



(Re)Exploration of the Influence of Marxist Feminism on 21st-Century Women in the Workplace

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ABSTRACT

Marxist feminism is a subset of feminist theory and politics that draws its theoretical inspiration from Marxism. It is characterised by its critique of capitalism as a system of institutions, practises, structures, incentives, and sensibilities that encourages the exploitation of labour, alienation of people, and diminution of freedom. Empowerment and equality for women cannot be attained within the confines of capitalism, according to Marxist feminists. It thus sets itself apart from other schools of feminist thought and politics by paying close attention to how societies are organised economically, including class stratification; refusing to grant the category of "women" a separate and special status regardless of class; being committed to the overthrow of capitalism; and being loyal to working-class and impoverished women.

This research study investigates how Marxist feminism continues to affect women in the workplace today. Marxist feminism has become a fundamental theoretical framework for analysing how class, gender, and capitalism interact. This study investigates how Marxist feminism has shaped and continues to shape the realities of women in the contemporary workplace by examining the historical evolution of the movement and its central ideas. My research paper emphasises the role of Marxist feminism in combating gender disparities, advancing workers' rights, and encouraging group action among women. Marxist feminism provides an essential framework through which to study how capitalism keeps taking advantage of female employees in the workplace. By fighting the gender-based division of employment, unequal pay, and institutional devaluation of female labour, Marxist feminism may promote economic injustices and improve conditions of employment for women. To promote women's rights in the workplace, it can also operate in tandem with other feminisms. It has a long history of supporting collective action and labour rights, and it is able to keep collaborating with labour unions and grassroots organisations to push for better conditions for employees, fair salaries, and equal opportunity for women at work.

Keywords: Marxist Feminism, Gender, Class, Capitalism, Workplace, Gender Equality, Labour Rights, Collective Action, Empowerment, Emancipation.

Introduction

Background and Significance:

In order to comprehend and address the intersections of gender, class, and capitalism, Marxist feminism arose as a vital theoretical framework. Because it acknowledges that the oppression of women cannot be understood in isolation from larger social and economic institutions, it is a product of the fusion of Marxist theory and feminist analysis (Armstrong, 2020). Marxist feminism's critique of the capitalist system and how it affects women's lives is one of its most important contributions. Marxist feminists contend that capitalism depends on and upholds gendered divisions of labour, in which males are primarily assigned to positions of power and authority in the formal economy while women are typically assigned to caregiving and reproductive tasks. Due to this split, women are economically disadvantaged, receive uneven compensation, and have fewer possibilities to develop in their careers (Jennings, 2019, pp. 117-148). Marxist feminists draw attention to the ways in which capitalism takes advantage of women's unpaid domestic labour and undervalues their contributions to the workforce.

The significance of comprehending women's experiences within the broader context of class struggle is another point stressed by Marxist feminism. It acknowledges the connection between class exploitation and gender oppression as well as the fact that women from various social classes suffer oppression in diverse ways. Working-class women, for instance, could experience extra difficulties like poor pay, unstable employment, and restricted access to resources and social support networks (Armstrong, 2020). Additionally, Marxist feminism emphasises the importance of female solidarity and group action. It contends that fighting systemic inequality requires more than just individual empowerment. Marxist feminists struggle to remove the structural obstacles that prevent women from moving forward in the workplace through organising and fighting for labour rights. They encourage the creation of unions and grassroots campaigns to fight for just compensation, secure working conditions, and laws that value the contributions of women.

Marxist feminism is significant because it acknowledges the connections between class, capitalism, and gender. It provides a thorough explanation of how structural injustices and power disparities affect women's experiences. Marxist feminism offers a paradigm for comprehending and combating the persistent inequities encountered by women in modern workplaces by exposing the underlying institutions that uphold gender oppression. It is essential for decision-makers, businesses, and individuals wishing to achieve gender equality in the workplace to comprehend the long-lasting effects of Marxist feminism. Stakeholders can collaborate to develop policies and practise that support equitable opportunity, just treatment, and better working conditions for all women by acknowledging the systemic nature of gender discrimination and that capitalism plays in sustaining inequality. Participating in Marxist feminist ideas can also help us understand

gender relations in a more nuanced way and inform our efforts for empowering women and promoting inclusive workplaces.

Purpose of the Study:

The goal of this study is to (re)examine the impact of Marxist feminism on contemporary working women. Marxist feminism has significantly influenced our knowledge of and resistance to gender inequality, but it is crucial to consider its relevance in the context of modern workplaces. By undertaking this study, we hope to shed light on the ways in which Marxist feminist viewpoints continue to influence women's experiences in contemporary workplaces and to pinpoint the long-term effects of this theoretical framework.

