

Unveiling Intersectional Feminism: An Inclusive Approach To Addressing Multiple Forms Of Oppression

Ishaan Tyagi

The West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences

Date of Submission: 08-10-2023

Date of Acceptance: 18-10-2023

I. INTRODUCTION

Intersectional Feminism is a style of feminism that takes into account the various ways in which each woman encounters prejudice depending on her colour, class, nationality, religion, and sexual preference. It recognises that injustice is a complicated structure that affects individuals differently depending on such traits.¹ Kimberlé Crenshaw, a law expert, invented the word "intersectionality" in her 1989 article to illustrate how intersecting oppressive systems produce peculiar experiences for individuals with various identification classifications. Crenshaw started with Black women, whose subjugation could not be captured solely by the labels "racism" or "sexism" if presented as an either/or proposition.² She contends that conventional feminist theory and anti-discrimination legislation have been unable to tackle the particular experiences of Black women, who are subjected to both sexism and racism and, as a result, bear a "double weight" of subjugation.³ Throughout its history, Feminism has mostly concentrated on the challenges encountered by white middle-class women. Intersectional feminism takes into account the many ways in which each woman experiences discrimination. "White feminism" refers to a kind of practice that disregards the difficulties encountered by queer, women of colour and women from other underrepresented factions. Hence, it is not authentic feminism at all.⁴ "White feminism" disregards intersectionality and ignores the tyranny experienced by non-whites. It is crucial to explain why not all white feminists practice "white feminism." Incorrectly, "white feminism" depicts the manner in which white women suffer gender discrimination as the manner in which all women encounter gender inequality.⁵

II. RATIONALE

There are several imperative reasons to study Intersectional feminism this is because the traditional feminist approaches have limitations in addressing the diverse experiences of women as they focus on the experiences of a particular sect. Intersectional feminism recognizes the ways in which various forms of oppression intersect and impact individuals' experiences of discrimination and marginalization. By addressing the intersections of oppression, intersectional feminism seeks to create a more inclusive and equitable movement that can work toward the liberation of all women. The rationale for intersectional feminism is to create a just and equitable society that recognizes and values the experiences of all individuals, regardless of their social identities.

III. OBJECTIVES

The objective of this research paper is to first understand the concept of intersectional feminism and its application in addressing the unique challenges faced by individuals who possess multiple marginalized identities. Through a review of existing literature, this paper aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of

¹ Soken-Huberty, Emmaline. 2022. "What Is Intersectional Feminism?" Human Rights Careers. December 4, 2022. <https://www.humanrightscareers.com/issues/what-is-intersectional-feminism/>.

² Editors, The. 2020. "Kimberlé Crenshaw's Intersectional Feminism." JSTOR Daily. August 1, 2020. <https://daily.jstor.org/kimberle-crenshaws-intersectional-feminism/>.

³ *Id*

⁴ Hawk, Taylor. 2015. "What is Intersectional Feminism" Denison University. 2015. <https://denison.edu/academics/womens-gender-studies/feature/67969>.

⁵ *Id*

intersectional feminism, its current limitations, and possible courses that can be taken to address said challenges. Also, a focus on how women of color have been marginalized within mainstream feminist movements. Finally, the paper aims to present possible ways by which intersectional feminism can address challenges faced by the LGBTQIA+ community and those having multiple marginalized identities.

IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the challenges and limitations of using an intersectional feminist approach, and how can these be addressed in future research and practice?
2. What are the contributions of women of color to intersectional feminist theory and activism, and how have their experiences been marginalized within mainstream feminist movements?
3. How can intersectional feminist approaches be used to address the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ+ individuals, particularly those who hold multiple marginalized identities?

V. ANALYSIS

What are some of the challenges and limitations of using an intersectional feminist approach, and how can these be addressed in future research and practice?

