

Chapter 11

Understanding Gender and Organizations: A Literature Review



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Introduction

Gender as a concept has been defined by various scholars but has always been one of the contested concepts. Gender equality as a contested concept has always been thoroughly debated within feminist theories and today, as much as any other time in history, it is capable of generating continuous questions and dilemmas. Gender refers to the social identity of men and women. It cannot be understood at the level of the individual (Zinn & Wells, 2000). Sex and gender are two different phenomena which have been often misunderstood as one or as being very ‘similar’ concepts. However, sex is a biological identity which all human beings carry from their birth, but gender is a socially constructed idea or a notion. According to World Health Organization,¹ the term ‘sex’ refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women and ‘gender’ refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women.

¹Gender refers to the socially constructed characteristics of women and men- such as norms, roles and relationships of and between groups of women and men. It varies from society to society and can be changed. While most people are born either male or female, they are taught appropriate norms and behaviours – including how they should interact with others of the same or opposite sex within households, communities and workplaces. When individuals or groups do not “fit” established gender norms they often face stigma, discriminatory practices or social exclusion – all of which adversely affect health. It is important to be sensitive to different identities that do not necessarily fit into binary male or female sex categories.

URL: <http://www.who.int/gender-equity-rights/understanding/gender-definition/en/>

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However, in their seminal work 'Gender Trouble' (1990), Judith Butler² argues that 'gender is performative'. They further argues that there is a difference when we say 'gender is performed' than by saying 'gender is performative' because when it is said that gender is performed than it means that 'gender is a role or we are acting in some way' but when we say that 'gender is performative' it means that it produces a series of 'facts'. They writes "We act and walk and speak and talk in ways that consolidate an impression of being a man or being a woman." They argues that we are 'acting' as men and 'women' and we act in a way that the 'actions become the reality and facts.' They further argues that this becomes a phenomenon that is being produced and reproduced all the time. So, to say that gender is performative is to say that nobody is a gender from the start but "becomes a gender". There are institutional powers and certain practices and norms which try to keep one's at the 'gender place'. They points out that gender as a concept has been institutionalized and policed and the only way to overcome this is to disrupt the policed function. They also argues that gender is culturally formed but it is also a domain of agency and freedom and it is important to overcome the inequalities that are imposed by ideal gender norms.

Gender Equality

There are quite a few studies which have tried to explain the underlying causes for gender inequality in society. As Squires (2005) argues that "gender equality has been referred to as a process of 'inclusion,' 'reversal,' and 'displacement,' whereby each of them refers to the principles of equality, difference, and transformation, respectively." Hence, gender equality can be conceptualized as a problem of affirming difference from the male norm, or of transforming all established norms and standards of what is/should be female and male or, achieving equality as sameness (Verloo, 2016).

The different meanings of gender equality are explored in relation to the issues of family policies, domestic violence, gender inequality in politics and business, migration, homosexual rights, and anti-discrimination in different countries and different settings. The meaning of gender equality has different visions and it also depends on different political and theoretical debates which cross-cut these visions. Beyond this, the geographical context also reflects the visions and debates over gender equality. Equality has been defined as a modern and progressive idea and has been associated with the French revolution's famous slogan 'liberty, equality and fraternity'. One of the studies elaborated four types of equality: ontological equality, equality of opportunity and equality of condition, equality of condition and equality of result or outcome (Turner, 1986). Gender equality, defined by the

² Judith Butler as of 2020 said they prefer to use "they" pronouns.

modern welfare states, is trying to provide equal opportunities for men and women in private as well as public sphere.

