Exploring Feminism Through Students' Perceptions and Attitudes

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Abstract

The goal of the study is to explore the views and opinions of students by investigating their perceptions of key issues concerning gender equality and feminism and to determine the relationship between gender and opinion on these issues in one of the central universities of India.

A convenience sampling-based quantitative investigation was conducted. The study's findings revealed that the majority of respondents were male and female students who supported and strongly agreed with key issues of gender equality and feminism, demonstrating that education does have a positive effect on their attitudes. On the other hand, female respondents showed more supportive behavior than males. Nevertheless, this reflects two simultaneous processes going on at the same time. One of these processes is the increasing education of the younger generation, which signifies movement towards modernization. On the other hand, being a student of the social science faculty, where both male and female student are already familiar with the topics through their course curriculum; they displayed a less favorable attitude and showed a feeble opinion towards feminism.

Keywords: Students, Perceptions, Course-curriculum, Feminism, Gender equality

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important social theorists, Judith Butler (1991), argues that gender is not an indication of performing in certain manners. It pertains to embracing and understanding about particular standards of gender, as well as being involved with behaviors that represent these standards. These actions support the primacy that underlies gender categories. In this way, practicing gender promotes the view that gender has been separated into two mutually distinct categories.

Gender equality means providing a comparable chance for men and women to make use of all of their human rights while also contributing to and benefiting from economic, social, cultural, and political development. It focuses on women and men holding equal roles in their households, communities, and societies. Equality between men and women begins with a fair treatment of girls and boys. (Mathu and Jain, 2008).

According to Kohli (2007), the fundamental reason of gender equality in Indian society is deeply rooted in its patriarchal system. Sociologist Sylvia Walby defines patriarchy as "a system of social structure and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women". Daily behaviors are influenced by patriarchal gender standards that validate masculinity in society, assigning women to subordinate roles.

Altering gendered standards and mindsets could address fundamental imbalances across all sectors of Indian society. Vyas et al. (2020) concurred that mindsets must be addressed in order to encourage sustained progress in India's gender equality settings, while there are indications that gender awareness raising initiatives can help. (Gressel et al, 2023).

Gender equality and feminism have arisen as important concepts for debate and social change in recent years. Promoting equal rights, opportunities, and representation for all genders is critical to create an inclusive and progressive society. In India, where societal norms and gender dynamics are firmly ingrained, understanding students' attitudes regarding feminism and gender equality is critical for effecting transformative change. Changes in Indian society can be witnessed around us due to increased awareness and dialogue around gender equality and feminism. When talking about awareness then the agents of socialization play an important role in individual life about their role and mold their behavior to function effectively in society. 'There are several agents of socialization that play a role in shaping a person's identity, including family, media, religion, school, and peer groups.' (Ochs, 1999).

Educational institutions have played a pivotal role in promoting gender sensitivity and inclusivity through curriculum reforms, awareness campaigns, and the establishment of gender-focused programs and initiatives. By actively engaging with issues of gender discrimination and inequality, these stakeholders have contributed to creating a more equitable and inclusive society where individuals of all genders have equal opportunities to thrive and contribute to the nation's development. The UGC has advocated the inclusion of gender studies and women's studies programs in the curriculum, as well as the development of Gender Sensitization committees to combat sexual harassment. Another statutory agency, NITI Aayog, has been involved in developing policies and initiatives to promote gender equality and empower women in a variety of areas.

As a result, the current study aims to investigate young people's attitudes regarding feminism and gender equality at the central University in New Delhi, with a focus on three social science faculty departments; gaining insight into students' understandings, ideas, opinions, and support for gender equality and feminism based on the issues covered in their course curriculum. There is an enormous body of literature on gender equality and feminism globally, but it has been evident that there is a significant research gap regarding the perception of students within the context of specific social science faculty who have prior exposure to the gender-related issues in their course curricula. Furthermore, little attention has been given to how students from diverse backgrounds and identities perceive feminism and gender equality where the voices of marginalized groups and intersectionality are increasingly recognized within feminist discourse. There is limited understanding of the effectiveness of educational interventions in shaping student's perceptions towards feminism and gender equality and the impact of existing social concepts in the curriculum, educational practices, gender sensitization programs, and advocacy efforts to foster a more equitable and inclusive environment. Through this research, we seek to understand the perceptions and attitudes of students towards the concept of feminism and gender equality and will reflect on their beliefs and support towards these concepts as they are already exposed to such topics through their course curricula. With these research gaps, the following research questions are:

1. What are the social science students' perspectives and attitudes regarding gender equality and feminism?
2. How do these perceptions vary across genders and attitudes?

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. To determine the perception of students pursuing higher education towards gender equality and feminism.
2. To study the relationship between gender and attitudes towards gender equality and feminism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender Equality, Feminist studies and Education

In the Global Gender Gap Report 2023, India showed significant improvement in its ranking rising from 135th (in 2022) to 127th out of 146 countries, reflecting the concerted efforts of various stakeholders including societies, organizations, and educational institutions to enhance gender equality. This positive shift underscores he collective commitment and the amount of exertion made by advocacy groups, civil society organizations, government policies and programs, institutions, and mass media toward addressing gender disparities and promoting inclusivity across different sectors. Morley (2011) has drawn attention to the increasing importance of 'globally southern' countries with regard to equitable gender frameworks throughout civic life and schooling. (Fontanini, Joshi, and Paivandi, 2020).

The work of Mary Wollstonecraft in the 'A Vindication of the Rights of Women' (1792) highlighted the significance of education. Mary maintained that shaping women with an education would provide them the freedom and autonomy they need to take part fully in societal possibilities. Taylor (2003). The work of eighteenth and nineteenth thinkers such as Mary and Mill challenged some of the social structures of middle-class Western women in their times. Society should allow women to have equal opportunities and independence to that enjoyed by men. (Bowden and Mummery, 2014).

