

## WOMEN AND SOCIETY A MAJOR FIELD OF STUDIES TO UNDERSTAND THE DISCRIMINATION

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**Abstract:** *The study of women and society is an interdisciplinary field that investigates the intricate interplay between gender, societal structures, and cultural norms that shape women's experiences within communities. This field recognizes that gender is not a fixed biological concept but a social construct that permeates all facets of life. It acknowledges the diverse experiences of women and the intersections with other identities. The primary objective of this field is to foster social justice and equality by advocating for policies and practices that advance gender equality and empower women.*

*The subject of women and society encompasses a broad range of topics, including the portrayal of female characters in literature, the practice of female genital mutilation, and the influence of government support agencies on women's entrepreneurship. It serves as a valuable resource for students, scholars, and researchers across various academic disciplines, providing a comprehensive understanding of the intricate ways in which gender impacts individuals and society as a whole. This understanding is achieved through an interdisciplinary approach that draws on insights from sociology, anthropology, psychology, literature, and other relevant fields.*

*This study aims to emphasize the significance of research in the field of women and society. The paper adopts a desktop research method, utilizing existing knowledge and literature to develop an understanding of the subject. By exploring the multifaceted dimensions of women's experiences, the study highlights the need to address gender disparities, challenge societal norms, and promote inclusive policies that foster gender equality and women's empowerment. It underscores the importance of incorporating a gendered lens in all aspects of social analysis and decision-making processes, ultimately contributing to a more equitable and just society.*

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## Introduction

Women and society refer to the intersection of gender, social structures, and cultural norms that shape women's experiences in society. This interdisciplinary field examines the social, political, economic, and cultural factors that contribute to gender inequality and explores strategies for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

The subject recognizes that gender is a social construct that affects all aspects of life including education, work, health, and relationships. It recognizes that women's experiences are diverse and intersect with other forms of identity such as race, ethnicity, sexuality, and ability.

The fields of women and society draw on a range of academic disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, psychology, history, political science, and economics. It seeks to promote social justice and equality by examining the ways in which gender intersects with other forms of inequality and advocates policies and practices that promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

Field studies on women and society provide a comprehensive overview of the many ways in which women have been and continue to be marginalized and oppressed in society. The subject matter covers a wide range of topics, including the role of female characters in the literature, the practice of female genital mutilation, the impact of government support agencies on women's entrepreneurship, the effects of childlessness on family resilience, and the different branches of feminism. This field of study can be an essential resource for anyone who wants to learn more about the challenges women face and the work that still needs to be done to achieve gender equality. Thus, it is a valuable resource for students, scholars, and researchers in various academic fields.

For those studying literature or gender studies, this helps to explore the role of female characters in the literature, and its discussion of different branches of feminism can provide important insights. For those interested in sociology or anthropology, the field of study coverage of topics such as female genital mutilation and government support for women's entrepreneurship can be particularly relevant.

Furthermore, this subject uses an interdisciplinary approach to make it useful for scholars and students in a range of fields, including psychology, history, and political science. By examining the experiences of women from various perspectives, the field of study offers a comprehensive understanding of the complex ways in which gender impacts individuals and society as a whole.

## Importance

The study of women and society is important for several reasons.

**Gender inequality:** The study of women and society helps highlight the persistent gender inequalities that exist in many societies. This includes the gender pay gap, under-representation of women in leadership positions, and marginalization of women in many areas of public life. Gender is a complex social construct that shapes how individuals perceive themselves and society perceives and treats them. Historically, women have faced significant challenges due to gender-based discrimination and stereotypes. Society often expects women to conform to certain gender roles, such as being the primary caregivers for children and maintaining a domestic household, which can limit their opportunities for personal and professional development.

Table 1. Gender inequality in numbers

24% Women make up less than 24% of the world's parliamentarians and 5% of its mayors.
24% On average, women are paid 24% less than men for comparable work, across all regions and sectors.
2/3 Two thirds of the world's 781 million illiterate adults are women, a proportion that has remained unchanged for two decades.
153 countries have laws which discriminate against women economically, including 18 countries where husbands can legally prevent their wives from working.
1 in 3 Worldwide, 1 in 3 women and girls will experience violence or abuse in their lifetime.
61%-44% of lesbians and 61% of bisexual women experience rape, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner, compared to 35% of heterosexual women.
1 in 10-Prior to the pandemic, one in ten LGBTQ+ people were unemployed, twice that of non-LGBTQ+ people.

Source: OXFAM (2023). Gender justice and women's rights< Oxfam International. <https://www.oxfam.org/en/what-we-do/issues/gender-justice-and-womens-rights>. Retrieved April 24, 2023.

In many parts of the world, women have been excluded from education and the workforce, denied access to healthcare, and are subjected to violence and abuse. However, women have also been at the forefront of social and political movements that have challenged these inequalities and have advocated for their rights.

*“Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right but also a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world. There has been progress over the last decades, but the world is not on track to achieve gender equality by 2030”* (United Nations 2022).

Among the seventeen goals of sustainable development, goal five aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; however, even 2023, the available facts show an alarming picture.