The fight for gender-equality has been largely associated with feminism. Feminism in fact has been defined as a cluster of contesting views on the gender problematic (Arneil, 1999; Verloo, 2016). In the past, gender roles were rooted in the traditional family structures where the roles of the women and men were more or less fixed with men as the bread-earners and women as assuming responsibility of housekeeping and raising the children. But the last few decades have witnessed that the structure has been buckling under economic and social pressures which has given rise to many questions regarding traditional gender roles. John Gray's best-selling book 'Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus' (1992) defines that men and women are so unlike each other that it is as if they come from different worlds. "Not only do men and women communicate differently," he states, but they think, feel, perceive, react, respond, love, need, and appreciate differently. They almost seem to be from different planets, speaking different languages and needing different nourishment." The book has become a huge bestseller by pushing the idea, even in the twenty-first century, that both the genders are so totally alien to each other that they might as well come from different planets. Thus, women have always been associated with attributes such as love and care and men as tough and direct (Brenner, 1998). The debate around gender-equality brings so many questions such as: What is the problem of gender in/equality? How can this problem be solved? What should be the goal of equality? Or, does it bring difference or diversity?

Gender Diversity

The term 'diversity' has been used intensively in the field of business and board-rooms these days but the definition has not been well conceptualized. A book titled 'Handbook of Workplace Diversity' talks about Blau's concept of diversity as one which refers to, "the great number of different statuses among which a population is distributed. It is the graduated-parameter equivalent of heterogeneity. Its minimum is when all persons occupy the same status; its maximum is when every person occupies a different status" (Konrad et al., 2006). The concept of diversity in management was popularized in the late 1980s in the United States. However, split between concepts based in grounded experience and those directed towards change, or 'should-be' propositions, have been observed over the years and this has been challenged by a growing field of 'Critical Diversity Management Studies' projecting from philosophical inquiry, discrimination and identity politics and attempts to counter neoliberalism (Hite & McDonald, 2010). In the discourse of boardroom diversity, it has been defined as a mix of human capital that a board of directors comprises collectively, and draws upon in undertaking its governance function (Milliken & Martins, 1996). However, the concept of diversity and its interpretation also largely depends on the structure of the government. It has been argued that the public sector tends to emphasize more on social justice outcomes while the private

sector will be concerned with organizational performance and shareholder return within the boardrooms (Walt & Ingley, 2003). Studies have the dynamics of power in accounting for low representation of women on corporate boards (Huse & Solberg, 2006).

One of the main focuses of gender diversity discourse is that it focuses on voluntary activities of the corporate sector as the best way to promote gender equality (Holvino & Kamp, 2009; Greene & Kirton, 2009). It does not pay attention to the structural and organizational problems but places 'individuals' as the problem and also the solution. Sheryl Sandberg in her bestselling book 'Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead' (2013) argues that it is true that gender biases operate at the workplaces but excuses and justifications regarding not climbing the ladder will not get women anywhere. She suggests that women should "lean in" and combine work and family life. The 'lean in' approach has been the central argument in the discourse of diversity management in the boardrooms in contemporary times. Anne-Marie Slaughter, a professor of politics and international affairs at Princeton University and also the director of policy planning at the State Department from 2009 to 2011, argues that society needs to be changed with the workplace culture as the American workplace structures are inherently hostile to women. She argues further, that although she respects Sheryl Sandberg as a leader but does not agree with her 'lean in' philosophy as she contends that, "we often cannot control the fate of our career and family; insisting that we can obscure the deeper structures and forces that shape our lives and deflect attention from the larger changes that must be made" (Time, September 26, 2015). Thus, placing women to 'lean in' will promote a virtuous circle where a woman is always asked to 'balance' her career and raises questions like 'is the low percentage of women in the boardrooms due to a lack of ambition or a lack of support or gendered nature of organizations?'

Gendered Organizations: A Literature Review

Gender equality has been the buzzword for the past half century or so now. A lot has been achieved as a result and women in most countries now enjoy almost equal social, political and economic rights. However, when we move beyond the legal ambit and step into the real world to look at the opportunities available to women, the stark difference is evidently visible. Women are gradually achieving equality in educational fields but when it comes to converting it into job opportunities, very few women are able to cross the glass ceiling. There are a lot of studies focusing on the causes of gender inequality in corporate sectors. Research within professional groups has shown that women have to significantly work harder to be perceived as equally competent as men (Lyness & Heilman, 2006). To add to it, the so-called second generation gender biases are also evident that arise from cultural beliefs about gender, as well as workplace structures, practices, and patterns of interactions that inadvertently favor men (Ely et al., 2011).