Idea-based sociological constructivism elevates significant ideas across fields in education. (Some examples include part-whole connections in mathematical concepts, photosynthesis in science, and a particular point of view in literature. Such major concepts broaden the student's perceptions and serve as vital foundations for their thinking and social meaning building (Gredlar, 1997). Feminist education must not just criticize oppressive behaviors, but also attempt to promote feminist consciousness in the study of the political system, society, and the field of economics. Feminist pedagogy offers a theory concerning learning, systems where learning takes place, and the participatory production of knowledge. Students collaborate in the formation of knowledge, and the curriculum becomes a blend of reading material and experienced reality. (Rayaprol. 2011).

Students are now much more exposed to critical discussions, debates, and changing their perceptions and attitudes from a traditional mindset towards equality and all this has been the outcome of topics like gender, human rights, social justice, and feminist theories which are included in the course curricula. 'The inculcation of gender equality in education has become emasculated, or certainly, not feminized, by its incorporation into neo-liberal global universities. This idea of gender equality in education has been one of the key international policy changes in the last 25 years, and certainly in the first decade of the twenty-first century in an era of near-global neo-liberalism' (David, 2016).

Gender inequality and prejudice must be addressed through social revolution. In short, people of every age and sexual orientation should be made aware of the inequities they create and adopt an egalitarian perspective (Unutkan et al., 2016). According to Rayaprol (2011), offering a course on gender issues must include the wider feminist goal of promoting gender consciousness among students.

The issue of gender equality in universities, as well as the role of feminist or women's studies, is an extremely contentious one, eliciting strong emotions from both proponents and opponents. The argument

that equality between men and women has been achieved typically relates to the distribution of male and female students pursuing undergrad or graduate courses of study (David, 2015).

As David (2016) has stated there are a lot of evidence now about the continuing richness and vitality of feminist work in and across the globe academy, in the arts, humanities, and social sciences. The third generation represents the 'peak of the wave' in academic feminism, where feminist and gender studies are integrated into undergraduate student curricula (David, 2015).

Perceptions towards Equality & Feminism

Gender equality is not a new idea. What is new is that young people are trying to change how they think about and feel about gender roles. Youngsters have the ability to re-strengthen society, and their views of gender roles, relationships, and discrimination play an important part in gender-inclusive societies if they themselves have gender-inclusive attitudes.

Patel, Santhya, and Haberland (2021) investigated shifting views among teenagers in an increasingly developing country in India. They discovered that girls had higher standards of equality beliefs than boys in both the younger and older cohorts, and this pattern remained consistent across time. Their findings revealed that individual, family, peer, and societal variables, as well as community activity, all had an impact on gender roles and views. (Lalchandani and Pardasani, 2022).

Lalchandani and Pardasani (2022) analyzed the perceptions of youth aged 14 to 19 on roles based on gender and desires for careers. It indicated that both male and female adolescents have a more equitable perspective of each other's roles and responsibilities in terms of personal affairs (marriage, raising a family, and so on) and professional goals.

There have been numerous studies conducted on the incorporation of feminism into course coursework. One of the studies conducted in the UK in 2013 with social work students to learn about their attitudes toward feminism and the perceived importance of feminist theory to the practice of social work revealed that the students support feminism's broad agenda for rights for women and social transformation. (Cree, V. E., and Dean, J. S., 2015).

A different research study, conducted by Gressel et al., (2023), revealed slight prejudices through investigating multifaceted views regarding gender. The study's findings pointed out that while overall responses are gender positive, there are still small variations in gender attitudes and apparent domains which require greater focus and awareness.

As Mackay, Menon, Govinda, and Sen (2020), mentioned the Feminists have significantly impacted educational practice, even though this is generally overlooked in academic studies. Foundational feminist pedagogical principles and practices include the concept of experience as knowledge, reflexivity, situated knowledge, small group discussions and peer-to-peer learning in the classroom, democratic decision-making, and workshop formats. Many of these principles and methods are now integrated into university-wide teaching and learning procedures. In this way, feminist pedagogy makes an indisputable contribution to disciplines, higher education, and knowledge production.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study has been viewed from two theoretical viewpoints. The first one is the intersectionality framework that recognizes the complex and interconnected nature of multiple identities. In the context of this research, intersectionality has allowed us to examine how multiple identities of students shape their perceptions regarding gender equality and feminism. As Crenshaw (1989) emphasizes, individuals' experiences are shaped not only by gender, but also by various other social categories such as race, class,

ethnicity, and religion. This theory aids in understanding the interconnectedness of social personal identities and the effect they have on shaping students' opinions, viewpoints, and beliefs regarding gender equality as well as feminism within the context of learning.

A different theoretical framework is Social Constructivism, which describes the way in which people endeavor to understand their surroundings and create meanings that fit to their experience. Socialization, education, age, and information sources are all factors that influence a person's knowledge. Students' attention to gender issues is essential and their awareness of this is expected to be shaped by various factors related to socialization.

While Vygotsky's (1978) work underscores the relevance of social relationships and cultural settings in influencing an individual's cognitive growth and knowledge of the world. Through the perspective of social constructivism, the influence of educational components, contact with peers and educators, and social standards within the framework of university aids to comprehend the perspectives of the students.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A descriptive research design with a quantitative approach was used to describe the variables and analyze them to determine students' attitudes about gender equality and feminism.

Sample

This study comprised students from three different courses: psychology, sociology, and social work at one of the central Universities in New Delhi, India. This is because prior knowledge of feminism and gender equality may be found in these courses, as their curriculum refers includes these. Participants were chosen based on their willingness and availability.

Tools of Data collection

Data was collected through a Mailed questionnaire. It consisted of twenty questions divided into two sections 'gender equality and 'feminism'. Responses were collected on a Likert scale indicating strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. Sixty-five responses were collected from the selected departments of social science faculty. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants of the study, their consent was solicited, and confidentiality was assured for the responses shared by them.

