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Research Paper

Seeing Like a Feminist: The Role of Politicized Collective Identity in Perceiving and Resisting Sexism among College Students

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ABSTRACT

With women all over the world speaking up about their experiences with sexism, it is becoming increasingly important to understand what it takes for one to recognize and subsequently resist sexism. While hostile, overt forms of sexism may be obvious to detect and resist, the same cannot be said for benevolent sexism. Using a mixed-methods approach, involving the use of thematic and statistical analysis, it was found that politicized collective identity can enable women to perceive and resist both hostile and benevolent sexism and that there exist significant differences between women who identify as feminists and those who don't vis-a-vis perceiving and resisting sexism, the perception of well-being after resisting sexism, and possessing a politicized collective identity.

T
hroughout history, men have held positions of greater power and social status than women, except a few matriarchies. This has ensured the survival of patriarchy to date. Factors such as men's greater size and physical strength that allowed them to dominate preindustrial societies and role divisions based on gender, which compel women to stay at homes and assume responsibility of domestic duties, have facilitated the generation of numerous patriarchal attitudes such as, *"men are the stronger sex,"* and *"women should take care of the home and family."* While men have always possessed structural power in society, sexual reproduction gives women *dyadic power,* which is power that arises from co-dependency (Glick & Fiske, 1996). In other words, men are compelled to depend on women for childbearing as well as for the satisfaction of their sexual needs. Additionally, men may depend on women for psychological intimacy. These lead to the notion of women as 'wives and mothers' or 'romantic love objects' that need to be protected and taken care of, and this essentially, is what constitutes benevolent sexism. Despite projecting a positive view of women, benevolent sexism is similar to hostile sexism, in that it views women as the "weaker sex" (Glick and Fiske, 1996).

Sexism, both hostile and benevolent, continues to plague the lives of countless women in the world. While hostile sexism is identifiable and recognizable, and can be dealt with, the same cannot be said for benevolent sexism. It can be extremely difficult to resist or raise a voice

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against benevolent sexism as it often fails to be recognized as a form of prejudice. As a result it becomes extremely difficult to take any form of action against the source of such prejudice. Because benevolent sexism is difficult to recognize, many women fail to attribute it as a cause for their inability to occupy higher-level positions in various societal institutions, such as their places of work.

As pointed out before, because benevolent sexism is so hard to recognize, it is equally hard to resist it. At times, women may feel uncomfortable when a certain benevolently sexist attitude is presented. However, they may also feel that while somewhat uncomfortable and untrue, such an attitude is not necessarily sexist, and may, therefore, raise no objection to it. Similarly, sexist jokes based on sexist stereotypes may also make women extremely uncomfortable, but they may choose not to raise a voice against it as they do not necessarily think of it as sexist. Additionally, even when benevolently sexist statements or jokes are recognized to be sexist and harmful, many women (and men) may choose not to raise a voice against it to maintain peace and not create discord. As a result, they may laugh at such a joke. But this can be extremely dangerous as it can create a belief that the joke is funny, even if it is not. Objection to such jokes can also create the illusion that women do not have a sense of humour. Benevolent sexist attitudes may also place a lot of pressure on women to behave in ways that are in accordance with gender stereotypes. As a result of constant exposure to such attitudes, women may start to internalize these attitudes and standards and when they fail to live up to such sexist standards, they may engage in self-blaming.

The rise of gender-based discrimination worldwide has also given rise to an increased acceptance of the ideology of feminism, which is an ideology that emphasizes social, economic, and political equality among the sexes. Identifying as a feminist implies that an individual has now developed a politicized collective identity (Duncan, 1999), which can be understood as a form of collective identity that contributes to group members' motivation to engage in a struggle for power that can have serious political repercussions (Simon & Klandermans, 2001). According to Simon and Klandermans (2001), there are three antecedents which transform a collective identity as a woman to a politicized collective identity of that of a feminist. The first is *awareness of shared grievances* (acknowledging the fact that women have continued to be oppressed and subjugated throughout history, irrespective of changes in political and societal structures). The second, *adversarial attributions,* involves placing the blame on an external agent (men and the broader societal structure that has allowed men to dominate positions of power in society) for the disadvantaged position of women. Finally, *involving society by triangulation* encompasses forcing members of the society to choose sides (to either side with the in-group (feminists) or with the out-group (non-feminist men and women).

Not everyone identifies as a feminist. Throughout history, feminism has been criticized by people from different sections of society and from people in varying positions of power. There can be numerous reasons as to why one does not identify as a feminist. While some may not agree with the principles of feminism, others may not be aware of these and as a result, may not want to identify with something they don't completely understand or know about. Many women (and men) also do not identify as feminists because of the social stigma associated with that identification. Feminists have been seen as "men-hating" women whose sole aim is to reduce men to "second-class" citizens and make women the sole authority on all matters in various domains of the society. Because of the extremely polarizing views on feminism in social media (which is a major source of information for people now) many

women and men may be afraid to identify as feminists because they do not know whether to identify as a feminist would be "right" or "wrong." Some people accept and endorse many of the viewpoints that feminists advocate. However, they too, do not identify as feminists. Fitz et.al., (2012) termed such individuals as "neoliberals", arguing that such individuals have a belief that just social system can be achieved through unconstrained competition and a sense of personal responsibility, that is, through ability and by working hard, one can succeed in life, irrespective of the group to which one belongs, and that individuals only have themselves (and luck to a certain degree) to blame for their failures.

