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**“Shame on her”/ “Poor Her”: Understanding the Impact of Patriarchal Orientation on the Perceptibility of Injustice Against Women**

**Abstract**

This paper aims to fathom the vagaries in perception of both genders of injustices levied on women. We assume that a patriarchal society incorporates metaphorically unequal distribution of resources, thus leading to several events of injustice towards women. We use the lens of patriarchal orientation of men and women to understand their cognition of injustice.

Keywords: Tokenism, patriarchy, injustice

## INTRODUCTION

Injustice is often perceived in contrast with others. This perception is predominantly influenced by the social context of an interaction, certain behaviours are accepted as normal across many cultures and simultaneously frowned upon in others. Therefore, the study of injustice poses a dilemma which truly is *in the conscience of the beholder*. Central to such an inquiry is the role of context which can critically influence a phenomenon. For example, racism was an internalized truth in the colonial societies, but discussed as injustice in most modern societies. Similarly, untouchability was a way of life in the pre-independence Indian society but deemed as a violation of fundamental rights in modern India. One such institutional construct that appears to remain prevalent in modern societies is patriarchy.

Patriarchy historically referred to the system of practices and behaviours where the man is the head of the household and has economic power, however it has grown to mean "a universal, unchanging deterministic social structure which denies agency to women" (Cockburn, 1990; Gordon 1988, p.vi, Orloff, 1993). This may result in the promulgation of larger gender-based stereotypes regarding merit and acumen (Jackman, 1994; Glick & Fiske, 2001). Patriarchy becomes the dominant framework within which gendered stereotypes are formulated. Further, in an organizational context, patriarchal orientation may determine work relations. Patriarchal orientations influence organizational behaviours, team selection, task allocation, feedback and even pay decisions. **Given its dominant hold in everyday life and behaviour, can patriarchal orientations determine individuals' perceptions of justice?**

Studies in the domain of perceptions of injustice point to in-group, out-group sensibilities influencing comprehension of injustice. Most notably observed with respect to race in an organizational context. However, we suspect that the in-group and out-group sentiment may vary with regards to other disadvantaged social groups, specifically gender. Though a host of aspects influence perceptions of injustice, literature from across domains frequently documents gender as a deciding factor to met out unjust behaviour. Interestingly, many individuals from disadvantaged groups appear to participate in their own subjugations perceiving such acts as cooperative and in the larger interests of the organizations. Where deviance from larger organizational mandates is viewed as idealism which works against the larger status quo. On the other hand, there may be excessive support for the disadvantaged groups which attempts to isolate an unjust act from the individual performing the behaviour. Such endorsement of a cause

of a social group may amount from the historical and stereotypical notions and not from a core justice perspective (read persistent injustice effect).

In congruence with the theories of hegemonic femininity, the velvet glove theory of protective paternalism (Jackman, 1994), theory of social dominance (Sidanius and Pratto, 2004), and theory of system justification (Jost & Banaji, 1994) we propound that subordinate groups often internalize injustice and are complicit in their subordinate status. This paper attempts to explore whether that the patriarchal orientation of the organization can potentially offset or heighten the “internalized patriarchy” in addressing injustice in same-gender associations.

### **THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS**

We begin by developing an understanding of what constitutes injustice for this we draw from literature to define the concept. The present study ties together theory from two broad domains: study of gender stereotypes and patriarchy through hegemonic femininity. We also look at internalization of injustice through the system justification theory and the persistent injustice effect and, we conclude with an overview of the velvet glove theory of protective paternalism. Together these theories allow us to understand the role of gender in the perception of injustice. The second part of this discussion studies the role of context through an overview of the scholarship around the study of patriarchal orientations.

