



(online) = ISSN 2285 – 3642

ISSN-L = 2285 – 3642

*Journal of Economic Development, Environment and People*

Volume 11, Issue 3, 2022

URL: <http://jedep.spiruharet.ro>

e-mail: [office\\_jedep@spiruharet.ro](mailto:office_jedep@spiruharet.ro)

## **Feminism and Feminist Grounded Theory: A Comprehensive Research Analysis**

**Devajit MOHAJAN**

Department of Civil Engineering, Chittagong University of Engineering & Technology, Chittagong, Bangladesh

Email: [devajit1402@gmail.com](mailto:devajit1402@gmail.com)

Mobile: +8801866207021

**Haradhan Kumar MOHAJAN**

Assistant Professor, Department of Mathematics, Premier University, Chittagong, Bangladesh

Email: [haradhan1971@gmail.com](mailto:haradhan1971@gmail.com)

Mobile: +8801716397232

**Abstract:** *The purpose of this paper is to flourish the grounded theory (GT) methodology in qualitative research from the feminist viewpoint. Since the mid-1990s feminist research on grounded theory has been started and researchers have been using this approach for research based on practical experiences. The nursing researchers, for the first time, draw on feminist principles in grounded theory for the better serving of the interests of women in healthcare. Feminist grounded theory (FGT) is the evolved form of the original grounded theory of Glaser and Strauss. Feminist research is a related area of social research and always thinks about the welfare of the women, especially those who are underestimated in the male-dominated society. In every country, some professions, such as nursing, home economics, nutrition, etc. are women dominated. Feminist grounded theory methodology research is well-fitted in these areas. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, feminist grounded theory is appropriate, effective, and highly resourceful. In the past, women's voices and views are frequently ignored in many cases, such as in academics and policy making. At present, feminist research is a growing field in the research arena that creates concerns about the rights of women and provides knowledge to bring them to light. This study exercises feminism and the structure of the feminist nature of the grounded theory to change the subordination of women and reduce social inequality in all stages. This paper aims to discuss and analyze feminist epistemologies and to highlight the necessity of feminist grounded theory in society.*

**Keywords:** Feminism, feminist research, feminist grounded theory, social science, gender inequality

**JEL Codes:** B54, C25, C35

**How to cite:** Mohajan, H. (2022). FEMINISM and FEMINIST GROUNDED THEORY: A Comprehensive Research Analysis. *Journal of Economic Development, Environment and People*, 11(3), 45-61. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.26458/jedep.v11i3.774>

### **1. Introduction**

Ernest Hartmann observed that men systematically dominate women. In his seminal work, he revealed the “set of social relations between men, which have a material base, and among men that enable them to dominate women” [Hartmann, 1984; Alston, 2014]. The discrimination of women at the household and social levels creates chronic morbidity among women [Hesse-Biber, 2012]. In the USA, women suffered in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Every suburban wife struggled against oppression with it alone [Friedan,



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1963]. Feminism consists of social, economic, and political movements and theories that are concerned with gender inequalities and gaining equal rights for women [Jain, 2020].

Many researchers suggest that feminist research takes a variety of legitimate forms and there is no “*distinctive feminist method of research*” [Harding, 1987; Fonow & Cook, 2005]. Feminist research has stressed a set of common epistemological features: focuses on subjective interpretations of social experience, respects the role of reflexivity in the research process, acknowledges the contextual and relational nature of knowledge, rejects subject-object dualisms, respects the role of reflexivity in the research process, and values the relationship between the researcher and the participant, attends gender, power, and transformative social action [Wuest, 1995; Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002; Routledge, 2007].

In feminist studies, differences, such as gender, culture, class, ability, age, and sexual orientation are revealed in the data collection [Wuest, 1997]. Feminist research studies women or focuses on gender. It aims to establish a gender asymmetry environment in the world [Kaur & Nagaich, 2019]. It does not speak for all women, but provides new knowledge about the experiences of women in society and recognizes the role of emotions and gendered embodiment [Landman, 2006]. The feminist methodology is dealt with how, or whether, knowledge is created with the social realities of women that are dominated by men. It tries to remove the power imbalance between research and subject for the change social inequality [Charles & Kerr, 1988].