Objectives of the Study:

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To offer a thorough analysis of the main ideas and theoretical underpinnings of Marxist feminism throughout history.
2. To investigate the continued applicability and significance of Marxist feminist concepts in the context of modern workplaces.
3. To examine the ways in which experiences of women in the workplace have been moulded and influenced by Marxist feminist viewpoints.
4. To determine how Marxist feminism has affected women's emancipation and empowerment in the workplace.
5. To offer analysis and suggestions for upcoming campaigns and initiatives to advance gender equality and enhance the experiences of women in the workplace.

Understanding Marxist Feminism

Overview of Marxist Feminism and its Historical Context:

During the 1840s and 1880s, Marx and Engels expanded their understanding of the social and historical nature of reproduction. *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* by Friedrich Engels, published in 1884, expounded on the changing social relations of production and reproduction. According to Engels, capitalism used the feudal family's labour to empty out the productive domain for its own purposes. As common lands were enclosed and rural existence depended only on salaries, women's work in handicrafts, spinning, subsistence farming, livestock rearing, and other agricultural labour fell by the wayside. Engels asserted that “*household management*” lost its public character under capitalism. Society was no longer bothered by it. The wife took on the role of the chief servant and was cut off from all social production, turning it into a private service (Engels, 2021, pp. 11-23). Women's subordination was

neither a result of biological necessity nor a divine mandate; rather, capitalism's class relations reinforced the gender inequalities that served as the foundation for women's oppression.

Marxist feminists believed that because this patriarchal family is a necessary component of capitalism, it must be dismantled as a source of oppression. Instead, socialisation should focus on gendered labour interactions within families. Women could only end women's oppression in patriarchal norms and social structures by joining proletarian battles against capitalism as workers. From the 1880s to the 1920s, Marxist feminists elaborated on these ideas by exploring the relationship between the division of labour between the sexes and the reproduction of capitalism as a whole. According to Pradella (2013, pp.117-147), Rosa Luxemburg claimed that reproduction was a key component of imperialism's strategy for intensifying its exploitation of workers, emerging markets, and natural resources.

The socialist and feminist movements of the 19th and 20th centuries served as a larger backdrop for the development of Marxist feminism (Bohrer, 2019). Marxist theory, which focuses on examining the social relations of production and the exploitation of the working class under capitalism, served as its main source of inspiration. Nevertheless, the distinctive experiences of women in the class struggle were first ignored by Marxist theory. Marxist feminists recognised the need to include gender in the analysis of capitalist systems because of the unique types of oppression and exploitation that women experienced. They maintained that the oppression of women was a product of their gender roles and the division of labour along gendered lines, as well as their socioeconomic position.

Key Concepts and Principles of Marxist Feminism:

Capitalism and Patriarchy - Marxist feminists contend that these two oppressive institutions are intertwined and mutually reinforcing. While patriarchy maintains gender stereotypes and hierarchies that consign women to unpaid domestic duties and lower-paid, undervalued occupations, capitalism depends on the exploitation of labour for profit.

Collective Action - Marxist feminists place a strong emphasis on the value of female solidarity and collective action. They support women joining unions and grassroots groups to fight against gender inequality and advance workers' rights, pay, and working conditions.

Capitalist Exploitation - Marxist feminists study how capitalism takes use of women's labour, both paid and unpaid, and maintains gendered disparities in salaries, employment possibilities, and working conditions. They emphasise how women's exclusion from the labour force helps capitalism.

Social Reproduction - Marxist feminists place special emphasis on the idea of social reproduction, which refers to the unpaid labour required for maintaining and propagating the labour force and the capitalist system. This comprises tasks primarily carried out by women, such as caring for children, cleaning the house, and providing emotional support. They contend that for capitalism to operate, women's unpaid labour is necessary.

Intersectionality and the Gender-Class Nexus:

The concept of intersectionality holds that several social categories, such as gender, colour, class, sexual orientation, and ability, cross to create unique identities and experiences for each individual (Vukoičić, 2013, pp.33-49). It acknowledges that many forms of oppression, prejudice, and privilege are not felt in isolation but rather interact and cross over.

The term "gender-class nexus" describes the relationship between class and gender systems and how they influence one another (Milkman et al., 2021, pp. 357-372). Marxist feminism contends that in a capitalist society, class exploitation and gender inequality are mutually reinforcing.

Intersectionality in the context of gender and class emphasises that women's experiences of oppression are influenced by the simultaneous influence of both factors rather than being simply determined by only one. Marxist feminists were able to comprehend the gender-class nexus, which acknowledges that the unique characteristics of capitalist societies impact how women experience oppression and inequality (Bohrer, 2019). It emphasises how class-based exploitation interacts with gendered labour divisions, unequal pay, restricted access to resources and education, and other types of discrimination to produce complex and multifaceted inequities for women.