Resistance to injustice has been the primary motivating factor of social movements throughout history, such as the feminist movement. For decades, oppressed groups throughout the world have used various forms of resistance against the perpetrators of injustice toward them, from using art as a medium of resistance to holding marches and demonstrations. Further, engaging in collective action may enhance well-being of individuals. For instance, a study by Foster (2015) examined how tweeting about sexism as a form of collective action, affects well-being. She found that those who publicly tweeted against sexism reported greater psychological well-being and less negative emotions. Engaging in collective action may give one a sense of making a positive contribution to or being a valuable and worthwhile member of one's group. Besides, raising a voice against injustice of any kind might make one feel empowered and satisfied.

The title of the present study has been adapted from Nivedita Menon's (2012) book, 'Seeing like a Feminist.' In her book, Menon successfully attempted to elucidate how the world appears to be, when viewed from a feminist perspective. According to Menon (2012), when one is able to look at the world and it's various practices and institutions as a feminist, they will realise that what once appeared to be fine, isn't actually so, and in reality, is deeply flawed and tends to maintain and perpetuate patriarchy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sexism and Types of Sexism

Simply defined, the term 'sexism' refers to discrimination against a person on the basis of the person's gender. In contemporary times, although people's opinions often appear to indicate that sexism is less rampant than it used to be in many societies, it would be more appropriate to say that sexism continues to exist but has taken on new forms that are a great deal more elusive and difficult to recognize as compared to more ancient forms of sexism (Barreto, Ellemers, Cihangir, & Stroebe, 2009). A study by Brandt (2011) showed that greater sexism predicts a reduction in gender equality over time, with sexism acting as a hierarchy-enhancing ideology.

In the Indian context, studies have shown how gender-based discrimination and sexism against women continue to affect women, often leading to adverse consequences. A study by Raju (2014) showed that despite measures taken by national and international organizations to improve the status of women in India, social factors such as illiteracy and lack of information, combined with economic factors such as low wage and unemployment, and political factors such as low participation of women in elections and election of women as members in various elected bodies, are largely responsible for the continuing gender inequality in the country. Krishnan (2015) pointed out how influential authority figures in India, often invoke the concept of the "Indian culture" as a basis for victim blaming in circumstances of rape.

Seeing Like a Feminist: The Role of Politicized Collective Identity in Perceiving and Resisting Sexism among College Students

While sexism has generally been understood to be a type of discrimination against women this discrimination can often assume different forms. Glick and Fiske (1996) differentiated between Hostile and Benevolent sexism. Hostile and benevolent sexism can be viewed as ideologies that complement each other and serve to maintain and justify the dominance of men over women (Glick et.al, 2000; Jackman, 1994, as cited in Abrams, Viki, Masser, & Bohner, 2003). Barreto and Ellemers (2005) argue that benevolent sexism contributes to the maintenance and perpetuation of social inequalities because it passes as an unnoticed form of prejudice. Their study, confirming this, showed that both men and women perceived people who endorsed hostile sexist views as significantly more sexist than those who endorsed benevolent sexist views. Because it is often difficult to recognize, benevolent sexism might also be harder to resist (Glick & Fiske, 2001). van Breen et.al, (2018) examined women's responses to subliminal gender stereotypes. They showed that despite the difficulty in recognizing such subliminal gender stereotypes, women who identified as feminists, rather than the broader group of women, were in fact, able to resist subliminal gender stereotyping.

Feminist Identification
While more and more people have been identifying as feminists research has also focussed on those who agree with feminists on certain issues surrounding gender, however, do not identify as feminists themselves. Fitz, Zucker, and Bay-Cheng (2012) proposed that such nonlabeling women represent a neoliberal belief system. Neoliberal ideology is based on the belief that a fair and just social can be achieved through unrestrained competition and personal responsibility. Such a belief implies that any individual-irrespective of group membership-can achieve success through hard work and ability and that apart from possible bad luck, individuals have only themselves to blame for their failures. (McCoy & Major, 2007; Plaut, Markus, & Lachman, 2002; Zucker & Bay-Cheng, 2010). Some research has attributed nonlabelers' refusal to identify as feminist to the stigma associated with feminists (e.g., Leaper & Arias, 2011; Quinn & Radtke, 2006; Ramsey et.al., 2007; Roy, Weibust, & Miller, 2007) or to having had nominal exposure to positive depictions of feminism and feminists (Leaper & Arias, 2011; Moradi, Martin, & Brewster, 2012; Zucker, 2004).