Moss Kanter (1977) in her phenomenal work on men and women of the corporation point out that men reproduce their corporate dominance through a relatively unconscious process whereby they replicate themselves when selecting candidates for open or new positions. She calls it “homosocial reproduction”. This process has a lot to do with employer’s urge to reduce risk associated with hiring individuals from demographic groups with less established managerial performance records. Thus, women who have lesser exposure as a demographic group are at a disadvantage and the vicious circle continues. She argues that gender differences in organizational behaviour are structural in nature rather than stemming from the characteristics of women and men as individuals. Moss Kanter observes: “While organizations were being defined as sex-neutral machines, masculine principles were dominating their authority structures.” However, she fails to recognize gender as the central theme in her arguments. This further means that men in high-level decision-making roles are more likely to hire or promote other men, rather than women, into authority positions, thus perpetuating their dominance in organizational positions of power and authority (Elliott & Smith, 2004).

Joan Acker is one of the most celebrated scholars who has worked extensively on gender and organizations. According to Joan Acker (1990), gendering happens at least five interacting processes. First is the ‘construction of divisions’ such as divisions of labor, of allowed behaviors, of locations in physical space, of power, the family, and the state in the line of gender. Second is the ‘construction of gender images and identities’ in the forms of ideology, language, dresses, media and culture. The third is the ‘interactions between men and women’ that produce gendered social structures. The fourth is the ‘production of a gendered personality’ which is the outcome of all three processes. And finally, it leads to the construction of complex organizations at societal level.

Institutions and organizational practices have traditionally been defined as being gendered in nature. It can be well understood in the sense that they need masculinity and femininity for their construction and that gender as the sum of attributes has been constitutive of social relations. However, there is a distinction between the sex composition and gender type of occupation. Sex composition is just about numbers whereas gendered occupations are about the nature of the occupation and can be said that a particular job is feminized, masculinized, or more generically gendered (Roos & McDaniel 1996).

Carole Pateman (1988) argues that women have always been kept away from the public sphere. She put forth her position by citing the classical theory of ‘social contract’. Nowhere is this more painfully clear in the world of professions than in the case of nursing. Thus, it can be argued that whenever women occupy a place in the public world, it is predicated on exclusion. The modernists theory argues about vertical segregation and how it leads to gender inequality (Parsons & Platt, 1973). Most of the organizations are taken as masculine and hierarchical in nature and this relationship has been taken by the organizational theorists as being obvious that very little debate was needed. Talking it forward, Maria Charles and David Grusky (2004) argue that gender inequality rests on a struggle between egalitarian and essentialist forces. This explains how a social construct becomes a reality in the

long run. According to them, horizontal segregation proceeds from an essentialist ideology that can persist-even thrive in the context of liberal egalitarian norms of equal opportunity. There have been many fundamental differences between men and women and liberal egalitarianism ensures that such differences reproduce themselves in a fair and gender-neutral contest. This reproduction of assumptions gives birth to essentialism not just in families but also in work organizations. Some authors also point towards the role of 'gender stereotypes' in limiting women's access to top positions in organizations which is another form of horizontal segregation. While hiring, companies often rely on gender stereotypes about competence, skill, socially appropriate job roles leading to most roles being filled by men (Gorman & Kmec, 2009).

