

# Hegemony and Transformation: A Comprehensive Analysis of Gender Issues in the Global Dynamics of the 21st Century

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## Abstract

*Gender inequality remains one of the most pressing challenges on the global development agenda. Although significant progress has been achieved through the MDGs and SDGs, the gap between men and women in economic access, political representation, and personal security remains very wide. This study aims to explore the sociological roots of gender inequality, its impact on the global economy, and how the currents of globalization and digitalization create both new opportunities and threats to gender justice. The method used in this study is a comprehensive analysis through an in-depth literature review of patriarchal structures, intersectionality theory, and the dynamics of gender issues in the 21st century. The analysis covers the mechanisms of perpetuating patriarchy through the institutions of family, education, and religion, as well as its manifestations in the capitalist economy and digital space. The results show that patriarchal hegemony remains a structure that is difficult to dismantle and is transforming into more complex forms in the digital era, such as technology-mediated gender-based violence. The gender wage gap and unpaid care work continue to hinder global economic potential, while women's representation in strategic decision-making remains far from targets. Intersectionality theory emphasizes that the discrimination experienced by women overlaps with issues of race, class, and colonialism, thus requiring non-monolithic solutions. This study concludes that gender transformation is not merely a moral issue but a prerequisite for the progress of civilization, demanding legal reform, inclusive education, and cross-national commitment to deconstruct oppressive hegemonic structures.*

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## 1. INTRODUCCION

As we enter the third decade of the 21st century, the world is witnessing a stark contradiction in the development of human rights. On the one hand, globalization and technological advances promise democratization of access and opportunity for all individuals, regardless of identity. However, on the other hand, global data shows that patriarchal hegemony remains the most difficult structure to dismantle, even transforming into new, more complex forms in the digital age. Gender issues are no longer merely marginal narratives about women's rights, but have become a major determinant of economic stability, international security, and global ecological sustainability. An in-depth study of this topic is urgent for at least three fundamental reasons: First, the systemic failure in the distribution of economic prosperity. Although various international agendas, such as Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) point 5, have been launched, the World

Economic Forum report (2024) warns that at the current pace of progress, the world will need at least another 134 years to achieve full gender equality. Gender hegemony creates the "feminization of poverty," where women worldwide bear the burden of unpaid domestic care work that underpins the capitalist economy but is never financially recognized. Without a comprehensive analysis, global economic policy will continue to ignore the trillions of dollars lost due to the labor force participation gap.

Second, the phenomenon of the "Shadow Pandemic" and structural violence. The global dynamics of the 21st century bring new threats in the form of technology-mediated gender-based violence. From cyber harassment to digitally organized human trafficking, women's bodies remain a battleground for power. Global crises, from the COVID-19 pandemic to climate change, have exacerbated this vulnerability. In-depth studies are needed to dissect how protection policies often fail because they only touch the surface symptoms without unraveling the cultural roots of violence embedded in hegemonic masculinity. Third, the urgency of representation in global decision-making. The world currently faces major challenges, such as climate change and the energy crisis, that require an inclusive perspective. Global leadership, still hegemonic and dominated by male perspectives, tends to produce technocratic solutions and often neglects aspects of social care and long-term sustainability. Gender transformation is not simply about "adding women" to the system, but about changing how the system works through the lens of feminism and intersectionality.

Therefore, this study should no longer be viewed as an additional or complementary study. It is an intellectual imperative for understanding how power operates in the 21st century. Without a comprehensive analysis, transformation efforts will become mere cosmetic jargon. While oppressive hegemonic structures will continue to reproduce injustices that hinder the progress of human civilization as a whole.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical research type. Specifically, the method applied is a literature study. (*Library Research*) The research was conducted by conducting an in-depth literature review of various scientific sources relevant to gender issues and global dynamics.

The data sources used are secondary, which include: 1) Classical and contemporary theoretical works: Analyzing the thoughts of figures such as Simone de Beauvoir regarding social construction, Raewyn Connell regarding *Hegemonic Masculinity*, and Sylvia Walby on patriarchal structures. 2) Global Report: Refers to the latest data from international institutions such *World Economic Forum* (2024), UN (UN Women), and documents *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs). The analytical framework in this study uses two main analytical tools: Patriarchal structural analysis dissects the mechanisms of perpetuation of male domination through the institutions of family, education, religion, and economy. Intersectionality theory uses Kimberlé Crenshaw's framework to understand how overlapping social identities (race, class, and gender) create unique modes of discrimination. Data analysis techniques are analyzed qualitatively by reducing, presenting, and drawing conclusions from global phenomena such as Gender Wage Gap, Unpaid Care Work, to the Shadow Pandemic phenomenon in the digital era.