Table 2. An alarming picture of gender inequality (women in a global picture)

<p>Globally, 26 per cent of ever-partnered women aged 15 and older (641 million) have been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by a husband or intimate partner at least once in their lifetime.</p> <p>In a 2021 survey in 13 countries, 45 per cent of women reported that they or a woman they know has experienced some form of violence since COVID-19.</p> <p>In 2021, one in five young women were married before the age of 18.</p> <p>35 per cent and 28 per cent of young women were married in childhood, respectively in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia.</p> <p>The global prevalence of child marriage has declined by about 10 per cent in the past five years.</p> <p>Up to 10 million more girls are likely to become child brides by 2030 due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, in addition to the 100 million girls projected to be at risk before the pandemic.</p> <p>At least 200 million girls and women today have been subjected to female genital mutilation, in 31 countries.</p> <p>As of 1 January 2022, the global share of women in lower and single houses of national parliaments reached 26.2 per cent, up from 22.4 per cent in 2015.</p> <p>At this pace, it would take another 40 years for women and men to be represented equally in national parliaments.</p> <p>Women’s share is slightly over one third in local governments.</p> <p>In 2019, before the pandemic, women accounted for 39.4 per cent of total employment. In 2020, women represented 45 per cent of global employment losses.</p> <p>The share of women in managerial positions worldwide increased from 27.2 to 28.3 per cent from 2015 to 2019, but remained unchanged from 2019 to 2020, the first year without an increase since 2013.</p> <p>Between 2007 and 2021, 57 per cent of women aged 15 to 49 who are married or in a union made their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use, and reproductive health care.</p> <p>In the first year of the pandemic, an estimated 1.4 million additional unintended pregnancies occurred in lower- and middle-income countries.</p> <p>Only 15 out of 52 reporting countries included sufficient provisions in their legal frameworks to protect women’s rights to land.</p> <p>Between 2018 and 2021, only 26 per cent of countries have comprehensive systems in place to track public allocations for gender equality, 59 per cent have some features of such a system, and 15 per cent do not have the minimum elements of such a system.</p>
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Source: The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022 <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/>.

To address these problems, United Nations – Sustainable Development Goal- 5, lists the five target as: *5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere; 5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation; 5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation; 5.4 Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate; 5.5 Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life; 5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences; 5.Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance, and natural resources, in accordance with national laws; and 5.B Enhances the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women; 5.C Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the*

*empowerment of all women and girls at all levels* (source: Sustainable Development Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls-<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/>)

As seen above, the ((UN) has played a role in achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. In addition to the UN, all development agencies and governments worldwide have implemented specific programs for gender empowerment. These ongoing efforts to promote gender equality and empower women include affirmative action policies, women's leadership programs, and initiatives that address gender-based violence. These efforts are important for creating a more just and equitable society in which all individuals have the opportunity to reach their full potential regardless of gender. These efforts are insufficient because patriarchal society's culture, traditions, norms, values, and rituals have created a web that is associated with beliefs that are entangled with religion. Religious values are created by patriarchal society, which is difficult to untangle. Here, the most important roles come to academicians, who (we) should create fact-based knowledge so that an actual fair world society can be created. The subjects like this can be considered as a small step toward achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls (Bhandari and Shvindina 2019).

**Historical Perspective:** The study of women and society provides a historical perspective on women's roles and experiences throughout history. This can help shed light on how gender roles and expectations have evolved over time and how they continue to shape contemporary social norms. The historical perspective of women's roles and status in society has been shaped by cultural and societal norms that vary across time and place. In many societies, women have been relegated to subservient roles with limited access to education, political power, and economic opportunities.

For example, in ancient Greece, women were seen as inferior to men and excluded from political participation and most aspects of public life. In the Middle Ages, women were expected to fulfill the roles of wife and mother, with little opportunity for education or professional development. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, the women's suffrage movement emerged in Europe and North America, advocating for the women's right to vote and other political and social rights. This movement laid the foundation for greater gender equality in many societies.

Despite progress in recent decades, women continue to face challenges and discrimination worldwide. In some cultures, women are still denied basic human rights, including access to education and healthcare, and are subjected to gender-based violence and discrimination. Understanding historical perspectives on women and society is important for recognizing and addressing ongoing gender inequalities and promoting women's rights and empowerment. It also highlights the importance of continuing to work towards a more just and equitable society.

**Intersectionality:** The study of women and society also emphasizes the importance of intersectionality, or the ways in which gender intersects with other social identities, such as race, class, sexuality, and ability. This approach recognizes that women's experiences are not uniform and that the unique experiences of women from marginalized communities must be considered. Intersectionality is a concept that recognizes that individuals hold multiple identities, which intersect to create unique experiences of oppression and privilege. In the context of feminism, women, and society, intersectionality highlights that women's experiences of discrimination and marginalization are not uniform but are shaped by their race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, ability, and other factors.

Intersectionality helps highlight the diversity of women's experiences and the need to address the multiple forms of oppression and discrimination that women face. For example, a white woman's experience of gender-based discrimination may differ from that of a woman of color, who faces both gender and racial discrimination.