Data Analysis

Data has been collected and analyzed in a quantitative form. Responses were collected in the form of percentages in Google Forms and for analyses statistical tools, Microsoft Excel has been used. Findings derived from the analyzed percentages have been presented by creating figures in the form of graphs.

FINDINGS

After analysing the data, we found some evidence of subtle sexism and gender-based discrimination which supports the literature on the subject. This surprisingly came from the students who were already familiar with the core concepts of social sciences, such as gender equality and feminism. Despite gaining knowledge on such leading topics, there were different views and opinion of male and female students and less favorable opinion from male students.
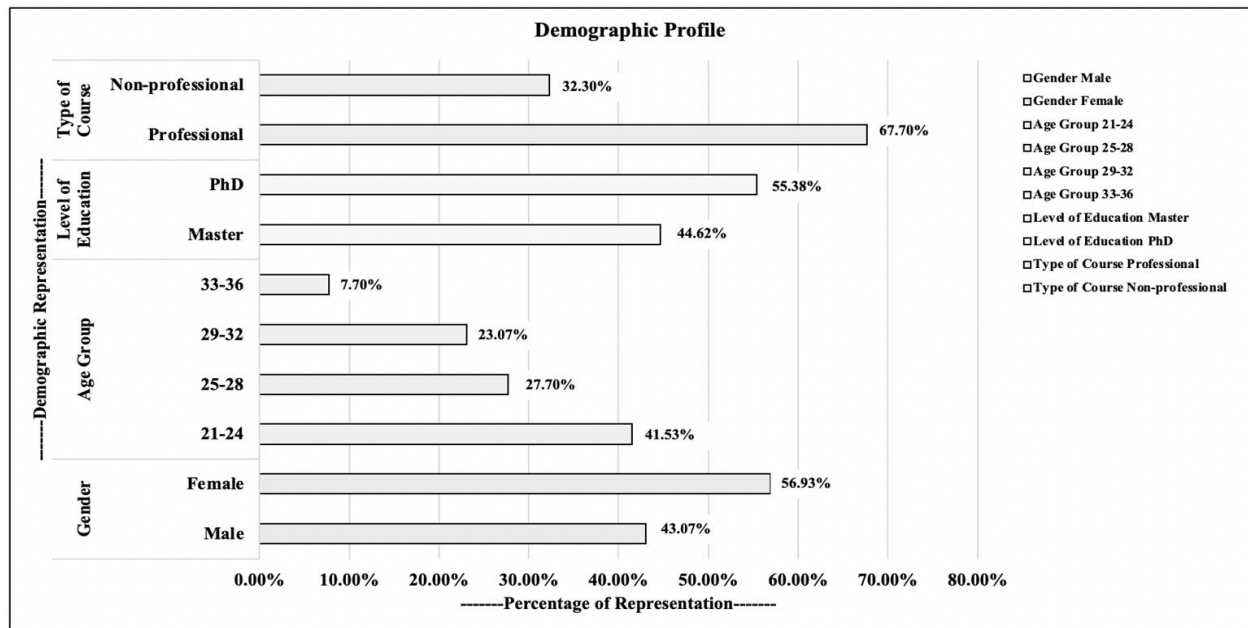
Figure 1: the demographic profile of the students

Figure 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the student hail from three departments of social science faculty (Psychology, Sociology, and Social Work) from the central university of New Delhi, India. Overall, there were 43.07 percent of male participants and 56.93 percent of female participants come under the age group of 21- 36 years. Most of the participants come within 21-24 years of age. Lastly, level of education showed that 44.62 and 55.38 percent of participants in the sample were enrolled in master's and PhD courses, respectively.

Mentioned below are the descriptive major findings:
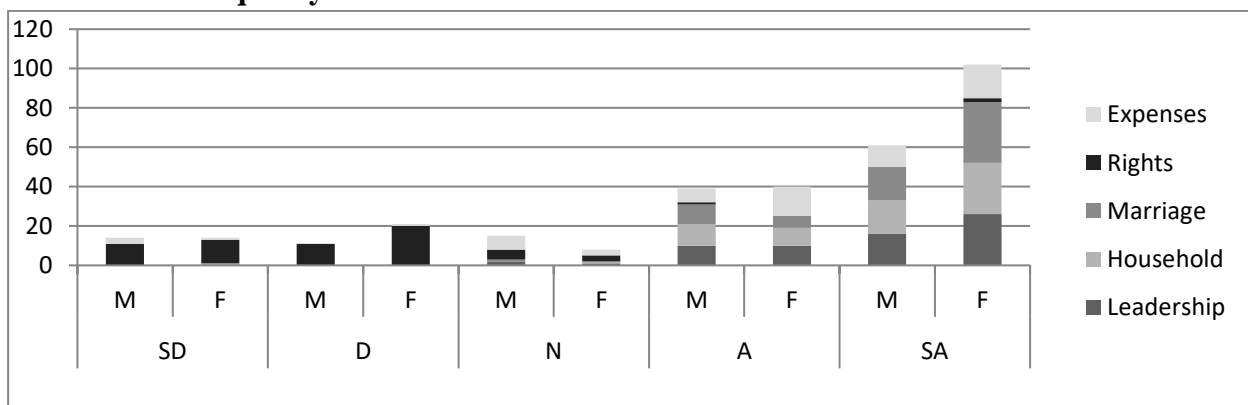
Section I: Gender Equality

Figure 2: findings on five questions of gender roles

The above figure represents the findings on five questions under 'gender equality' on leadership roles, sharing household tasks, freedom to propose marriage, rights and household responsibilities and expense sharing.

1. Leadership Roles

The term "leadership" has been formally defined in terms of qualities, behaviors, influence processes, po-

wer, politics, authority, change, goal achievement, management, and transformation, among other topics. (Klenke, 2004).

