

Gender Equality and Psychological Issues

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Gender Equality

Gender equality has been an important and popular subject since the late 1900's. Gender inequality, specifically pertaining to women, also causes several other issues to arise, such as a lack of education [1]. Gender inequality is also related to violence and abuse [2]. Researchers have indicated the need to transform societal norms and perspectives on gender equality, in an attempt to reduce violence against women [3]. However, in places such as the Middle East, where great gender inequality persists, some would argue that women have become accustomed to the constant discrimination. There are a variety of issues related to gender inequality, discrimination, and violence still present in the Middle East, including harmful traditions, forced marriages, and female genital mutilation [4]. Although many organizations - local, national, and international - advocate equal rights for women as well as men, and for the abolishment of violence and discrimination against women, gender inequality, discrimination, and violence against women persists in being an issue to be solved. Gender inequality is a continuous challenge in countries with limited and where men are prioritized [1].

Continued gender inequality is also supplemented by the variety of definitions regarding discrimination. The most comprehensive definition refers to discrimination against women being "any distinction, exclusion, or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field" [5]. Furthermore, violence against women has been defined as "any act or conduct based on gender which causes death or physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, whether in the public or private sphere" [6]. However, although violence and discrimination can be defined, and although there are policies established to advocate for gender equality, all of these efforts are futile for as long as women in Africa and the Middle East perceive themselves and their bodies to be the property of their husbands.

Psychological Issues

There are numerous psychological issues that are imposed on women as a result of gender inequality, discrimination, and violence [7]. The phenomenon of Middle Eastern women, who are perceived to have become accustomed to gender inequality, discrimination, and violence, should be explored from a psychological point of view, since these women have tolerated decades of abuse. Utilizing Jung's concept of the shadow can be helpful to gain a deeper understanding of this specific topic of women and violence, and can provide reasoning for why women in the Middle East allow themselves to be subjected to violence and gender inequality.

The human psyche is the totality of all the psychic processes (conscious and unconscious), which influences an individual's behavior, thoughts, and personality [8]. According to the founder of analytical psychology, Carl Jung, the human psyche is comprised of three components: the ego, the collective unconscious, and the personal unconscious [9]. The shadow refers to hidden desires, which

might be opposite of the self, yet are not always negative. The shadow, or negativity, is therefore often a subjective emotion and is a result of social conditions. By applying Jung's idea of the components of the human psyche, the mechanisms and complexes of the unconscious, and the archetypes of the collective unconscious, it may be concluded that Middle Eastern women may feel that they should have equal rights as men do, yet they experience these feelings as negative, because they are opposed to their conditioned social norms. These feelings thus present their shadows [10,11], since they are opposite to the traits they were raised with. However, involving Middle Eastern women, the shadow is desirable and should be uncovered and expressed to further women's empowerment and rights. For the proponents of gender equality, oppressed women have to recognize their shadow in order to advocate for equal rights and better treatment. This realization is a necessity to further the motions for gender equality, as well as for governments to develop and pass laws that empower and protect women.

Conclusion

Several countries have instituted legislative measures to guard women from abuse, yet many women still do not reap the benefits from continued efforts and initiatives to better gender equality [7]. When exploring this issue through Jung's explanation of the shadow, one can understand how some women are still entrapped in situations of abuse and discrimination. Gender equality advocates as well as other organizations desire that women understand, identify, and reveal this shadow, as once the shadow is revealed, women will recognize their rights, specifically their right to be free from violence and discrimination, and can start to fight for empowerment and rights.

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