Feminism, which recognizes intersectionality, seeks to promote social justice and equality for all women, not just those who are privileged by their race, class, or other factors. It acknowledges that fighting for gender equality cannot be done in isolation from other social justice issues such as racism, economic inequality, and discrimination based on sexuality or ability. Intersectionality provides a more nuanced understanding of women's experiences and the ways in which various systems of oppression intersect and contribute to inequality. By recognizing these

intersecting identities and experiences, feminism can become more inclusive and effective in promoting gender equality and social justice for all women.

**Empowerment:** By studying women and society, we can gain a deeper understanding of the challenges women face and the ways in which they resist and challenge gender norms. This can lead to greater empowerment of women, as well as the development of policies and programs that support gender equality. Empowerment in the context of women and society refers to the process of increasing women's access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making power and supporting them to take control over their lives and achieve their goals. Empowerment is essential to achieving gender equality and creating a more just and equitable society.

Empowerment can take many forms, including access to education and training, economic opportunities, political participation, and social support. Women's empowerment also involves challenging and changing the cultural and social norms that perpetuate gender-based discrimination and inequality. Empowerment is crucial because women's access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making power is historically limited in many societies. This has contributed to gender-based discrimination, violence, and inequality and has prevented women from fully participating in all aspects of society.

When women are empowered, they are better able to advocate their rights, make decisions about their lives, and contribute to their families and communities. Empowered women are also more likely to invest in their children's education and health, which leads to positive social and economic outcomes. The empowerment of women is essential for achieving gender equality and creating a more just and equitable society. It is crucial to continue working towards creating opportunities and removing barriers that hinder women's empowerment and full participation in all aspects of society.

**Social progress:** The study of women and society is important, because it can help drive social progress. By understanding the factors that contribute to gender inequality, we can address them and create a more equitable and just society for all. Social progress and development have been linked to the advancement of women's rights and gender equality. Feminism, which advocates women's social, economic, and political rights, plays a significant role in promoting social progress and development. Feminism has challenged traditional gender roles and norms, which have limited women's opportunities for education, employment, and political participation. Feminist movements have fought for women's right to vote, access to education, and equal pay for equal work, among other issues (Zaitsev, Shvindina and Bhandari 2019).

The advancement of women's rights has also been shown to positively impact social and economic development. For example, when women have equal access to education and employment, they are better able to contribute to their economic growth and poverty reduction. Additionally, when women have access to reproductive health services, they are better able to plan for their families, which can lead to improved maternal and child health outcomes.

Social progress and development are also linked to reducing gender-based violence and discrimination. Feminist movements have brought attention to the issue of violence against women and have worked to create legal frameworks and social norms that condemn and prevent such violence. The advancement of women's rights is essential for the promotion of social progress and development. By recognizing and addressing the systemic barriers that limit women's opportunities and contributions, we can create a more just and equitable society that benefits everyone.

### **What Women and Society Subject Addresses?**

There are thousands of books and academic papers written within the domains of women and society, gender, feminism, women's roles, etc. (UN DESA 2022, EIGE 2020, O'Brien 2009, Worell 2001, Walter 2003, Smith 2008, Kramarae, and Spender 2000, Evans, Hemmings, Henry, Johnstone, Madhok, Plomien, and Wearing 2014, Coleman, and Ganong 2014, Pendleton 2016, Cook 2006, Chadwick, Whitney 2002 etc.) and most of them advocate the realities of social inequality dominated by the patriarchal society (Brabeck and Brown 1997, Brunell, and Elinor 2019, Chodorow 1989, 1991, Collins and Bilge 2016, Collins 1990, DeVault 1996, 1999, Haraway



1988, Hawkesworth, 2006, Susan 2000, Chafetz 1997, Repo 2020, Juschka 2016, Warren and Cheney 1991, Millett 1969, Mitchell 2000, Moi 2002, Shapiro 1992, Smith, Dorothy 1984, Stacey 1990, Tong, Rosemarie 1989, Wallin 2001, Zaitsev, Shvindina and Bhandari 2019) and many dedicated journals dedicated for the women empowerment, gender inequality, feminism and so on ((Berkeley journal of gender, law & justice 2005, Camera obscura (Addison, Tex.). 2010, Feminist studies (Online). 1972, Feminist theory (Online). 2000, Frontiers (Boulder, Colo.: Online). 1975, Gender and Society (Online). 1987: Women's Studies International Forum (Online). 1982 etc.). However, we still do not fully understand the underlying cultural, social, and economic cases of such discrimination. Therefore, more research and action programs are needed. This study attempts to fill this small gap in this vague subject.

The field of Women and Society Studies emerged in response to the lack of attention paid to the experiences of women and other marginalized genders in traditional academic disciplines. It seeks to challenge and expand our understanding of gender and power, and to promote social justice and equality for all individuals, regardless of gender identity (Mitchell 2000; Moi 2002; Shapiro 1992; Smith and Dorothy 1984; Stacey 1990; Tong and Rosemarie 1989; Wallin 2001; Zaitsev, Shvindina, and Bhandari 2019; Bhandari 2019, 2023). Some of the key goals of women and society include increasing awareness of the diversity of women's experiences, examining the intersection of gender with other forms of oppression, and promoting gender equity and social change.