Injustice has predominantly been discussed as an experiential phenomenon. With a majority of the papers discussing the “experience of injustice” these papers rely centrally on primary data. In Mikula & Schlamberger (1985) earlier work on injustice, defined how the experience of injustice conditioned attributions and evaluatory thoughts. The propositions asserted that victims of injustice reported to attributions. While the observers resorted to assessments an evaluation. With this, the authors suggest that injustice and the perceptions of it differs from the position a subject assumes. However, a more concrete effort towards definition was undertaken by Mikula, Petri, & Tanzer (1990) to discuss injustice as a power play and a biproduct of unequal power in task relationships. On the other hand, Miller (2001) discusses injustice from the lens of anger and disrespect, where the experience of injustice varies with the perception of disrespect.

This discussion also lent the foundation for the evolution of a definition of injustice. In this article we define injustice as an individual’s experience of disrespect or unfair treatment at the hands of another, on the basis of unequal power relationships between the two individuals. This perception may vary with individuals or circumstances, and in the context of the present article,

we rely on the lenses of patriarchy (Cockburn, 1990; Gordon 1988, p.vi, Orloff, 1993), as a determinant in this shift in position is the gender of the individuals.

With this prologue in mind, the present study ties together theory from two broad domains: study of gender stereotypes and patriarchy through hegemonic femininity. We also look at internalization of injustice through the system justification theory and the persistent injustice effect and, we conclude with an overview of the velvet glove theory of protective paternalism. Together these theories allow us to understand the role of gender in the perception of injustice. The second part of this discussion studies the role of context through an overview of the scholarship around the study of patriarchal orientations.

Connell's seminal work on hegemonic masculinity (1995, 2004), drove the study of gendered stereotypes and paved way to the study of femininity. However, the difference cannot be singularly attributed to stereotypical notions of masculine and feminine qualities and social roles, where one (feminine) is viewed as complimentary (Schippers, 2007). In fact, hegemonic femininity is deeply tuned with the dominant culture, where dominant-subordinate role assignment also serves the "interests and ascendancy of ruling classes", legitimizing the dominance of one group (Connell, 1987; Schippers, 2007). Therefore, compliance, nurturance, and empathy are perceived as "womanly virtues".

The discussion around stereotypes under hegemonic femininity also ties in with the system justification theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost & Hunyady, 2002), which propounds that stereotypes simultaneously justify intergroup relations and lend merit to the existing status quo as a fair system (Jost, Pelham, Sheldon, & Sullivan, 2003).

Jost, Banaji, and Nosek's (2004) comprehensive survey on system justification theory outlines the four tenets of the scholarship surrounding this work; (a) ideological preference for justifying social order (b) internalized inferiority by the disadvantaged group, (c) inherent implicit acceptance (d) divergent views on the extent to which ideological support exists amongst the most disadvantaged: where some studies suggest: less support (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) or more support (Jost et al, 2003). The inherent challenges with such a construction is to view merit to be a factor of gender.

Interestingly, the paradoxical position of the disadvantaged group in support of potentially unjust social order is a more nefarious consequence of system justification attempts. The potential internalization of such stereotypical outlook; where even an unjust act is perceived to be a system fulfilling bi-product. Perhaps, this ties to system maintenance perspective, where

there are active attempts to avoid and not approach conflict. This aspect was detailed in Jackman's (1994) work on the velvet glove theory of protective paternalism which proposed that terms of social relations are determined by the dominant groups. These dominant groups use subtle forms of coercion to wield dominance, therefore paternalism is a more efficacious form of social control (Jackman, 1994). Central to Jackman's postulation is the impact of physical and role segregation in determining attitudes towards group relations. Jackman's empirical analysis of US based survey data suggests that, gender relations have limited physical segregation, but a high degree of role segregation and paternalism and a lower amount of conflict. On the other hand, race relations have higher physical segregation, lower role segregation and higher conflict.