Grounded theory (GT) is considered the most widely accomplished research in the qualitative social sciences. It is a qualitative and inductive approach that deals with how people manage problematic situations in their lives. Two US sociologists; Barney Galland Glaser (1930-2022) and Anselm Leonard Strauss (1916-1996) originally established the GT in 1967 [Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1994]. They have revealed that GT is the discovery of theory from the collected data. GT produces new knowledge which is used to develop new theories about a phenomenon. Therefore, it is a qualitative research design, which aims to create theories about social processes that are grounded in the data [Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2007]. It is a systematic and established methodology, but the flexible process of collecting and analyzing data to generate new theory [Mills & Birks, 2014; Charmaz, 2006]. It supports feminist ontological and epistemological groundwork; as women participants are experts about their experiences that provide appropriate data. Grounded theory and feminist theory have been considered compatible methodologies to use together in qualitative research. The combination of both is based on epistemological, ontological, and methodological congruence [Wuest, 1995; Keddy et al., 1996].

Since the mid-1990s feminist grounded theory (FGT) has started its journey for the welfare of women. Researchers from a variety of disciplines have arranged their well-suitably methodologies and finally incorporate feminist principles into their GT studies [Plummer & Young, 2010]. In the beginning, nursing researchers have contributed their knowledge to the well-matched relationship between feminist and GT behaviors [Kushner & Morrow, 2003]. Canadian professor of nursing, Judith Wuest, has developed the feminist grounded theory (FGT) in social sciences [Wuest, 1995, 1997]. She suggests three specific epistemological bases that display the matching of feminist research with GT: i) the basic views of symbolic interactionism that reflects a deep-rooted subjective interpretation of social experience as a source of knowledge of women, ii) both theories share the characteristic within social structures that is relational, and iii) feminist theory parallels with GT [Strauss & Corbin, 1994; Wuest, 1995, 2012].

Globally most women are the victim of gender inequality. Consequently, feminist grounded theory (FGT) researchers have huge scope to flourish their knowledge in this research area. In this study, we have



(online) = ISSN 2285 – 3642

ISSN-L = 2285 – 3642

*Journal of Economic Development, Environment and People*

Volume 11, Issue 3, 2022

URL: <http://jedep.spiruharet.ro>

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observed that GT are enriched by a feminist perspective when working with women [Plummer &Young, 2010].

## 2. Literature Review

Swati Rajan and Swati Kalbhor in feminist research have presented women's voices and perspectives, their struggles against oppression, their beliefs and values for social change, and ending social inequality in all forms [Rajan & Kalbhor, 2018]. Shruti Jain has stressed various social reformers to improve the status of Indian women. She has realized that feminism is social, economic, and political movement that focus on gender inequalities. She has observed that cyberfeminists and social media can create strong feminist networks. On the other hand, the digital space has also become a source of online harassment, bullying, and sexual exploitation [Jain, 2020].

Sandra Harding focuses on feminist epistemology considering the development of method and methodology as the basis of research. She has identified two epistemologies: feminist standpoint and feminist empiricism. Feminist standpoint epistemology serves as a foundation of a methodology for feminist research that is a grounded analysis of women's material realities. On the other hand, feminist empiricism is dealt with feminist responses to biases and problems in traditional disciplines [Harding, 1987]. Gwendolyn Beetham and Justina Demetriades have provided a background on the feminist frameworks at the foundation of research conducted from a gender perspective. They have explored the ways to use feminist methodologies in the development of gender-sensitive indicators and have examined the methods currently available for assessing progress on gender equality [Beetham & Demetriades, 2007].

Michele Ollivier and Manon Tremblay have identified three defining principles of feminist research: i) feminist research is characterized by its double dimensions, ii) it is grounded in feminist values and beliefs, and iii) it is characterized by its diversity [Ollivier & Tremblay, 2000]. Myungsun Yi and Bong-Sook Yih have suggested that a combination of feminist approaches within nursing is a bold step to enlarge the structure of nursing knowledge. They have discussed four perceptions of feminism: liberal feminism, radical feminism, Marxist feminism, and social feminism in some detail. They have also explained feminist empiricism, feminist standpoint, and postmodern feminism [Yi & Yih, 2004].