- This study of women and society highlights the diverse experiences of women from diverse cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds.
- It provides a platform for women's voices and experiences to be heard and valued in academia and society.
- Women's studies have examined the impact of patriarchal structures and systems on women's lives and explored ways to dismantle them.
- The study of women and society promotes their empowerment and agency by highlighting their contributions and achievements in various fields.
- It helps address and redress gender-based violence and discrimination, such as sexual harassment, domestic violence, and human trafficking.
- Women's studies provide a space for critical analysis and interdisciplinary inquiry, bringing together fields such as sociology, history, literature, and political sciences.
- The study of women and society is essential for creating inclusive and diverse curricula that reflect the experiences and perspectives of all members of the society.
- It encourages the development of policies and practices that promote gender equality and social justice, benefiting not only women, but also society as a whole.

### **Major Problem is Discrimination**

Discrimination is a major problem that affects many individuals and groups, and can take many forms, such as racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism, and ageism. Discrimination can lead to unequal access to opportunities and resources; limited social mobility; and negative social, emotional, and mental health outcomes. Discrimination can also have a ripple effect on individuals and their communities, leading to feelings of isolation, marginalization, and exclusion. Discrimination can perpetuate and reinforce the existing power dynamics, exacerbate inequalities, and hinder social progress.

Discrimination requires a multifaceted approach that involves education, policy change, and individual and collective action. This includes promoting awareness of different forms of discrimination, challenging biased attitudes and behaviors, and implementing policies that promote equity and social justice. It is important to acknowledge and recognize the experiences of those who have been discriminated against and work towards creating inclusive and equitable societies where all individuals are valued and treated with respect and dignity.

Discrimination against women, particularly in the developing world, is still a major problem in social development. Women's discrimination is a complex issue that can manifest in many different ways. Some of the major problems with women's discrimination include the following:

- **Gender-Based Violence:** Women are more likely to experience violence, harassment, and abuse because of their gender. These include physical, sexual, and emotional violence.
- **Unequal Access to Education:** Women may face barriers to access education, which limits their opportunities for employment, economic independence, and social mobility.
- **Unequal Pay:** Women often earn less than men for the same work, which can contribute to economic inequality and limit their financial independence.
- **Limited Political Participation:** Women may face barriers to participating in political processes, including running for office or having their voices heard during decision-making processes.
- **Cultural and Social Norms:** Cultural and social norms can perpetuate gender-based discrimination, limit women's opportunities, and reinforce gender stereotypes.
- **Limited Access to Healthcare:** Women may face barriers to accessing healthcare, particularly reproductive healthcare, which can have profound consequences for their health and well-being.
- **Intersectional Discrimination:** Women with multiple marginalized identities, such as race, ethnicity, sexuality, or ability, may face compounded forms of discrimination that limit their opportunities and experiences.

**Addressing discrimination** requires a comprehensive and intersectional approach that recognizes the multiple forms of discrimination women face. Policy changes, social and cultural shifts, and individual actions are required to create more equitable and just societies (Bhandari 2019, 2023).

Overcoming women's discrimination requires a multi-faceted and sustained approach. The following are some ways that can help address women's discrimination:

- **Education and Awareness:** Education- and awareness-raising programs can help challenge gender stereotypes and cultural norms that perpetuate discrimination against women. This can be achieved through formal education programs, community outreach, and media campaigns.
- **Legal and Policy Frameworks:** Laws and policies that promote gender equality can help eliminate discriminatory practices and promote equal opportunities for women. This includes policies that promote equal pay, access to education and healthcare, and laws that criminalize gender-based violence and harassment.
- **Economic Empowerment:** Providing women with economic opportunities such as access to financial resources, training, and employment opportunities can help increase their economic independence and reduce their vulnerability to discrimination.
- **Political Participation:** Women's political participation and representation can help increase their visibility and influence decision-making processes. This can be achieved through policies that promote gender equality in political processes such as quotas and affirmative action programs.
- **Intersectional Approaches:** Addressing women's discrimination requires recognizing and addressing the multiple forms of discrimination women face, such as those based on race, ethnicity, sexuality, or ability. Intersectional approaches that recognize the interconnectedness of these issues can help create more inclusive and equitable policies and practices.
- **Empowering Women:** Empowering women through education, skill building, and leadership opportunities can help build their confidence and agency, enabling them to challenge discrimination and advocate for their rights.

Overcoming women's discrimination requires a sustained and comprehensive approach that addresses the root causes of discrimination and promotes gender equality in all aspects of society. This includes education and awareness raising, legal and policy frameworks, economic empowerment, political participation, intersectional approaches, and empowering women.

This study provides examples of how women are treated in a male-dominated patriarchal society and the options to overcome this chronic problem, which is grounded throughout human civilization.

### **Feminisms**

Feminism is a diverse and complex field that has evolved over time, with numerous theories and movements emerging in response to the changing social and political contexts. Some of the major theories and developments in feminism include the following.

**First-wave feminism:** The first wave of feminism emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and focused on securing women's rights to vote, access to education, and other basic legal and political rights. Key figures in this movement include Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Mary Wollstonecraft.

**Second-wave feminism:** The second wave of feminism emerged in the 1960s and the 1970s, and focused on issues such as reproductive rights, workplace discrimination, and sexual violence. Key figures in this movement include Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem, and Audre Lorde.

**Third-wave feminism:** The third wave of feminism emerged in the 1990s and focused on issues such as intersectionality, diversity, and politics of representation. Key figures in this movement included bell hooks, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and Rebecca Walker.