However, paternalistic or patronizing attitudes especially in gender relations point to inherent sexism, but akin to Jackman's (1995) postulation are not hostile, but benevolent in nature (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Empirical work by Moya, Glick, Lemus, & Hart, (2007) suggests that benevolent sexism encourages women to accept restrictions and partake in their own movement/behaviour thinking that it is in their own good. Perhaps, this hints that women might potentially be more reactive to hostile variants of sexism and prefer benevolent strains, with the intention of system justification (Roberts and Pennebaker, 1995). For example, women react differently to a seemingly flattering comment about her appearance by her manager at the workplace, some might accept, and certain others might question it, suggesting the presence of both heroic resisters as well as passive victims. There are also those who condemn the former with terms such as "misguided idealism". Therefore, such a system, though inherently gendered is perceived to be a simulacrum of a just system. While the system justifying injustice and tokenism represent two extremes within a spectrum, we suggest that they can exist simultaneously and to varying degrees within organizations. A determinant of such construction can be drawn from the patriarchal orientations of individuals.

### **CONCEPTUAL MODEL**

Extant literature has indicated that the marginalised portions of the society are implicit in the injustice that is met to their category, however there are also instances of heroic resisters persevering for their rights and equality in social and economic domains. Inequality, asymmetrical distribution of power, unfair distribution of goods and benefits all fall under the domain of injustice (Mikula & Schlamberger, 1985, Mikula, Petal, Tanzer, 1990). The presence

of patriarchy deems that the populace is unjust towards the marginalised gender, in this case – women (Sleeter, 2013). Women being more marginalised in a patriarchal society (which seems to be the norm in varying degrees universally), would therefore be subjected to more unjust circumstances (Jost & Kay, 2005). Academically, injustice could be ascertained logically however, perception of injustice is a fluid concept depending on the construction of the reality, its interpretations and the perceptual flow (Newtson, 1973; Ross et al., 1977; Reeder & Brewer, 1979). Therefore beliefs, context, situation, value systems determine the pattern of adoption of an opinion (Ashkanasy, 2002). This conceptual model insinuates that degree of affiliation or internalisation with the notion of patriarchy for both genders might dictate their perception of injustice towards women. Thus, not all sects of a society perceive injustice similarly. Internal value system, current thought-process and accompanying emotions all contribute to the perception of discrimination (which could lead to injustice) (Bargh, Chen, & Burrows, 1996; Devine, 1989; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). Additionally, it is not necessary that acceptance or denial of disparity is directly related to their conscious endorsement whatever that might be, as it has been shown that most stereotypes and understanding of social order is at the sub-conscious level (Jost & kay, 2005). This conceptual paper attempts to answer a few questions that intersect injustice with women and it's perception by both genders through the lens of patriarchal orientation.

### **Perception of injustice perceived by women**

It could be deemed that homophily dominates the notion that women would tend to empathise when they see injustice being met out to other women. However, several studies have indicated that perception of injustice is individually distinct. It is worthy to reconnoitre the elementary query of whether women accept injustice more than men or do women not perceive it as injustice? There are two extreme scenarios that we would broach for the purpose of perspicuity, 1) where women do not acquiesce injustice (as defined) against women and the other 2) where women would perceive injustice met out to other women because of their gender.

The differentiating factor here lies in the social accounts that they have experienced. Human behaviour has distinctly moved in directions to ease the burden of mental perplexity. Social accounts and values steer the most optimum way to perceive anomalies and deemed incidents of unfairness to balance the heuristic payoffs (Davidson & Friedman, 1998). Therefore, individuals would choose to perceive an incident as unjust or just according to the decision that is most aligned with their own value judgement and principles. Deeming that high patriarchal

