



RESEARCH PAPER

**Feminism and Women Empowerment: Ambiguities and Conflicts of
Feminism in Pakistan**

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ABSTRACT

Feminism has largely been considered an alien concept in the non-west, contrary to indigenous traditions and norms. Western feminism colonial intrusion is easily discredited as an attack on the cultural authenticity of non-west societies and a corrupting influence. The paper is an effort to frame women's concerns in the context of their situation rather than with reference to the standard set by western feminism. This is a qualitative theoretical study that uses the methodology of discourse analysis and implies the theoretical framework to analyze feminism's conflicting perceptions and perspectives in Pakistan. This paper seeks to examine the diverse voices and lived experiences of women and answers the questions of how western discourses are devoid of issues and lived experiences of the women of third-world countries as well as how western feminism is different from eastern feminism in narratives, demands, and needs. Empowerment through feminism activism in Pakistan which is the phenomenon of this study analyzes the structural description enlightens the interpretative process and emphasizes on 'how this phenomenon is realized by the women.

KEYWORDS

Eastern Feminism, Feminism, Pakistan, Western Feminism, Women Activism, Women Empowerment

Introduction

Positivists have a crucial role in research independence but in theoretical debate, post-positivists are credited for the practicality of theories and knowledge. The feminism debate is a struggle to achieve end goals and reject the oppression (individual, institutional, social/cultural) of the patriarchal system practiced in societies. Post-Positivists emphasize the background knowledge and values of a theory that is influenced by researchers (McNabb, 2004). The debate of feminism started in USA and UK was that time the motto and goals were according to the ground realities and the social system of states. Feminism movements achieved the maximum of their demands in the early 20th century.

This research has three sections, the first section introduces the concept of feminism, the second section discusses the status of women in western world countries and the third section examines the women's role in Pakistan. Next, the last part compares the status of women in developed and developing states in post-modern and post-structural theoretical debates. The ending part detects gender roles in society and

the cons of the erroneous connotation of feminism. This paper compares the western feminism model and eastern feminism model and the implications of the models based on cultural differences.

Literature Review

Feminism is a modern and broader concept firstly used in the 1830s by Charles Fourier and later in France by Hunburtine Auclert in her Journal *La Citoyenne* as *La Feminitè* in the 1880s. Feminism can define through historical events and development. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie a Nigerian writer defines feminism in her book “we should be all feminists” as “Feminism means the participation of men and women on an equal basis in social, political and economic courses (Adichie, 2014). Bell Hooks in her book “Feminism is for everybody: Passionate Politics” define feminism as a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression (Hooks, Bell, 2000).

Feminism is not a simple notion it is dynamic in nature and it evolves us all and shaped various lenses people use to view themselves and the world at large. Simply, people can say that feminism is a study of women’s equal rights as men as well as feminist moments. A woman who believes and struggles for the sexes in social, political, and economic equality is known as a Feminist. This research study provides basic concepts of feminism to better understand the subject. Sex is something biological characteristic of a person, Gender role refers to socially constructed characteristics, behavior, and expectations for a person. Gender identity is a psychological sense of oneself as male or female (Adam & Griffin, 2007). Now the coming section discusses the historical events of feminism discourse.

Feminism links to the Santa Falls Convention-1948 and the aim was the abolition of slavery and to discuss the political, social, and economic rights of women. The feminism thesis is defined in three waves. The first wave movement started in the late 19th through early 20th centuries and the famous name of feminists are Elizabeth Candy Stanton, Matilda Joslyn Gage, and Susan B. Anthony. This wave aimed to deal mainly with equal rights for women, suffrage, and education. The Second wave (the 1960s to 1980s) movement aimed to deal with inequality laws, cultural inequalities, and the role of women in society. The key concern of this wave was i) raising questions about sexism and patriarchy, ii) raising voice against gender-based violence and domestic abuse iii) sexual liberation of women. This wave also tinted on seeking sisterhood and solidarity in nations and also claimed that women’s struggle was a class struggle (Rampton, 2008). The famous name and works of this wave were *The Feminine Mystique* emphasizes on equal rights by Betty Friedan, and the second sex discusses the role played by the sociocultural environment by Simon de Beauvoir. Kate Millett theorized about women’s oppression in *Sexual politics*. The third wave (1990-2000) was a continuation of the second wave and a response to the failures in the postmodern view. The key concern of the third wave was to involve women of diverse status, change the portrayal of media and stereotypes about women, and change the constructed identity about women’s roles and intersectionality. The notable name of this wave was Allison Wolfe, Anita Hill, and Rebecca Walker.