**Postcolonial feminism:** Postcolonial feminism is a branch of feminism that focuses on the experiences of women in the Global South and the impact of colonialism and imperialism on women's lives. Key figures of this movement include Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Trinh T. Minh-ha.

**Queer feminism:** Queer feminism is a branch of feminism that focuses on the experiences of LGBTQ+ people and challenges heteronormativity and the gender binary. Key figures of this movement include Judith Butler, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and Adrienne Rich.

**Black feminism:** Black feminism is a branch of feminism that focuses on the experiences of Black women and the intersection of racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression. Key figures in this movement include Angela Davis, Audre Lorde, and Patricia Hill Collins.

These are only a few examples of diverse theories and movements within feminism. Feminism continues to evolve and adapt to new social and political contexts and new theories and movements are constantly emerging.

### **The role of feminism in overcoming discrimination**

Feminism plays a critical role in challenging and combating discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, social status, and economic conditions. Feminist movements and theories have raised awareness about the ways in which these forms of discrimination intersect and reinforce each other and have advocated for policies and practices that promote equality and justice.

Some ways in which feminism has worked to address discrimination and promote social justice include:

**Intersectionality:** Feminism highlights the ways in which different forms of oppression intersect and reinforce each other. This approach, known as intersectionality, recognizes that people experience discrimination and privilege in complex and interconnected ways and that any effort to address social inequality must take these intersections into account.

**Advocacy for women's rights:** Feminist movements have fought for legal and political reforms that recognize and protect women's rights, including the right to vote, access to education and healthcare, and freedom from violence and harassment.



**LGBTQ+ rights:** Feminist movements have been instrumental in advocating for LGBTQ+ rights, including the right to marry, adopt children, and be protected from discrimination in the workplace and public life.

**Anti-racism:** Feminism has also worked to address racism and promote anti-racism, particularly in relation to the experiences of women of color. This has included advocating for policies that address the specific needs of marginalized communities and challenging systems and structures that perpetuate inequality.

**Economic justice:** Feminism advocates for economic justice, including equal pay for equal work and policies that support women's economic independence and security.

Overall, feminism has played a vital role in raising awareness of discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, social status, and economic conditions, and in advocating for policies and practices that promote equality, justice, and social change.

### **Feminisms is one of the major field in Women and Society Studies**

Feminism is one of the major fields in Women and Gender Studies. Feminism is a social, political, and cultural movement that advocates equality of the sexes and recognition of women's rights. Feminism has played a significant role in shaping the discourse around gender and sexuality and has led to numerous social, political, and legal changes that have benefited women and other marginalized groups.

Women and Gender Studies is an interdisciplinary field that explores the social, cultural, and political dimensions of gender and sexuality. It examines how gender identities are constructed, and how they intersect with other forms of identity and social inequality, such as race, class, and sexuality. Feminism is a key theoretical and practical framework within Women and Gender Studies, and many courses in the field have focused on feminist theory, feminist activism, and the history of the feminist movement.

Feminism is a broad and diverse movement that aims to promote gender equality and challenge the patriarchal systems of power and oppression. Feminism recognizes that women and other marginalized genders face unique and intersecting forms of discrimination and aims to address these issues through a variety of approaches, including political activism, advocacy, education, and scholarship.

Feminism has evolved over time, and there are several strands of feminist thought, including liberal feminism, radical feminism, socialist feminism, and intersectional feminism. Each of these strands has its own approach and focus; however, they share a commitment to promoting gender equality and challenging systemic oppression.

Feminist scholars and activists have made significant contributions to studies on women and society by highlighting the experiences and perspectives of women and other marginalized genders, critiquing patriarchal power structures and gendered norms, and advocating for policies and practices that promote equity and justice.

### **The overall purpose of the paper**

The overall purpose of women and society is to provide a comprehensive and up-to-date understanding of issues related to feminism, inequality, sexism, racism, ethnic and endogenous differentiation, and their impacts on individuals and society. This study aims to offer both theoretical and practical perspectives on these topics, using real-world examples to illustrate the ways in which gender intersects with other forms of oppression and privilege.

By providing a broad overview of these issues, the discipline seeks to raise awareness and promote understanding of the diverse experiences of women and other marginalized genders and to challenge the power structures that perpetuate inequality and injustice. Through its focus on field reality, this study also offers readers concrete examples of the ways in which these issues play out in everyday life and provides tools and strategies for addressing them.

The purpose of women and society studies is important, as it seeks to promote social justice and equality for all individuals and to provide a valuable resource for scholars, activists, and policymakers working to address issues related to gender, inequality, and social change.

The purpose of studies on Women, Gender and Society is multifaceted and can be summarized by the following major points:

- Examining the experiences of women and other marginalized genders: Women and Gender Studies seek to explore the social, cultural, economic, and political experiences of individuals who have historically been excluded or marginalized due to their gender identity.
- Critically analyzing power structures: WGS aims to critically analyze the power structures that shape these experiences and to understand how gender intersects with other aspects of identity (such as race, class, and sexuality) to create unique experiences of oppression and privilege.
- Challenging traditional academic disciplines: Women and Gender Studies emerged in response to the lack of attention paid to the experiences of women and other marginalized genders in traditional academic disciplines. The field seeks to challenge and expand our understanding of gender and power and to provide a more inclusive and comprehensive view of the world.
- Promoting social justice and equality: WGS is grounded in a commitment to social justice and equality for all individuals regardless of gender identity. This field seeks to increase awareness of the diversity of women's experiences, examine the intersections of gender with other forms of oppression, and promote gender equity and social change.