Caroline Ramazanoglu and Janet Holland have claimed that the position of women in relation to men, and male domination of social theory, recent feminism and its adjustment knowledge have confronted three different sources of criticism. They have revealed that women are ignored in many factors, such as racism, systems of production, nationalism, heterosexism, and the complex relations between them [Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002]. Kathleen Peters and her coauthors have explored the utility and value of feminist approaches when undertaking narrative-based research. A feminist approach allows that the origin of oppression is not personal but very much about power, men, as well as women, may experience the effects of oppression [Peters et al., 2008].

Mary Margaret Fonow and Judith A. Cook have attempted to explicate feminist research practices along with data collection and analysis, ethics, reflexivity, policy implications, social action, collaboration, and dissemination of research findings to capture the intersectionality of gender with other categories of difference, such as race, sexuality, and class [Fonow & Cook, 2005]. Kaysi Eastlick Kushner and Raymond Morrow have examined the construction of symbolic interactionist, feminist, and critical feminist variants of grounded theory methodology [Kushner & Morrow, 2003]. Ann Oakley argues that a feminist methodology discusses social science researches more specifically. She stresses an in-depth qualitative interview for feminist research [Oakley, 1981]. Haradhan Kumar Mohajan has introduced the elementary



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concepts of qualitative research methods in social sciences [Mohajan, 2011, 2012, 2016, 2017a,b, 2018b, 2020c]. He has also developed feminism and its variants in some detail [Mohajan, 2022a,b]. Marilyn Plummer and Lynne E. Young have discussed the roots of GT and feminist analysis to identify six key areas of their research. They have realized that research in feminist GT started in the mid-1990s. They have shared their experience from a study of peer support and the health of lone mothers. They have recommended that nurse researchers draw on feminist principles to guide their use of GT for better serving women [Plummer & Young, 2010].

Judith Wuest has applied the method of GT from the feminist perspective. Her thought covers the knowledge discovery for nursing that incorporates diversity and change. She has acknowledged the contextual and relational nature of knowledge by rejecting subject-object dualisms. She wanted to establish a relationship between the researcher and the participant in the GT research approach [Wuest, 1995, 1997]. Barbara Keddy and her coworkers have discussed how GT could be used in a creative and constantly evolving manner for feminist research [Keddy et al., 1996]. Margaret M. Cullen and Niamh M. Brennan have analyzed the GT methodology, its purpose, and its application in the research arena. They have also identified quality criteria for the conduct of GT research [Cullen & Brennan, 2021]. Judy E. Boychuk Duchscher and Debra Morgan have discussed analytically the stages and strategies of sampling, collection, coding, memoing, and analysis of collected data that are used by Glaser and Strauss in 1967 [Duchscher & Morgan, 2004].

### 3. Methodology of the Study

To rationalize the selection of a research methodology, a researcher must understand its philosophical origins and unique characteristics [Rieger, 2019]. Methodology relates to nature and power to science, truth, and epistemology [Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002]. Sandra Harding suggests that *“methodology is a theory and analysis of how research does and should proceed”*. She has also suggested that there is not a *“distinctive feminist method of research”* [Harding, 1987]. On the other hand, Mary Fonow and Judith A. Cook believe that there is a feminist methodology in social science that *“involves the description, explanation, and justification of techniques used in feminist research and is an abstract classification that refers to a variety of methodological stances, conceptual approaches, and research strategies”* [Fonow & Cook, 2005]. In the study, the research methodology is qualitative, and the procedures and techniques are of feminist research [Reinharz, 1992].

Since the establishment of GT at the Chicago School of Sociology in 1967, it was male-dominated [Mills et al., 2007]. Some researchers consider GT as the natural maturing of a methodology. Judith Wuest believes that GT is strictly rooted in the constructivist paradigm and the researchers practice their epistemological lens to the study for the enrichment of their research methodology [Wuest, 2012]. In qualitative research, GT and feminist theory have been labeled as congruent methodologies to use together [Wuest, 1995; Keddy et al., 1996].