orientation denotes acceptance of men as controllers of society, injustice meted out to women would be reasoned to be merited or the norm of the social order. Consequently, as system justification theory espouses there is an inherent need to maintain social order which leads to paradoxically leads to internalisation of acceptance to the lower strata in an aslant culture (Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004). In case of the former, they are guided by the concept of idealised femininity, where a “good woman” needs to be subservient to men, and injustice prorated towards them is the governing tenet. Additionally, the acceptance of pre-defined distinct “roles” for genders might stultify the assessment of injustice. Nevertheless, this tolerance for an unequal society might also stem from fear of antagonism from the power structures thus stemming from “self-interest” (Smith and Mackie, 2002). Allegorically, acceptance of this presiding patriarchal power leads them to adopt this status quo leading to “persistent injustice effect” (Davidson, M., & Friedman, 1988; Simons et al., 2007). Another obscure explanation could be the presence of intra-group conflict and competition amongst women in a highly patriarchal society. By affiliating with the dominant category that theoretically would be the inflictor of injustice, they might gain plaudits and thus some favours from the prevailing class (Bobo, 1988; Sherif, 1967; Sidanius and Pratto, 1999). Another pertinent factor to consider is the discernment of the mindset of the perpetrator of injustice. When there is a sense of concordance with the said offender, the sensitivity towards injustice would diminish (Fincham & Jaspers, 1980; Robinson & Darley, 1995). When the marginalised gender is in compliance with the dominant gender, they would have higher levels of empathy towards the perpetrating section and thus would have a sluggish response to the injustice being imposed.

Thus, we can propose that:

*Proposition 1: Women with high patriarchal orientation would not perceive “injustice” on other women in a patriarchal society.*

However, there would be women that would ardently perceive injustice in the context of our paper. We imply that injustice would be present due to the unequal nature of our existing society (Bies and Moag, 1986; Bies, 1987; Shapiro, 1991). This empathy would stem from their understanding and awareness of the skewed constitution of our society. Cognizance of the current systems along with self-consciousness would lead to a building sense of empathy, which has always been the first step towards establishing social justice. Consequently, this enlightenment would lead to repudiation of the existing social order, and heroic activism. It could be implicitly realised that women who remonstrate the existing patriarchal hegemony

would have low patriarchal orientation and they would thus conceive that men and women are equal and need to have parallel control over familial as well as economic domains. Concisely, they are the proponents of the Feminist Ideology. Furthermore, we could also usher homophily as an explanation for perceived injustice, wherein they have not subconsciously complied with the patriarchal mores and empathise with their affiliates for injustices they might be enduring themselves. Above all this there is also moralistic anger that logically grasps the injustice that might be present. Observing any harm of a third person can provoke feelings that our aligned to the moral standards that guide the functioning of communities. Any violation or deviation from these moral directives that desecrate the principles of basic respect and parity leads to moralistic anger (Miller, 2001; Vidmar, 2000). A low patriarchal orientation might facilitate recognition of defiance of principles of veneration and egalitarianism which might be present in injustice due to a patriarchal social order. Thus, we can postulate that:

*Proposition 2: Women with low patriarchal orientation would perceive “injustice” on other women in a patriarchal society.*

### **Perception of injustice perceived by men**

In a patriarchal society, men are the controlling class. It can therefore be implied that injustice is existent due to the perpetuation of this power asymmetry and thus by extension injustice, in preponderance is prompted by men. However, as indicated in the media and larger society, men too react diversely towards injustice towards women due to the patriarchal structure of our civilisation. In continuation we would approach this framework from two extreme probabilities – 1) men do not perceive injustice towards women and 2) men perceive injustice towards women.

In the first scenario, men would not perceive injustice because they do not recognise the privilege bestowed to them due to their gender, and/or the inequality that is prevalent in the society. This might stem from unawareness or indoctrination of the puritan traditional structures of the pre-existing societal standards. Borrowing from the concept of masculine hegemony, the easiest option for men would be to maintain status quo and thus safeguard their current position while concurrently apportioning resources unequally (metaphorically), which could lead to events of injustice. Alternatively, certain men subconsciously believe that women are preordained to portray “roles” that have been ascribed by the traditional customs that have been passed on centuries. In both the cases, the aforementioned men have the tendency to maintain a patriarchal hierarchy and therefore would have a high patriarchal orientation.

