by Latina women, including issues of immigration, classism, and cultural expectations.
* **Asian American feminism:** Addresses the diverse experiences of Asian American women, navigating racism, xenophobia, and gender expectations within their communities.
* **Indigenous feminism:** Explores the historical and contemporary experiences of Indigenous women, focusing on colonization, land dispossession, and violence against Indigenous women and girls.

**4.1.2 Class and Gender:**

* **Working-class feminism:** Investigates the specific realities and needs of working-class women, considering economic inequalities and limited access to resources.
* **Marxist feminism:** Analyzes how capitalism and economic structures perpetuate gender inequality and exploitation.
* **Welfare feminism:** Advocates for social welfare policies and economic reforms that support low-income women and families.

**4.1.3 Sexuality and Gender:**

* **Lesbian feminism:** Examines the experiences and activism of lesbians, addressing homophobia and heteronormativity within feminist movements.
* **Queer feminism:** Challenges the binary construction of gender and embraces diverse sexualities and gender expressions.
* **Trans feminism:** Focuses on the experiences and struggles of transgender women, confronting transphobia and advocating for transgender inclusion within feminism.

**4.1.4 Ability and Gender:**

* **Disability feminism:** Analyzes the specific challenges faced by disabled women, addressing ableism and advocating for accessibility and inclusion.
* **Neurodiversity and feminism:** Explores the experiences of neurodivergent women, considering how societal expectations and diagnoses can intersect with gender inequality.

**4.1.5 Age and Gender:**

* **Young women's feminism:** Addresses the issues faced by young women, including body image pressures, sexual harassment, and navigating online spaces.
* **Older women's feminism:** Examines the specific concerns of older women, including ageism, financial security, and healthcare access.

**4.1.6 Global and Colonial Intersections:**

* **Colonial and postcolonial feminism:** Critiques the ways in which colonialism and imperialism have shaped gender relations and inequalities across the globe.
* **Decolonizing feminism:** Calls for dismantling colonial structures and Eurocentric perspectives within feminist theory and praxis.
* **South-South feminism:** Promotes collaboration and knowledge sharing between feminist movements in the Global South, addressing common challenges and diverse experiences.

**4.1.7 Environmental and Gender Intersections:**

* **Ecofeminism:** Connects environmental degradation and ecological crises with patriarchal systems and the exploitation of women and nature.
* **Climate justice feminism:** Focuses on the gendered impacts of climate change and advocates for inclusive solutions that empower women and marginalized communities.

These are just some of the many areas within intersectionality. As the field continues to evolve and expand, new intersections and perspectives will undoubtedly emerge, enriching the understanding of how social identities interact and influence individual and collective experiences.

**5.0 FEMINIST MOVEMENTS AND ACTIVISM**

This examines the historical and contemporary movements that have fought for women's rights and gender equality. It explores the strategies, tactics, and achievements of feminist activists and organizations.

Feminist movements and activism encompass a wide range of social and political efforts aimed at establishing gender equality and eliminating discrimination against women. These movements have played a crucial role in advancing women's rights and challenging patriarchal structures throughout history.

5.1 KEY THEMES AND GOALS OF FEMINIST MOVEMENTS

Feminist movements have addressed various issues affecting women's lives, including:

Suffrage: The right to vote for women



Women's suffrage march

Reproductive rights: Control over one's own body and reproductive decisions, including access to safe abortion and contraception



Prochoice rally

Workplace equality: Equal pay for equal work, freedom from discrimination and harassment, and access to leadership positions



Women's march for equal pay

Violence against women: Combating domestic violence, sexual assault, and other forms of violence against women



Antidomestic violence campaign

Body image and beauty standards: Challenging unrealistic and harmful beauty ideals that promote body dissatisfaction and discrimination



Body positive movement

Intersectionality: Recognizing the interconnectedness of gender with other social identities, such as race, class, and sexual orientation, and addressing the unique experiences of marginalized women

5.2 WAVES OF FEMINISM

Feminist movements have evolved over time, with distinct periods of heightened activism and social change. These periods are often referred to as "waves" of feminism:

First-wave feminism (late 19th and early 20th centuries): Focused on securing women's suffrage, property rights, and legal protections

Second-wave feminism (1960s and 1970s): Expanded the scope of feminism to address issues such as workplace equality, reproductive rights, and sexual liberation

Third-wave feminism (1990s and early 2000s): Emphasized intersectionality and challenged traditional gender norms and stereotypes

Fourth-wave feminism (2010s and onward): Leverages social media and technology to mobilize and amplify feminist voices, addressing issues such as online harassment, gender-based violence, and body positivity

5.3 FORMS OF FEMINIST ACTIVISM

Feminist activism takes many forms, including:

* Grassroots organizing: Community-based efforts to raise awareness, build support, and advocate for change
* Protests and demonstrations: Public demonstrations to draw attention to feminist issues and demand action
* Legal challenges: Pursuing legal action to challenge discriminatory laws and policies
* Policy advocacy: Working with policymakers to develop and implement feminist legislation
* Cultural and artistic expression: Using art, music, literature, and other creative forms to challenge gender stereotypes and promote feminist messages

5.4 IMPACT OF FEMINIST MOVEMENTS

Feminist movements have had a profound impact on societies around the world, achieving significant gains for women's rights and gender equality. Some notable achievements include:

* Securing the right to vote for women in most countries
* Expanding access to education and employment opportunities for women
* Enacting laws against discrimination based on gender
* Raising awareness about and combating violence against women
* Changing societal attitudes towards women's roles and identities

5.5 ONGOING STRUGGLES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Despite the progress made, feminist movements continue to fight for gender equality and address ongoing challenges, such as:

* Gender pay gaps and workplace discrimination
* Reproductive rights restrictions and access to healthcare
* Gender-based violence and harassment
* Underrepresentation of women in leadership positions
* Discrimination against women based on race, class, sexual orientation, and other intersecting identities

Feminist movements remain vibrant and diverse, adapting to evolving social and political contexts while continuing to advocate for a more just and equitable world for all women.

**6.0 APPLICATION OF KNOWLEDGE IN LIFE, WORK AND COMMUNITY**

The knowledge gained from feminist theory and gender analysis can be applied in various aspects of life, work, and community to promote gender equality, challenge gender stereotypes, and create a more inclusive and just society. Here are some specific examples of how this knowledge can be applied:

6.1 IN LIFE:

* Challenging Gender Stereotypes

By understanding the social construction of gender, I can recognize and challenge gender stereotypes that limit my own and others' potential. This can lead to more fulfilling personal relationships, career choices, and life experiences.

* Promoting Gender Equality

Knowledge of feminist theory and gender analysis can empower me to advocate for gender equality in my personal life, challenging gender-based discrimination and promoting equal opportunities for all.

* Raising Gender-Conscious Children

As a parent, I can apply the knowledge and understanding of gender to raise my children to be aware of gender stereotypes and the importance of gender equality. This can foster more inclusive and respectful relationships between my children.

6.2 IN WORK:

* Creating Inclusive Workplaces

As an employee, I can use feminist theory and gender analysis to identify and address gender biases at my workplace and encourage my employer to create more inclusive and equitable work environments for all employees.

* Promoting Equal Pay and Opportunities

Knowledge of gender-based pay gaps and occupational segregation can inform policies and practices that promote equal pay and opportunities for women and men in all professions.

* Addressing Gender-Based Harassment and Violence

Gaining insight into the causes of gender-based violence can enable companies to put preventative and intervention plans in place that effectively address the problem.

6.3 IN COMMUNITY

Advocating for Gender-Responsive Policies

Understanding the impact of gender on various social issues, such as poverty, education, and healthcare, can inform advocacy efforts for gender-responsive policies that address the specific needs of women and men.

Supporting Community Organizations

Knowledge of feminist theory and gender analysis can guide community organizations in developing effective programs and initiatives that promote gender equality and empower women and girls.

Promoting Gender-Sensitive Community Initiatives

 Understanding the intersectionality of gender with other social identities can inform community initiatives that are inclusive and sensitive to the diverse needs of all community members.