When a researcher goes through a research s/he must go about being as reliable as possible. S/he should apply and demonstrate rigorous collection and analysis methods and systems. On the other hand, the validity of data refers to the truth that tells about the subject or phenomenon, which have been studied. Validity provides a true measurement, description, and explanation of what it is claiming to be measured [Campos, et al., 2017]. We have tried to maintain the reliability and validity of the research in this review work [Mohajan, 2017a, 2018b].



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When a researcher conduct research, s/he must be mindful of ethical and data protection issues. The three principles of ethics are informed consent, confidentiality, and avoiding harm to do well. Research ethics involve the application of fundamental ethical principles to research activities, such as the design and implementation of research, respect towards society and others, the use of resources and research outputs, scientific misconduct, and the regulation of research [Israel, 2015]. In this article, we have tried to maintain ethical principles and have tried to give citations in the text properly.

In this study feminism philosophy, epistemology and methodology are outlined. Feminism is a perspective, but not a research method. Feminist grounded theory and feminist ethnography are highlighted to strengthen the research area. In this paper, we have used secondary data sources that are related to grounded theory and feminist grounded theory. We have consulted and analyzed renowned journal articles, printed and e-books of eminent authors, handbooks, conference papers, internet websites, etc. to successfully complete the study [Chowdhury et al., 2013; Islam et al., 2012; Mohajan, 2013, 2014a, b, 2017a, 2018b; Mohajan & Mohajan, 2022].

#### **4. Objective of the Study**

The main objective of this article is to describe feminism's qualitative research method in the grounded theory. Some other related objectives are;

- to highlight feminism and its waves,
- to discuss the aspects of feminist research including FGT, and
- to show the present women's health.

#### **5. Feminism**

Feminism is a collection of movements and ideologies that want to establish and defend equal cultural, political, economic, and social rights; and legal protection for women in all regions of society. For example, feminism takes attempts to establish equal opportunities for women in education and employment [Stanley & Wise, 1983; Day & Wray, 2018; Jain, 2020]. Several dictionaries have defined "*feminism*" as "*a doctrine that aims to improve the position of women*". In many cases feminine are socially and culturally devalued, and men enjoy greater access to scarce and valued social resources [Guimaraes, 2007]. It does not believe that women are superior, even does not hate men, and does not support male oppression. It only aims to achieve and establish equality between women and men [Cole & Symes, 2020]. Debra Jackson has mentioned that "*feminism was born as a response to oppression*" [Jackson, 1997]. In the society, women express themselves as humanist feminists, radical feminists, socialist feminists, separatist feminists, liberal feminists, democrat feminists, and so on [Rajan & Kalbhor, 2018].

From the earliest eras of human civilization, it is seen that feminism is one of the oldest social activities that try to abolish or reduce discrimination and establish gender equality in society [Freedman, 2002]. The roots of feminism are buried in ancient Greece. Athenian philosopher Plato (427-347 BCE), in his classic book "*Republic*" advocated that women possess "*natural capacities*" equal to men for governing and defending ancient Greece, but everyone had not agreed with Plato [Scott, 1996]. Charles Fourier (1772-1837), a French philosopher and utopian socialist, is credited with having coined the word "*feminism*" in 1837 for supporting women's suffrage [Goldstein, 1982]. The word "*feminist*" also first arise with "*feminism*" France in 1837 and the Netherlands in 1872, Great Britain in the



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1890s, and the USA in 1910. The first international congress held in Paris in 1892, use the word “*feminist*” [Hilversum, 1994].

In Western history, it is noted that women were confined to the domestic arena, while public life was booked for men. In medieval Europe, women were deprived of their own property, and study, and did not permit to participate in public life [Perry et al., 2015; Cole & Symes, 2020]. Feminists act, speak, write, and advocate on behalf of women’s issues and rights, and identify injustice against females in society [Malinowska, 2020].