Marxist Feminism's Impact on 21st-Century Women in the Workplace:

With regard to resolving gender disparities and promoting women's rights, Marxist feminism has significantly influenced women in the workplace by offering crucial ideas and tactics. Marxist feminism emphasises how capitalism depends on a division of labour based on gender, with women typically being assigned to unpaid domestic and care duties. It critiques the undervaluation of women's labour and supports initiatives to acknowledge and redistribute unpaid work by drawing attention to this division (Bohrer, 2019). It has examined how undervaluing and underpaying women's labour contributes to capitalism's perpetuation of the gender pay gap. It opposes the systemic undervaluation of professions and vocations with a female preponderance and demands equal compensation for equal labour. It has helped to support initiatives to confront and end discriminatory workplace practices by stressing the power disparities and systemic causes of these problems. It has inspired the creation of laws and policies meant to alleviate gender disparities in the workforce. Organisational practises and cultural attitudes towards gender equality in the workplace have been impacted by Marxist feminist viewpoints (Gebbers, Gao and Cai, 2020, pp. 3623-3643). It has contributed to the creation of legislation against discrimination, equal pay acts, and family-friendly regulations that protect women's rights and foster gender equality. Marxist feminism has aided in establishing more fair and powerful work cultures by opposing patriarchal conventions, encouraging inclusive behaviours, and highlighting the worth of women's contributions.

Criticisms and Limitations of Marxist Feminism in Addressing Gender Inequality:

Marxist feminism has come under fire for ignoring other overlapping kinds of oppression, such as race, sexuality, and ability, in favour of concentrating largely on the relationship between gender and class.

By placing a focus on class as the main axis of inquiry, it may ignore the particular difficulties and experiences of women who have several intersecting marginalised identities. Its essentialist conception of gender frequently conceptualised women's subordination as being primarily dependent on their function in the home and in procreation (Armstrong, 2020). This constrained perspective could ignore the variety of women's experiences, identities, and oppressions. Marxist feminism has been criticised for underplaying the cultural and symbolic aspects of gender oppression. The ways in which gender ideologies, discourses, and norms impact women's lives and sustain disparities, according to critics, go unaddressed.

Conclusion

Intersectionality and the Need for Inclusive Feminist Approaches:

The concept of intersectionality emphasises how people encounter several forms of privilege and oppression at once. It acknowledges how the intersection of gender with other social constructs including race, class, sexual orientation, and ability shapes people's experiences in particular ways (Vukoičić, 2013, pp.33-49). Workplaces need to adopt inclusive feminist strategies that recognise the intersectionality of diverse systems of power and work to understand and address the intricate ways in which various forms of oppression cross and compound. The experiences and viewpoints of marginalised people who encounter multiple types of discrimination and oppression at work need to be at the centre of inclusive feminist methods. Inclusionary feminism will confront the prevailing narratives that frequently ignore or marginalise some communities by giving voice to these experiences. Recognising how social identities impact people's lives differently and the importance of multiple perspectives for a thorough understanding of gender disparity would be helpful. By challenging the presumption of a single, universal experience of femininity, inclusive feminist methods will aid in challenging inequalities within feminist movements and ideologies. They will admit that racial, social class, and sexual preferences all have an impact on the experiences and worries of women. This workplace inclusivity will ensure that marginalised women's challenges and concerns are not minimised or rejected in the twenty-first century, promoting a more diverse and equitable feminist working environment. The promotion of solidarity and coalition building among many groups will be facilitated by intersectionality and inclusive feminist methods. Inclusive feminism will try to forge coalitions between various social justice movements, such as those fighting for racial justice, economic justice, and LGBTQ+ rights in the workplace for women and even for other genders, by acknowledging the interdependence of struggles and common aims. This cooperative strategy will support initiatives to combat various oppressions and create a society that is more inclusive. Furthermore, by taking intersectional viewpoints into account, better policies can be created to address the unique problems encountered by various groups and to remove the physical obstacles that maintain gender-based disparities.

Future Prospects for Marxist Feminism in Advancing Women's Rights in the Workplace:

The potential for expanding women's rights in the workplace remains with Marxist feminism. It offers a critical perspective through which to examine the ongoing exploitation of women's labour in the

workplace by capitalism. Marxist feminism can support continuous attempts to alleviate economic inequities and enhance working conditions for women by continuing to oppose the gendered division of labour, unequal compensation, and systemic devaluation of women's work. Collaboration with other feminist viewpoints, such as intersectional feminism and postcolonial feminism, can aid socialist actions today and assist advance women's rights in the workplace in more inclusive and all-encompassing ways. Marxist feminism may more effectively confront the complex realities of gender inequality and engage in more effective coalition-building and solidarity across various social justice movements by incorporating ideas from other feminist theories. Marxist feminism is able to promote legislation that addresses problems like the gender pay gap, occupational segregation, workplace discrimination, and sexual harassment by identifying the structural and systemic causes of gender oppression. It may also have an impact on the creation of inclusive organisational procedures that combat gender disparities and support women's emancipation. Last but not least, Marxist feminism has a long history of valuing collective action and labour rights. It can keep working with grassroots movements and labour unions to promote better working conditions, just pay, and gender equality in the workplace in the future. Marxist feminism may support systemic change and the emancipation of women in labour movements by mobilising and organising women workers.

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