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*Issue on Gender issues and how they affect
human lives*

Editorial: Introduction to Special issue on Gender issues and how they affect human lives

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A b s t r a c t

This editorial serves as an introduction to the special issue on gender issues and how they affect human lives. Capturing the overall interdisciplinary potential on gender, are papers from various fields including; Divinity, English literature, Philosophy, Management, Accounting, Economics, which all in their different ways discuss the encompassing features on gender. It is the hope that this interdisciplinary approach will spark other researchers' engagement in gender discussions and result in the advancement on topics discussed towards a solution to these gender issues.

[K e y w o r d s]: Stereotype, Gender identity, Gender bias, Gender inequality

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OVERVIEW

This special issue seeks to explore the relevant gender issues prevalent in the world both current and historical perspectives. With a view on various dimensions on gender it strives to shed more light on concerning issues while embracing a hope for improvement in the overall context of gender. Gender concerns are very topical now and issues that affect women and men have become cases of major action. Beneath the dominant forces, certain voices in the society are silenced and the issues that affect certain individuals are sometimes neglected. It is time for researchers and policy makers to sensitize themselves and be open to these issues. Nevertheless, gender for most parts and in various fields have been contextualised in terms of the feminine; this is because the woman has been the underrepresented in various aspects in the public sphere. In this special issue, taking an interdisciplinary approach a plethora of topics are investigated which illustrates the diversity and complexity of gender concerns in the world.

The term gender as captured by Holmes (2007, p. 2) represents “socially produced differences between being feminine and being masculine”. In this sense issues which concern gender can be drawn from articulations discussions both men and women in society. However, inferences from the construct cannot be well articulated without recognising the social structures which governs the interpretations of gender. Taking gender as a social structure Risman (2004) highlights how gender can be interpreted from individual and institutional interactions. Nevertheless, others would interpret gender in terms of the biological make up of an individual which denotes how sexual anatomy determines who is male and female. Still taking gender from a social structure angle opens explorations on race structures as well as inequalities which shapes reality. Others have also attempted to utilise Freud’s psychoanalysis to explain the differences among men and women (Holmes, 2007) which attributed the evolving developmental stages of men and women to account for their difference. Beyond this, individuals are also socialised in their daily lives growing up with ideals of what constitutes certain gender roles in society; thus, use this as a lens to view and treat people in society. Certain interpretations from the socialisation process can lead to negative ideals for the alternative gendered individuals. This for instance, can result in sexism which places one sex superior to the other and/or patriarchy which presents a system that believes

in male dominance, oppresses and exploits women, which later spans to the household, state, paid work, violence, sexuality and cultural affairs (Macionis and Plummer, 2005).

This leads to an increased gender consciousness among the individuals who became aware that society has assigned a less and inferior stance to their gendered position. Here the ideal would be attempting to free themselves from such oppressive structures (Chow, 1987). As most of the people in power positions at the time were male there was a silenced voice of female in various dimensions. Back during the times of Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Astell who would have been acclaimed as English feminist at the time experienced and described how women were oppressed from birth, were uneducated and prevented from engaging in work (Walters, 2005).

Sredl (2017) conducted a study in Yugoslav of generational women and their gendered relation that influence their social interaction. In this study, it was discovered that generation III women are more privileged with access to education and jobs than the generation I and II women, though both share a similar emotional subjectivity. This further leads to the up-rise in gender stratification and how there is unequal distribution of wealth, power and privilege between the sexes (Macionis and Plummer, 2005). Nevertheless, with the rise of feminism and increase in women discussions, women were allowed to make progression in work, education and participate in public discussions. The rise of feminism has opened more doors for women to engage in work beyond domestic work or those with minimum wage. While the awareness of such stereotypes can lead to certain gender concerns attempts have been made to project women in various dimensions.

In line with discussions on the conceptualisations on gender and how they affect human lives, this issue is supported with eight papers discussing different aspects on gender. All papers attempt to take an interdisciplinary approach and cover various aspects of the gendered dynamic.

The first paper by Black takes a historical account into the diary of Mary Jean Wilson and Katherine Trail to understand the difficulties which the Victorian women faced as they attempted to expand their horizons in the 1890's. It narrates how women were not previously allowed to graduate with honours degree at the time. However, these women despite limitations found joy in

the arts, languages and literature. Yet, it identified stereotypical labels placed on unmarried women in the 19th century despite other achievements.

The second paper by Macphee also follows on from such stereotypes that lead to injustice witnessed by women seeking medical attention. She narrates the epistemic and hermeneutic injustice that ignore women's pain when articulated to health care professionals. Women's pain was dismissed as non-serious pain and were ignored or given less importance when they were undergoing serious life-threatening issues that were damaging to their health.

The third paper by Farooq follows on from a religious angle and discusses how marital rights of women have been determined by those in authority over her. Predominately permission for married rights are sought by the male guardian which are constructed to put control on who the woman decides to marry. Drawing from the Islamic guardianship and equality construct it shows how they play a role in women's marriage choice and sometimes how the authority given to the woman and man varies.

The fourth paper by Wikström starts to discuss issues on sexual harassment. Particularly it attributes toxic masculinity and the encouragement of it to be responsible for sexual harassment. This paper further attributes toxic masculinity to be responsible for the rape culture and entitlement expressed by some men. Finally, it positions men inability to express emotions to be responsible for exhibiting such features.

The fifth paper by Alqahtani deeps into social role theory to discuss how gender roles are dominated. The paper further touches on the male and female agentic vs communal roles which come into play when considering roles in leadership. It discusses how due to such stereotypical views' women entering males dominated fields face challenges in leadership progression.

The sixth paper by Tagoe begins to account for the gender pay gap with a focus in British legislative acts. It discusses how various companies are beginning to think about gender pay gap however there are still some inconsistencies in starting salary schemes for individual job, promotional schemes and the general payment characteristics.

The seventh paper, by Adebisi while acknowledging the gendered disadvantages experienced by women presents a hope for their development. It articulates how the digital economy particularly the gig economy has the potential to provide a flexible work nature for women. It is the hope that female labour may improve with the digitalisation of the work force.

The eight paper by Zhao finally taking the cultural context of china, attributes the involvement of women in the workforce to also have a role in the country's development. As a result of the increase in women's involvement in politics and education it demonstrates an improvement in the country's outlook. It traces the improvement in the country's GDP and overall economic growth can be attributed to women's involvement.

In summary, these papers in their individual ways have attempted to capture the gender dynamics at play from historical, cultural, religious perspectives and how it translates to the workforce. There is the potential for increasing studies on gender issues however from this issue it can be seen how progress and been made over time. It is the hope that these papers shedding light on various aspects on gender would encourage future discussions on other issues to not only see how they affect human lives but also, act as a source for change and a remedy to issues raised.

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