Looking deeper into the gendered nature of the organizations some studies conclude that culture is an important factor as well. Culture has been one of the most highlighted factors which have been considered to be responsible for gendered organizations. Culture has a deep impact on how it creates work and family roles, and obedience to those roles is fundamental to any kind of social order. Thus culture has a profound impact on gender in organizations. It is very complex and difficult to change the nature of the organizations as these attributes are mostly hidden in nature. But, change could be possible through highly powerful, informal institutional values, norms, structures, and processes that underlie and shape human interactions (Schein, 2010). Aruna Rao and David Kelleher in their article 'Leadership for Social Transformation: Some Ideas and Questions on Institutions and Feminist Leadership' (2000) posit gendered nature of organizations in the genesis of modern organizations and the influence of culture on these organizations. They argue that the gendered nature of organization is the result of a mixture of patriarchal society, militarism, and theory of Social Darwinism. The organizations are mostly patriarchal and hierarchical and exclusionary in nature that treats women as 'outsiders'. Taking their research further, Aruna Rao and David Kelleher also talk about deep structure and culture in the article 'Institutions, Organizations and Gender Equality in an Era of Globalization' (2003) where 'deep structure' means the collection of values, history, culture and practices that form the unquestioned, 'reasonable' way of work in organizations. The structure of the organizations was never to transform social relations but had always reinforced them. The article also makes an important point that a very few organizations enforce accountability mechanisms or ways of balancing or restraining the power of those at the top meaning that the organizations want to maintain a 'status-quo' in order to maintain the deep rooted 'values'. The central argument therefore is that, institutions across the globe are mostly embedded in relational hierarchies of gender, class, caste, and other critical fault lines, which define identities and distribute power- both symbolically and materially. These institutional rules aren't limited to only corporations but operate in the organizations-like families, state to market and constrain the ability to challenge gender-biased institutional norms within the organization and in communities.

The article 'Glass Ceilings or Gendered Institutions? Mapping the Gender Regimes of Public Sector Worksites' by Raewyn Connell (2006) raises the same question regarding the structural barriers in the organizations-as opposed to societal

or individual factors- which prevents women from advancing to high-level positions. Quite often, the gender equity policy debates often take a simplified, categorical view of gender. But the author has tried to understand gender as a multi-dimensional structure in which four different kinds of relationships and processes coexist. The first one is through division of labor. The gender division of labor remains a powerful presence in organizational life. The second one is gender relations of power. It defines the structure of authority and is a crucial feature of gender inequality and remains an important issue within public sector organizations. Thirdly, emotion and human relations are important factors relating to the way people experience gender relations. The feelings of injustice, resentment about change, and feelings of betrayal mostly, are discarded by modernizing organizations. It is not usually seen as an issue in policy discourse, but is a very important factor when we look into the questions of gender and organizations and how it works. Lastly, gender culture and symbolism also play important roles to emphasize gender difference in workplace culture.

Bureaucracy has also been one of the highlights when talking about gender and organizations. In her article 'The Epistemology of the Gendered Organization' (2001), Dana M. Britton puts up a question concerning how do we recognize a gendered organization? In her argument, she addresses three of the most common ways of seeing organizations and occupations as gendered. Firstly, she argues that the ideal-typical bureaucratic organization is inherently gendered. By "inherently" gendered she implies that the very basic concept and structure is based in terms of a distinction between masculinity and femininity. Secondly, a gendered organization is male or female-dominated. Finally, a gendered organization is dominated by gendered symbols and identities as masculine and feminine in nature. In another interesting argument, Christine L. Williams (2002) in the book *Gender and Sexuality* argues how gendering of organization and bureaucracy suggests that a key issue for consideration is not so much the exclusion of women from work defined as professional, but rather their routine inclusion in ill-defined support roles.

It becomes very important to talk about 'symbols' and 'language' when one talks about gendered organizations. Some scholars have worked intensively around the creation of gender symbols and identities which has a profound effect on the nature of organizations. For example, the norms of the boardrooms are defined as 'masculine' such as 'quick', 'tough' and 'risk-takers'. It has been argued that women were not a part of the knowledge creation inside the boardrooms. It was always men who dominated the boardrooms. It has also been argued that a lesser number of female executives in the workplace means women lack sufficient numbers in their own demographic group to foster relationships that will help in their career advancement while men do not face similar disadvantages (Skaggs et al., 2012). Men in organization are more likely to foster relationships and develop networks to promote career advancement of other men (Ibarra, 1992). However, some scholars argue that earlier leadership qualities were strictly thought in terms of 'masculine' but now women at the top are introducing new styles and norms to the business which are characterized as the 'softer side' of leadership. These norms or attributes are more open, caring and more likely to encourage others (Elorriaga, 2011).

