

RESEARCH PAPER

Analyzing the Socio-Political Impact of Feminist Movements: A Comparative Study of African and American Contexts

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes and compares how the feminist movement has influenced social, political, and cultural spheres in Africa and the USA. This paper attempts to examine the different impacts and trajectories of the feminist movement in Africa vis a vis the movement in the USA. Uses a comparative qualitative analysis of African and American feminist movements in historical, cultural, and socio-political perspectives. The study finds that although feminist movements in Africa and the USA have made great gains for women's rights, their results vary depending on cultural differences, political, and economical contexts. In Africa, the movement is challenged with context-specific issues, while in the USA, part of the progress is influenced by institutionalized architectures and historical inequalities. Recommendations are made on the need to promote cross-cultural exchanges to advance global feminist solidarity while aligning strategies to address specific socio-political and cultural challenges facing women in both Africa and the USA. Further, it calls for strengthening educational and policy frameworks for supporting gender equality within different contexts.

KEYWORDS Feminism, Trans-National Feminism, Gender Equality

Introduction

In reality, international feminism movement is not uniform. Its worldwide effect is defined by the diverse past, social, and political circumstances. The 19th and 20th centuries saw a significant upsurge in feminism in the United States. In the end, it concentrated on women's reproducing, work, and voting rights. In order to create a society where gender equity is not only acknowledged but also disputed, these currents of feminism keep challenging laws and call for social changes (Kaifa, et. al., 2024). The American feminist movement fervently supports women's rights within the framework of patriarchy and the restoration of women's legitimate ownership in all spheres of life.

The contrasts of the social, political, and economic environment with which the feminist struggle in Africa has operated are different from the experiences in Europe and America. The differences come from the unique socio-political landscapes, traditional practices, and colonial legacies that exist on the continent. In this light, a lot of African feminist movements have to grapple with forms of gender discrimination besides the other serious concerns of poverty, education, and colonialism. The movement has been marking issues such as gender-based violence, early marriages, limited access to education and health, and advocating the issue of intersectionality of gender vis-a-vis race, class, and culture, as the problems they face are not one but very complex, multiple, and interrelated. African feminists have struggled to reinterpret feminism in the context of local cultures by marrying feminism through indigenous practices and concerns of social justice.

Comparing feminism in America and Africa reveals that, although having very different historical backgrounds, the movements have the objective of empowering women and dismantling oppressive structures. In terms of differences, the African feminist

movement focusses on grassroots activism that seeks to make the case for change at the community level, whereas the American feminist movement has been more strongly linked to institutional and legal reforms. Despite the fact that women's issues in both regions may differ, feminist action is characterized by an attempt to change society and a growing awareness of the need for international cooperation. Therefore, this paper examines more closely how these minor distinctions and parallels still influence feminism in both the US and Africa.

Literature Review

SERNAM as an institution allowed women's movements to drive activism across a wide spectrum. The 1990s institution became a major resource for gender mainstreaming, women-oriented state-centric policies, and all sorts of support for women's rights. However, the close association with government agendas always put grassroots feminist concerns out of the game or limited their scope for entirely structural changes. The relationship SERNAM has with women's movements is rather complicated. Although it enabled advancement in violence prevention and labor rights, it created a structure for the feminist activism within parameters set by the state. It provides ways and barriers in state-sponsored feminist structures (Franceschet, 2023).

Feminist activism and women's movements have been at the forefront of every fight against gender inequality and the promotion of women's rights. These movements have addressed issues such as equitable access to reproductive rights, work, education, and protection from discrimination and assault. Since then, they have spoken up on the many demands of women in relation to the various racial, class, and sexual categories. Collaboratively, all feminist groups have raised public awareness of inequality and prompted government action about legislative improvements. Such movements have altered legislative safeguards, societal attitudes, and the possibilities available to women; they are undoubtedly a significant step in building a society where more justice and fairness will be attained (Gouws & Coetzee, 2019).