By applying the knowledge gained from feminist theory and gender analysis, individuals can contribute to creating a more just and equitable society where everyone has the opportunity to thrive, regardless of their gender.

**7.0 PERSONAL EXPERIENCE**

 As a young woman, I always felt a sense of unease with the way gender was portrayed and experienced in the world around me. I grew up in a society that often-reinforced traditional gender roles and expectations, and I couldn't help but notice the ways in which these norms limited my own potential and the potential of others.

My first exposure to feminist theory and gender analysis came in college, where I took a course on women's studies. In this class, I was introduced to the concepts of patriarchy, gender socialization, and intersectionality. These concepts were like a revelation to me, helping me to understand the root causes of gender inequality and the ways in which it manifests in various aspects of our lives.

Through my studies, I began to see the world through a different lens. I became more aware of the subtle and insidious ways in which gender stereotypes and biases permeate our language, media, and institutions. Additionally, I developed a better awareness of the intersectional nature of oppression, realizing that racism, classism, and homophobia are all interconnected kinds of discrimination that cannot be comprehended in isolation from gender inequity. As I delved deeper into feminist theory and gender analysis, I was also inspired by the stories of women who have fought for gender equality throughout history. I read about the suffragettes, the civil rights activists, and the contemporary feminists who continue to challenge the status quo. These women were my role models, and their courage and determination fueled my own commitment to social justice.

My personal experiences with feminist theory and gender analysis have transformed my understanding of the world and my place in it. I have learned that gender is not an immutable biological fact, but a social construct that is constantly being shaped and re-shaped. I've also discovered that gender disparity impacts everyone and is not only a problem for women. It's a human rights issue.

With this information, I feel more equipped to speak out against gender stereotypes and promote a society that is more just and equal. I am no longer afraid to speak out against sexism and discrimination, and I am committed to using my voice to amplify the voices of marginalized groups.

My journey into feminist theory and gender analysis is ongoing. I continue to learn and grow as I engage with these fields of study. I am grateful for the knowledge and insights that these disciplines have given me, and I am committed to using them to make a positive impact on the world.

**8.0 CONCLUSION**

 Feminist theory and gender analysis are intertwined fields that provide critical lenses for examining the complex interplay of gender, power, and society. These interconnected disciplines challenge the traditional notions of gender as a binary construct and delves into the diverse experiences and perspectives of individuals across the gender spectrum (Butler, 1990).

 Central to feminist theory is the recognition of gender as a social construct rather than a biological determinant (West & Zimmerman, 2002). Gender roles, stereotypes, and expectations are not innate but rather shaped by societal norms, institutions, and power dynamics (Connell, 2002). This understanding challenges the rigid gender binary and opens up the possibility for a more fluid and inclusive understanding of gender identities (Butler, 1990).

 Feminist theory also critically examines the concept of patriarchy, a system of male dominance that underpins gender inequality (Walby, 2004). Patriarchy manifests in various forms, including political and economic inequalities, gender-based violence, and the marginalization of women's voices and experiences (Hooks, 2000). By understanding the roots of patriarchy, feminist theory seeks to dismantle its oppressive structures and create a more equitable society (Agger, 2018).

 Gender analysis, a subset of feminist theory, specifically focuses on how gender is shaped through everyday interactions, language, and media representations (Acker, 2006). It explores how gendered norms are reinforced and reproduced through social practices, institutions, and cultural norms (West & Zimmerman, 2002). By understanding how gender is produced and reproduced, gender analysis aims to challenge gender stereotypes and promote more inclusive and equitable social structures (Crenshaw, 1991).

 Feminist theory and gender analysis are not merely academic pursuits; they have profound implications for real-world issues. These fields inform policies and practices aimed at achieving gender equality, addressing gender-based violence, and promoting inclusive workplaces and societies (Acker, 2006). They also provide a framework for understanding the intersectional experiences of individuals who face discrimination based on their gender, race, ethnicity, class, or sexual orientation (Crenshaw, 1991).

 In essence, feminist theory and gender analysis are transformative tools for understanding and addressing gender inequality. They empower individuals to challenge gender stereotypes, advocate for their rights, and work towards a more just and equitable society where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

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