Theoretically, the purpose of these waves was to tint the feminism debate at the world level and ensure a change in the discipline of anthropology. Feminism debate tends to ensure the equality and equity of women in all disciplines and reconstruct the societal norms and gender roles in society. Third-wave movements were spread globally and they involved the women of Asia and Africa in the race for women’s rights. By the end of the 20th century, there were numerous notable works available on

feminism and gender equality that describe the actual aim of feminism theory. Like every subject, feminism also has its core concepts and theories. For a better understanding of feminism, this research study divides feminism and feminists' discourse into three major concepts. The coming section discusses the theoretical framework.

Material and Methods

This is qualitative interpretative research that uses the methodology of discourse analysis. Primary data sources are newspapers, and websites and secondary data sources are books, research articles, and official publications.

Theoretical Framework

Liberal Feminism is a moderate traditional perspective of feminism and started in the 18th century in Europe as the first wave movement. It claims that women are equal to men and that states need to extend rights and privileges to women to give them equal status in liberal states. Tong argues that "society has a false belief that women are less intellectual and physically capable than men by nature. Its emphasis is on individual liberty, autonomy, diversity, and rights. Liberal feminists show discrimination in political and economic equality. The main claim of this thought is that women are human beings, not sexual beings they also have wishes, they are rational creatures as well as liberals accept the sex role and household tasks. In USA and UK, liberal women broke the stereotypes and get jobs in the male dominant society. In developed states, women are working in all types of affairs political, economic, social, legal, and policy making. This thought summarizes that liberals campaign the equal rights and opportunities for women within the framework of a liberal state (Tong, 2009).

The Marxist/Socialist feminism lens emphasizes equal pay and the destruction of capitalist society. Socialist feminists claim that women can achieve true freedom of working by the end of oppression which is economic and cultural. Marxist feminists try to destroy the capitalist system and speak upon the issues of unequal pay, lack of family-friendly policies, and issues of higher education. In short, Marxist and socialist theorists link gender discrimination and women's oppression to the capitalist system and the division of labor (Hague & Carruthers, 1981).

Radical Feminism lens is a most diverse extreme form of feminism. It claims that liberal and Marxist feminism is not enough to address the issues of feminism. Radical feminists view women's oppression as a result of male domination and the values assign to women by patriarchy. The exploitation of women's rights is lying in sexual oppression. Radical feminism attempts to draw lines between biologically-determined behavior and culturally-determined behavior to free both men and women as much as possible from their previous narrow gender roles. The problem is not in feminism, the problem is the patriarchal system which assigns less value to women in a society (Walby, 2011).

Muslim feminism seeks to achieve liberty, rights, and equality according to religious teachings. Muslim or Islamic feminists emphasize establishing a social and political system that is based on Islamic principles and entails the Quranic Principles and instructions of gender equality. Islamic feminists want their rights, liberty, and equality as mentioned in Quran and Islam.

There are more concepts of feminism in literature like *Ecofeminism* claims that patriarchal philosophies are harmful to women, children, and other living things. These feminists focus on racism issues and the destruction of women worldwide by patriarchy. They demand that women must be independent economically from men (Gilman, 1911). *Black feminism* argues that women are oppressed and this oppression is a combination of sexism, racism, classism, and heterosexism (Wheeler, 2002).