The conceptual conflict between African and Western feminism and its implications for gender equality in Eritrea. The way that Western and Third World feminism conceptualize women as the object of conflict is where they diverge. Eritrea and other Third World nations' rights for women are negatively impacted by Western feminism. However, because African feminism takes into account women's reproduction and producing duties, it has good implications for women's rights in Third World nations. In order to safeguard feminine liberty, particularly with regard to the right to reproduce, unsafe customs, and involvement from the public, the Ethiopian federal government should adopt African feminism and update its legislation, rules, and directives (Bayu, 2019).

History and impact of feminist waves in global activism with the special focus on gender violence: Early concern of feminist waves such as early advocacy for women's rights expanded into efforts to address issues more contemporary such as sexual violence and systemic inequality. They have influenced the worldwide conversation on gender violence while fostering international solidarity toward the change of policies and social attitudes. The article also shows the extent to which feminist activism continuously connects local and global struggles within which the old patriarchal structures are challenged and gender justice defended internationally (Weldon, Lusvardi, Thompson & Forester, 2023).

With the growth of local oversight, data, non-profit organization (NGO). (or the professionalization of feminist within NGOs), issues, simplicity, authoritarianisms, and emigration, local organizing has spawned feminist movements within the local framing. Although acknowledging the distinctions among countries and feminist movements inside those countries, the latest study on feminist movements in the Asia-Pacific, the Mideast and North African region, sub-Saharan Africa, European countries, and the United States also

challenges these geographic classifications as how feminist means in each of those areas. Local therapies reveal some similar obstacles; despite the fact women experience various challenges at every place (Runyan, Williams, Mhajne & Whetstone, 2020).

Development and influence of the #MeToo movement in two models of cultural and political systems. In America, the movement spread largely through social media for the wailing of women who have been victims of sexual harassment and assault. In South Korea, although the social media-based movement also adapted to unique cultural and social norms around gender and authority, it had its own unique set of challenges. The movement in Korea, based on patriarchal overtones, was influenced by the clash between traditional thinking and demanding gender equality. The two movements framed their collective actions against sexual violence and gender inequality, but the ways in which these issues were articulated and responded to differed due to the local context (Jestine & Mendoza, 2021).

When designing and implementing programs, it is crucial to take feminine customs and standards into account in order to optimize the possible advantages. Merely emphasizing empowering could prove to be sufficient if the restrictive gender norms and practices which could compromise the efficacy of what is being done aren't addressed. Lastly, the architects of programs and administrators need to think about adapting the intervention components to the targeted empowers-related consequences, encouraging community assets and trade, and clearly pursuing distinct powerful objectives (Etienne Lwamba, 2022).

The files are really concerned with the experience and challenges encountered by women in positions of global leadership. It emphasizes how the female leaders from various places end up balancing political power while dealing with societal patronizing expectations and gender pressures. Through the comparison of women leaders from national to international levels, the paper puts emphasis on how the actual differences exist in terms of gender concerning leadership style, public effectiveness, and perception among the public. Much different from the above are the typical scrutinies and barriers that women face in power, including strikes between achieving their traditional gender roles and political duties, while essentially using their leadership in gender equality campaigns. This marks a significant contribution in the debate concerning gender as in shaping careers and archives of women leaders across the world (Watson, Jencik & Selzer, 2005). Race, gender, and class where it meets in the life of a Black woman. The essence of womanism involves understanding it as cultural and social movement against the narrow feminism of mainstream, attempting to mainstream its experiences by including the different aspects of Black women's lives. It reviews the historic foundations of womanism and its emergence as relevant today in terms of identity, empowerment, and social rights issues in an attempt to expand the feminist imagination into the diversity of intersectional thinking (Izgarjan & Markov, n.d). Development in the economy and gender equality are intimately linked. Females' emancipation will result from growth themselves, but taking decisions will shift as a result of gender equality, and growth will be directly impacted. In contrast to the claims that some of the more upbeat legislators assert, it is unclear whether enforcing rights for females once will start a positive feedback loop in which female advancement and empowering will ultimately lead to their equality as individuals in wealthier communities. On another direction, despite general beliefs about women's abilities, monetary growth by itself cannot guarantee meaningful advancement in key areas of gender equality, particularly in the area of the ability to make decisions (Duflo, 2011).