## 3. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1.1 RESEARCH RESULT

#### 1.1.1 Patriarchal Structure and Culture

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Patriarchy as a social system places men in primary power. Ontologically, many cultures construct domestic roles for women and public roles for men. This construction is reinforced through the institutions of family, education, and religion. The word "patriarchy" is etymologically derived from the Greek patriarchs, meaning "father's order." However, in contemporary discourse, patriarchy is not simply the dominance of individual fathers within the family, but rather a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women (Walby, 1990). This review views patriarchy as a "system" that permeates the very fabric of culture, dictating how resources are distributed, how power is exercised, and how gender identities are constructed from birth to death. One of the fundamental debates in this literature review is the origins of patriarchy. There are two major views:

- **Essentialist View:** Patriarchy is considered a logical consequence of biological differences (male physical strength). However, this view has been widely refuted by modern anthropologists.
- **Constructionist View:** Affirming that patriarchy is a cultural product. Simone de Beauvoir, in her work *The Second Sex* (1949) stated, "*One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.*" This statement serves as an ontological foundation that rigid gender roles in patriarchal structures are the result of ongoing cultural socialization, not natural destiny.

### 1.1.2 Mechanisms for Perpetuating Patriarchy through Cultural Institutions

The family is often the first place where patriarchal structures are introduced. Through the domestic division of labor, children learn that the private sphere is feminine and the public sphere is masculine. Sociological literature suggests that parenting styles that differentiate toys, clothing, and responsibilities based on gender are the first building blocks in the patriarchal edifice within individuals' minds. Although schools formally teach equality, the "hidden curriculum" often perpetuates gender stereotypes. A literature review shows that textbooks often portray men as inventors, leaders, and adventurers, while women are portrayed in supporting or domestic roles. This limits students' aspirations and self-esteem from an early age. Many cultural systems use religious or mythological narratives to justify women's subordination. Gender-biased interpretations of sacred texts are often used as a legitimizing tool to limit women's opportunities for leadership and public decision-making. There is a symbiotic relationship between patriarchy and capitalism. Feminist economic literacy highlights the concept of *Unpaid Care Work* (unpaid care work). The global economic structure relies heavily on women's domestic labor (cooking, childcare, housekeeping), which is not financially valued. If this work were measured monetarily, it would be worth trillions of dollars annually. Patriarchy provides a "subsidy" for capitalism by ensuring that (male) labor is cared for at home without additional cost to the industrial system. Modern literature on gender emphasizes that patriarchy not only harms women but also oppresses men through the concept of Hegemonic *Masculinity* (Raewyn Connell). Men are expected to be strong, unemotional, and sole breadwinners. This leads to psychological burdens, higher suicide rates in men, and a tendency to engage in risky behavior to prove their "manhood." Within a patriarchal structure, violence is often used as an instrument to maintain the status quo. Sylvia Walby identifies violence as one of the six structures of patriarchy. Domestic violence, sexual

harassment in the workplace, and the objectification of women in the media are systemic ways to remind women to remain subordinate. This review should incorporate Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectionality theory. Women's experiences within patriarchal structures are not uniform. A wealthy white woman in Europe experiences patriarchy differently than a female farmworker in Indonesia. There are other layers of oppression such as race, class, and colonialism that intertwine with patriarchy, creating unique forms of marginalization. The digital age brings both challenges and opportunities. On the one hand, social media reinforces the objectification of women and gives rise to new forms of digital patriarchy (*online gender-based violence*). On the other hand, global movements like #MeToo demonstrate the power of digital solidarity in challenging centuries-old power structures. Deconstructing patriarchy requires radical cultural change. Gender literacy must be an integral part of national education. Policies like paternity leave (*paternity leave*), women's representation in parliament, and economic recognition of domestic labor are steps toward dismantling this structure. Patriarchy is a highly flexible structure; it has been able to adapt to the times, from the agrarian era to the era of artificial intelligence. However, because it is a cultural construct, it is not impossible to change. Understanding the roots of patriarchy in culture is the first step toward building a more just world order, one where humanity is no longer confined by narrow gender boundaries.

Intersectionality Theory

In global discourse, we cannot see gender in isolation. Intersectionality theory, developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw, explains that the discrimination experienced by women in the Global South (Developing Countries) is different from that experienced by women in the Global North (Developed Countries) because it overlaps with issues of race, economic class, and colonialism. For decades, social analyses of discrimination have tended to be “monolithic”—that is, they have viewed oppression from only one perspective, whether gender alone or race alone. Intersectionality theory is here to break this linear way of thinking. Intersectionality is an analytical framework used to understand how multiple social and political identities (such as gender, race, class, caste, religion, disability, and sexual orientation) combine to create unique modes of discrimination and advantage. This review will discuss how a Black woman's experience of poverty should not be understood simply as the sum of “sexism + racism + class,” but rather as a qualitatively different and overlapping form of oppression. Although the term “intersectionality” was coined in 1989, its roots date back to the 19th century. Sojourner Truth, through his famous speech “*Ain't I a Woman?*” (1851), questioned why the definition of “woman” in the feminist movement at the time referred only to upper-class white women, while black women who worked hard on the farms were ignored. In 1974, a radical black feminist group, *Combahee River Collective*, issued a statement stating that the lives of black women involve “integrated” systems of oppression (racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class). They asserted that the liberation of one group would not occur without simultaneously dismantling all of these systems of oppression. This review would not be complete without discussing the contributions of **Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989)**. Crenshaw introduced the metaphor of the “crossroads” (*intersection*) to clarify the legal position of black women. If there is an accident at an intersection, it could be caused by cars coming from either direction (racism

or sexism), or a combination of both. If a black woman experiences discrimination in the workplace, the law often fails to protect her if she cannot prove that the discrimination was “only” because of her gender or “only” because of her race. Crenshaw argues that the “namelessness” of these overlapping experiences is a form of systemic failure.