Overall, the purpose of this paper is to provide a critical lens through which to view the world and promote a more inclusive and equitable society for all individuals.

The representation and roles of women in society have indeed undergone significant changes over time, but gender-based inequalities and discrimination that stem from historically sexist beliefs and practices are still prevalent in many areas of society.

Despite advances in gender equality, women still face challenges and barriers in areas such as employment, education, politics, and even in their personal lives. Stereotypes and biases continue to influence how women are perceived and treated, limiting their opportunities and potential (Brabeck and Brown 1997, Brunell, and Elinor 2019, Chodorow 1989, 1991, Collins and Bilge 2016, Collins 1990, DeVault 1996, 1999, Haraway 1988, Hawkesworth, 2006, Susan 2000, Chafetz 1997, Repo 2020, Juschka 2016, Warren and Cheney 1991, Millett 1969).

It is essential to recognize and address these inequalities to create a more just and equal society. We must continue to challenge sexist beliefs and practices and promote gender equality, inclusion, and diversity in all aspects of society.

### **A self-reflection-patriarchy is a significant obstacle to women's advancement and development.**

**Case Study:** *In my social, environmental, and educational trajectory from the date my memory begins, as I remember the social events from my primary schooling days to date. As usual, as part of my socialization, at home my parents, grandparents, relatives, siblings, neighbors, my playmates, and my surroundings tried to teach me how to live in a stratified, classified, caste, race, and ethnically divided unequal, gender bios and sexist patriarchy society.*

*They also tried to impart ways to maintain social harmony with each other, where societal norms and values were primarily imposed by the elite high caste males and reinforced by females. I always wondered, why all my friend's parents did not equally participate in various social and cultural events and why even an elderly senior of low caste origin used to salute me or used to say JADAU (doing salute with enthusiastic respect and honor) to me, though I was below the age of his youngest grandchildren. Now I know this is primarily due to the prevalent social structuring of our society based on caste, where some individuals are privileged simply because they were born to a so-called high caste family and others were born to a so-called low caste family. Not only that, but I have also seen familial or social boycotting/out casting of my maternal aunt (as for all woman) once every month for about four days for the reason of her physiological menstrual cycle. Firstly, she was considered impure and thus was treated as untouchable and could not touch water and water sources during this period. There was the problem of water collection. Secondly, she could not enter the house and she could not cook food in the kitchen and perform other household chores. During this period, she was not supposed to touch anything that is in liquid*

*form despite her being a major labor force to conduct household chores and maintain the house. Another indirect issue associated with this periodic menstrual cycle for a newly married woman was family distress. The underlining fact was the fear of physical and mental preparedness to have a baby. My uncle and aunt had no children for a long time for which aunty was blamed. I think my grandparents might have held the hope of conceiving a baby with their daughter-in-law, and when there was a regular period cycle in her, I think, they felt hopelessness, and my aunty was blamed. Even having a baby on time was not an issue. The sex of a newly born baby mattered, and boys were expected over girls. That conflict remained in the family until my uncle and aunty had a baby boy after decades of their marriage.*

*Primarily, my young brain was disturbed due to unseemly, divided society due to the haves and have not a situation of the society, and the divisions created in the name of tradition, culture, religion, and other social systems – norms, values, regulations, and rules. On the one hand, my surroundings were enforcing me to mingle or merge within the existing social systems; on the other hand, my inner self was questioning “why we all are not equal, why we all do not have the same access to social events, education, labor, food and even in shelters” and “also why society is giving more priority and love to me and why not to girls of my age (like Indira, Yogi. Kali, Bhunti). Why did even the elderly or senior people of the low caste family in our community treat me as the son of a so-called privileged high caste family? Why my aunt was not equally treated at home and my parents repeatedly called her PARAYA DHAN (the property of someone else- since my uncle and she had the same parents (my grandparents). I was deeply shocked all the time without any clear answer- why there was unequal treatment between brothers and sisters. Why sisters were not the priority of education? As soon as I was able to have some courage to ask questions, first, I asked my grandfather, why they blamed my aunty (his daughter-in-law) who had not committed any mistake? Why does my uncle have an education option and why not for my aunty (though both were his children)? My grandfather never responded to my questions, and he always just praised me without any reason. I was not happy with such praise at all. However, nobody answered my questions.*

*My uncle was a schoolteacher. I thought he would answer, but he also simply replied that I was too young to discuss those matters. I asked those questions to my primary and secondary school teachers, as I grew up. However, no one gave me a clear answer to why there was inequality. What is a society and why the social system is not equal for everybody? Time never stops, it was time to join high school; however, the closest high school was within three hours of walking - one way. I wanted to continue my studies and decided to join the school. My family members did not oppose my decision. However, I was the only student from my village who chose the six-hour-long walk. Although there were several children my age, no one preferred to take the risk of six hours every day walk to school. I still wonder why none of the children of my age joined that educational journey to school.*

