

## Study of Feminist Identity Development in Indian Educated Women

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### Abstract

The present study is about the study of feminist identity development in Indian educated women. The sample consists of 600 Indian educated women (300 urban, 300 rural, 300 working, 300 non-working, 100 of 25-35 age, 100 of 36-46 age and 100 of 47 and above) selected randomly from Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan districts. Feminist Identity Development Scale (FIDS) by Bargad, A. & Hyde, J. S. (1991) was used to collect the data. The statistical techniques were used the mean, standard deviation and t-test. The result indicates that there was a significant difference between the feminist identity development of urban and rural educated women but the working and non-working educated women didn't differ in feminist identity development. Also, feminist identity development varies with age.

### Introduction

**F**eminism is one of the most talked about and misunderstood terms. On the one extreme, you have the people who despise feminism and feminists. On the other extreme there are the groups of people who argue for feminism without understanding feminist politics. To most people feminism is equality. But feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation and oppression. Feminism is an umbrella term for range of views about injustices against women. There are disagreements among feminists about the nature of justice in general and the nature of sexism in particular, the specific kinds of injustice or wrong women suffer in their lives; and the group who should be the primary focus of feminist efforts. Nevertheless feminists are committed to bringing about social change to end injustice against women. . Feminism attempts to bridge the gulf that exists between women, to create solidarity among them, to assert their rights and to provide mutual support in finding their own identity (Chakravorty, 1994 and Kiran, 2000).

### Feminist Identity

Identity in general is awareness of personal self-sameness as well as uniqueness and continuity of one's existence in time and space and the perception of the fact that others also recognize one's own self-sameness and continuity. According to Erickson (1968) identity formation employs a process of simultaneous reflection and observation, a

process taking place on all levels of mental functioning, by which individual judges himself in the light of what he perceives to be the way in which others judge him in comparison to themselves and to a typology significant to them, while he judges the way of judging him in the light of how he perceives himself in comparison to them and to types that have become relevant to them.

Josselson (1987) described the feminist identity as that a young woman forms in late adolescence as the foundation for her adult identity.

Eisele and Stake (2008) feminist identity is a woman's collective or social identity that involves adopting feminist attitudes and identifying as a feminist.

There are five stages of identity development

**Passive Acceptance** -It describes women who deny or are unaware of sexism and not only accept sex role stereo- types but also find it beneficial.

**Revelation** -It describes women who become sensitized to pervasive oppression of women and respond to their revelation with anger and guilt.

**Embeddedness-Emanation** -It involves discovery of sisterhood and preference to socializing with women.

**Synthesis** -It is characterized by transcendence to traditional sex roles and a tendency to evaluate men on an individual basis.

**Active commitment** -It describes an authentic and effective commitment to change and the translation of newly developed consolidated identity into meaningful and effective action.

Feminist identity, attitudes, and other such traits have been linked to a wide range of variables, suggesting the important role that feminism plays in women's rejection of harmful sexist socio cultural messages and the resultant effect that rejection of these messages can have on well-being. These include more positive attitudes about sexual stimuli (Bay-Cheng and Zucker, 2007), effects on issues related to disordered eating (Green, Scott, Riopel, and Skaggs, 2008; Hurt, et al., 2007; Sabik and Tylka, 2006), positive body attitudes and increased appearance satisfaction (Murnen and Smolak, 2009; Peterson, Tantleff-Dunn, and Bedwell, 2006) decreased negative impact of sexism on well-being (Landrine and Klonoff, 1997), and increased willingness to confront sexism (Leaper and Arias, 2011). Many feminist theorists believe gender is not innate; rather gender is something we do (West and Zimmerman, 1987) and perform (Butler, 1990). Feminism as a contextual identity is connected with some parts of identity but not with all elements. For those who view feminism as an underlying construct, feminism is interconnected and interactive with all of the other identity elements. Feminisms work to correct the social gender imbalance, necessitating women's continued self-identification as feminist.

There are several reasons noted for women choosing to identify as feminists:

- (1) exposure to feminist beliefs through education,
- (2) personal influences such as strong feminist role models, and
- (3) awareness of gender discrimination.