Analogous to women with low patriarchal orientation, men too might acquire moralistic anger towards any injustice that bolsters the holds of patriarchy and defiles the principles of equivalence (Miller, 2001; Vidmar, 2000). Additionally, men would not tend to experience gender-homophily. Hence, any injustice would be deemed to be recognised as a part of the endorsed view of the society. Thus, we can propose that:

*Proposition 3: Men with high patriarchal orientation would not perceive “injustice” on women in a patriarchal society.*

However, akin to certain women there would be men who would raise their voice against the injustice transpiring. Men, who analogous to women cognise and dismiss the existing inequalities, would understand that injustice subsists. However, certain men under the garb of tokenism and benevolent sexism might espouse these notions of feminism, however they might sub-consciously still assume “man” to be the protector of human race and thus also women-kind. There is a possibility of certain cognitive dissonance in this scenario. However, for the sake of argument, we will assume that men who believe in that disparity exists and should be decimated, would be more conscious of the injustices meted out to women. Thus, we can suggest that:

*Proposition 4: Men with low patriarchal orientation would perceive “injustice” on women in a patriarchal society.*

## **LIMITATIONS**

In this article, broadly speaking we attempt to unpack two broad phenomena. The role of patriarchal orientation in the perceptions of a just act and an unjust act. Where this relationship is moderated by the gender of an individual and their patriarchal orientation.

The proposition must be inferred in the light of a host of factors affecting the various variables. Firstly, the role for the context, partially the political climate. Countries with a poor index of women’s development may have a dramatically different patriarchal orientation versus a more modern society with more gender conscious laws.

A potential limitation of this article is its inability to account for complex sexual-identify parameters. Individuals’ sexual and identity-based complexities are outside the ambit of the present discussion and hence, have not been included in the model. This paper limits itself to using a singular lens of patriarchal orientation to understand the perception of injustice. This is restrictive and bypasses works the two-factor model of relative deprivation by Crosby (1982)

and the attribution-of-blame model of Mikula (1993). We do not look at cases where women attribute injustice when there might be none (Freudenthaler & Mikula, 1998). We also ignore psychological mechanisms, personality, micro-analysis or even the relationship between the perpetrator of injustice and the “victim”. Additionally, there is no analysis of the “victim” and their relationship with the person who’s understanding of injustice is being examined.

We also do not aim to look at injustice on men, since it does not lie within the scope of patriarchal orientation as a moderator. We could assume that, women with high patriarchal orientation would not tend to experience gender-homophily in a case of injustice towards men, however, might be more reluctant to disregard any injustice towards the controlling section. Contrastingly, women with low patriarchal orientation would tend to experience gender-homophily in a case of injustice towards men if the perpetrators of injustice are women. However, the latitude of our paper restrains us to look at injustice in a patriarchal setting and therefore such hypothetical conjectures are out of our scope.

Table 1 additionally also looks at the aspect of covert versus overt espousal of their perception. Our paper assumes that our subjects have a homogenous opinion of their perception, that is, we presume that what are subjects are explicitly stating about their perception is what they are also feeling internally. However, in this era it would be no surprise that both men and women might openly claim to perceive a certain act as just / unjust though they might actually believe it to be the opposite. Table 1 introduces the concept of cognitive dissonance if there is any dichotomy between internal and external endorsements. Considering that individuals would want to reduce cognitive dissonance and therefore would ideally reduce the gap between inner and outward affirmations. This process of reduction is key to our paper and therefore we do not necessarily look at any dichotomy.

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Insert Table 1 about here

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## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this paper is to understand how patriarchal orientation effects perception of injustice towards women in a patriarchal context. Our assumption is that men & women entrenched in patriarchal societies inwardly believe that women deserve to be treated in a certain manner; that it is their position in society and that any inequality in treatment is not

injustice but is their fate and is the norm. Contrastingly, we suggest that the lower the acceptance of patriarchal norms the higher is their inclination to perceive injustice.

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**Table 1: Perception of men and women on injustice towards women**

Patriarchal Orientation Gender	Consider injustice as an unjust act		Consider injustice as a just act	
	Low	High	Low	High
Man	No Cognitive Dissonance	Tokenism	Cognitive dissonance	Internalisation of unequal society/ conscious endorsement of patriarchy
Woman	No Cognitive Dissonance	Ritualized Solidarity/ Misguided Idealism	Cognitive dissonance	Idealised Femininity