A significant obstacle for intersectional feminism to overcome is the absence of underrepresented perspectives in conventional feminist movements. White, cisgender, able-bodied, middle-class women have historically dominated mainstream feminism, while women of colour, queer folks, and people who have impairments have been side-lined.⁶ This can exacerbate the marginalization and eradication of these views and perpetuate systemic oppression. To solve this difficulty, intersectional feminist groups must highlight the views and experiences of oppressed individuals. This can be accomplished through providing spaces and outlets for these persons to speak and be understood, and by emphasizing their experience in feminist activity and advocacy. Also, it is essential to recognize and appreciate the services of marginalized folk to intersectional feminist theory and activity.

It can be challenging to traverse the intricacy of various marginalized categories, which is one of the major obstacles of intersectional feminism. This is especially true for persons who jointly occupy many social categories, such as those who are Black and female.⁷ Intersectional feminism frequently necessitates a level of depth and comprehension that can be challenging to attain, especially when dealing with a diverse array of experiences and views. One option for addressing this difficulty is to highlight the viewpoints of the most marginalized members in a specific community.⁸ This requires proactively looking out and elevating the viewpoints of people that possess several marginalized identities and may be particularly susceptible to systematic oppression. By emphasizing the experiences and needs of these persons, intersectional feminism is better able to solve the challenges they encounter.

Another difficulty of intersectional feminism is the interconnectedness and intricacy of the issues in question. Intersectionality can create a complicated network of injustice and privilege, making it challenging to comprehend and tackle all crossing elements. Furthermore, various communities within intersectional movements may have competing or contradictory agendas.⁹ It is essential to deal with intersectionality with sensitivity and sophistication. It is essential to acknowledge that individuals may experience numerous forms of oppression, and that these encounters may vary according to their social identities. Also, it is essential to understand the possibility of competing interests and to emphasise the perspectives and experiences of the most marginalised.

Another difficulty associated with intersectional feminism is the possibility of conflict and separation amongst feminist movements.¹⁰ As persons with diverse experiences and backgrounds come together to fight for

⁶Zota, Ami R., and Brianna N. VanNoy. 2021. "Integrating Intersectionality into the Exposome Paradigm: ANovel Approach to Racial Inequities in Uterine Fibroids." *American Journal of Public Health* 111 (1): 104–9. <https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.2020.305979>.

⁷Mansoor, Asma. 2016. "'Marginalization' in Third World Feminism: Its Problematics and Theoretical Reconfiguration." *Palgrave Communications* 2 (1). <https://doi.org/10.1057/palcomms.2016.26>.

⁸*Id*

⁹Roth, Sike. 2021. Review of *Intersectionality and Coalitions in Social Movements- a Survey and Outlook*". Research Gate. 2021. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350949893_Intersectionality_and_coalitions_in_social_movements_-_a_survey_and_outlook.

¹⁰"Some Essays: Division within the Feminist Movement." n.d. Accessed April 4, 2023. <https://nyandikosanya.blogspot.com/2007/03/division-within-feminist-movement.html>.

social equality, disputes and conflicts are always possible.¹¹ This can lead to internecine conflict and a lack of unity within the movement, which can ultimately undermine the efficacy of intersectional feminism as a whole. To solve this difficulty, it is crucial that feminist groups stress openness and clear dialogue. This requires the creation of spaces where people from varied backgrounds can share their thoughts and observations in a courteous and welcoming setting. It also involves recognizing and handling any problems or differences that develop in a constructive and coordinated manner, as opposed to letting them to linger and separate the movement.

Prioritizing community-led remedies is a method for addressing the issues of intersectional feminism. As opposed to imposing answers from above, it is essential to collaborate with marginalized groups to understand their needs and goals and to build solutions that address their particular difficulties. This strategy can assist in fostering trust and enhancing connections between intersectional feminist movements and oppressed populations.

What are the contributions of women of color to intersectional feminist theory and activism, and how have their experiences been marginalized within mainstream feminist movements?