### 5.1 Waves of Feminism

Hildegard Bingen (1098-1179), Christine de Pisan (1364-1430), Olympe de Gouge (1748-1793), Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), and Jane Austen (1787-1817) are considered as the foremothers of the modern feminism movements. They have advised for the dignity, intelligence, and basic human potential of the female life [Rampton, 2015]. In the Indian sub-continent, feminism was considered the reform and anti-colonial movements for better political rights, access to education, and employment in the context of the colonial state [Misra, 1997]. Feminists and scholars have divided feminism into four waves as [Malinowska, 2020]: first wave (1840s-1920s), the second wave (1960s-1980s), third wave (1990s-2000s), and the fourth wave (2010s- present period).

**5.1.1 The First Wave Feminism:** It is referred to feminist activities, which stress overturning legal inequalities that range from 1840s to 1920s; largely took place in Europe and in the USA [Jain, 2020]. It also spread in Egypt, Iran, and India. It was generally propelled by middle-class Western white women [Malinowska, 2020]. In this wave, women gathered together to confront a wide range of practices that affected the lives of women and children. For example, in 1848, in the USA about 200 women met in a church with 12 resolutions of specific rights, such as the right to vote and women’s participation in politics. Congress finally passed the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment to the US Constitution in 1920 and gave women the right to vote [Rampton, 2015].

The first wave focuses on women’s economic, sexual, and reproductive rights. It deals mainly with suffrage (right to vote and contract), access of women to higher education, professions of medicine, law and accountancy, access to jobs and better working conditions with maternity leave and equal pay, protection of women and girls from domestic violence, and legislation to protect women and girls from prostitution [Gray & Boddy, 2010; Mohajan, 2022]. It has a mission for women’s rights, such as equality in legal and political rights, equal rights within the family, abortion and reproductive rights with access to contraception and quality prenatal care, the opportunity to vote and holds public office, and of legal rights in marriage [Molyneux et al., 2021]. Later included some more rights, such as the rights of married women to own and earn property, to legal protection against physical abuse by their husbands, to disobey their husbands and for divorce, and against sexual harassment, rape, and misogyny [Goldstein, 1982].

It has proved both a boon and a bane for the women’s movement. From the first wave, society considers that women are humans, not property. It opens up various opportunities for women. They have believed that in many cases women are more innocent and more virtuous than men [Phillips & Cree, 2014].

**5.1.2 The Second Wave Feminism:** It is commonly referred to the feminist activities that took place in the early 1960s and spreads all over the Western world and beyond, and lasts up to the 1980s [Rampton, 2015; Jain, 2020]. The wave is celebrated with the publication of Betty Friedan’s “*The Feminist Mystique*” in 1963



(online) = ISSN 2285 – 3642

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*Journal of Economic Development, Environment and People*

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[Friedan, 1963]. It emerged in the wake of World War II when many women entered the labor force and many other forms that challenged prevailing notions of women's role in the family, workplace, and society [Phoca & Wright, 1999; Gray & Boddy, 2010]. The feminists have attempted many issues during this wave, such as reproductive rights, reduction of inequalities in the workplace, abortion and birth control rights, the sexual liberation of women, equal employment opportunities, paid maternity leave, and the provision of adequate childcare facilities. The movement was against rape, marital rape, and domestic violence, sexual objectification of women's bodies, and pornography and prostitution [Tong, 2009; Phillips & Cree, 2014].

The wave deals with the inequality of laws, as well as cultural inequalities and the role of women in society. It has attempted a wide range of issues focusing on women's work and family environment. The first action is seen in the 1960s with the arrival of the contraceptive pill. The movement has depicted women of color and developing nations, seeking sisterhood and solidarity. It is also known as the Women's Liberation Movement. Many women during the second wave were initially part of the Black Civil Rights Movement, Anti-Vietnam Movement, Chicano Rights Movement, Asian-American Civil Rights Movement, Gay and Lesbian Movement, and many other groups fighting for equality [Adamson et al., 1988; Mohajan, 2022]. It has stretched the anti-war and civil rights movements and the growing self-consciousness of a variety of minority groups around the world [Rampton, 2015].