### Review of related literature

Cunningham (2012) conducted a research on a sample of 616 students to explore feminist attitudes and feminist self-identification jointly and separately in their connection with personal empowerment specifically as it is conceptualized in feminist therapy theory. As suggested by the extant research on feminist self-labeling, it was hypothesized that women who do endorse a feminist social identity would report significantly higher levels of personal empowerment than those who do not accept the label. These results supported the hypothesis. In other words, positive consequents associated with feminist self-labeling and with the

recognition of the existence of sexism, reflecting a noteworthy relationship between feminist consciousness and personal empowerment were found.

Pidgeon and McNeil (2013) conducted a study on a total of 91 university students and 108 women from the general population aged 18 to 67. The results of the study show the mediating effects of empowerment on the relationship between feminist identity development and body image dissatisfaction suggesting that women who develop a strong feminist identity also feel empowered and more satisfied with their body image. It can be concluded from the above studies that there is recognition of discrimination against women and willingness to fight against it by the women themselves. The women who identify as feminists feel more empowered than those who do not. There is variation in thinking as to the attitudes and identity of a feminist among some of the women. It is also shown that feminist self-identification and pro-feminist attitudes are separate but related constructs, as well as that there is some degree of connection between feminist traits and women's personal empowerment.

Sultana, Norhafiza and Faziah (2013) conducted a study in one of the districts of Gombk in Malaysia by measuring empowerment between working and nonworking women considering their decision making power in their families as the level of empowerment. The study consisted of 132 (66 working & 66 non-working) respondents from three residential areas and three academic institutions. Their first objective was to examine decision making power of the respondents regarding their personal aspects and affairs related to their children. The results showed that working women enjoyed greater power and freedom as compared to non-working women on these aspects. As for as the overall assessment of the decision making power was concerned, the study revealed that the majority from the working group had high and moderate level of decision making whereas only a few respondents from non-working group had such levels of decision making power.

Lepcha and Chhetri (2017) collected data from 100 women respondents including married and unmarried as well as working and non-working

women of Lepcha tribal community of India to study their status. Four parameters of empowerment namely social, economic, political and familial were considered for this purpose. The analysis of the empowerment indicators showed that the percentage of female literates was 83.75% which was quite satisfactory but most of the women had attained only primary and secondary education, the percentage of women attaining higher education was very low. There was very high percentage of dropouts which was 74.6%. Only 48% of females took part in family decision making. Percentage of Political participation was 56%. The overall empowerment score was 38 out of 100 indicating low levels of empowerment as well as the status.

Liu, Y. and Zheng, Y. (2019) evaluated the psychometric properties of a Chinese form of the Feminist Identity Composite (FIC). A total of 2,334 Chinese adult women completed the scale for this study. In study 1 ( $n = 875$ ), exploratory analysis indicated six factors, Passive Acceptance, Revelation, Embeddedness/Emanation, Active Commitment, and Synthesis, the latter of which was divided into two subscales (Femininity Synthesis and Autonomous Synthesis). In study 2 ( $n = 810$ ), confirmatory factor analysis was conducted with a different sample to examine the construct validity of the model obtained in study 1. In study 3 ( $n = 649$ ), the convergent validity of the FIC was examined via their relationship with willingness to engage in feminist behaviors and attitude toward trans-people. The results indicated that a new measurement with solid conceptual and psychometrically solid properties needs to be developed to assess Chinese women's feminist identity.

**Objectives**

1. To know feminist identity development in Indian educated women.
2. To identify feminist identity development in educated women of different age group
3. To find out the difference in feminist identity development in educated working and nonworking women.
4. To find the difference in feminist identity development in rural and urban educated women

**Hypothesis**

1. Indian educated women have passive acceptance of feminist identity.
2. There is no significant difference in feminist identity development in rural and urban educated women.
3. There is no significant difference in feminist identity development of working educated women and non-working educated women.
4. Feminist identity development in educated women varies with age.

**Sampling**

Educated women from urban and rural areas of Punjab and Rajasthan comprised the sample (600) of the study. Further grouping is done on the base of different age groups (25-35, 36-46, 47 years and above) and working status.