Adding to the gender symbols, language also plays an important role in creating gendered organizations. Fiona Devine (1992) raised an important point that language has also played an important role in shaping organizations and entrepreneurship as masculine in nature. She argues that entrepreneurship and organizations have always been described as a man's world. This gap between masculine character and feminine character exists because the feminine aspects of organizational creation and feminine dimensions of new ventures are not well articulated, and even when articulated, they are not identified as feminine. So, there is sparseness when it comes to paying attention to the feminine aspects of organizations. The relations in the workplace are always affected by gender symbols and gender identities thus further supporting the class struggle. This makes one more interested in looking at the 'social positing' of language and knowledge creation.

The famous 'Feminist Standpoint Theory' argues that knowledge stems from social position. Sandra Harding is considered to be the foremost theorist of the feminist standpoint theory where she argues that 'a social disadvantage implies an epistemological advantage' (Harding, 1992). Taking the 'feminist standpoint theory' as the reference, it has been argued that military and defense organizations present the best way to understand the vital knowledge about gender relations. The hegemonic masculinity creates specific notions of masculinity which become the 'norm' in the long run. Gender has been conceived of as an activity and a social dynamic rather than a role and a woman has always been marginalized and excluded from positions of influence (Meriläinen et al., 2004). The article Gender and the Politics of Knowledge (2003) by Mary Ann Dzuback argues about the exclusion of women from the process of 'making of knowledge'. She argues that women did not have the access to education and knowledge and publicly, to criticize male dominance of intellectual life, and to articulate a feminist challenge to existing gender relations that placed women subordinate to men and denied them access to the same rights and privileges. This has led to many structural barriers to women within the organizations. The notion of 'glass ceiling' has been one of the most used terms while discussing gender organizations. The creation of 'gendered organizations' is a vicious cycle which can be well reflected in the 'gender segregation processes' in organizations which ultimately leads to glass ceilings. The metaphor of the "glass ceiling" has been used to describe an invisible but very real barrier that prevents women from moving up the corporate ladder beyond a certain point (Baxter & Wright, 2000). The glass ceilings therefore, are the unseen barriers that keep women from climbing to the top of the corporate ladder in spite of their competencies or achievements.

Judith G. Oakley in her article 'Gender-Based Barriers to Senior Management Positions: Understanding the Scarcity of Female CEOs' (2000) talked about three barriers to women in order to achieve the top positions in corporations. First, she talked about the barriers that are created by corporate practices such as recruitment, retention and promotion which favor males. Secondly, behavioral and cultural barriers such as stereotyping, tokenism, power, preferred leadership styles, and the psychodynamics of male/female relations. The third barrier is that of power and influence which is societal and broader in nature. Therefore, she also argues around

the vicious circle that has been created at the organizational and societal level. Aruna Rao and David Kelleher (2003) also argue on the same lines. They expostulate that gendered organization lays down four interrelated factors which prevent women from challenging institutions. They are, lack of political access, lack of appropriate accountability systems, cultural systems and cognitive structures. There are studies which state that men find it difficult to take direction from women. The process of 'doing gender' or 'homosociality' is the process in which powerful men knowingly or unwittingly search for and find other men who resemble themselves. Hence, there are still problems in establishing the authority of women managers or women at the top positions. This process of homosociality shows how the present organizational structure denies the significance of gender differences and gender equality in organizations. Women often become constructed as deficient when the competence of individuals is evaluated in superficially gender-neutral ways and qualities associated with men and masculinity are emphasized (Wahl & Holgersson, 2003; Meriläinen et al., 2004).