In this study, findings showed that out of 65 respondents, N=42 respondents strongly agreed comprising of 16 male and 26 female respondents the statement that women should take responsibility for leadership. There are various studies which are empirical evidence that female leadership is distinguished by an entrepreneurial spirit, the ability to form work teams, and the ability to make judgments in times of crisis (Acevedo-Duque et al., 2021). Within the domestic setting, women are deemed capable of self-organization, family activity planning, and dealing with hardship (Vimal et al., 2021).

2. Household Tasks

Gender roles are important in understanding the work-home interaction because they are based on socially created assumptions applied to individuals based on their gender and underpin various cultural divisions of labor (Wood & Eagly, 2010). Another study done by Rajendran and Raya (2010) discovered that spouses' educational levels have a considerable impact on the distribution of household work, indicating a strong link between men's education and their participation in domestic activities. However, their research found that in rural India, the extent to which husbands share home tasks is limited, with only 25% actively participating in domestic work. This finding is consistent with my research, in which 43 respondents comprising 17 male and 26 female strongly agreed that males should undertake household activities, emphasizing the disparity between beliefs toward gender roles and actual sharing of domestic responsibilities.

3. Freedom To propose Marriage

Gupta (1976) stated that, while most Indian marriages are arranged, the opinions of the partners, particularly grownups, are increasingly taken into account. He emphasized the cultural concept that people are destined for their life partners, which can contribute to a sense of inevitability and subjection to fate in marital decisions. In contrast to this traditional viewpoint, my study indicated that 48 respondents, including 17 males and 31 females, strongly agreed that women should have the ability to propose marriage, challenging established gender roles. This shift in attitude is backed by the judiciary's acceptance of the right to marry a person of one's choice as an intrinsic part of human liberty, as specified in Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. In the landmark judgment of Lata Singh v. State of Uttar Pradesh, the Supreme Court declared that societal standards should not interfere with individual marriage decisions, underscoring India's growing views on marital autonomy. (Singh, Sharma, Sharma, & Sahu, 2023).

4. Balancing Rights and Household Responsibilities

The study by Sultanpur (2021) investigates the intricate link between Indian women's educational attainment and domestic duties. According to the survey, a sizable proportion of respondents (63%) still consider housekeeping to be solely the responsibility of women, with only 37% believing in shared responsibility between husbands and wives. This traditional view of family roles reflects long-held gender norms that remain despite women's increased educational achievement.

In contrast, my survey indicated that 31 respondents, 11 men and 20 women, disagreed with the idea that women should emphasize balancing rights and domestic obligations. This study implies a shift in beliefs, particularly among young and educated people who may be questioning the long-held idea that housework is entirely the responsibility of women.

5. Expense Sharing

The study's findings, based on 28 responses consisting of 11 males and 17 females, indicated a high consensus that women who earn income should equally contribute to outing expenses. This viewpoint

indicates an increasing acceptance of financial equity among couples, particularly when both partners provide financial contributions. This complements another study by Kruger, Palmer, and Goetz (2023) that examines the role of shared financial responsibility. Participants who merged resources with their partner indicated greater financial happiness, implying that perceiving money as a communal resource enhances overall financial well-being. These findings underscore the increasing acceptance of financial parity in relationships, indicating that both men and women are progressively endorsing equitable financial contributions, hence enhancing a sense of collaboration and contentment.
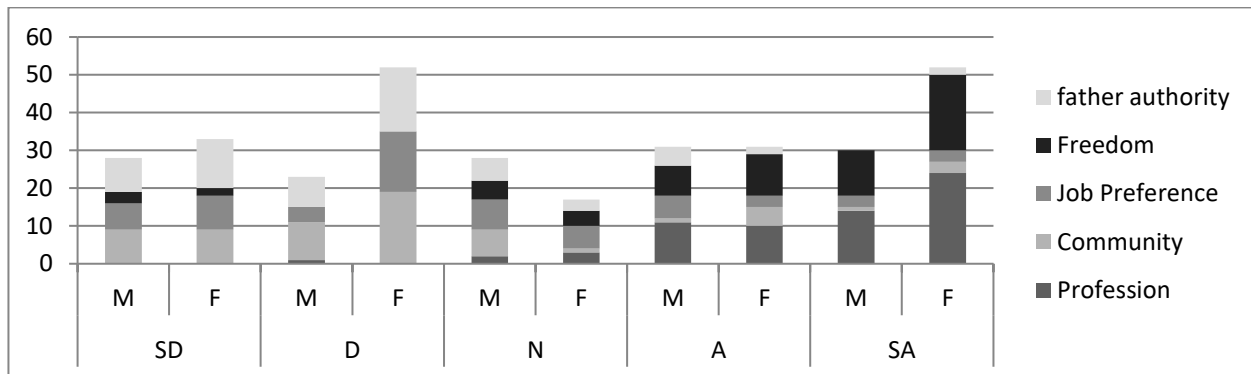

Figure 3: findings on another five questions of gender equality

6. Women's participation in professions

To improve women's economic engagement in India, increasing data on their economic activities and time use is crucial. However, innovative public and private sector approaches are needed to address India's declining female labor force participation. (Fletcher, Pande, and Moore 2017). Supporting this view, my study's findings show that (N=38) of respondents, including 14 males and 24 females, firmly agreed that women should take their proper place alongside men in all fields. This agreement between existing literature and my research data emphasizes the importance and potential benefit of coordinated efforts to close the gender gap in economic participation. The broad agreement among respondents suggests a societal change toward increased acceptance of women in professional settings, which, when combined with successful policy measures, might result in significant gains in female labor force participation.

7. Community's Intellectual Leadership

Women have historically had more difficulty than men in overcoming negative expectations and reactions, which has frequently hampered their capacity to achieve positions of respect, influence, and leadership. Despite tremendous progress over the last half-century toward increased acceptance of women in leadership posts (Eagly & Carli, 2007), gender-based discrimination in leadership selection continues. This persistent bias is apparent in my survey, in which (N=29) of respondents 10 males and 19 females disagreed with the statement that a community's intellectual leadership should be primarily in the hands of men. This reflects a considerable resistance to traditional gender norms and an increasing support for women in leadership, which is consistent with the broader cultural shift toward gender equality in leadership positions.