In short, feminism is referred to a debate about equality, women's liberation, gender roles, and gender-based violence. Some theorists discuss it in post-modernism and post-structuralist contexts. The term feminism is not limited to three ideas nowadays it is divided into diverse concepts and turned into an academic discipline. Feminism uses the psychoanalysis technique to reassess the concept in the western world. Psychoanalysis is the concept of Freudian feminism which added scientific justification to claim female oppression and the significance of psychology. The second technique is Lacan's feminism of structural identities of genders. The main aim of psychoanalysis feminism is to analyze the mindset of society and how she treats and behaves with women. This technique is deeply concerned with sexism, gender, sexuality, family relations, and constructed identities (Freud, 1900).

This research intends to discuss the actual connotation of feminism. The analytical analysis provides the best concerns of a theory as it is a western thought which makes it different from the other states because the core values of peoples and states are different and diverse. Post-Positivist debates ensure the ground realities to practice a theory in general. So, this research examines the status of women or feminism in developed and developing countries. This case study argues that the implication of feminism discourse in developing countries is portrayed destructively and people are misusing the concept by their end means. For, this the coming section discusses the status of women or feminism in the western world/ developed countries and analyzes the core values of feminism according to their demands, culture, and ground realities.

Western Feminism: Status of Women in Developed Countries

Numerous questions are raised about feminism like its meaning. How do we understand feminism across national boundaries? Across the ethnicity? Across the culture? Across the psyche of humans? What is it in the anthropological debate? To understand debate this research study seeks to analyze western feminist thoughts, their struggles for women's rights, the status of women in western countries, and their social, cultural, and psychological order. As stated earlier, feminism or women's movements started early twentieth and was that time political and intellectual vivacity was suspicious. *Betty Frieden* was the founder of the second-wave movements and the women's liberation movement. This movement struggled for equal rights for women to live, independent and free lives. The second wave struggle makes feminism an essentialist approach due to its diversity in nature which was not defined well. This essentialist behavior of feminism contradicts the post-modern and post-structuralist feminists' theories. In this perspective, a particular challenge faced by post-modernist and post-structuralist feminism is how to undo the essential or natural conception of self, while simultaneously maintaining the category "women" which feminism necessarily requires (Beck, Bonss, & Lau, 2003).

The essentialist feminist theory claims a lack of intellectuality in feminism so it is criticized as "Empirical studies conducted from a range of theoretical perspectives (radical, socialist and liberal feminist) have all in some way affirmed the existence of women's experience as a source of privileged understandings, if not the basis of

alternative social science. Now, however, the deconstruction of 'women' is having profoundly destabilizing effects upon feminist theorizing and research. . . This has liberated a plethora of exciting philosophical, political, and cultural endeavors that tackle the essentialism around women embedded in both feminist and non-feminist texts (Hopkins, 2018). This perspective leads to western where this feminism started and spread across the culture. In this regard, empirical analysis demands the knowledge of the political, cultural, anthropological, gender roles and societal order of western countries. This section provides the core values of the subject in western states.

Hester Eisenstein and *Alice Jardine* defined western feminism as "Western culture has proven to be incapable of thinking not-the-same without assigning one of the terms a positive value and the other, a negative. The response to difference on the part of women varies: some exalt it by embracing certain biology – and a certain eroticism. Some deny it, or, rather, seek to defuse the power of difference by minimizing biology and emphasizing cultural coding: on some level, these responses are saying, 'Woman would be the same as . . . if only.' A third strand states, like the first group, that women are indeed different from men, but for feminist reasons they add: women are also *better* than men. This group's reasons would not be biological but sociocultural: as outsiders and nurturers, women do things differently from, and better than, men" (Eisenstein & Jardine, 1988).

First-wave movements highlighted the protection and suffrage of women in the West. Because women were considered a slave and had not any freedom and those stereotypes were based in western culture till the 1950s. Lately, the second wave movements changed the dilemma and sighted some major issues like Honor, Killing, Property Rights, Property rights, and Job-related issues. The movements started to gain secure status in society and equal rights in every field. Western culture shifted into the transformation of culture and spread across borders. This women's liberation struggle became a voice of women and broke the societal myths and changed the family order in western culture. The third wave gained actual value and made this liberation a subject in anthropology study. The cultural transformation caused the change in societal, constructive, sociological, and behavioral approaches.