"The Impact of Feminism Movements: A Comparative Study of Africa and the USA" reveals that many research gaps are found in feminist movements in both regions. One such gap is an insufficient exploration of how divergent cultural, historical, and socio-political context affects feminism activism in Africa as opposed to the USA. There is also relatively limited perspective on intersectionality with regard to these movements in terms of race,

class, and ethnicity as they relate to women's experiences and engagements with feminism in the two regions. Another consequence is that it lacks an analytical comprehensive study of the impacts that local feminist movements exert on global meanings, particularly with regard to how perspectives of African feminists are brought into mainstream global debate. This limited view of comparative studies outside Western feminism would result in a big gap in appreciating the impacts of feminism at a global level- be they local or international- and globally.

Material and Methods

This comparative study research paper will adopt qualitative method. It is a thorough analysis of academic literature, peer-reviewed journals, feminist manifestos, policy documents, and media coverage of both areas. All of these sources will be asked to critique the material for such key issues as political, social, and economic changes influenced by feminist movements, or by cultural representations of gender roles. The texts and literature used will cover historical events so that the study can be able to analyze how feminism has evolved in both regions particularly with respect to race, class, and ethnicity.

Origins and milestones of Feminism

The African feminist thoughts form a dynamic and emerging movement for women's liberation and equality within the context of political and social struggles in Africa. This sentiment is indeed rooted in the global women's movements of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries and did emerge post-independence as these women fought for political representation, equality in educational and economic affairs and freedom from gender-based violence within newly formed nation states (Mama, 2019). African feminists decried the notion that feminism is a Western tail to it and cut off phenomenon, fighting instead for a radical and liberatory vision that could become a vehicle for confronting global systemic inequalities, including the exploitation of the African woman and her resources, by neoliberal capitalism. They invoke the present future whereby African women enjoy human rights and freedom as they command global space for the justice and equality struggle. In contrast, USA emphasizing the major themes of feminism as they have evolved through the various movements shaped by particular historical situations and social actions. The principle had an early beginning in the work of Mary Wollstonecraft A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792). and this could be regarded as the first phase of feminist activism for women's rights. The call for women's suffrage in the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention highlighted race-gender interconnections with Sojourner Truth being one of the prominent voices. Suffrage victory was one of the hallmarks of 1920 but it did not solve all problems (Head, 2019).

The second wave, incited by figures like Betty Friedan in the 1960s focused on the examination of sex roles and rights at the workplace. Third-wave feminism came in the 1990s and was dominated by younger, inclusive voices like Rebecca Walker. Important milestones continued extending into the new century in movements like #MeToo and the Women's March in 2017 who fought under the umbrella of broader rights, including reproductive and racial justice (Head, 2019).

Key challenges and Disparities

Africa: Socio- Economic And cultural Empowerment

In actual fact, feminist agitation in Africa has been including gender-based violence within its agenda especially GBV-related practices such as female genital mutilation early and child marriages as well as domestic violence. Some feminists and organizations such as The African Feminist Forum have been working tirelessly on the continent to change social capital roles into strong legal tools in the protection of women against the vice.

Access to education and healthcare are icebergs of the African feminist movements. Secondary and reproductive healthcare discrepancies in educational attainment are problems that are often raised in many African countries. These feminists fight for programs that ensure education for girls and programs that fight such anti-development forces as child marriages. Economic empowerment is yet another popular issue affecting women, the most in rural areas where women usually work in agriculture without access to resources such as land ownership, credit, and technology. According to African feminists the establishment of an equal economy for women should be accompanied by laws that legitimize recognition of informal economic contributions by women. Lastly, although progress in political representation has been made notably Rwanda and South Africa the picture of political leadership across Africa is still dismal for most parts, with women being underrepresented in most leadership positions.