Collective Identity and Politicized Collective Identity
Klandermans, Sabucedo, Rodriguez, and de Weerd (2002) studied farmers from Galicia (Spain) and The Netherlands and hypothesized that the more farmers identified with other farmers, the more likely they will be to engage in farmers' protests and that those farmers who belonged to farmers' organizations were more likely to take part in farmers' protests than were farmers who did not belong to such organizations. The results of their study showed that a sense of collective identity aroused participation in collective action in both Spain and The Netherlands. One way in which members belonging to groups that have endured, and possibly, continue to endure, oppression and discrimination cope with such obstacles is to increasingly turn to and identify with their group (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999). Because of perceiving and acknowledging shared grievances, people can develop a politicized collective identity, which enables them to engage in a power struggle on behalf of their group. Wohl, King, and Taylor (2014) examined two ethnic groups, Tamil and Somali, at periods when violent conflicts were occurring in their homelands that would ultimately determine their future, to assess whether politicized collective identity would lead to support for political protest to promote the interests of the ingroup at home with collective angst deciding its form. The results of their study showed that there was support for violent political protest only when ingroup members shared a politicized collective identity and

collective angst against an outgroup and that politicized collective identity predicted support for peaceful political protest when there was low collective angst.

Resistance

Haslam and Reicher (2012) reviewed the Stanford Prison Experiment (1971) and conducted the BBC Prison Study (2006) to show that when members of lower-status groups are tied to each other by a sense of shared social identity, resistance can serve as the basis for effective leadership and organization that allows them to counteract stress, challenge those in authority, secure support, and promote social change, even in the most extreme circumstances. A qualitative study by Shorter-Gooden (2004) attempted to identify the strategies that Black women used to cope with and manage the stress resulting from sexism and racism. The findings revealed that the Black women used multiple coping strategies including three ongoing internal coping strategies (depending on faith and spirituality,; looking up to and deriving strength from their African-American ancestors; and valuing themselves); one ongoing external coping strategy (relying on social support); and three specific coping strategies (changing their outward behaviour or presentation, reducing contact with specific people and situations, and standing up and fighting back). A qualitative investigation by Smith and Simmonds (2018) explored how Australian same-sex attracted women used resistance strategies to cope and build resistance in the face of sexism and homophobia. The women reported that their resilience increased as a result of directly challenging homophobia and sexism in everyday lives, along with engaging with and depending on members of the same-sex attracted community for emotional and social support.

Well-Being

Being a member of a group and identifying with the group can contribute to our sense of well-being. It helps fulfil our basic need of belongingness, thereby providing us with a sense of being accepted and loved by others, as well as having adequate social support. Khan, Hopkins, Tewari, Srinivasan, Reicher, and Ozakinci (2014) investigated the relationship between identification, beliefs about coping, and well-being, in rural North India. They found that social identification as a Hindu had an influence on well-being as it contributed to the participants' belief that they could cope effectively with everyday stressors. In seven studies involving a diverse range of samples, Johnstone et.al, (2015) found that when people identify strongly with their group and internalize group membership as an essential part of their self-concept, group membership enhanced well-being. Further, Hopkins and Reicher (2016) showed how taking part in mass gatherings and identifying with others who participated in them could enrich people's lives and boost both physical and mental health.

Hypotheses Generated

1. Politicized Collective Identity would act as a mediator between perceived sexism and the tendency to resist perceived sexism.
2. There would be a significant difference between women who identify as feminists and those who don't in perceiving sexism.
3. There would be a significant difference between women who identify as feminists and those who don't in terms of possessing a politicized collective identity.
4. There would be a significant difference between women who identify as feminists and those who don't in the tendency to resist sexism.
5. There would be a significant difference between women who identify as feminists and those who don't in terms of well-being resulting from resistance to sexism.

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

The Social Identity Theory and the Self Categorization Theory

The basic premise of the *social identity theory* is that based on their group membership, individuals attain a sense of their identity, of who they are. Glick and Fiske (1996) proposed that because of the entrenched patriarchal societal structure, only men are perceived as having the capabilities necessary to dominate positions of power in the society and govern social institutions. The perpetuation of such a perception can lead men to associate strongly with their male identity and enhance their self-esteem through such a strong association. When women are exposed to sexist attitudes, especially benevolently sexist attitudes, they may experience not only a lowering of their self-esteem but may also start believing that something quite rudimentary about their gender is depreciated by others (Barreto, Ellemers, Cihangir, & Stroebe, 2009). However, as per the social identity theory, once women perceive that there exists a discrepancy between their in-group and an out-group (men), a lowered sense of self-esteem might bring about a desire to engage and partake in social action to bring about change. Such a collective desire to engage in social action may increase one's sense of identification with the in-group, leading to stronger bonds and greater cohesiveness. As per the *self-categorization theory*, it is not just society that categorizes individuals into groups that leads to the development of social identity, but also individuals' own categorizations of themselves into particular groups and their choice in determining the salience of a particular identity in a specific circumstance, that is important. It is important to understand that while simply being a member of a particular group can lead one to face injustices, such as prejudice and discrimination, groups don't simply provide a basis for injustice but can also give individuals the power to fight against these injustices. Women who self-categorize themselves as feminists, share a politicized collective identity as a feminist and attempt to engage in a power struggle against societal structures that perpetuate gender inequality, with the aim of bringing about social change.

