

Capitalism and the Pursuit of the Emancipation of Women

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Abstract: Capitalism is highly patriarchal in structure and has established and promoted unequal social relations between men and women such that the latter are oppressed while male supremacy is endorsed socially and economically in the private and public domains of life. In the capitalist system, women for the most part are subordinate to their male counterparts when it comes to employment benefits and opportunities for growth. Women are exploited in the workplace as they are expected to serve their male colleagues in highly patriarchal systems. In the Capitalistic milieu, women's work is devalued in various ways. For one, their great inputs in domestic work are downplayed as a 'normal' role. In most workplaces, women face segregation and their work and knowledge are appropriated to safeguard the comforts and facilitation of domination by males. Women are considered a tool in the workforce to generate greater profits and their vulnerability makes them an easily exploitable labour force. In this context, Feminism is a crucial transformative movement which impacts on the rights of women and it is also an imperative stimulus on critical theory. Its schema to grasp the nature and contrivance of male oppression and the way in which the fairer-sex experiences this oppression in workplaces is important to consider. The suppressed female gender discourse calls for greater consideration of equality between the sexes in especially workplaces. Women need to be enabled and empowered to take their rightful place in the world of work and socially. In this paper the researchers thus seek to provide an overview of feminism and its role in the contemporary world of work. The current gender inequality and absence of women in leadership positions, as well as the many challenges faced by women in the workplace need to be addressed. The research is based on an extensive literature review using a wide range of predominantly secondary sources and it accordingly serves to stimulate gnosis as well as a deeper understanding of feminism and why it is essential for women to fit into the scheme of general representation in a far more equitable manner in workplaces.

Keywords: Feminism, Patriarchy, Capitalism, Equity, Critical Theory

Introduction

The current paper focuses on the need for the emancipation of women particularly within the workplace environment. It views this phenomenon as a product of the capitalist system, a system with wider social ramifications affecting all aspects of social life (Ramon Grosfoguel). This includes the social, epistemological, political and cultural aspects of human existence and for which the workplace is not immune. It is for this reason that Grosfoguel and his colleagues see capitalism not merely as an economic system but most importantly as a civilisation. Most fundamentally the paper views capitalism as a hierarchical and exploitative system. Accordingly, the exploitation of women's bodies particularly in the workplace, (but also in the private sphere of life) can be seen within this frame as part of the larger exploitative project embedded within capitalism.

Marxist scholars like Antonio Gramsci, Louis Althusser, CLR James and Allen Wood generally accept Marx's view of the capitalist system as characterized by alienation, sometimes referred to as estrangement. Wood identifies two themes in this regard namely, alienation as the frustration of human self-actualisation and alienation as the domination of social conditions over their creators (Wood 1981: 50). In both cases, human beings are frustrated and stripped of their freedom to carry out their own projects and so doomed to economic servitude. In an essay "The Marxian Critique of Justice" (1972), Wood notes in addition that although capitalism leads to exploitation, the system itself is not unjust.

For him, the evil in the system arises from the fact that it constitutes a form of servitude. As he puts it: “Under the capitalist mode of production the appropriation of surplus value [by the capitalist] is not only just, but any attempt to deprive capital of it would be a positive injustice” (Wood 1972: 265). Wood thinks that exploitation is not only necessary but an essential feature of the capitalist system. One may perhaps read Wood in this regard as advancing an argument that there are forms of exploitation or labour relations that may be regarded as ‘fair’ or ‘just’ as long as this does not humanise those affected.

Wood’s argument is however, and somewhat at odds with other Marxian commentaries such as those advocated for by Buchanan (1979) and Holmstrom (1977) for instance. While Wood confines exploitation and estrangement as confined within the labour process itself, these scholars conceive of bourgeois social life in general as based on exploitation. His error, therefore, is that he fails to see the generality of Marx’s theory of exploitation, according to these scholars. His mistake as it were, is to “restrict ‘exploitation’ to the wage-labor process” (Buchanan 1979: 136) and fails to see bourgeois human relations, *in general*, as exploitative. Buchanan argues that it is not only that the labour process itself is exploitative but capitalist society, is unjust. He further observes that since wage labour is necessary for human livelihood (1979: 123), this has ramifications for other aspects of life. We find in the modern world, capitalist exploitation assuming gender and racist biases in the main. We shall in this article, focus more on gender dimensions of exploitation.