Rae Lesser Blumberg in her article 'A General Theory of Gender Stratification' (1984) talks about the stratification process in the society or the organization as the result of economic power. The one who is economically stronger rules the process. And it was the time of the 1970s that the status of women became a "public issue". This period came up with many theories of and underestimated the range and women's economic activity, and overestimated the factors of certain biological factors. The article however has a very interesting angle to stratification theory based on anthropology. Based on some studies, the author argues that the most important common factor of apparent sexual equality in all these studies is that women wielded at least half the economic power. Thus, the central argument is that the major independent variable affecting sexual inequality is women's relative economic power. This article makes another very interesting argument that today's industrial societies (both capitalist and socialist) have their origin in agrarian societies. Hence, we tend to think women as "second-class citizens" throughout all of human history because agrarian societies represent the overall low point of female status in human history.

Looking in and across the large corporate boards in the UK, US or elsewhere, it has been found that boards are composed of males from similar backgrounds (Singh et al., 2008). Deborah L. Rhode (1988) clearly discusses the informal obstacles faced by professional women and how they have to choose between their family and work to reach the top in the hierarchy. There has been a trend of the growing representation of women in managerial jobs but women have been able to make very few advances to the upper echelons of corporate positions, especially in the boardrooms. In a very similar argument, Raewyn Connell (2006) posits a very important point that organizational gender arrangements are active, not passive. The 'gender regime' within an organization prevents women from reaching the top positions and very few reach the corporate board (Arken et al., 2004). In a very interesting article, Dr. Felicity Gibling, a psychologist, has analysed the problem of inequality at the workplace at the psychological level. She has analyzed works of many prominent scholars and concluded that numbers really matter when it comes to work pressure and

performance pressure. There are many studies which show that if women comprise less than 15% in any position, they can be labelled 'tokens' and can be viewed as symbols of their group rather than as individuals and these 'token' positions suffer from performance pressure and isolation (Davidson & Cooper, 1992).

Humans have been represented as 'males' in organizations. It also ignores sexuality that further leads to not recognizing the production of gender identity, gender images, and gender inequality within organizations. The status of a 'job' is considered to be gender-neutral in the organizational theories based on the assumption that the worker is abstract, disembodied. But in reality, both the concept of a job and workers are deeply gendered and 'bodied'. Women are devalued because they are assumed to be unable to conform to the demands of the abstract job. Gender segregation at work is also sometimes openly justified by the necessity to control sexuality, and women may be barred from types of work, such as skilled blue-collar work or top management, where most workers are men, on the grounds that potentially disruptive sexual association or contact should be avoided (Lorber, 2000). The gendered hierarchy at the organizational level is maintained on the arguments on women's reproduction, emotionality, and sexuality created through abstract, intellectualized techniques. Gendered hierarchy is so much embedded in the organizations that the willingness to tolerate sexual harassment is often a condition of the job. There are some jobs such as secretaries, where one can witness sexualization of the woman worker as a part of the job (MacManus, 1979). But the critical perspectives on organizations have ignored women and paid very little attention to power dynamics and masculine traits, and oppressive structures within the organizations.

Some theorists have tried to untangle the gendered nature of organizations and have tried to locate a systematic understanding around it. Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1977) argues that performance pressures, social isolation, and role encapsulation were the consequences of disproportionate numbers of women and men in a workplace but Kanter fails to explain the process of backlash. The backlash theory of intrusiveness looks into the long term effects of an increase in the number of women in male-dominated occupations. It threatens dominants and results in clear gender discrimination in the forms of sexual harassment, wage inequities, and limited opportunities for promotion.

It is not just in theories that gendered nature of organizations has been neglected as a discourse but it has also been neglected in empirical research. A very few researchers have paid attention to gender in organizations and see no relationship between gender and organizational process. Joan Acker in her article *Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organizations* (1990) argues that we need a systemic feminist organizational theory because it is important to understand the gender segregation in the organizational process to understand the further dynamics of glass ceilings and gendered nature of organizations. Following this is the fact that organizations create cultural images of gender which further construct gendered identities in the organization. Thus, an inclusive feminist organizational theory would enable organizations to be more democratic and more equal.