The Methodological Perspective

For the purpose of the present study, a *Mixed-Methods* approach was used. The mixed-methods approach was opted for as using both qualitative and quantitative techniques of research could help provide a more detailed and comprehensive picture of the role of politicized collective identity in perceiving and resisting sexism, as compared to relying on a single approach.

STUDY 1- EXPERIENCING SEXISM: A QUALITATIVE ENQUIRY

Sample

Ten college-going women from Delhi-NCR were requested to take part in the interviews and they gave their informed consent. Their ages ranged from 20-21 since most of them were Undergraduate students in their final year of college.

Design and Procedure

The present study is an exploratory one. For the present study, in order to understand women's experiences regarding sexism and combine the information gathered with existing literature to form precise research objectives, interviews were conducted. A semi-structured interview was conducted using open-ended questions for the present study.

Before the conduction of the interviews, an interview schedule was prepared by the researcher. The interview schedule included questions that required participants to express what they thought about sexism and gender-based discrimination, their experiences of it,

whether they were able to produce some kind of a response to such experiences, and their emotional state after providing a response of some kind. The schedule also consisted of questions that would enable respondents to express their views on feminism. Following the construction of an interview schedule, participants were chosen for the present study. The potential participants were told that the interview would require a maximum of 30 minutes and that participation was completely voluntary. Care was taken to ensure that the participants did not feel coerced in any way to take part in the interview.

After all the interviews had been conducted successfully, the researcher transcribed the interviews which had been audio-taped, in order to identify the major themes that emerged from the collected data

In order to analyse the data generated from the interviews and identify themes from it, the steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) were followed. The end product of following the steps was the identification and generation of four themes that best summarized the major findings from the interviews.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Theme I: Experiencing Sexism in the form of Restrictions and Doubting of Capabilities

A majority of the participants when asked the question "Have you ever faced discrimination on the basis of your gender?" replied with a "Yes", although they were also unsure of it at the same time since they probably did not consider it to be as extreme as what many women face. Those who did respond affirmatively reported being subjected to restrictions of various kinds, such as the kinds of clothes they could wear, the latest they were allowed to be out of their house, the opportunities they were denied because of their gender, and the imposition of stereotypes that they were expected to adhere to because that was what was "expected" from women. For example, the following extract shows how one participant had to deal with restrictions on her activity, restrictions that were imposed on her by her father.

> "...so my father is not very you know, supportive and I used to go out and play with boys...and it was like clear for me that you are not going to set out of the house after 6pm or talk with boys and all that and my brother could do anything and I can't do it you know."

(Extract 1)

Similarly, another participant reported how she had been constantly told to behave in "appropriate" ways-ways that a woman would be *expected* to behave in, such as sitting in a particular manner, talking in a certain way, and so on.

> "A lot of gender stereotypes growing up have been forced on me even in a relatively progressive family that I've grown in as to how I'm supposed to conduct myself being a woman, how to talk to people..."

(Extract 2)

Participants also reported how when in school, they were always underestimated, especially when it came to sports, in comparison to boys. Their capabilities were doubted and it was assumed that they would not be able to perform at the same level as the boys of the school. Thus, the recollections of the participants when asked about their experiences with gender-based discrimination can be understood to be a result of stereotypes that do not consider women to be as talented or as able as men in various fields, as well as stereotypes that lead society to have certain expectations of women with regard to their conduct. Such stereotypes

reflect benevolent sexist attitudes and the responses of these participants show that recognizing benevolent sexism as discrimination is often difficult.

Theme II: Satisfaction as an Outcome of Raising a Voice

Participants acknowledged that whether they were able to raise a voice against gender discrimination or not, depended on the context and that they were able to speak up against certain instances of gender-based discrimination, when subjected to it. These responses varied, ranging from openly calling out people on their discriminatory behaviour to engaging in the very same activities that the women were told not to pursue simply because of their gender. For example, one participant recalled how she had confronted her father after years of being subjected to discrimination in the form of restrictions.

> "I did raise my voice and you know I was like, "you're wrong"
> and "I'm right" and you know you have to open your mind...I
> did raise my voice and um, you know now I can be out of my
> house till-like late at night."