*During the three years of walking for school from the home village to the school, I saw such inequality in every step of my social, economic, political, and religious life. Even I saw such inequality in school because there were no female teachers in middle and high schools. I was surprised, and I raised that question in the school, too. No one answered. There was a hostel in the school but only for boys. I wanted to know the cause of this problem, once I reached grade ten, I asked the principal about this situation of inequality in society. I also asked him, is there any subject that addresses these issues? He told me ‘Yes and said that at college-level there is a subject called SOCIOLOGY. So, that was the first time I heard about this term. After three-four attempts, I passed high school, and I joined the college. There was no sociology subject; however, I went to India for undergraduate college and took sociology as one of the subjects of my preference. I discontinued and continued with so many trajectories; however, after several years, I completed my doctorate in sociology. I must state that, still, the question of how, and why society has been biased, unequal, and uneven in economic, social, political, and religious systems are the subject matters of my research.*

*We learn from culture, traditions, education, and particularly through societal practices. Even if we do not agree with the situation, our mental and behavioral patterns become the same as we see and practice through our surroundings. I must acknowledge that I also built with the same male-centric, patriarchal mentality and behavior. Therefore, my behaviors were and still are unknowingly biased. Now, I feel that I might not have given*

*the same importance to my grandmother, my mother, aunts, my sisters, and my female friends' circle as I valued to grandfather, father, uncles, brothers, and male friends. Also, I must confess that, I might not give the equal rights to my wife in family decision making, and I might have imposed my male-centric decisions in all social (son's or daughter marriage), economic (purchasing of land, house building, loan, donation, saving, bank account holding, etc.,) and educational matters (the choice of schooling for son and daughter). I must confess that through my behavior I might have been hurting many of my heartily closed ones including my mother, sisters, my daughters, daughters-in-law, and my wife. I feel that I might have expressed my biased behaviors and hurt them directly or indirectly. Therefore, foremost, I beg for forgiveness from all of you for my every biased action, reaction, and behavior throughout my life. I am indebted to you all, especially those who have to face my erratic behavior in day-to-day life as my narrow and extended family members. As a by-product of the patriarchal, stratified, classified, caste, race, ethnically divided unequal society, I cannot say that all my misbehaves were unintentional, however, now I accept all of my mistakes and I hereby plead for my guilt and beg for removal of all debts on me and pardon and forgive (case study was adopted from the Bhandari, Medani (2023 xi). Further, I would state that it is unfortunate that gender inequality and discrimination continue to persist in various forms and contexts, despite progress that has been made in recent years. Indeed, understanding the historical and cultural factors that have contributed to such inequalities is essential to address them effectively. It is important to acknowledge and challenge the social norms, beliefs, and practices that perpetuate gender-based discrimination, including the prioritization of one gender over another in various spheres of life. Efforts to promote gender equality and empower girls and women must involve not only legal and policy changes, but also changes in attitudes and behaviors, starting from the individual level. Everyone has a role to play in creating a more equitable and inclusive society, and it is crucial to work together towards this goal.*

On the basis of above listed story, I would also like to note that, the role of social scientists is crucial and important because we belong to the varieties of complicated social, cultural, religious, economic, political, traditional, etc. systems and our role is to reveal the positive and negative reality of this system and contribute for the betterment of the society directly or indirectly. Therefore, we must accept and acknowledge that- many heads have worked extremely hard to bring us as sensible and responsible humans. We should not feel shame, to tell the truth, and should not be scared to find the truth and produce the truth. Social scientists are those who understand the societal trajectory and thrive for social justice, wellbeing, inclusive and equitable society, and rational social change. Therefore, social scientists need to understand the social theories, applicable methods, and actual systems of the society as the body of knowledge - the mind (theories), methods (the pathways of research), and the heart part (the knowledge itself of the society). Until or unless we do not find our niche and the grounded reality of our surroundings, the sociological knowledge we possess cannot contribute to a meaningful social change and cannot reveal the underlined facts of the social system.

This study is also an understanding of social feminist theories within science domain, which provides a shallow answer to thirst for knowledge of women and society. I hope this study will increase the thirst for knowledge and help to conduct research and bridge the knowledge gap. I feel that we have not been able to explore our social theories, which are grounded more in ethical, traditional, spiritual, and harmonious structures. We have to reveal the reality of our path of knowledge, which holds thousands and thousands of years of history of epistemology. However, I think this study could provide the pathways to begin to search for theorists who build our society, and we never recognized them.

### **Main scope of the women and society studies**

This subject explores the women's experiences and perspectives, which provides valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities that women face in different societies and cultures. This helps raise awareness about issues such as gender inequality, gender-based violence, and discrimination, and can contribute to ongoing discussions about how to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. In terms of the scope, this study on women and society in general, covers a wide range of topics, including but not limited to:



Women's history and contributions to society; gender-based violence and discrimination; women's health and reproductive rights; role in the workplace and the economy; political participation and leadership; education and access to information; rights and legal frameworks

role in the family and in caregiving; cultural and social roles; women's activism and social movements; intersectionality and the experiences of women with diverse identities; future prospects for women's rights and gender equality etc.