During this period three main types of feminism appeared: i) mainstream which focused on institutional reforms that reduce gender discrimination, giving women access to male-dominated spaces by promoting equality, ii) radical that can reshape society entirely to bring liberation, and iii) cultural that teaches "*there is a female essence which is distinct from men*" [Snyder, 2008]. The feminist activists saw political and cultural inequalities as closely interlinked. They protest against the Miss America beauty pageant in the Atlantic City of New Jersey in 1968 and 1969, as it is an event of objectification of women's beauty. They declare it as a "*cattle parade*", because it reduces the beauty objects of women [Snyder, 2008]. Naomi Wolf refers to it as "*victim feminism*" and depicts it as "*sexually judgmental, even anti-sexual, judgmental of other women's sexuality and appearance, and self-righteous*" [Wolf, 1993].

**5.1.3 The Third Wave Feminism:** It has begun in the mid-1990s challenging female heteronormativity and lasted up to the 2000s. Rebecca Walker (1969-), an American writer, feminist, and activist, first coined the term "*third-wave feminism*" in an essay on feminism in Ms. magazine called "*Becoming the Third Wave*" that is published in 1992 [Walker, 1995; Gamble, 2001; Snyder, 2008]. Third-wave feminism as anti-essentialist, post-colonial, postmodern, and poststructuralist in orientation has been constructed through "*hybridity and contradiction*" or a response to the "*sense of fracture and fragmentation in the project of feminism*" [Gillis et al., 2007]. It refers to the diverse strains of feminist activities. It has emphasized identity, gender, race, class, nation, social order, and sexual preference. It indicates a continuation and a reaction to the perceived failures of second-wave feminism and also a response to the backlash against initiatives and movements created by the second wave [Heywood, 2006; Jain, 2020].

Third wavers depict their version of feminism as more inclusive and racially diverse than the second wave, and they call it "*a form of inclusiveness*" [Heywood, 2006]. Women fight to vanquish the disparities in male and female pay and the reproductive rights of women. Three significant elements stand out in this period: i) the importance of policy related activism, ii) the strengthening of feminist movements, and iii) rights advocacy in the Global South; and the consolidation of women's studies as a discipline. The third wave of feminism rejects grand narratives for a feminism that operates as a hermeneutics of critique within a wide array of discursive locations [Snyder, 2008].



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Some feminist researchers cannot distinguish between second and third-wave feminism [Snyder, 2008; Mohajan, 2022]. They believe that in the second phase many constructs were weakened, such as the notions of “*universal womanhood*”, body, gender, sexuality, and heteronormativity [Rampton, 2015].

**5.1.4 The Fourth Wave Feminism:** It emerged in the new millennium after an interim period when feminism as a visible and active social movement was said to scarcely exist [McRobbie, 2004]. It has been characterized by growing numbers of new feminist organizations, online communities, and activist campaigns [Jain, 2020]. It is comprised of a range of effects, not all of which seem to complement one another [Chamberlain, 2017]. During this wave, there have been socio-cultural, historical, and political changes in society. Social media has opened up significant spaces for the fourth-wave feminism [Solomon, 2009].

The fourth wave of feminism is still an attractive shape [Peroni & Rodak, 2020]. It is considered action-based viral campaigns, protests, and movements like #MeToo movement that speak out in record numbers against discrimination [Malinowska, 2020; Mohajan, 2022]. MeToo is a social movement against sexual abuse and sexual harassment that is used by American sexual assault survivor and activist Tarana Bruke in 2006 [Ohlheiser, 2017]. The communication space opened by young bloggers and twitters is called “*Hashtag Feminism*” which talks about misogynist and sexist culture. It has opened the way to a new questioning of the relationship with the law, the state, and citizenship rights [Munro, 2013]. This wave is characterized by “*queer, sex-positive, trans-inclusive, body-positive, and digitally driven*” [Day & Wray, 2018]. In the Indian Sub-Continent dowry harassment and domestic violence are major problems that are different from the West [Jain, 2020].

## 5.2 Feminist Research

The feminist theory is as like the ideal in the background of motherhood. It aims to understand the nature of gender inequality by examining women’s social roles and lived experiences [Stanley & Wise, 1983]. It highlights the importance of reflexivity, situated standpoints, power differentials, and openness to the type of flexibility that is implied by methodological self-consciousness [Hordge-Freeman, 2018]. It also tries to advance the health and security of women in all steps of society [Phillips, 2015].