(Extract 3)

Likewise, certain other participants exclaimed that being able to do what they wanted, irrespective of the fact that they were told they could not do that because of their gender, or that it would be difficult for a woman to accomplish that particular goal, was in itself a form of resistance that spoke volumes, without the use of words. Such responses help one understand that resistance may not just involve being assertive or engaging in collective action. The simple act of doing something you were never perceived as capable of doing, itself can act as a form of resistance.

> "I guess in a way, even if it wasn't a verbal response, the idea
> and the action that I actually chose to move out and I'm in my
> third year and I will be finally graduating and continue to stay in
> Delhi for a year, like a couple of years itself has just become a
> response"

(Extract 4)

The participants reported that once they were able to speak up, they experienced positive emotions such as a sense of satisfaction and a sense of strength. Some participants also reported that they were glad because they believed that when they spoke up, they could make a small but nevertheless positive difference and impart knowledge to the perpetrator of the discrimination. Such instances may have helped the participants enhance their self-efficacy. Participants also reported how standing up for themselves gave them a sense of pride and fulfilment which may have helped them bolster their self-esteem.

Theme III: Advocating Equality between Sexes despite Non-Feminist Identification

Some participants, despite believing that there should be equality between men and women in all domains, did not identify as feminists. Some of them felt that the ideology of feminism has been misconstrued in recent times and is being used to ensure the superiority of women over men rather than gender equality.

> "...the ideology of feminism is completely changing and I feel
> that people who are, you know, pure feminists and my friends
> and family members they advocate the ideal of being superior."

(Extract 5)

> "I think I think men and women should have equal rights. But
> then somehow I am not a feminist."

(Extract 6)

These participants' responses show that they do not wish to identify themselves as feminists because they feel that in present times, the actual meaning of the word has been misconstrued by women, who tend to use the argument of feminism to further their own interests. One reason why they believe so may be because of media content about how some women register false cases of sexual harassment and/or assault against men, or make statements that while may be made with a good intent, can be expressed in a way that makes them appear to be biased against men. Such incidents tend to get greater attention on social media and may be accompanied by captions that say *"Feminazis look at this!"*, *"Feminism is cancer"*, and so on. The greater the exposure to mass media depicting such portrayals of feminism, the stronger the belief that this is what feminism has been reduced to.

Theme IV: Construction and Perpetuation of Sexism by Society

Each of the participants responded in the affirmative when they were asked whether they believed society was responsible for many of the problems that women have faced throughout history and continue to face. Each participant acknowledged how it was difficult for women to overcome stereotypes and stand up for themselves for reasons that could be attributed to the larger society. These included internalization of gender stereotypes in order to become a "good girl" or consideration of parents' social standing.

> "When a girl, when she feels suppressed by a man, so what she'll try to do, she might be scared. She wants to raise her voice but she might be scared. Why? Because, imagine, suppose, they are married. She feels suppressed by her husband so then she can't raise her voice there is society behind her to think of because she might think that if I raise my voice my reputation, the reputation of my parents, like, that will be ruined. And why does she care about reputation? Because society."

(Extract 7)

Because gender-based stereotypes are taught to men and women from a very young age, it is difficult to not internalise those. A study by Hussain, et.al, (2015) found that an individual's family teaches them gender-appropriate and inappropriate behaviour with respect to cultural and societal norms. As a result, men and women grow up believing these stereotypes until they finally reach a point where they consider such stereotypes to be the absolute truth. Such generalisations have for years ensured the role of women as caregivers, responsible for the household and the role of men as the earning members.

Vilification of women who go out to work, who move out of their homes to pursue higher education, who marry someone they chose themselves, and others who dared to defy gender stereotypes, continues to be rampant by various members of the society, who consider such behaviours to be serious deviations from norms and hence, abnormal. Invoking the argument of morality, i.e., telling little girls that they "should" behave in certain ways in order to be "good" creates a feeling of guilt in those little girls when they grow up to be women and try to raise a voice against sexism. This may be because women who defy norms and try to carve their own place in the world are seen as a threat by patriarchy.

STUDY II: DETERMINING THE ROLE OF POLITICIZED COLLECTIVE IDENTITY IN PERCEIVING AND RESISTING SEXISM AND THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FEMINISTS AND NON-FEMINISTS

Sample

One-hundred and fifty-two (n= 152) participants filled the survey questionnaire. The inclusion criteria for the present study were that all the participants had to be college-going women between the ages of 18-25 in Delhi-NCR. Hence, all the participants were at different stages of the higher education process. A snowball sampling procedure was used along with purposive sampling.

Instruments

5 instruments were used in this study.

1. **Perceived Sexism:** The Short-Version of the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick and Fiske, 1996) was used to assess to what extent participants would regard those who held those opinions as sexist. The participants were asked to indicate how sexist they would perceive someone holding opinions such as "Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess", etc, on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Not at all Sexist) to 7 (Extremely Sexist). A reliability analysis was done using SPSS and the Cronbach's alpha was found to be .92 (α= .92).