Conversely, with the critical state of ladies in creating nations, the condition of ladies in Western nations is currently extraordinary. Young ladies in the United States and Europe are as likely as young fellows to obtain an advanced education. In addition, these higher educations are not restricted to conventional occupations for ladies, for example, education and nursing. Ladies enter graduate school furthermore, a therapeutic school in developing numbers. As of the year 2000, ladies created 47 percent of graduate school understudies in the United States, and 42 percent of lawful guide lawyers furthermore, open safeguards in the United States are ladies (Association, 2000). In Great Britain, ladies make 60 percent out of medicinal school understudies – as numerous as 70 percent at certain colleges. 33% of the expert degrees in law, prescription, and business in North America and Western Europe are currently conceded to ladies. Thus, ladies' portrayal in an open office in these portions of the world has risen significantly (Carvel, 2002). Agreeing to the U.S. Branch of Labor Women's Bureau (2006), 38 percent of working ladies in the United States starting in 2005 held administrative and proficient positions, what's more, 23 percent of CEOs were ladies (Bureau, 2006).

Nowadays this liberation movement gained the name of women's study and feminism in literature. But this study aims to analyze the true, actual and correct connotation of women's study in society. Because this research paper claims that

cultural norms and societal behavior are different in diver's societies and ideologies. The main point of this section is that these movements started in Europe and USA because the women were that time didn't get the status of a human or identity. And the struggle of those women was based on their culture and needs. They were against their societal myths and their patriarchal system that destroyed their identity and value. But the transformation of this subject in other states and societies causes disorder in culture, societal norms, and identity of men and women. Because the ground realities, issues, and demands of other states are different. The coming section discusses the status of women in developing states. The western theories of feminism are western cultured theories and they won't be applicable in other countries and cultures.

Eastern Feminism: Status of Women in developing states

Women's Liberation movements were aimed to ensure the participation of women in society, struggled for women's equal rights as men, and tried to gain identity in the male dominant society. The movement started with primary demands as stated earlier and so on the struggle demands much more from society. In developing countries, women seem less active in state and domestic affairs. This is because of the societal norms and stereotypes of the culture. The debate of developing countries spread the light into many issues like poverty, poor management, economic issues, education issues, Gender development approach, human rights violations, etc. Feminist movements demand freedom and liberty. Democracy and feminism equally crush men and women under the banner of "Freedom" in liberal societies. As Beauvoir criticized the idea organization of society in democratic and neoliberal concepts of governments. She mentioned that the reality of a culture does not the same as ours and it cannot be predicted. For this human needs to study other society, ideology, and culture. In developing countries, the organization of society is much different according to developed countries. The women of developing countries are facing different issues like jobs, Finance, Education, Family, and gender identities. She made clear that women's liberation and feminism is consists of distinct perspectives and values. We need to support feminism from their point of view, instead of imposing a western feminist perspective. The success of some feminists does not compensate for all feminist's demands (Beauvoir, 1949).

From her perspective, Feminism is a diver's course and practice in sets of values according to society. Africa, Somalia, and Muslim states based on religious instructions. In Africa, women do not have the right to private property. In Somalia and other African states, women consider sexual things, in Muslim states, women are facing Honor killing issues, Child marriage issues, and job as well as education issues. So, feminist women need to add their demands according to their culture and societal norms. They don't have to follow western feminism and their perspectives. Developing feminists need to follow their perspective and own demands.

The western model of feminism is contradictive in its nature. Because the theories and variables of Western feminism are different from than eastern model of feminism. Literary analysis of the Feminism model in Eastern states has its requirements and backgrounds of theory. Western writers contend that Western culture and Knowledge is superior and all the theories and Western model is applicable in Non-Western countries. But the empirical study of literature spread light on the contradiction between literature and people's thoughts. The coming part discusses Pakistan's feminism.