The modern world abounds in gender biases and social structures which define the responsibilities and roles of women. Within this context, feminism as activism is a critically important movement as well as a corpus of thoughts that underscore the need for an affirmative transformation of society in a way that females and their critical roles in society are not marginalized (Nicolaides, 2015). Feminism relates to the persistent efforts made globally to liberate the female species from millennia of repression and exploitation, and to a larger degree marginalization in society. Its clarion call is to eliminate patriarchy and uncover, analyse and eliminate all practices which foster and sustain gender inequality, from whatsoever sector in society. Patriarchy is a social system that perceives human beings as binary – men and women. As it is male focused, patriarchy favours men and it marginalises women in virtually all spheres of life.

Feminism is thus an important collective movement which is mainly concerned with individual rights of the fairer sex. It is essentially a social, political, and philosophical movement promoting equality of the sexes, with a special stress focus on tackling and taking apart systemic inequalities and injustices that disproportionately impact mainly on women. Its objective is to challenge and restructure society, cultural norms, and institutional practices that continue to promote gender-based discrimination and domination of women by men. In a nutshell:

“Its aim is to secure additional rights and privileges for women in all societies and while it is assuming greater global prominence its primary impetus is in the Western world. In Africa for instance, women bear many social ills which are directly attributable to regional cultural beliefs, many of which are outmoded, which invariably accompany an inevitable degeneration of humanity as such. It is imperative that the fairer sex be afforded their rightful place as full citizens in all spheres of life and that social injustice be fought, since in the traditional world, female submission is considered to be a natural act of ideal femininity in patriarchal societies. The Feminist Ethics focuses on women’s as opposed to men’s interests and rights and it seeks to modify, recreate, or reorganize many features of traditional western and African ethics that downgrade or diminish the moral experience of females. For example, due to the patriarchal cues they obtain both within and outside the home, young girls and boys automatically accept that “masculine” values such as justice and reliability, which are associated with culture and the public environment, are further fully *human* than “feminine” values as caring, sympathy, empathy and kindness, which they tend to relate to nature and their private existence” (Nicolaides, 2015:1)

It is evident that despite improvements in gender equity, and legislative mechanisms, women in South Africa are still worse off than their male counterparts in many important aspects of workplace experience. For one the fairer sex is greatly under-represented in managerial and executive roles and gender discrimination persists with men still being favoured. The South African government has sought to fight gender discrimination through the South African Constitution of 1996.

The government appears to be committed to bring gender equality into the workplace this has not yet been realised (Sinden, 2017) and so the gender gap persists. There are many workplaces such as those in academic arenas that have developed carefully crafted formal programmes relating to inter-alia equitable employment, promotion, and family

related employment leave, but the bottom line is that men are given greater professional rewards (Baker, 2016). Gender equality is not at all going to be an easy thing to achieve in the workplace and far more still needs to be done if the gender imbalances are to be at all reduced in any meaningful shape or form (Begeny et al., 2020).

Many organisations across the globe have crafted operational frameworks and have suitable policies in place to promote gender equity, and there are also national laws in place that are intended to safeguard that women are treated fairly and have access to employment, but these are not nearly enough (Anastasiou & Siassiakos, 2014). Patriarchy continues to promote male supremacy both economically as well as socially, and it is essentially the belief that women should serve men. Consequently, capitalism in its current form, while seemingly supporting the notion of equality in the workplace, is in fact basically suppressing and oppressing women. Thus, in reality women are in many ways just as oppressed as they were in ancient civilizations and in many cases, they are merely viewed as objects and exploited by the system. Over and above the hours spent in workplaces many women perform a wide range of additional domestic chores related to the raising of children and housework. It is evident that male orientated activities are given higher value than female activities and so inequality persists. Millet writing in her *Sexual Politics*, argues that patriarchal societies use a variety of methods to drive dominance by men over women who are lulled into coopting deep rooted patriarchal ideology so that they willingly accept their suppression and also tend to marginalise other women (Millet, 2000).

Capitalism was disseminated to the entire world during colonialism and has clearly had some negative effects as it in many ways socially marginalises women and exploits their labour in what is still largely a patriarchal system which minimises their human worth. In the workplace, there is an entrenched idea that men are supreme entities in the world of business. While it is mainly men who become Chief Executive Officers or Chief Financial Officers, gradual improvements have been made in terms of equity and the ratio of women to men in the business world is gradually increasing. There still a huge chasm and a wage gap, and gender inequality which are issues that need to be addressed (Ziman, 2013). As stated in feminist ideology, women are dominated by men, and this is viewed by some liberal critics as being due to capitalism which neglects basic universal human rights. Consequently, those of a Marxist orientation support the notion of abolishing capitalism (Kanatli, 2024; Grant, 2005).