2. **Politicized and Non-Politicized Identification:** In order to assess non-politicized identification as a woman and politicized identification as a feminist, eight items, four for each, were used. For each item, respondents had to indicate the extents of their agreement or disagreement using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). Reliability analysis found the Cronbach's alpha for the non-politicized identification items to be .87 (α= .87) and the same for the politicized identification items was found to be .98 (α= .98). The Cronbach's alpha for both the scales together was found to be .89 (α= .89).

3. **Politicized Collective Identity:** Adapted from Langner's (2005) thesis, ten items were used to gauge the politicized collective identity of the participants. Participants were asked to give an indication regarding the extent to which each of the statements applied to them using a 7-point Likert scale, that ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). Reliability analysis conducted using the SPSS revealed the Cronbach's alpha to be .92 (α=.92).

4. **Resistance Tendencies:** The tendency to engage in resistance against gender-based discrimination was assessed using a scale of five items, three out of which were developed by the researcher on the basis of the pilot interviews conducted, and the remaining two items used were the same as those used by van Zomeren, Postmes, and Spears (2012) for their study. Participants were asked to indicate the degree to which they would engage in such activities using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). A reliability analysis was done using SPSS which revealed the Cronbach's alpha to be .91 (α= .91).

5. **Well-Being:** To assess the psychological well-being that resulted from resisting gender-based discrimination, five items developed by the researcher were used. Participants were asked to state to what extent each of the statements applied to them, using a 7-point Likert scale, that ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). Reliability analysis done using the SPSS found the Cronbach's alpha to be .92 (α= .92).

Design and Procedure

A correlational, cross-sectional survey design was used for the purposes of the present study. A survey questionnaire was prepared using the above-mentioned measures and sent out to the participants. Before beginning to answer the survey items, all the participants had to sign a consent form, confirming their voluntary and informed consent to participate in the study and that they matched the inclusion criteria. Demographic information was then obtained from the participants. The participants were then presented with the survey items and were asked to carefully read each of the statements presented and do so as they were instructed. 7-point Likert scales were used for all the items belonging to all the measures in order to ensure that the participants had a broader range of responses to choose from, that would best suit their real feelings regarding a particular item.

A statistical analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS; Version 20). Using the Bivariate Correlation function, a zero-order correlation was done which revealed each variable's relationship with the other variables. To examine whether there existed significant differences between women who identified and feminists and those who didn't in terms of perceiving sexism, possessing a politicized collective identity, tendency to engage in resistance against sexism, and well-being resulting from resisting sexism, an independent samples t-test was computed. In order to assess whether politicized collective identity acted as a mediator in the process of perceiving sexism and the tendency to resist perceived sexism, Mediation Analysis was done using the Process Macro plug-in, that had been previously downloaded from Andrew Hayes' website.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Table No. 1 Means, Standard Deviations, and Zero-Order Correlations among Variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Perceived Sexism	5.34	1.33	-					
2. Feminist Identification	4.67	2.00	.80**	-				
3. Woman Identification	6.39	.80	.18*	.21**	-			
4. Politicized Collective Identity	4.63	1.47	.78**	.79**	.09	-	.	
5. Resistance Tendency	5.31	1.56	.78**	.88**	.15	.78**	-	.
6. Well-Being	5.65	1.21	.80**	.86**	.27**	.78**	.89**	-

*Note. **p<0.01; *p<0.05; M=Mean, SD=Standard Deviation*

Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations of all the variables, along with the zero-order correlations among the variables of interest. There exist significant and positive correlations among most of the variables. As can be seen from the table, possessing a politicized collective identity as a feminist shows a significant correlation with perceiving sexism, implying that if a woman embraces the politicized collective identity of a feminist, rather than just the collective identity as a woman, her ability to perceive both hostile and benevolent sexism will be enhanced, and so will her tendency to resist both forms of sexism.

Table No. 2 Independent samples t test for Feminists and Non-Feminists on Perceiving Sexism

Measure	Politicized Identification (N=76)		Non-Politicized Identification (N=76)			
	M	**SD**	**M**	**SD**	*t(142.08)*	*p*
Perceiving Sexism	6.26	.84	4.41	1.06	11.95	.000***

*Note. ***p<0.001; M=Mean, SD=Standard Deviation*

Table No. 3 Independent samples t test for Feminists and Non-Feminists on Politicized Collective Identity

Measure	Politicized Identification (N=76)		Non-Politicized Identification (N=76)			
	M	**SD**	**M**	**SD**	*t(150)*	*p*
Politicized Collective Identity	5.63	1.11	3.62	1.04	11.58	.000***

*Note. ***p<0.001; M=Mean, SD=Standard Deviation*

Table No. 4 Independent samples t test for Feminists and Non-Feminists on Tendency to Resist Sexism

Measure	Politicized Identification (N=76)		Non-Politicized Identification (N=76)			
	M	**SD**	**M**	**SD**	*t(116.43)*	*p*
Resistance Tendency	6.40	.76	4.21	1.38	12.09	.000***