Actually, feminist research differs from traditional social sciences research [Greaves et al., 1995]. There is no single definition of feminist research in social science, but many authors point to certain key elements as defining features. A research that studies women or focuses on gender is considered feminist research [Robbins, 1996]. Feminist research indicates that the origin of oppression is not personal but very much about power. In society, both men and women are victims of oppression [Peters et al., 2008]. In most cases, women have to struggle against oppression, their beliefs and values, and diversity [Shiva, 2016]. Feminist research has been identified as an analysis of the struggles of women against the multiple forms of oppression and abuse. Wendy Robbins defines feminist research as “*feminist researchers produce feminist research*” [Ollivier & Tremblay, 2000]. Michel Olivier and Manon Tremblay have identified three principles of feminist research i) construction of new knowledge and the production of social change in multiple forms of their oppression, ii) it is grounded in feminist values and beliefs, and iii) it is characterized by its diversity [Olivier & Tremblay, 2000].

Feminist research covers the full range of knowledge building that includes epistemology, methodology, and method [Rajan & Kalbhor, 2018]. It is action and change-oriented that strives to represent human diversity [Reinharz, 1992]. It requires many essential issues, such as antiracism and diversity, democratic





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decision-making, and the empowerment of women. In feminist research, meaning comes from the experiences of women, their perceptions of experiences, and life stories [Rothe, 1993].

Feminist research is identified as a method of knowing women's experience of living in a world [Rajan & Kalbhor, 2018]. It tries to discuss i) discrepancies in men's and women's earnings, ii) females are socialized to care more than men about such things as clean and neat homes, iii) expect women, but not men, to be responsible for domestic work, iv) among dual-earner couples women continue to perform a far greater proportion of domestic and childrearing work than their husbands [Chafetz, 2004]. Feminist research is guided by feminist theory. It strives to represent human diversity and includes the researcher as a person. It may be trans-disciplinary and attempts to develop special relations with the people studied, and it aims to create social change. It is a perspective, not a method [Reinharz, 1992]. It is considered as consisting of a number of assertions about the nature of social reality and sociological inquiry [Cook & Fonow, 1985].

Feminist researchers frequently find the impersonal aspect of survey research abhorrent in terms of human relations. They try to develop methods and preferences for techniques to obtain the best results for women [O'Neill, 1995]. They share useful knowledge which contributes to global gender justice, changing women's subordination, and stops all forms of social inequalities [Rajan & Kalbhor, 2018].

## 6. Basis of GT

Grounded theory (GT) is a qualitative research methodology in social science with a distinct history that has resulted in numerous approaches and feminist grounded theory (FGT) is one of them. GT is an elegant, useful, and valid research method in social sciences [Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Morse, 2001]. Researchers collect new ideas and themes that emerge from the speeches of the people of the society. The theory is derived from the data and develops them by collecting, coding, and analyzing data concurrently [Cullen & Brennan, 2021]. GT is an inductive research method for the generation of theory (substantive or formal), using qualitative data that are generated from research interviews, observation, or written sources, or any other source. Therefore, its central aim is theory building, rather than theory testing [Glaser & Strauss, 1967]. It seeks to make sense of the data collected to determine its meaning and significance [Parker & Roffey, 1997]. It incorporates guidelines for simultaneous data collection and analysis to develop theories about social processes that are grounded in real-life experiences [Charmaz, 2006; McClement & Harlos, 2008]. It is a systematic but flexible process of collecting and analyzing data to generate new theories [Mills & Birks, 2014]. As GT is an exploratory research method, it does not start from an existing theory and predefined concepts. In GT, the data are collected, coded, and analyzed simultaneously; also concepts and properties become evident [Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1998].

The modified approach to GT does not use the terms "*category and subcategory*" [Dey, 1990; LaRossa, 2005]. GT focuses on behavioral concepts, such as trust, resilience, caring, coping, and so on [Morse, 2001]. It has an established reputation for the study of human behavior for making knowledge [Suddaby, 2006]. Fundamental elements of the GT are: i) coding, ii) development of concepts, iii) constant comparison of data, iv) theoretical sampling, v) theoretical saturation, vi) theoretical integration, and vii) use of memos to reflect researchers' analytical thought processes [Sutton et al., 2011; Cullen & Brennan, 2021]. Occasionally, GT is referred to as the constant comparative method. Because, every piece of coded data is compared with every other piece of data, with concepts and categories, and with all levels of abstraction as the developing theory begins to take the form [Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 2001; Conrad, 2013].