### 1.1.3 Three Dimensions of Intersectionality

Crenshaw divides intersectionality into three main dimensions:

1. **Structural Intersectionality:** How social location (e.g., immigration status and gender) makes the experience of domestic violence different for immigrant women compared to citizen women.
2. **Intersectionality of Politics:** How political movements (feminist vs. anti-racist) often force individuals to choose one identity, which ultimately marginalizes those in both groups.
3. **Intersectionality of Representation:** How media and popular culture portray (or erase) the existence of women with overlapping identities.

Patricia Hill Collins (1990) expanded this concept through the term “*Matrix of Domination*” argues that oppression operates on three levels:

- **Personal Biography Level:** Individual daily experiences.
- **Group Community Level:** Group culture and values.
- **Social Institution Stage:** Schools, churches, media, and government.

Collins emphasizes that each individual has a unique position in this matrix—a person may be *an* oppressor in one context (for example, because of their economic class) but be oppressed in another context (because of their gender).

### 1.1.4 Global Issues: Intersectionality Beyond the West

Criticism of this theory often states that it is too “American-centric”. However, scholars in the Global South have adapted the theory to local issues:

- **In India,** Intersectionality is used to understand the relationship between castes (*Dalit*) and gender.
- **In Southeast Asia,** It is used to dissect the issue of female migrant workers who face oppression based on citizenship status, class, and gender.
- **Disability:** How do disabled women face systemic barriers that are different from disabled men or normal women?

In the VUCA era, “one size fits all” policies are no longer effective. Intersectionality demands that policymakers:

- Viewing the resolved data (*disaggregated data*) not just by gender, but gender-race-age.
- Ensuring social assistance programs reach the most marginalized at the darkest “crossroads”.
- In education, the curriculum should reflect a diversity of voices so that students from overlapping backgrounds feel represented.

This theory has not escaped criticism. Some consider intersectionality to be “identity politics” that divides society. However, intersectional scholars argue that recognizing differences is not about division, but about achieving true justice by leaving no one behind. Intersectionality is not just an academic theory; it is a tool for social justice. It forces us to see the complexity of humanity beyond

simple labels. By understanding that oppression and privilege are intertwined, we can build more inclusive and effective social movements.

## 1.2 DISCUSSION

Globally, women are more likely to live below the poverty line than men. This is due to the "Gender Wage Gap" and the burden of unpaid domestic work and *unpaid care work*. If women were given equal economic participation, global GDP would be expected to increase by trillions of dollars. However, women often face a double burden: working in the public sector while bearing primary responsibility for childcare and household responsibilities. UN data shows that during global crises (such as the COVID-19 pandemic), rates of violence against women increase dramatically. This violence includes physical and sexual violence, as well as increasingly widespread digital violence. Global issues also include the fight against female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage, which are still prevalent in parts of Africa, East Africa, and Africa.

Central Asia. This is a human rights violation that hinders the potential of young women globally. Despite an increase in the number of female world leaders, women's representation in global parliaments still falls short of the 30% quota. Structural barriers and media stereotypes remain major barriers for women in strategic positions. Research shows that female leadership tends to be more collaborative and focuses more on social welfare, education, and health policies. Equal gender representation in politics leads to more inclusive policies. In developing countries, women's access to the internet and digital technology is significantly lower than that of men. This limits their access to information, online education, and digital economic opportunities. A recent global gender issue is AI algorithms, which often inherit gender bias from existing data. If technology developers are dominated by one gender, the resulting technological products risk reinforcing old stereotypes. Women in agrarian communities are often the first to be impacted by climate change due to their role in finding water and food. However, they are the least involved in climate mitigation policies. This movement links the exploitation of nature with the oppression of women. Current global issues encourage the involvement of women as agents of change in environmental conservation. A review of the history of the international women's movement shows a shift from simply demanding the right to vote to demanding comprehensive structural justice through the fifth point of the SDGs (*Gender Equality*). Modern movements such as "*HeForShe*" emphasize that gender equality will not be achieved without the involvement of men. Deconstructing "*Toxic Masculinity*" (toxic masculinity) benefits both men and women.

## 4. CONCLUSION

In some parts of the world, movements are attempting to reverse progress on gender rights under the guise of protecting traditional values. This poses a serious challenge to international diplomacy. Global gender issues are not merely moral issues, but prerequisites for the advancement of civilization. A gender-equal world is a richer, safer, and more just world. This effort requires a commitment across countries, cultures, and generations. This global issue demands that we view human beings not by their biological categories, but by their potential and contributions to humanity.

### Strategic Recommendations in this study

1. Legal Reform: Eliminate discriminatory laws at the national level.

2. Inclusive Education: A curriculum that deconstructs stereotypes from an early age.
3. Supporting Infrastructure: Paternity leave policy (*paternity leave*) and affordable childcare.

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