*Note. ***p<0.001: M=Mean, SD=Standard Deviation*

Table No. 5 Independent samples t test for Feminists and Non-Feminists on Well-Being after Resistance to Sexism

| Measure	Politicized Identification (N=76)		Non-Politicized Identification (N=76)			
	M	**SD**	**M**	**SD**	*t(116.51)*	*p*
Well-Being	6.50	.59	4.80	1.07	12.15	.000***

*Note. ***p<0.001; M=Mean, SD=Standard Deviation*

Tables 2, 3, 4, and 5, depict that there exist certain significant differences between the women who identified as feminists and those who refused to do so. From Table No. 2, it can be seen that feminists were able to perceive both hostile and benevolent sexism more accurately as compared to women who did not identify as feminists. Table No. 3 depicts that women who identified as feminists possessed a significantly greater politicized collective identity in comparison to women who simply identified themselves as part of the broader group of women, rather than as feminists. Data from Table No. 4 depicts that, women who identified as feminists reported a significantly greater tendency to resist sexism, as compared to non-

feminist women. Finally, from Table No. 5, it can be seen that women who identified as feminists reported experiencing greater levels of well-being upon resisting sexism, in comparison to women who did not identify themselves as feminists.

Mediation Analysis
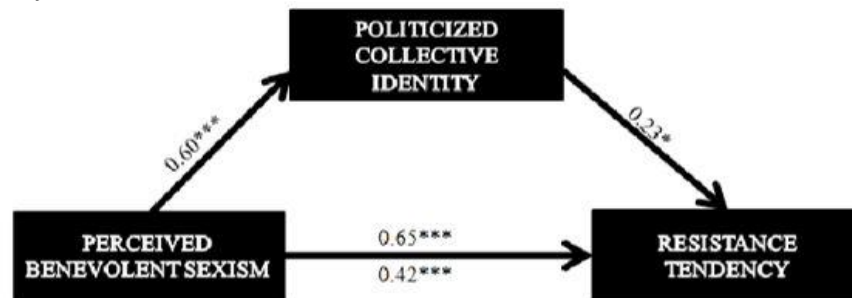
Note: ***p<0.001, *p<0.05

Figure No. 1 Politicized Collective Identity as a Mediator between Perceived Benevolent Sexism and Tendency to Resist Perceived Benevolent Sexism
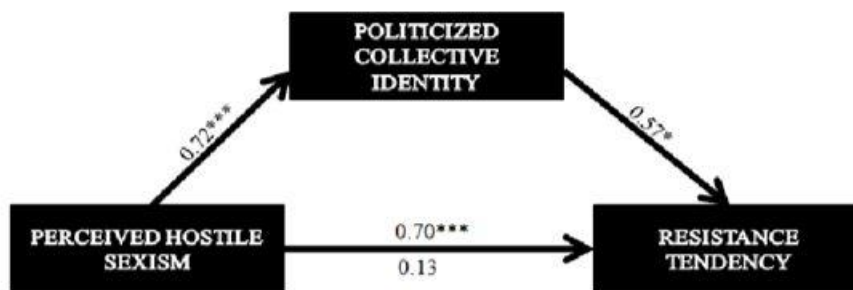
Note: ***p<0.001, *p<0.05

Figure No. 2 Politicized Collective Identity as a Mediator between Perceived Hostile Sexism and Tendency to Resist Perceived Hostile Sexism

Mediation analysis was conducted using PROCESS Macro in SPSS to examine whether politicized collective identity acted as a mediating variable between perceived sexism and the tendency to resist perceived sexism. Results indicated that politicized collective identity acted as a significant mediating variable between perceiving both hostile and benevolent sexism and the tendency to resist both the forms of sexism.

DISCUSSION

All hypotheses of the present study were supported by the research findings. Preliminary analysis of the quantitative data which showed the zero-order correlation among each of the variables, along with the means and standard deviations, showed that a politicized identification as a feminist shows a *strong and significant relationship* with perceived sexism, implying that as one increasingly adopts a politicized identification as a feminist, the more they may tend to perceive both hostile and benevolent sexism, as sexist. This is an important finding as benevolent sexism is inherently difficult to identify and recognize as sexist, and as a result, is increasingly difficult to resist. Thus, this finding implies that feminists may be more likely as compared to non-feminists, to perceive both forms of sexism,

as actually sexist, and thereby tend to engage in varying forms of resistance to perceived sexism.