This subject is important for anyone interested in promoting gender equality and social justice. They can help readers understand the complex issues facing women around the world and inspire action towards positive change. Women and society studies can draw on a range of disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, history, political science, economics, literature, and cultural studies. It can also encompass interdisciplinary approaches that incorporate feminist theory and methodology. This can be other steps of understanding the epistemology of women and society studies.

Women and society studies covers varieties of topics including theories of practices on women and societal studies including feminism in social sciences with focus on social sciences. The study covers a broad range of important societal topics related to gender and feminism. It is a valuable resource for individuals who are interested in learning more about these issues and their impact on society as a whole. It can provide insights into the historical and cultural factors that have contributed to inequality and sexism, as well as feminist theories and practices that aim to address these issues. This field of studies is beneficial for a wide range of stakeholders who are concerned with promoting social justice and equality.

## **Conclusion**

The "Women and Society" discipline has a significant importance and scope as it aims to bridge the knowledge gap on various aspects related to gender roles, patriarchal cultural systems, development of feminist theories, women empowerment, and societal equity. Understanding the gender roles assigned to women in different societies and cultures is crucial in identifying the existing inequalities and the root causes of gender discrimination. This subject serves as a platform to raise awareness about these issues and highlights the need for change.

Patriarchal cultural systems have been one of the major barriers to gender equality. It perpetuates gender stereotypes and biases, which have a negative impact on women's lives. The subject provides insights into the workings of such systems and the ways to challenge them.

Feminism theories have played a significant role in advancing the rights and opportunities for women. The coverage of the development of feminist theories could help readers understand how these theories have evolved and how they continue to shape the women's rights movement.

Women empowerment and societal equity are two key themes that appears to focus on. Empowering women through education, employment opportunities, and other means is essential for achieving gender equality. At the same time, ensuring societal equity by eliminating discrimination and biases is equally important.

I am hopeful that this general introduction of women and society topic has a wide-ranging scope, covering various aspects related to women's rights and gender equality. By bridging the knowledge gap, it could help promote greater understanding and awareness of these issues and pave the way for a more equitable and just society.

## **The future direction of Women and Society Studies**

The field of women and society studies is poised to continue its significant contribution to shaping our understanding of gender, feminism, intersectionality, and social progress. The importance of this field lies in its ability to explore the historical, social, cultural, and economic factors that shape the experiences of women, as well as to identify the ways in which gender inequality persists and intersects with other forms of oppression. Despite progress, discrimination against women remains a major problem globally. Women still face



discrimination in areas such as education, employment, and access to healthcare, and they continue to be disproportionately affected by poverty and violence. Addressing discrimination requires a multifaceted approach that includes legal and policy changes, social and cultural transformations, and grassroots activism.

A self-reflection on patriarchy as a significant obstacle to women's advancement and development is also a key area of inquiry in women and society studies. Patriarchy reinforces gender stereotypes and perpetuates the idea that women are inferior to men. Understanding how patriarchal systems operate and how they can be challenged is essential for achieving gender equality.

In terms of scope, the field of women and society studies encompasses a wide range of topics, including but not limited to, women's history, feminist theory, gender and sexuality, intersectionality, and women's empowerment. The field is multidisciplinary, drawing on insights from sociology, anthropology, history, political science, and other disciplines. The scope of this study will focus on the key themes of feminism, gender inequality, historical perspective, intersectionality, empowerment, social progress, major problems of discrimination, addressing discrimination, and a case study of self-reflection on patriarchy as an obstacle to women's advancement and development. The women and society studies are one that is grounded in the continued exploration and understanding of the diverse experiences of women across the globe, as well as the continued identification and challenge of gender inequality and discrimination.

The Women and Society Studies is important for several reasons. Firstly, the field contributes to our understanding of gender inequality and the ways in which it operates in different societies and cultures. This understanding is crucial for identifying and addressing the barriers that prevent women from fully participating in social, economic, and political life.

Secondly, Women and Society Studies provides a platform for exploring the intersectionality of gender with other forms of oppression, such as race, class, and sexuality. This intersectional approach acknowledges that individuals experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and disadvantage, which need to be addressed through comprehensive and inclusive policies and interventions.

Thirdly, Women and Society Studies helps to identify and challenge the cultural and social norms that perpetuate gender inequality and restrict women's opportunities for empowerment and advancement. This is important for creating a more just and equal society, where all individuals can reach their full potential.

The Women and Society Studies is also relevant for societal development. By understanding the experiences and perspectives of women, policymakers and practitioners can develop more effective policies and programs that are responsive to women's needs and aspirations. This can contribute to the economic, social, and political development of communities and societies.

For instance, research has shown that investing in girls' education and women's economic empowerment can lead to significant social and economic benefits, including reducing poverty, improving health outcomes, and promoting sustainable development. Women and Society Studies can provide insights into the factors that enable or hinder such interventions and help to develop more effective strategies for achieving gender equality and promoting women's empowerment.

In conclusion, Women and Society Studies is vital for advancing gender equality, promoting social justice, and achieving sustainable development. By providing insights into the diverse experiences and perspectives of women, the field can contribute to creating more inclusive and equitable societies, where all individuals can reach their full potential.

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