Acker (2012) identifies five processes that reproduce gender in organizations: the division of labor, cultural symbols, workplace interactions, individual identities, and organizational logic. Acker also explains how hierarchies are rationalized and legitimized in organizations. But one of the points that should be noted is that Acker mostly talks about the 'traditional career' model. But, it is not that the organizations are not gendered in contemporary times. However, the mechanism is different and much more complex in modern times. Organizations and their 'main aim' have been dominated by masculine characteristics and are pervaded by gender (Kimmel, 2004). It further gives rise to organizational sexuality and violations. There has been an increase in the number of women in corporate sectors but when it comes to effective management skills, it has always been seen as a masculine trait and this ultimately gives rise to gendered identity formation (Alimo-Metcalfe, 1993).

M. Britton (2000) also agrees with the idea that there is a need to problematize the notion that organizations are gendered. This might result in identifying the factors that result in the formation of oppressively gendered forms. Thus, future research should try to examine whether and in what ways occupations are gendered, rather than simply assuming that this is the case. There is a need to problematize the simple 'common sense' that 'organizations are gendered'. Joan Acker (1990) argues that to say that an organization is gendered is to say "that advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine." The organization is gendered also means how much the organization is symbolically and ideologically conceived in terms of a discourse that draws on hegemonically defined masculinities and femininities.

One of the notable writers Carole Pateman in her famous book *Participation and Democratic Theory* (1970) has neglected gender when she talks about democratic organization. Her perspective on work organizations is based on the fact that rational-technical systems for organizing work, such as job classification and evaluation systems and detailed specification of how work is to be done, are parts of pervasive systems of control that help to maintain class relations. Rational-technical, are built upon and conceal a gendered substructure in which men's bodies fill the abstract jobs. Thus, Aruna Rao and David Kelleher (2000) argue that institutions need to be changed in order to make a significant impact on gender inequity. Thus, organizations are not gender-neutral but act as sites in which gendered identities and attributes are presumed and reproduced over the years. Britton (2000) also discusses how ideal-typical bureaucratic organization is innately gendered and gender is something which is a very fundamental element of organizational structure and life. Acker (2009) further argues that the time has come when we need a systematic theory of gender and organizations. It is because institutional rules determine who gets what, who does what, and who decides.

Conclusion

One of the foremost conclusions drawn from the literature review is that, the organizations are gendered in nature. The organizations are dominated by what are overtly considered as ‘masculine’ traits. Society has always marginalised women, and men have been in the upper echelons of the hierarchy. The norms that place ‘masculine’ qualities above ‘feminine’ ones are hard-wired into the social practices and organizations. Sexism and cultural values that subordinate women are deeply embedded in the social structures that regulate social interaction inside the organizations. However, one of the major drawbacks of literature on gendered organization is the absence of coherent feminist organizational theory. But why do we need a systemic feminist organizational theory? One of the biggest problems with all the organizational theories is that they conceptualize organizations as gender-neutral. There is no systemic feminist theory around gender and organizations and gender as a subject has been ignored in organizational theories.

Chapter Takeaways

- Gender refers to the social identity of men and women. Sex and gender are two different phenomena which have been often misunderstood as one or as being very ‘similar’ concepts.
- The different meanings of gender equality are explored in relation to the issues of family policies, domestic violence, gender inequality in politics and business, migration, homosexual rights, and anti-discrimination in different countries and different settings.
- Feminism has been defined as a cluster of contesting views on the gender problematic
- One of the main focuses of gender diversity discourse is that it focuses on voluntary activities of the corporate sector as the best way to promote gender equality.
- Gender equality has been the buzzword for the past half century or so now. Yet, women are only gradually achieving equality in educational fields but when it comes to converting it into job opportunities, very few women are able to cross the glass ceiling.
- Culture has a profound impact on gender in organizations. It is very complex and difficult to change the nature of the organizations as these attributes are mostly hidden in nature.
- The gendered nature of organizations has not just been neglected in theories but also been in empirical research.

Reflection Questions

1. Upon reading this chapter, what do you consider some of the most prevalent factors for lingering gender inequality in work environments?
2. How would you distinguish sex and gender?
3. What is the role you attribute to feminism in the scope of gender equality?
4. How is culture and influencing factor in gender equality?
5. Explain the term, “gendered nature of organizations”.

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