The main focus for a business according to capitalism and its patriarchal bent, is to strive to maximize profits. Women who are employed are then often viewed as a means to save money since men would request great salaries. Even if women obtain the same salaries as men they are not necessarily liberated as most have no real power or influence at all in the workplace. Capitalism controls society by choosing to accept gender roles as they are currently set and simply put, men benefit the most. Women are marginalised by the effects of patriarchy that is rooted in capitalism which is according to Marxists, a profoundly exploitative and unjust system (MacKinnon, 1982). They often argue that Capitalism and patriarchy work in tandem to support each other and profit from exploiting women.

Feminist ideology

Feminist movements were initiated in the 18th Century and operate by campaigning for all women's rights, including those relating to workplace issues (Echols, 1989). Feminism fights to define personal, and social equality between the sexes (Mendus, 2005). First-Wave Liberal Feminism (1840-1920) fought to bring in reforms and developed a language of equal rights for women and especially fought for right to vote in a liberal democratic framework. This was in contrasted to labour-based proletarian women's movements that gradually developed into socialist and Marxist feminism which were based on the class struggle theory (Artwińska & Mroziak, 2020).

Feminism has its origin in the Latin word '*femina*' which depicts women's concerns. In the last four decades it has been reshaping attitudes on the general role and position of women in society. It stems from in the fight for women's rights and began in Europe in the late eighteenth century. This was when Mary Wollstonecraft (1759- 1797) published her work *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* in 1792, at a time when the fairer sex were, for the most part, second-class citizens. She was intensely opposed to the view of a female nature as an ideological construct, and her work and that of others, led to women obtaining voting rights in Britain and Germany in 1918, and progressively, feminism took root in America as well. Simone de Beauvoir in her work *The Second Sex* (1949), articulated the notion that one is not born a woman, but rather becomes one, suggesting that femininity is not determined biologically but is rather based on cultural conditioning.

Feminism understands that women are not simply a biologically different category of humans, but also a social category. Women are exploited based on their sexuality and are viewed as lesser beings that are considered to be inferior to men. In patriarchal societies, the males dominate and are for the most part the perpetrators of social

inequality and consider women to be lesser beings although women are not in any shape or form fundamentally inferior, submissive or any less intelligent than males.

Aristotle (384–322 BCE) indicated in his writings that women are less rational than their male counterparts. His ethics, however, was an indication of the values of Athenian citizens who were mainly property owning Greek males. He nonetheless recognized mothers as citizens of Athens. In Athenian society the values of Greek females and even foreigners and slaves, both male or female were generally not in the least considered to be equal (Levy, 1990). Aristotle does describe women as having special qualities. For one they are viewed by him as *mathimatikoteron*, indicating they have a increased capability for rational learning than men, They are also *phrontistikotera*, indicating they are generally far more thoughtful in child-rearing. They are also *mnemonikoteron*, emphasizing their advanced memory. Men he considered to be *hetton epiboula*, or less deliberate. Aristotle believed that women and men are capable of exhibiting political judgement. He did stress that women are virtuous and that they have excellent intellectual strengths such as their ability to manage well, study, recollect, and rear the young (Deslauriers, 2009).

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804 CE) to a large extent argued that women lack civil personality and are thus incapable of making a truly meaningful contribution in the public sphere in any manner. He classified women as mere agents that act on intuition or some inclinations and not on what men act on, which he believed was rationally learnt moral principles.

Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712 -1778 CE) asserted that men and women have diverse virtues. Thus, Women are far more suitable for managing their homes while men are naturally the leaders. By reason of their “natural” differences they have dissimilar roles in culture and society. Consequently, their education needed to be more personalized to their respective unique roles. Inappropriately, men have higher status in societal eyes when it comes to reasoning and most of the time this equally applies to their values and virtues. Women’s rights are very often ignored in highly patriarchal societies. Feminism strives for an equal, interactive and united society in which there is unity between the sexes. It pursues justice for the marginalized women in society.