In the field of feminist theory, academics including Kimberlé Crenshaw and Patricia Hill Collins have been crucial in the creation of intersectional paradigms that acknowledge the methods in which racial group, gender, and other forms of subjugation junction and composite to create unique perspectives of marginalization. Collins maintained that the lives of black women are impacted by both race and gender, as well as by a vast system of overlapping oppressions. She maintained that the lives of black women cannot be fully comprehended through the prism of classic feminist theory, which frequently concentrates exclusively on gender and disregards the manners in which race and other kinds of oppression overlap with gender to influence women's experiences. Collins's study on intersectionality has been especially effective in drawing attention to the marginalisation of black women within conventional feminist movements. She contends that black women have frequently been sidelined from mainstream feminist discussion and movement, and that their perspectives have been eliminated or disregarded. She advocates for a more intersectional perspective to feminist theory and activity that acknowledges the multiplicity of women's experiences and the ways in which different forms of oppression cross and connect.¹² Crenshaw contended that standard legal and feminist frameworks failed to account for the specific experiences of black women who confront both racial and gender discrimination. She stated that these frameworks frequently view ethnicity and gender as separate and different categories, failing to recognise how they cross and interact to produce a unique form of oppression.¹³ Several scholars and activists have adopted a more interdisciplinary analysis to their work as a result of Crenshaw's work on intersectionality, which has had a massive influence on feminist theory and action. Her insights into how many types of oppression cross and interact have served to shed light on the realities of oppressed groups and have challenged traditional feminist theory to be more comprehensive and sensitive to the varied experiences of women. They have also stressed the significance of centring marginalised communities' realities in feminist theory and practise.

In terms of activism, women of colour have been at the forefront of fights for social justice and parity, challenging systematic kinds of subjugation and campaigning for their communities' rights and interests. Combahee River Collective, a Black feminist lesbian organisation, stressed the necessity for intersectional assessments and methods to combat different oppressive practices.¹⁴ Both mainline feminist movements and the Black liberation movement marginalized these women. A second illustration is the Chicana feminist movement, which highlighted the hardships and obstacles of Mexican-American women in the battle for social justice. They acknowledged that their experiences were moulded by numerous interwoven oppressive forces, and they strove

¹¹Bleaney, Michael, ed. n.d. Review of *Ethnic Diversity and Conflict*. Research Gate. Accessed April 4, 2023. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350949893_Intersectionality_and_coalitions_in_social_movements_-_a_survey_and_outlook.

¹²Collins, Patricia Hill. "It's All in the Family: Intersections of Gender, Race, and Nation." *Hypatia* 13, no. 3 (1998): 62–82. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3810699>.

¹³Crenshaw, Kimberle. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241–99. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039>.

¹⁴"The Combahee River Collective and Intersectionality in the Age of Identity." 2021. Retrospect Journal. February 14, 2021. <https://retrospectjournal.com/2021/02/14/the-combahee-river-collective-and-intersectionality-in-the-age-of-identity/>.

to contest the mainstream storylines that neglected or excluded their perspectives.¹⁵ Notwithstanding these accomplishments, women of color's experience and viewpoints have frequently been disregarded throughout prominent feminist movements. Typically, mainstream feminism has been dominated by white, middle-class women and has frequently concentrated on topics that largely concern this group, such as wage equality and reproductive choice. For instance, it is widely believed and publicized that Women get 78 cents for each dollar men make. Yet, this statistic only pertains to Caucasian women. As disheartening as it may be, minority women earn far less. Black women get 64 cents for every dollar a white man earns, but Hispanic women make just 56 cents.¹⁶ This has resulted in the alienation of women of colour and their specific experiences of oppression.

In addition, mainstream feminism has often not succeeded in acknowledging or addressing the areas in which race meets gender and other oppressive practices, creating a colorblind perspective to feminism that wipes away the realities of women of colour.

How can intersectional feminist approaches be used to address the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ+ individuals, particularly those who hold multiple marginalized identities?