Women who identified as feminists and those who didn't were found to have significant differences in terms of perceived sexism, possessing a politicized collective identity, the tendency to resist sexism, and well-being resulting from resisting sexism. It was found that women who identified as feminists were better able to perceive sexism. This finding is supported by the results of correlation analysis mentioned before, which found that politicized identification as a feminist shows a significant and positive relationship with perceived sexism. Similarly, it was found that women who identified as feminists possessed a significantly greater politicized collective identity as compared to women who did not possess a politicized identification as a feminist. Identifying as a feminist implies that one has decided to identify with a group that aspires to bring about socio-political change by changing the broader societal structure and its institutions, thereby leading to political repercussions. Hence, as would be expected, feminists were found to have a significantly greater politicized collective identity, as compared to non-feminists. Feminists were found to report significantly greater tendency to engage in resistance to sexism as compared to non-feminists. It is easy to understand why this may be so. Identifying as a feminist means adopting a politicized collective identity and engaging in social change action, meant to have major political repercussions and consequences that will change the existing societal structure. Consequently, one may engage in various forms of resistance against sexism to ensure that changes be made in existing societal structure, which is predominantly patriarchal. A study by van Breen, Spears, Kuppens, and de Lemus (2018) reported similar findings. Because feminists showed greater tendency to engage in resistance against sexism, they also reported greater levels of well-being resulting from resistance to sexism, as compared to non-feminists. Identifying as a feminist and experiencing a sense of belongingness with other women who identify as feminists, along with engaging in various forms of resistance against sexism may lead to enhanced well-being, as was found in a study by Hopkins and Reicher (2016).

Politicized collective identity was found to act as a significant mediating variable in the process of perceiving and resisting both benevolent and hostile sexism, thus indicating that the process of resisting perceived sexism is strongly influenced by whether one possesses a politicized collective identity or not. As mentioned before, while it may be easy to recognize hostile sexism as actually sexist, the same cannot be said for benevolent sexism, which is often difficult to characterize as sexist. Because of this, it is often difficult to resist benevolent sexism. However, the fact that politicized collective identity acts as a significant mediator in the process implies that identifying in terms of a politicized identification, i.e., as a feminist, helps in recognizing benevolent sexism and resisting it along with helping in recognizing hostile sexism and resisting it as well. This is an important finding as it is extremely crucial to recognize and label benevolent sexism as sexist since it continues to adversely affect the lives of women throughout the world by regarding them as *weak* creatures who cannot deal with the challenges of the wider world. Further, while it may be easier for women who identify as feminists as well as those who don't to recognize hostile sexism, politicized collective identity may help engage in resistance activities that seek to bring about broader socio-political changes in the existing patriarchal societal structure, rather than just bringing about specific changes in the conditions of women in specific areas of the world. Additionally, one reason for the finding of a significant direct effect between perceiving and resisting benevolent sexism could be that as women pay more attention to

subtle forms of sexism, they will be more likely to identify the difficult-to-recognize benevolent sexism, and thereby, resist it, regardless of possessing a politicized collective identity (Becker & Swim, 2011).

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Implications

One of the most important findings of the present study is that politicized collective identity acts as a significant mediator in the process of perceiving sexism, both hostile and benevolent, and the tendency to resist perceived sexism, implying that having a politicized collective identity may actually help one recognize not just the more overt hostile sexism, but also the more covert and deceptively non-harmful benevolent sexism. Thus, attempting to develop a politicized collective identity as a feminist, either through reading up literature on feminism, or associating with people who identify as feminists and understanding their journeys of becoming feminists themselves, has the potential to help many women, as well as men, recognize benevolent sexism when they do encounter it. On the path of developing a politicized collective identity as a feminist, individuals may be exposed to literature that can actually help in debunking many of the myths associated with feminism, such as *"feminists hate men."* This in turn, can actually help many understand what feminism actually is, and how the ideology of feminism has mistakenly been demonized as something that seeks to ensure the superiority of women over men, and not equality between the sexes. Finally, it cannot be overemphasized how important it is to recognize benevolent sexism and resist it. Benevolent sexism, especially through gender stereotypes, degrades the lives of women all over the world, by labelling them as weak creatures that require protection from stronger men. This has led to gender differences in nearly all spheres of the world, be it restricting women from stepping outside the domestic domain for their "protection", or the positions women typically occupy in the workplace. Therefore, if possessing a politicized collective identity may actually help in recognizing and resisting the evil of benevolent sexism, it is important to ensure that women are helped in various ways to understand the ideology of feminism, its need, especially in current times, and the consequences of developing such a politicized collective identity.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

A crucial limitation of the present study is that the direct effect between perceiving benevolent sexism and tendency to resist benevolent sexism was found to be significant. This finding is in contrast with research findings which report that identifying and resisting benevolent sexism is often tough. With limited research evidence to support this finding, it requires further analysis and its possible causes could be addressed by future researchers. Additionally, the sample consisted only of college-going women who were currently attending institutions of higher education in a predominantly urban setting and belonged to mostly middle and upper-middle socio-economic classes of the society. Therefore, future researchers could take steps to ensure that women belonging to different ages and socio-economic backgrounds, from both rural as well as urban areas, could be studied. Additionally, steps could be taken to conduct such a study to study not just women but also individuals of other genders and various socio-economic classes.

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