Structural and Legal reforms in USA

In the United States, feminism has been concerned with a variety of issues, but most importantly with those relating to the elimination of legal and institutional discrimination. The feminist agenda's most important reform has continued to be reproductive rights, including abortion and access to contraception, which remain significant in light of the recent overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, a major setback.

Workplace equality has also been one of the foundations of U.S. feminism; it remains alive through laws like the Equal Pay Act (1963). and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (1964), which were enacted in part to reduce gender discrimination in employment settings. But, no matter those legal gains, women have yet to see pay equality, and women are still underrepresented among those occupying leadership positions.

Sexual harassment and violence have also gained prominence in emerging issues under the #MeToo movement, which showcased how common sexual harassment and assault were in many industries. Thus far, it has raised awareness but effected slow systemic change.

Challenges and Constraints

Socio- cultural Obstacles in Africa

The primary category is "social and cultural obstacles," that occurred in each of the five domains in different ways and consist of premature marriage, illiteracy, discrimination against women, insufficient access to land, and the care industry. The third factor, "difficult and brittleness," has led to an endangered category consisting of youthful jobless women, whereas the next factor, "financial barriers," mostly consists of younger women's limited possibility of financing. The last obstacle, "abilities advancement," is the absence of anything to help adult women get the training and direction they need to find good jobs. The initiatives and obstacles noted depend on information that is currently accessible and may not be representative of Africa as a whole. While that is a wealth of knowledge about women's work in certain areas of Africa, like East and West Africa, it is less material accessible for the remainders of the continent, like Central and Southern Africa. Still, this doesn't mean that there are no initiatives in these areas or that there aren't enough of them; actually, it only indicates that there aren't enough data and verification (Khan, 2020).

Along with that political instability and economic inequality, which are the most troublesome hindrances, there are political unrests, corruption, and dictatorship in many African countries, such that they have limited the ability of feminist organizations to push for legislative reforms or against gender inequality. Even in cases where feminist movements have made headway, such organizations, as well as activist themselves often face immense risks of persecution. Economic dependency is another perennial issue. While

female-led businesses are sprouting and women are participating more in agriculture than previously, many women still remain outside all formal economic opportunities, and their work continues to be undervalued. Although economic empowerment is a key agenda of feminist movements in Africa, it is hindered by patriarchal land ownership and inheritance laws.

Ideological and political friction in USA

Feminism movements have stood quite strongly on a backlash from conservative and religious groups, particularly with regards to reproductive rights. The anti-abortion movement has been successful in pushing through its changes through legislatures, and the reversal of *Roe v. Wade* has been the crowning pinnacle of what many consider as decreases in women's autonomous reproductive decision-making.

These inequalities endure racial and economic forms. It has made great strides with white middle-class women-mainstream feminism; this has seldom paid attention, though, to the struggles of women of color, particularly Black and Latina women. Intersectionality had made an attempt to bridge this gap by bringing in a consideration of race, class, and gender into feminist activism. But women of color in the US continue to suffer in the face of real racial discrimination and systemic inequalities.

America has seen a dramatic shift in its culture of politics in the last year as the Democratic Party has selected two outstanding nominees to compete to represent the party's presidency candidacy. A social convention was broken when Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, a woman and a male of multiracial heritage (which immediately qualifies him as black in the US). were chosen. Americans have questioned if supporters' potential racism will influence their support for Obama and maybe Hillary Clinton's candidature would be defeated by innate misogyny (Epstein, 2008).

But the Hillary's beat was caused by racism, certain of which continued to exist in regularly society while others of which had been planned by right-leaning ideologues. She was also a target of similar prejudices that were aimed at the former head of the women's movement in the US (and possibly other countries). and Friedan.

Legislative Gains and Social Shift in USA

This has been highly effective in instituting many legal and social reforms as a part of the feminist approach in the U.S. Women were given the right to vote in 1920 and later laws were enacted to improve equality in the workplace, reproductive rights, and protections against sexual harassment and violence. Feminism has also altered cultural norms surrounding gender and encouraged women to be more fully involved in the public sphere.

Challenges persist in the form of a wage gap, underrepresentation of women in leadership positions, and opposition by specific conservative sectors against issues on feminism.