8. Job Preference and Promotions

In a study conducted by Benson, Li, and Shue (2024) argue that despite evidence that women frequently outperform male colleagues with equal potential ratings, employers continue to underestimate female employees' capabilities. This chronic underestimate results in lower subsequent potential ratings for

women, limiting their job advancement and promotion prospects. In line with this, my survey discovered that a large proportion of respondents (N=20), consisting of 4 men and 16 women, disagreed with the assertion that men should be given priority in job recruiting or promotion over women. This opposition to gender-based discrimination in hiring and promotions indicates a growing knowledge and rejection of conventional biases, but it also emphasizes the importance of ongoing efforts to confront and fix these embedded inequities in the workplace.

9. Freedom for Women

Catharine MacKinnon's paradigm, which distinguishes between the "difference" model and the "sameness" approach to gender equality, provides important context for the current discussion about women's emancipation and rights. The "difference" paradigm seeks equality by recognizing women's particular experiences and problems, whereas the "sameness" approach calls for gender-blind policies that treat men and women as essentially equal in all respects. (Morales, 2007). This theoretical perspective is consistent with empirical findings from the current study, in which (N=32) of respondents, including 12 males and 20 females, firmly agreed that modern women have the same rights as men. This agreement indicates that a sizable percentage of the community supports the "sameness" approach, which advocates for equal treatment and access to opportunities, strengthening MacKinnon's analysis' significance in modern gender relations discourse.

10. Father Authority

The research illustrates an expanding knowledge of parental roles in childrearing. While mothers are frequently regarded as having a substantial effect during the pre-natal period, the responsibilities of fathers and mothers tend to balance as children grow. (Gežová 2015). This position is corroborated by empirical facts, which show that (N=25) comprising 8 male and 17 female of respondents disagreed with the statement that fathers should have more authority than mothers in parenting children. This disagreement, particularly among female responders, illustrates a trend toward acknowledging the value of shared responsibility and authority in parenting. It is consistent with the broader concept that both parental roles are distinct and equally important, despite differences in how each parent contributes to the child's development.
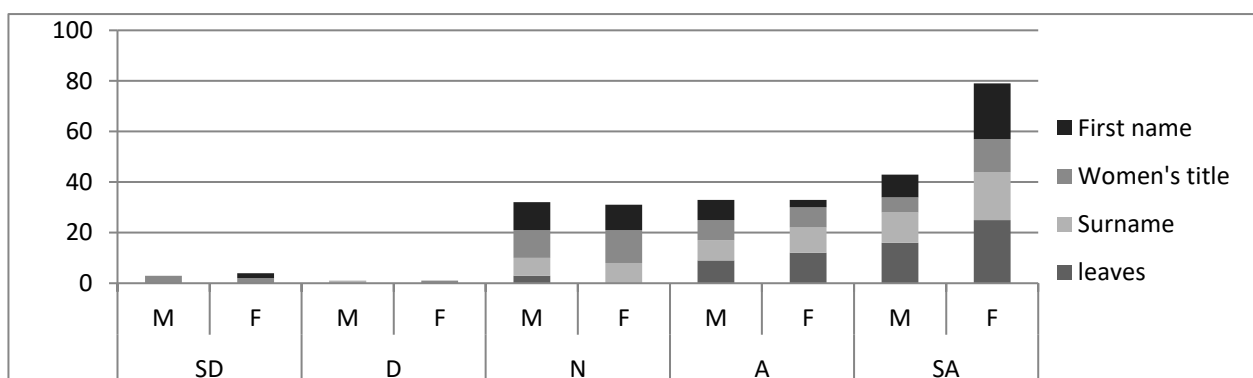

Figure 6: findings on another four questions of gender roles

11. Maternal and Paternal Leaves

The focus on maternity benefits over paternal leave puts pressure on women to quit their jobs. This disparity reinforces gender stereotypes and the idea that mothers raise children. For gender equality, both parents must share parenting obligations. Paid paternity leave can change attitudes and foster equal child-

rearing by mothers and fathers. (Pradeep and George, 2021). This study indicated that 41 respondents (16 male and 25 female) strongly agreed that all institutions should offer maternal and paternal leaves. A growing consensus recognizes that supporting both parents in early parenthood is vital for gender equality in the workplace and beyond. These studies agree that comprehensive parental leave policies should empower both parents, challenge gender stereotypes, and promote a more fair sharing of responsibilities.

12. Surname choices

Men whose wives keep their maiden names or hyphenate their surnames with their wives are often seen as less masculine or more feminine, reflecting deep-seated cultural perceptions of marital surname decisions. (Forbes et al., 2002; Robnett, Wertheimer, & Tenenbaum, 2018). This research indicated that 31 respondents (12 male and 19 female) strongly agreed that a wife should be permitted to keep her name or the husband could take his wife's name, with the option of both parties choosing a neutral surname for their offspring. This consensus shows a trend toward marriage and family identification equality and a rising acceptance of flexible name rules that challenge gender norms.

13. Gender-Neutral title

Titles like "Mrs." and "Miss" are forms of linguistic sexism, as shown in the study by Lee and Collins (2008). The difference in how men and women are called based on their marital status shows underlying gender biases. The idea that a woman's identity is tied to her relationship with a guy is strengthened by this practice. In this study, 24 people were neutral when asked if they thought a woman's title should always be "Ms.", even if she wasn't married. This shows that people aren't sure if traditional titles should be changed. The link between these studies is the ongoing argument over the social norms that say how to talk to women, which both shows and reinforces the inequality between men and women. This lack of agreement shows that people are aware of sexist language use, but they still don't want to fully adopt more neutral and equal ways of addressing each other.