First wave feminists wrote about issues of work and class as being important for women’s liberation (Gilman, 1979; Simone de Beauvoir;1952) when numerous feminist philosophers were seeking to define themselves individualistically on issues such as the economic and social purpose of housework and its links to women’s oppression. The core issue was how to deal with the public / private divide of capitalist societies in which women’s reproductive functions have either restricted their work to the home environment or fashioned a second ‘shift’ problem of voluntary housework and childcare and remunerated work. The primary deliberation was whether-or-not to keep housework in the private domain but make it more technical and resourceful (Richards, 1915). Another option was whether-or-not to “socialize” housework by bringing it into the public domain as suggested by Gilman in (Gilman, 1898).

What is termed as Second Wave Feminism was initiated in the1960s, and it additionally contributed to the feminist ideology by drawing on civil rights movement issues and women’s solidarity initiatives. Women were told that they contrasted to men psychologically. They were considered to be viewed as mainly stereotypical emotional beings. Men were considered to be highly rational beings. The Feminists detested such explanations and asserted that women are indeed different due to the fact, that they have been conditioned in highly oppressive patriarchal systems and need to behave in ways that are reflected upon as being feminine. Some feminists today argue that women do think differently, and that this is due to the fact that women’s thinking often provides very important insights that are largely missed in masculine rationality.

The liberal feminists criticized housework since it is voluntary work. Thus, women are dependent on men, and they are degraded because their housework is external to the meaningful sector of public economic production (Friedan, 1963). Marxist feminist theorists tend to view this externality issue as part of the problem. Others even argue that housework goes back to the feudal method of production of goods for use that continues under capitalism and it gives men power over the work that women undertake (Fox, 1980). Some Marxist feminists maintained that a woman’s housework is part and parcel of the social reproduction of capitalism which permits women no to be paid for housework but offers more profits for the capitalists. Labour is thus sexually divided. It was also suggested that wages be paid for housework (Federici, 1975). Either way, most women view housework as work, and it should be categorized as work, and those doing it should be paid for it by either society or the state (Ferguson, 2004).

Subsequently in the 1960s, these traditions prompted a radical form of feminism to emerge that calls for a fundamental reorganization of society to eliminate all forms of patriarchy. Liberal, socialist (Marxist), and radical feminism are

often described as the three schools of feminist theory (Maynard, 1995) although some newer forms have also arisen since then.

When one develops a feminist approach to ethics, they are merely doing what Aristotle, Rousseau, and Kant should have done initially. They should have been paying attention to the moral experiences of women as well as men. In the process they may also be acknowledging that it is inadequate for traditional western ethics to view females as moral agents or include female issues. What is imperative is a recalculation and reflection of the ontological as well as epistemological hypothesis upon which the value and role of women is constructed. (Nicolaides, 2015)

Implications

The key argument in feminism issues is how sex turns into a gender issue that is a social phenomenon, which primarily leads into the women issue. Rubin (1975) argues that though biological sex is unchanged gender is socially constructed operating chiefly to set apart the sexes and advantages men while oppressing women. Feminism asserts that males and females are biological sexes but are nonetheless created as a woman and man which are generally identified sexual categories. Where there is prejudice against the fairer sex, this stem from the sex and gender separation. According to feminism, women are discriminated against in their public and private lives and do not enjoy the same rights as men. They are viewed predominantly as ‘mothers’ and “women’s different relations to productive work, reproduction, socialization of children and sexuality in patriarchy give her lesser economic and psychological power in relation to men.” (Mitchell, 1972: 43). The sexes are thus socialised to have divergent identities, personalities and even their skills are seen as different. Private patriarchy operates as a device to eliminate women from having any economic and political power, while patriarchy serves as an instrument to drive the discrimination between men and women.

Some extremist feminists sustain the notion that women’s work is part of a distinct patriarchal mode of reproduction that motivates all economic systems of production and it is one in which the men exploit women’s reproductive work. Some critics combine radical feminist assumptions with the Marxist theory of knowledge and they argue that a woman’s work inexorably links her to nature and human needs in a more diverse way than men’s work does (Harding, 1986). Millions of women do housework daily which is not remunerated work – they clean homes, cook, take care of children etc. The capitalist system at times necessitates hiring women but invariably pays them far less than men for the same jobs and this act in itself lowers wages in general, and exhausts women who work in the workplace and then also at home again after the days work in a company or such like. Once the women have done the work required by the system, they are simply sent back into the housework arena – to their ‘rightful place’. Capitalism and patriarchy jointly reinforce the oppression of women and Patriarchy is linked to capitalism (Bruneau).