Resource and political constraints

Although African nations are adopting local and global legal structures pertaining to feminine and fundamental freedoms, there remains a notable discrepancy among intention and implementation. Making ensuring that current legal norms are adequately protected, applied, and imposed is sometimes more difficult than improving them. The cohabitation of judicial tools with conventional juridical structures presents a difficulty with respect to execution. Effective familial and interpersonal relationships, together with the development of trustworthiness and supportive environments during difficult and depriving times, are

all facilitated by a variety of societal practices. But there are also disadvantageous corporations and societal expectations that hinder the progress of achieving gender parity and female empowerment (Report of the International Workshop on Political Feminism in Africa, 2017). They're not yet there in terms of full economic empowerment or even gender equality. African feminists continue to grapple with indifference to and petty provision for access with their political membership, limitations of access to resources, and their natural habitat patriarchy which can easily contribute to victory over one's goals.

Conclusion

Africa and America have had cut-throat feminist movements parallel in their respective uses of movements in transforming societies, eliciting questions of gender equality, and dismantling patriarchal systems. However, the approaches between the two, the challenges each movement faces, and cultural contexts surrounding the emergence of these movements vary widely. The US feminist movement largely exists in the historical constructs of race and class differences; such issues as suffrage, reproductive rights, sexual harassment, and institutionalized discrimination have all emerged in various waves of feminism. Notably, civil rights movements, largely spearheaded by women of color underscored the intersection of race, class, and gender—the very basis upon which much of feminist activism gets viewed today.

Aside from those stated above, African feminists have had to contest with a host of cultural, political, and economic impediments. Existentialism has propelled feminist activism. On the other hand, legacies of colonialism, traditional gender ideologies history, and political freedom struggle have shaped the discussions. Women's issues on the Continent have focused on gender violence, education, political representation, and economic justice so far. The impact of caste and colonialism along with class and gender within the African feminist discourse cannot be overlooked.

Differences aside, what is common to both is a commitment to counter social inequality based on gender, promote women's rights, and challenges that patriarchy has brought to individual societies. For both regions, therefore, it can be said that feminism has developed a much broader understanding of issues through intersectionality, arguing that it is important to understand those issues wherein gender inequality stands with respect to class, race, and other forms of inequality.

Global collaboration and transnational limitations

Both the US and Africa have been involved with international feminist solidarity. American feminism has often been an inspiration to feminist movements around the world; however, there are many criticisms regarding the fact that its own "internal" concerns and cultural peculiarities are not at times included in most of its criticisms and discussion for non-Western selves. African feminists, while engaging in international feminist networks, have often found themselves questioning Western feminist frameworks and advocating more local and context-sensitive frameworks for gender equality. Internationally, globalization has also opened up spaces for cross-border collaboration through platforms like social media campaigns and international advocacy. For example, the #MeToo movement from the United States has gained a global hearing and has been invoked by women from different countries and cultures. Meanwhile, African women have used the international platform to rally against issues such as sexual violence and reproductive rights, using it to call for female representation.

Recommendations

Necessity of Grassroots networking of Feminist Movements in the USA and Africa

The grassroots feminists in the USA and Africa need to be supported in terms of resources and networks where they can continue working. Movements of such types normally have the closest reach into local communities as compared to any other movements.

Promoting Global alliances for local impacts

Feminists must build networks across international boundaries and help one another. The feminist movement will be able to multiply the effects of advocacy and generate use from scarce resources into greater amounts by sharing resources, knowledge, and strategies.

Addressing Educational and Health Disparities

Education is the lifeblood for the gender successful movements from the regions. More emphasis should have to be given for further reducing the incidence of female illiteracy, particularly in rural areas of Africa. Besides improving health services, reproductive health facilities are also critical interventions for women's empowerment.

From policy to protection: Ending gender-based violence

Formulate more comprehensive laws that offer protection to women against violence, sexual harassment, and feature discriminating conditions within both public and private environments. Strengthen women's shockproof mechanisms for reporting abuse.

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