14. Use of Given First Name

The present study indicates that a majority of respondents (31 participants, comprising 9 males and 22 females) concurred that a woman should preserve her own first name rather than adopting her husband's, highlighting an increasing endorsement for women to keep their individual identity after marriage. Likewise, a study by Scheuble & Johnson (1993) underscores a gender disparity in beliefs regarding men adopting their wife's surname, with females exhibiting greater support for this notion and males demonstrating more resistance, indicative of conventional gender role perspectives. Both studies concentrate on the topic of gender and name-changing behaviors, providing insights on cultural expectations for identity in marriage. Collectively, these findings indicate a transformation in attitudes towards naming traditions, with a growing acceptance of unconventional practices, particularly among women, who are more inclined to oppose patriarchal standards.

Section II: Feminism

15. This question was open-ended in nature. The study provided respondents with the opportunity to define 'feminism' according to their own understanding. The results showed that more than half of the participants, regardless of their gender, linked the term to the pursuit of equality between men and women and the questioning of patriarchal systems. A small number of participants held a negative perception of feminism, perceiving it as misguided or as a privilege limited to the wealthy. This aligns with Hawkesworth's (2018) characterization of feminism as a range of socio-political movements and ideologies that aim to establish and achieve equality of sexes in political, economic, personal, and social spheres. (Barned, 2021).
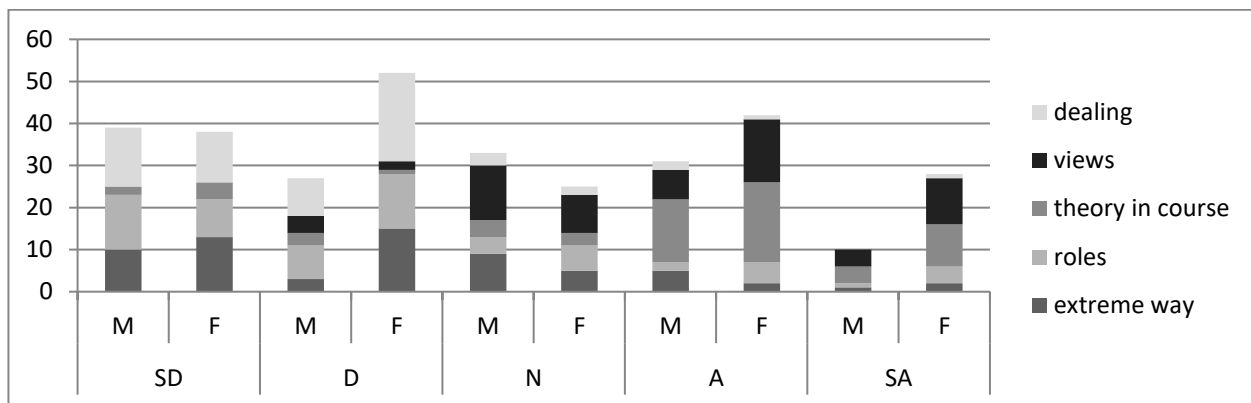
Figure8: findings on another five questions of feminism

16. Extremity of Feminist Thinking

The severe nature of feminism can shape people's views of feminists, especially when it comes to their tolerance and sense of community. Koch et al. (2016) found that people tend to give less warmth to organizations that they view as more radical. Despite the term "radical" in feminist discourse relates to a certain set of principles rather than extremism, radical feminists are typically seen as less warm and welcoming. This might be the reason behind this perception (Henley et al., 1998; Hartmann, 1979). Consistent with this, a sizeable proportion of respondents (10 men and 13 females) in the current study vehemently disagreed with the claim that feminism embodies an extreme viewpoint on gender relations. This provides more evidence that the unwillingness to connect with feminism can be due to perceived radicalism than to the substance of feminist ideas. In order to overcome the obstacles to more widespread acceptance of feminist identities, it is essential to comprehend these views.

17. Gender Roles and Society

There is a strong connection between the changing gender roles and the fight for gender equality. A more compassionate society, according to the study by Gross (2003) can only be attained if males, like women, reject traditional gender norms. Traditional masculinity has served males well, while many women have taken on an androgynous identity that combines the best of both sexes. This lack of movement, the research found, is one reason why people are unhappy with gender roles even now. In order to achieve genuine equality, people of both sexes need to break free of societally prescribed roles, according to the present study, which found that 13 males and 9 females strongly disagreed with this idea. This defiance of gender norms is consistent with the larger feminist objective of changing people's views of what men and women should be like in society. If we want to cure the cultural sickness of gender and build more fair society, we must understand these dynamics.

18. Course-based Knowledge on Feminism

Interactive engagement in the classroom, facilitated by values such as transparency, the advancement of equality, trust cultivation, and respect for diverse viewpoints, is fundamental to feminist pedagogy (Disch & Thompson, 1990, p. 69; see also Schniedewind, 1983). Feminist pedagogy responses show gender differences. This study found that 29 out of 34 female respondents agreed with feminist pedagogy's emphasis on interactive classroom engagement. This majority female agreement shows women better fit with feminist educational methods. The assertion was supported by only 5 males, demonstrating that men are less interested in feminist pedagogy.

Feminist pedagogy is crucial to resolving gender gaps in education, as seen by this discrepancy between

male and female respondents The results revealed that while female students embrace feminist approaches, male students may need additional engagement to ensure a more inclusive understanding and application of feminist ideals in educational environments.

19. Views on Gender Abilities

The research conducted by Osarenren and Ogunleye (2009) on professionals in nontraditional sectors, including engineering, statistics, medicine, and estate management, revealed no substantial gender disparity in the assessment of job competence. Both male and female professionals had a strong opinion of their competence in doing their duties, indicating a favorable self-concept across genders. This finding corresponds with the current study, in which a majority of respondents (N=30) challenged the assertion that men possess inbuilt superiority in managing complex global matters such as trade, politics, and economics. The disagreement was primarily articulated by female respondents (21 out of 30), contesting the notion that men are more adept at managing such issues. Collectively, these results indicate that conventional gender roles and beliefs of male dominance in intricate fields are being challenged, as both men and women increasingly acknowledge the parity of talents in professional and cultural spheres. This transition highlights the necessity for additional investigation on the evolution of gender attitudes within the workforce and wider societal roles.