Patriarchy and male domination cannot be relegated to an entirety of individual acts of prejudice. This is since it is basically a coherent system that models all characteristics of life, both the collective and that of individuals. There are essentially two distinct forms of patriarchy which have surfaced in response to the stresses concerning capitalist economies and economies based on patriarchal households, and private and public patriarchy. Private patriarchy is considered to be exhibited by its excluding of women from economic and political power, whereas public patriarchy segregates women (Walby,1990). Given that there are a range of embedded social influences of patriarchy in current gender relations, the feminist and masculinity theories today each stress that men and women should collaborate to achieve the significant goals of feminism (Gardiner, 2002; Tong, 2013).

The South African Scenario

In South Africa, as indeed in most nations, Women are victims of gender inequality, and they are underrepresented in the corporate boards of organisations and very few are found in the upper echelons in for example leadership and senior management roles. In 2023, it was ascertained that merely 26.5% of women held senior management positions, compared to 73.5% of men (Department of Employment and Labour, 2023). This highlights the continuing gender disparity in leadership and top management positions. Despite much progress having been made in gender equality over the years, women still, for the most part, remain underrepresented at the highest levels of decision-making in many industries and organizations.

Comanne (2020) asserts:

...capitalism uses patriarchy as a lever to attain its objectives, while at the same time reinforcing it. The fact that women are relegated – by patriarchy – to domestic tasks allows

capitalists to justify their over-exploitation and under-payment of women with the argument that their work is less productive than men's. They invoke weakness, menstruation, absenteeism for pregnancy and maternity leave, breastfeeding, and caring for sick children and older relatives. This is where the woman's salary is denigrated as being "for extras".

Women are in the main grossly overexploited in many workplaces. They simultaneously spend many hours on housework which does not in any manner have the same status as paid work. Nonetheless, women are seriously overworked in a social order that is grounded on a sexual separation of labour including the domestic sphere and the private sphere. Men on the other hand are far freer and predominantly involved in work in the private sphere. There is thus a social relationship of inequality lurking behind gender differences between men and women. In social relations men are required to be ready to prove themselves while women must be subservient, detached and also compliant. There is an urgent need to press on for absolute equality between men and women in workplaces, family relations, and also in the public sphere. This will be a huge task given that the capitalist system oppresses women as a tool which allows the capitalists to control the complete workforce towards their own profit acquisition. When capitalism faces a disaster, austerity measures kick in it is the women who become the victims as they are immediately excluded from inter alia social benefits.

We should note that gender equality is protected in the South African Constitution, and the Republic of South Africa is founded on "non-racialism and non-sexism". Furthermore, the Bill of Rights guarantees freedom from discrimination on the grounds of both sex and gender (Dubourdieu, 1999). There is additionally affirmative action legislation in the Employment Equity Act (EEA) 1999. Such Acts are critical in redressing past wrongs levelled against women. They support women in their striving to break the 'glass ceilings' that exist towards the attainment of equitable workplaces and promote equal opportunity and fair treatment of all genders. The affirmative action aspects remedy past drawbacks in seeking and obtaining employment and to a large extent safeguard equitable representation of women in all occupational classifications and levels in the South African workforce. Having said the aforesaid, there are companies that hire and develop women and some even give them preferential treatment over men that have comparable qualifications and also meet the criteria for employment (Cloete and Mokovo 1995). It was stated in 2023 that only about a quarter of top management level positions in the South African labour market were occupied by women. Some 26.5 percent of women in general occupy the top management echelon of the workforce in South Africa, while males occupy the remaining 73.5 percent (Department of Employment and Labour, 2023). The overall female National Economically Active Population (EAP) in the country is roughly 45.5 percent from the 2022 figures, and women between 15 and 64 years of age are working or seeking jobs (Statistic South Africa).

Statistics South Africa, states that 54.3% of women of working age in South Africa were either employed or looking for work in 2023. This represents an increase of 4 percentage points from 2013, when the rate was 50.3%. This indicates that workplace disparities between men and women still exist and that labour-force contribution rates amongst women continue to be lower than those for men. Women are far also less likely to find employment than men. When women are employed, they are also more likely to serve in low-paying jobs and in vulnerable conditions (Statistics South Africa, 2023). Women often have far fewer opportunities for mentorship and sponsorship, which are imperative for their career advancement. In addition, the huge structural inequalities overly affect women as they seek to advance in the world of work. Barriers that inhibit women from progressing into leadership positions are often linked to stereotypical thinking and rampant biases about their competencies in the workplace. There is of course, also discrimination in the capitalist system that favours men in leadership roles.