Invisibility is one of the greatest obstacles encountered by queer individuals who hold several stigmatised statuses.¹⁷ Understanding and prioritising the narratives of persons who have several oppressed identities, intersectional feminist techniques can be employed to tackle this problem.¹⁸ This means aggressively searching out and amplifying the views of those who are frequently overlooked or marginalised from conventional LGBTQ+ action and support initiatives. Black, Indigenous, and persons of color (BIPOC) queer individuals, for instance, may confront particular issues that are not handled by mainstream LGBTQ+ organisations. Intersectional feminist techniques can assist in addressing this issue by guaranteeing that BIPOC queer individuals are not only added in LGBTQ+ groups and awareness campaigns, but also occupy management positions. In a bid to address the problem of invisibility, intersectional feminists urge for increased representation and acknowledgement of LGBTQ+ individuals in all spheres of society. This includes lobbying for the integration of queer viewpoints and perspectives in mainstream, education, politics, healthcare, and community programs. Visibility initiatives that promote the voices and perspectives of queer humans from all walks of life are another method for addressing invisibility. These initiatives can assist in raising awareness, promoting wider tolerance and comprehension of varied queer identities, and challenging the prevalent assumptions and storylines that frequently restrict visibility. Moreover, intersectional feminism may battle cultural norms and structures that promote the problem of invisibility. This involves opposing heteronormative and compulsory heterosexuality ideas that favour binary gender and heterosexual relationships and fighting for policies and regulations that encourage better living standards for LGBTQIA+ individuals.

The hostility and brutality encountered by queer individuals with multiple marginalised statuses is an additional significant obstacle. This encompasses harassment and prejudice owing to their sexual orientation, gender expression, race, ethnicity, and other characteristics that overlap with their own.¹⁹ Understanding that prejudice and hate are not isolated instances but instead systematic problems entrenched in broader oppressive structures, intersectional feminist techniques might be utilised to tackle this problem. For instance, transgender discrimination frequently overlaps with prejudice caused by race and class, culminating in overwhelming instances of abuse towards coloured trans women who are frequently omitted from conventional LGBTQ+ advocacy activities. By advocating for laws and practices that not only uphold the liberties of LGBTQ+ persons but also tackle the structural causes that lead to discrimination and violence, intersectional feminist methods can assist to address this issue.

Intersectional feminist views can be used to solve the particular problems experienced by LGBTQ+ individuals, especially those with multiple marginalized identities. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, and queer (LGBTQ+) individuals frequently have a greater risk of experiencing psychological

¹⁵Garcia, Alma M. "The Development of Chicana Feminist Discourse, 1970-1980." *Gender and Society* 3, no. 2 (1989): 217–38. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/189983>.

¹⁶ Supra note 4

¹⁷Moore, Darnell L., Beryl Satter, Timothy Stewart-Winter, and Whitney Strub. "A Community's Response to the Problem of Invisibility: The Queer Newark Oral History Project." *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking* 1, no. 2 (2014): 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.14321/qed.1.2.0001>.

¹⁸Melaku, Tsedale M., Angie Beeman, David G. Smith, and W. Brad Johnson. 2020. "Be a Better Ally." *Harvard Business Review*. November 1, 2020. <https://hbr.org/2020/11/be-a-better-ally>

¹⁹Meyer, Doug. "Evaluating the Severity of Hate-Motivated Violence: Intersectional Differences among LGBT Hate Crime Victims." *Sociology* 44, no. 5 (2010): 980–95. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42857485>.

difficulties, HIV/AIDS, and some kinds of cancer.²⁰ Unfortunately, healthcare personnel may not be fully prepared or qualified to administer culturally competent treatment to LGBTQ+ patients, particularly those with multiple marginalized identities. By advocating for policies and practices that encourage positive and culturally competent healthcare, such as schooling healthcare providers in LGBTQ+ cultural competency, prioritizing explicit consent and respect for autonomy, growing access to healthcare for marginalized communities, and endorsing the development of LGBTQ+ health centres, intersectional feminist methods can be used to tackle this problem.