20. Men and Women as Feminists

In the current study, the majority of respondents (N=38), comprising 10 males and 28 females, firmly concurred that both men and women may embody feminist ideologies and actions. This underscores a common conviction that feminism transcends gender, representing a collaborative endeavor for equality. Schacht and Ewing (1998) emphasize the significance of recreating gender relations. The concept of feminism is presented as a fundamental transformation from patriarchal principles, promoting a balance between traditionally masculine attributes such as rationality and materialism, and nurturing and cooperative qualities normally associated with femininity. Collectively, these studies indicate an emerging consensus that feminism surpasses gender limitations, advocating for a revision of societal norms that emphasize human interests and communal well-being over individual rivalry. This comprehensive perspective on feminism posits that the advancement of gender equality depends on collaboration and mutual comprehension, rather than strict conformity to conventional gender norms.

DISCUSSION

Gender Equality

The study's findings revealed that students in the social science faculty had extremely favorable gender attitudes, while female students were more egalitarian than male students. The findings are comparable to those of Patel et al. (2021), who discovered that university students took an egalitarian attitude to gender stereotypes. Çimen et al. (2021) found that female students were more feminist, while male students held more stereotyped gender attitudes. Using the intersectionality theoretical framework, the study's findings must be studied in a more thorough and nuanced manner, ensuring that the viewpoints and experiences of women from all backgrounds are considered in the greater context of gender equality.

The result demonstrates an increasing understanding of the significance of gender equality in home duties as strong agreement was shown by both male and female respondents, indicating a shift toward a more equitable division of home duties. This research defies conventional beliefs about marriage proposals and reflects a progressive stance on gender norms. Strong agreement among male and female responders suggests a shared conviction in the agency and autonomy of women.

The respondents' emphasis on the significance of women's rights and roles outside of traditional household responsibilities reveals a break from traditional gender roles. The fact that both male and female respondents disagreed is noteworthy because it shows that societal standards have changed. The result also implies that couples recognize shared accountability and financial independence. Strong agreement was demonstrated by respondents of both sexes, demonstrating a desire for financial equality and a break from conventional gender-based expectations. This research demonstrates a progressive perspective on gender equality in the workplace as strong agreement was shown by both male and female respondents, demonstrating a shared belief in giving women the same chances as men in all professions.

These findings go against long-held gender assumptions that disproportionately associate male intellectual leadership. Respondents of both genders disagreed, indicating a rejection of gender hierarchy in intellectual endeavors. This also suggests a departure from gender bias in hiring procedures. Notably, both male and female respondents disagreed, demonstrating a common trust in selection and promotion procedures that are based on merit. The equal rights and autonomy of women in modern society are acknowledged by this finding. Strong agreement was shown by both male and female respondents, indicating a common conviction in gender equality. These results cast doubt on conventional gender roles in parenting and emphasize the need for shared parental responsibilities. There was dissent from both male and female respondents, pointing to a shift toward more egalitarian parenting techniques.

This study reflects a rejection of the conventional gender norms that place restrictions on the goals and opportunities of women as strong disagreement was expressed by both male and female respondents, demonstrating a common perspective on the value of women's career aspirations. Participants did not think that women should be seen as having less capacity to contribute to economic production than men. These findings go against gender prejudices that limit the possibilities of women in the job. Both male and female respondents disagreed, indicating that they thought women contributed equally and equally well. The finding draws attention to the prejudices and cultural pressures that women frequently experience. Respondents of all genders indicated agreement, demonstrating a similar understanding of the influence of socialization on women's experiences. The result also confirms the widespread conviction that harmful gender stereotypes must be contested and destroyed. Strong agreement was demonstrated by both male and female respondents, demonstrating a shared commitment to advancing gender equality and empowering women.

The findings on marriage dimension showed that marriage is not only a household responsibility but also an economic responsibility and majority of the respondents strongly agreed. According to research findings in the literature, equal positions are described as the equal sharing of responsibilities between men and women in family, job, marriage, and education (Ehrenberg et al., 2004). However, there are still disparities in perception between male and female students, with female students having more favorable opinions than males. Through the lens of social constructivism, marriage attitudes are shown to be socially created, with an emphasis on how shared ideas, cultural scripts, social interactions, and societal conventions shape people's perceptions.

These results show a preference for egalitarian principles in marriage. Strong agreement was shown by both male and female respondents, demonstrating a shared awareness of the value of equality and shared duties within marriage. This research emphasizes the value of shared parenting and the rejection of conventional gender roles in childrearing as a strong agreement among male and female responders suggests a common conviction in the equitable division of childcare tasks.

This result underlines a comprehension of the significance of financial parity within a partnership. Strong agreement was shown by both male and female respondents, demonstrating a common belief in economic justice and the appreciation of individual efforts. The finding shows how crucial it is to help parents balance their obligations to their families and their careers. Strong agreement was demonstrated by both male and female respondents, demonstrating a shared conviction that both mothers and fathers should have access to parental leave options. The study also reflects on the opinion of students towards the choice for the spouse to adopt his or her spouse's name, for the wife to retain her original name, or for both partners to select a neutral second name for themselves and their offspring. This conclusion demonstrates a belief in giving people the freedom to choose their names in marriages. Strong agreement was demonstrated by both male and female respondents, indicating a common conviction in name equality and flexibility.

According to the data, participants had a variety of opinions about the use of gender-neutral titles. It implies that some respondents might not strongly agree with or disagree with the idea and further research may be necessary to understand their motivations for giving a neutral response. Respondents strongly agreed that a woman ought to adopt her given first name rather than her husband's. This finding reveals a commitment to upending naming customs and maintaining one's own identity when married. Strong agreement was shown by both male and female respondents, demonstrating a common perspective on the value of personal autonomy and identity.