Comanne (2020) states that women are regularly expected to take on most of the caregiving responsibilities, and this makes it difficult for them to engage in demanding leadership positions. Women need representation in leadership positions where they can serve as role models and can fight for equitable policies that benefit women and men, and that consider family leave, variable work arrangements, and fair and equitable pay. There is a need to enforce gender equity policies, incorporating equal pay, fair parental leave, and anti-discrimination measures. In addition, flexible work environments would also go a long way to support women who are mothers in their important family roles and a work-life balance is required so that jobs, where possible, have at least some flexible work schedules.

Fitong Ketchiwou et al, (2022) maintain that the South African Government has legislation that shields women from discrimination and promotes gender equality. The Employment Equity Act for one, requires employers to promote more equitable representation based on gender, race, and disability. In addition, procurement processes have been revised to support women entrepreneurs in the market. Despite these developments, women still face many challenges such as rejection, unfair work allocation, and they are plagued by the negative perception that often exists when

females are in leadership roles. Ketchiwou et al, suggest some important changes such as offering women remote work possibilities, flexible hours, and needed parental leave. They also call for training, development and mentorship for women based on sound policies that provide equal pay, and a necessary work-life balance. Unfortunately, privilege is not visible to men, since they are the ones enjoying unfair privileges.

Some men need to put aside any sense of entitlement they may have and start contemplating gender equality far more than they currently do because it is just, fair and right to do so. They should seek to eradicate structural gender inequality that pervades most societies globally. The task is not easy since many men feel threatened and believe that feminism per se, is detrimental to them. Gender equity will undoubtedly benefit both sexes and companies by increasing levels of productivity, leading to greater innovation, and enhanced employee satisfaction. It also plays a huge part in attracting a diverse talent pool of employees and in the long run it improves a company's reputation.

Research by McKinsey and LeanIn.org over a decade provides key statistics demonstrating a clear correlation between organizational gender diversity and financial performance. Companies that have more women on executive committees tended to earn at least a 47 percent higher rate of return on equity than companies with no women serving as executives. In addition, companies in the top 25 percent when it came to gender diversity were 27 percent more likely to beat their national industry average in terms of levels of profitability (Emerson, 2020). It has been conclusively reported by Catalyst, a global non-profit organisation conducting research on gender equality in the workplace, that gender inequality and income inequality are strongly linked. Where women are included in companies, there are indeed many advantages inter-alia, more gender equality, happier employees, greater employee retention, a lower-jobs turnover exists, recruitment is easier and productivity is generally much higher. Their study also found that gender inequality and income inequality are strongly linked to each other (Catalyst.org, 2025).

Conclusions

There are various implications emanating from feminism today as it impacts individuals, communities at large and institutions. It advocates for equal pay for equal work and calls for women to be widely accepted in leadership roles in public and private offices. In addition, mothers and fathers should be given special parental leave when required. Women all marginalized people must have a voice in society and be treated fairly. Gender roles should inter alia not restrict either women or men and women's financial autonomy should be supported through entrepreneurship ventures, education provision, and access to needed resources. No wage gaps should exist between the sexes. Women should be able to voice their opinions in any forum. Men should generally strive to exit from patriarchal mindsets and embrace equality of the sexes and share in all family responsibilities. No woman should be evaluated by men on her beauty or simplicity, but human value.

A fair transition and carefully thought out transformation are required in changing mindsets around the issue of equality between the sexes. Human consciousness in South Africa needs to be pricked so that the true spirit of Ubuntu manifests in workplaces. Males cannot and should not continue as the gate - keepers who ignore the colossal contributions that women make in society in general. The real challenge is for the real men to begin to accept the notion of a liberated womanhood. Feminist theory has reviewed the social construction of masculinity and its inferences for gender equality. The social construct of maleness is seen by feminists as challenging because it relates males with aggression and contestation and this buttresses patriarchal and highly unequal gender relations. In the capitalist system that prevails globally, the needs of women must be addressed. There is clearly a huge need to stop the oppression and exploitation of women who should be presented with fair opportunities in workplaces and society in general. They also need to have access to resources and be positioned to contribute in the various social, economic, cultural and political processes as they attain their rightful place in society.

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