Pakistan Feminism: Status of Women in Pakistan

Pakistan is a diverse cultured country that has its own identity, ideology, mix-culture, and cultural norms. The women in Pakistan are Facing issues of Child Marriage, Dowry, gender-based violence, Rape, honor killing, and education. The Islamic ideology, in theory, provides lucrative rights to Muslim women but in practice, the constructive myths and stereotypes violate these rights in developing areas. Now a day's Pakistani women are seen in every field of work and education. In 1962, Ayub Khan passed the family law to ensure women's safety in Pakistan society. Benazir Bhutto also motivated women and support the feminism narrative in Pakistan. In 2006, Pakistan Govt. Passed the Women's Protection Bill to ensure the safety of women and prohibited child marriages and forced marriages. Oscar-winning Feminist Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy made documentaries on Acid throwing as Saving Face in 2012 and on honor killing to stop the violence against women in 2015 (Sarwari, 2016).

Pakistan Feminism has three types Rational feminism, Irrational feminism, and Hyper Feminism. Rational feminism or moderate feminism is working on actual women's rights and representing the real issues. Rational feminism is working on Pakistan culture and their set of perspectives is valid and covers the actual demands of women. Irrational feminism is elite class ladies which are imposing western culture in Pakistan and destroying their cultural identities and disturbing family order. These are following pure western narrative and don't care about the other women. Hyper feminism is timely feminists means desi liberals or so-called liberals appear in any issue and criticize the patriarchal system. These feminists do not follow any scenario like western or eastern. They have their propaganda and issues which makes the chaos of issues in society (Zia, 2017).

In Pakistan, liberal feminism activists are trying to impose a western model of feminism in literature and practical life. There is a need to find the differences in the Western model and the need to make an eastern model of feminism which is based on all its regional realities and culture. The coming section analyzes the implications of feminism in Pakistan society.

Analysis and Findings

This research paper aims to analyze the real connotation of feminism in societies mainly in Pakistan. As stated earlier, Pakistani women have gained many demands and trying to eliminate the stereotypes and myths about women. This paper argues about Pakistan's feminism does not practice the real narrative of feminism.

The world's women's activist artistic analysis mirrors the enlivening of the female character and the success of the female authors' manifestations in this century. In the meantime, such composing is national, since it can't create without the impact of its national culture, and is dependably tuned into national writing. The birthplaces of abstract analysis in Britain, France, and America have made an incredible commitment to the investigation of ladies' writing, yet these particular arrangements of basic hypothesis don't fit eastern women's activist writing. Besides, they are western-focused hypotheses.

Lately, some third-world researchers of women's liberation have called attention to the furthest reaches of western women's activist hypothesis, and underline this is because of the social convention and social frameworks of the creating nations. On such

bases, they stress the distinction between women's activist works and abstract analysis of various countries also.

Western women's activists give incredible consideration to sexual life, sexual traditions, and the effect on ladies of sexual culture: there even showed up a pattern of 'Sexualism'. They wear mutilating focal points while watching the states of the ladies in different nations. For example, the enthusiasm of a considerable number of western women's activist investigations was focused on particular traditions, customary foot binding, female circumcision, and prohibitive clothing standards in some Middle Eastern nations. They view these traditions as images of the ladies' situation in that nation and portrayed them in their artistic works. Such depictions frequently do not have the correct chronicled setting, and mistake antiquated traditions for present-day substances, in this manner regularly reaching false inferences, which they at that point venture onto ladies in the creating nations by controlling world assessment. They generally take the frame of mind of the proprietor of an unrivaled culture, as though the ladies in different nations can't accomplish freedom and cultivated existence without their women's activist speculations. Their neo-provincial frames of mind without a doubt were identified and caused disappointment among the women's activists in creating nations.

In any case, the western women's activists promoted such plans to the world to utilize sisterhood to call the ladies of the world to join in the battle against the male-controlled society. In this course, they disregard the unmistakable political and budgetary interests of the ladies in various nations, which are brought about by the distinctions of race, country, and class.

As a matter of fact, depending on a remote sisterhood, it is difficult to cross the enormous hole in monetary, political, and social interests produced by expansionism. What's more, the ladies in creating nations, need sensible intent to acknowledge such hypotheses.