Feminism

Some responses of the participants were:

'Feminism is a broad term which refers to the perspective that recognizes and opposes patriarchy and argues for equal rights and opportunities for women'.

'It is a necessity in today's world as it is a concept to negate the differences among men and women'.

'It is an ideology that believes in the human rights and social justice should be practiced and that feminism is more about awareness and education'

'Feminism is not a good idea, and it is a luxury only the rich can achieve'.

The study shows that feminism is not just for women and that people of any gender may support and promote gender equality. Strong agreement was shown by both male and female respondents, indicating a shared view of feminism's inclusivity. The result shows that the idea that feminism is an extreme or radical ideology has been disproved. Strong disagreement was expressed by both male and female respondents, reflecting a shared conviction in the legitimacy and significance of feminist viewpoints. The result implies that people now reject conventional gender roles and support gender equality as male and female respondents both voiced vehement oppositions, demonstrating a common belief in defying social norms and advancing equality for all. Respondents, especially female participants, have some level of awareness and knowledge of feminist theories because the result indicates that many individuals were exposed to feminist theories and ideas during their academic careers. The findings also go against gender preconceptions and show that men and women have equal abilities and chances. Respondents of both sexes disagreed, indicating a similar conviction in the potential and skills of all people, regardless of gender.

The usual scholistic claim that students perceive feminism as equality, implying equal rights for men and women, aligns with the research findings. However, the term misleads people into believing that feminism solely focuses on women's empowerment, leading to the majority of high school graduates not identifying as feminists and not fully supporting the movement (Eleyba, 2021). Those who identified as feminists,

without any restrictions on their support, primarily understood feminism as a concept of equality. This group of women advocated for equal opportunities, the right to an abortion, equality during childhood socialization, and social justice, while also expressing concern about issues like sexual harassment. The participants in this interview generally identified as feminists after attending women's studies classes. (Aranson 2003).

The various perspectives of students on feminism reflect the varied ways in which social construction impacts perception and beliefs. These viewpoints are created by encounters with educational curriculum, media, cultural conventions, and personal experiences. Recognizing the role of social construction helps to explain why people have different perspectives on feminism and emphasizes the significance of addressing these diverse influences to develop a more inclusive and comprehensive understanding of gender equality.

CONCLUSION

1. The study found that students in the social science faculty had favorable views toward gender equality and feminism, indicating the impact of gender-related courses on their lives. The study's findings shed insight on how the younger generation understands feminism and gender equality, as well as the impact of course curriculum on behavior, emphasizing the importance of supporting inclusive conduct and overcoming prejudice in society.

2. Findings reflect on the Implementing gender-based pedagogical approaches in social science has significantly influenced the opinions of both male and female students, leading to a more progressive view of gender roles.

3. The respondents generally supported gender equality and the tenets of feminism, although some distinctions between male and female students persisted, with female students being perceived as having a more egalitarian attitude. As this points out traditional held Indian gender norms are still alive. As a result, curricula must address both roles in the perpetuation of inequalities: men in a way that does not portray them as wrongdoers, and women as participants in an age-old hegemonic system that has created inequalities to undermine women's inherent value to both men and women. By raising awareness through these courses, we intend to help those who already identify as gender positive become more informed advocates for gender equality by stressing how these more subtle concerns provide the groundwork for explicit types of gender violence and injustice. (Gressel et al., 2023).

4. Most of the participants firmly believed that women should take on leadership roles, share home chores, and be free to make marriage proposals. Additionally, they understood the need for equal chances in all fields as well as the necessity of fighting against unfair labels and stereotypes that are placed on women.

5. The promotion of feminism and gender equality in educational institutions and society at large may be affected by these findings. Women's rights should be promoted, inclusive debates should be encouraged, and societal practices that support gender inequality should be challenged. Education institutions play an important role in combating sexism and cultivating a culture of gender equality.

6. This study's shortcomings include a small sample size from the few departments of single university. Therefore, care should be taken when extrapolating the results to a larger population. To obtain a deeper knowledge of the subject, future research might examine the experiences and viewpoints of students from various social backgrounds and in different educational settings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Advancing Education and Awareness.** The study emphasizes the significance of education and awareness in advancing feminism and gender equality. Institutions of higher learning should include courses and extracurricular activities that promote awareness, highlight prejudices, and dispel preconceptions regarding women in many academic sectors. This can promote a welcoming climate for gender equality and aid students in developing a more nuanced understanding of gender issues.

2. **Media Literacy and Critical Engagement.** There is a need for media literacy programs that equip students with the skills to critically engage with online content. Promoting critical thinking and discernment can help students navigate diverse perspectives and avoid misinformation while learning about feminism.

3. **Inclusive Dialogues and Safe Spaces.** It is crucial to encourage inclusive dialogues and establish safe spaces for candid debates to address worries about extreme feminist viewpoints and mistrust. Platforms for polite dialogue can help close knowledge gaps and clear up common misconceptions, enabling a more nuanced and educated discussion about feminism and gender equality.

4. **Collaboration and Partnerships.** The promotion of gender equality can be strengthened through cooperation between educational institutions, civil society organizations, and activists. Partnerships can make it easier to share resources, knowledge, and best practices, which can result in more successful campaigns to address gender inequities and advance feminism.

5. **Continued Research.** This study lays the groundwork for future studies on feminism and gender equality. To determine the level of awareness, longitudinal research can also shed light on how attitudes toward feminism and gender equality have changed over time. Comparative studies can also be conducted with participants from various backgrounds and educational institutions.

Declaration of generative AI in scientific writing

During the preparation of this work the authors used (Quillbot & Grammerly) in order to improve the readability and language of the manuscript. After using this tool, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and takes full responsibility for the content of the published article.

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