Education is another field in which intersectional feminist strategies can be utilised to tackle the different problems encountered by LGBTQ+ folks. Pupils who identify as LGBTQ+ frequently face bullying and prejudice at school, which can result in lower school performance and increased dropout rates. This is particularly the case for queer students who possess several marginalised statuses, such as minority pupils, learners who are disabled, and low-income students.²¹ By advocating for policies and practises that encourage positive and culturally appropriate schooling, such as instructors in LGBTQ+ intercultural competence, constructing queer inclusive school curriculum, and preaching for legislation to safeguard LGBTQ+ educators from hate and bias, intersectional feminist methods may be employed to tackle this problem. Intersectional feminism can also aid double-marginalized kids by tackling structural injustices in the education system. This involves campaigning for laws that encourage equity in financing, resources available, and possibilities for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. Intersectional feminist views, for instance, might support affirmative action policies that attempt to improve the participation of historically underrepresented groups in higher education and encourage diversity in academic institutions. With the promotion of broad and equitable curricula that represent the realities of marginalised groups, intersectional feminism can solve the issues experienced by double-marginalized students. This involves including the opinions and accomplishments of individuals of colour, the LGBTQ+ community, and PWDs in the program.

VI. CONCLUSION

To summarize, intersectional feminism acknowledges that women face diverse types of repression based on their colour, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability, and other intersecting and interacting social characteristics that produce unique experiences of marginalisation. This style of feminism emphasizes and prioritises the viewpoints and realities of the most marginalised, recognising that traditional feminist theory and activity have frequently omitted or obliterated the outlooks of women of colour and queer individuals. To solve this obstacle, feminist groups must promote inclusivity, community-led solutions, and open communication. Kimberlé Crenshaw and Patricia Hill Collins were essential in the development of intersectional frameworks that emphasise the significance of centering the experiences of oppressed communities within feminist theory and practise. Feminist movements may create a better more equal and just world for all women, regardless of their societal identities, by embracing an intersectional perspective.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- [1]. Zota, Ami R., And Brianna N. Vannoy. "Integrating Intersectionality Into The Exposome Paradigm: A Novel Approach To Racial Inequities In Uterine Fibroids."
- [2]. Mansoor, Asma. 'Marginalization' In *Third World Feminism: Its Problematics And Theoretical Reconfiguration.*"
- [3]. Roth, Sike. Review Of "Intersectionality And Coalitions In Social Movements- A Survey And Outlook"
- [4]. Bleaney, Michael, Review Of *Ethnic Diversity And Conflict.*
- [5]. Collins, Patricia Hill. "It's All In The Family: Intersections Of Gender, Race, And Nation."
- [6]. Crenshaw, Kimberle. "Mapping The Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, And Violence Against Women Of Color."
- [7]. The Combahee River Collective And Intersectionality In *The Age Of Identity.*
- [8]. Garcia, Alma M. "The Development Of Chicana Feminist Discourse, 1970-1980."
- [9]. Moore, Darnell L., Beryl Satter, Timothy Stewart-Winter, And Whitney Strub. "A Community's Response To The Problem Of Invisibility: The Queer Newark Oral History Project."

²⁰ Constance Gustke, "LGBT Community Faces a Variety of Serious Health Problems" n.d. Healthline. <https://www.healthline.com/health-news/lgbt-community-faces-serious-health-problems>

²¹ G Jocelyn-Blackman, Gaell. 2008. "How Are LGBT Youths Affected by Discrimination and What Can Schools Do to Help? — York College / CUNY." www.york.cuny.edu. 2008. <https://www.york.cuny.edu/english/writing-program/the-york-scholar-1/volume-5-fall-2008/how-are-lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender-lgbt-youths-affected-by-discrimination-and>.

- [10]. Meyer, Doug. "Evaluating The Severity Of Hate-Motivated Violence: Intersectional Differences Among LGBT Hate Crime Victims."