**Tools**

Following tools will be employed to collect the information

1. Information sheet prepared by the investigator
2. Feminist Identity Development Scale (FIDS) by Adena Bargad & Janet Shibley Hyde (1991)

**Statistical Analysis**

Mean, Median and SD are used to describe the data and t-test is used to find the significance of difference.

**Data Analysis**

**Distribution of scores in feminist identity development in rural, urban, working, non-working and different age group educated women. N=(600)**

**Table no. 1**

Sample group	N	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
Urban educated women	300	167.28	169.12	25.03
Rural educated women	300	152.18	155.39	21.89
Age 25-35	200	168.29	170.32	22.89
Age 36-46	200	162.82	164.08	18.82

Age 47 and above	200	155.56	156.87	21.90
Working educated women	300	169.22	170.20	20.05
Non-working educated women	300	170.49	172.63	19.82

Table 1 in indicates that mean, median and standard deviation of urban educated women (N=300) is 167.28, 169.12 and 25.03 and that of rural educated women (N=300) is 152.18, 155.39 and 21.89. The mean varies in both the groups. Also, for the age group of 25-35(N=200) of educated women the mean, median and standard deviation is 168.29, 170.32 and 22.89 and that of age group 36-46(N=200) the same is 162.82, 164.08 and 18.82 and that of age group 47 and above (N=200) it is 155.56, 156.87 and 21.90 respectively. For the working educated women (N=300) mean, median and standard deviation is 169.22, 170.20 and 20.05 and that of non-working educated women (300) is 170.49, 172.63 and 19.82 respectively.

**Comparison of feminist identity development in rural and urban educated women (N=600)**

**Table 2**

Variable	Group	N	Mean	S.D	Df	S.E.D	t-Ratio	Level of Significance
Feminist Identity Development	Urban educated women	300	167.28	25.03	598	3.82	3.95	significant
	Rural educated women	300	152.18	21.89				

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01  
Note :- Table Value 1.96(0.05), 2.58(0.01)

Table 2 show that the t-ratio between two groups urban educated women (N=300) and rural educated women (N=300) is 3.82 which is significant at both the levels.

**Comparison of feminist identity development in working and non-working educated women (N=600)**

**Table no. 3**

Variable	Group	N	Mean	S.D	Df	S.E.D	t-Ratio	Level of Significance
Feminist Identity Development	Working educated women	300	169.22	20.05	298	3.68	0.38	Not significant
	Non-working educated women	300	170.49	19.82				

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01  
Note :- Table Value 1.96(0.05), 2.58(0.01)

Table 3 indicate that t-ratio between the groups working educated women (N=300) and non-working educated women (N=300) comes out 0.38 which is insignificant at both the levels.

**Discussion of result:**

Hypothesis 1: Form the data we can see that the mean score of educated Indian women is higher than the average and it is on the upper side which shows revelation, embeddedness-emanation, synthesis and active commitment in their identity development, so, the hypothesis no. 1 i.e. Indian educated women have passive acceptance of feminist identity development gets rejected .

Hypothesis 2: It has been found that mean score of urban educated women on feminist identity

development is more than the mean score of rural educated women. The t- test score of urban educated women and rural educated women is also significant. This reveals that urban educated women are more aware about feminist identity development. They have the better perception about the role and status of women in the society. Although rural women has been educated but still they have somewhat older perception about the role of women in the society. Hence the hypothesis no. 2 i.e. there is no significant difference in feminist identity development of urban educated working and rural educated women is rejected..

Hypothesis no. 3: In the next findings it is seen that there is small difference between the mean scores of working educated women and non-working educated women. The t-test score also comes out insignificant which indicates that it is the education which gives women the clarity of thoughts and not the working status. Hence the hypothesis no. 3 i.e. there is no significant difference in feminist identity development of working educated women and non-working educated women gets accepted.

Hypothesis no. 4: If we look at the mean score of feminist identity development in various age groups then it can be clearly seen that the younger age group i.e. 25 to 35 years has more mean score than others and the lowest mean score is of the age group 47 and above. From this data it can be indicated that the feminist identity development is decreasing when we go from younger age group to older one. It means young women are more clear about themselves and may be older women are still leading the older notions about the identity of females in society. Hence the hypothesis i.e. feminist identity development in educated women varies with age stands accepted.

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