As of late, an ever-increasing number of women's activist researchers have understood that there is a significant difference in the individual experience, social foundation, and reasonable issues that face ladies in created nations stanzas those in creating nations. This hole frequently surpasses the hole among guys and females brought about by sex contrasts. The hole of physical and social contrasts isn't the entire establishment that prompts ladies' genuine living conditions and such factors regularly produce results through race, class, country, social tradition, and culture. As a rule, the contrasts between races, classes, and societies will straightforwardly control ladies' life and social position. All things considered, there has not yet risen a coordinated women's activist hypothesis which can incorporate every one of the races, classes, and national and social interests, nor has there been a women's activist association that can all-inclusive incorporate ladies' musings, expressions, and practices. On such a premise, women's liberation will unavoidably create in a few ways. In the meantime, the encounters and sentiments of ladies in creating nations just as the limiting elements of history, society, and culture have started to be taken care of and even given significance.

Pakistani Society has a strong culture and family order. Rational feminists understand the nature of issues and gender role issues in Pakistan society. So, they demand basic needs and do not disturb the gender roles in society. But irrational feminists disorder the literature of feminism and disturb the family order. They are also upsetting the gender roles and identities of Pakistan society. Elite feminists have different issues regarding their status but middle-class women demand something

rational. By applying the western perspective this class is destroying culture and shifting it in a worst or new way. Pakistan society demands something lucrative and rational; it also has its narrative and ideology. The best way to gain maximum from it needs to study the culture and actual narrative of feminism. Then feminists need to make a road map of demands and way of work. Western perspective is hard to implement in Pakistan society due to its Islamic ideology and cultural ground realities. The findings of this study are:

- Every society has its own cultural and societal demands and any struggle needs to base on its societal narratives.
- By applying the western culture, Pakistan feminists are destroying their own culture and gender identities.
- Family order in Pakistan society is fully supportive and working finely but by western culture, these implications destroy it and makes chaos.
- The demands of western women are different from Pakistan women.
- The dilemma of narratives based on ground realities and Pakistan's societal narrative is different from the western narrative.

Conclusions

This paper tries to analyze the true meaning of feminism and how it can be exercised in different societies. For this western feminism provides some arguments that any study and theory have its background according to its place of origin. The theoretical implications are different in different places. Pakistan Feminists are following the wrong agenda and descriptions which are based on their will and interests. The propagating implications of the theory are making the worst scenario of the study. Pakistan feminists need to study their own culture, and literature and then demand women according to Pakistan society. When family and societal order disturbs then the domestic violence increases. the conflict emerged among feminist's groups because a large number of feminists reclaim feminism within a religious cosmos of multiple meanings. Islam is the principal reality within which most Pakistani women live their lives. Therefore, women perceive their rights within Islamic frameworks and oppose any other non-Islamic agenda and rights. Thus, this divides feminists into major two groups: secular and religious Islamic feminist groups, in Pakistan. Feminism has largely been considered an alien concept in the non-west, contrary to indigenous traditions and norms. Western feminism colonial intrusion is easily discredited as an attack on the cultural authenticity of non-west societies and a corrupting influence. The efforts to frame women's concerns in the context of their situation rather than concerning the standard set by western feminism. In non-west societies especially Muslim, religion inevitably plays a vital role in shaping the feminist's struggle and enterprise, seeking the possibility and desirability of Islamic feminism arise. Islamic feminists employ the strategy of reinterpretation of the Teachings of the Quran, and argue that the problems faced by women in Muslim societies are generally the result of misguided male interpretations of the principles of Islam. Muslim feminists believe that women can become a powerful source of gender justice if a woman-centered re-reading of Islamic sources is conducted. In sum, Pakistani feminist groups belonging to middle-poor-class reject the western model as has been seen in response to Aurat March activism, and the majority of women have rejected, criticized, and perceive it as a western import agenda to destroy the local cultural values and norms as well as contrary to the women actual

demands and issues. Therefore, this paper suggests all feminist groups need to create harmony by uniting themselves under common goals and inspirations. Until all the groups are separated then there is no progress and empowerment for women. There is a dire need for unity among feminist groups, to establish a model - based on local values, norms, and principles- and framework which entails the notions -voices, and narratives- of all and works as a collective group for collective goals, leading them to women's empowerment.

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