(online) = ISSN 2285 – 3642

ISSN-L = 2285 – 3642

*Journal of Economic Development, Environment and People*

Volume 11, Issue 3, 2022

URL: <http://jedep.spiruharet.ro>

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The GT originally developed “*The Discovery of Grounded Theory*” in 1967 by two American sociologists Barney Glaser (1930-2022) and Anselm Leonard Strauss (1916-1996) focuses on theory verification to theory generation. They have researched the interactions between healthcare professionals and dying patients. They have proposed a method to generate theory directly from systematically obtained sociological data [Glaser & Strauss, 1967]. Distinguishing characteristics of GT are [Glaser, 1978, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998]: i) it focuses on a process and trajectory that result in identifiable stages and phases, ii) it uses gerunds indicating action and change; iii) it has a core variable or category, and iv) it is abstract but unique.

## 7. Characteristic of FGT

In 1995, Wuest has published a book titled “*Feminist Grounded Theory: An exploration of the Congruency and Tensions between Two Traditions in Knowledge Discovery*” which is considered the introduction of feminist grounded theory. In this book, she stressed that the feminist version is developed originally for nurses. She has observed that prejudice and unfairness toward women convey FGT to support women’s opinion, but it has a lack of procedures to study the social phenomenon [Wuest, 1995].

Theory evolves during the research process and is produced from the continuous interplay among data analysis, data collection, and resulting theory [Corbin & Strauss, 2015]. The development and use of feminist research methods reject traditional scientific methods and take on a more relaxed and open approach to gain a better understanding of social reality. The feminist structure is the power inequities between dominant and oppressive groups [Creswell, 2007]. Divisions of power among different settings are often characterized by various factors, such as language, gender, country of origin, race, culture, ability, social class, age, residence, sexual orientation, etc. Consequently, feminist researchers have produced multiple variations that interpret power dynamics based on one or more of these factors [Risman, 2004; Conrad, 2013]. During the 1960s-1990s, mass women have access to education, and an entire generation developed in the world. The women have thought about their bodies, their health, and their lives. At the same time, an anti-feminist activity has grown in society and downsizes the healthcare funding that increases the burden on women [Macdonald & Schreiber, 2001; Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 2001].

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the work of classical pragmatists and symbolic interactionists at the Chicago School of Sociology was male-dominated [Annells, 1996; Mills et al., 2006]. Mass movements against social injustices are incurred by women in the 1920s [Deegan & Hill, 1987]. It is very difficult to identify exactly when feminism commenced [Whelehan, 1995]. It is realized that feminism motivated the academy in the early 1970s [Messer-Davidow, 2002]. Feminism is not definitively a methodology; but it offers a lens that can be applied to many theoretical, methodological, and analytical strategies [Wuest, 1995; Conrad, 2013]. Since the mid-1990s feminist research in GT has flourished. The origins of feminism are difficult to pinpoint exactly because early work with feminist undertones continues to surface [Whelehan, 1995]. FGT demonstrates the epistemological connection between feminist inquiry and GT [Plummer & Young, 2010]. FGT is constructed based on four central feminist beliefs: i) respecting participants, ii) avoiding oppression, (c) providing useful findings, and (d) employing reflexivity [Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 2001; Clarke, 2005].

The feminist approach claims that feminist research, particularly in research regarding women and their experiences in the social world, can be better understood through a feminist approach [Wuest, 1995]. Adele E. Clarke has suggested that GT is implicitly feminist due to its roots in pragmatism and symbolic interaction, and also for its attention to variation and diversity [Clarke, 2005]. On the other hand,



(online) = ISSN 2285 – 3642

ISSN-L = 2285 – 3642

*Journal of Economic Development, Environment and People*

Volume 11, Issue 3, 2022

URL: <http://jedep.spiruharet.ro>

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Judith Wuest and Marilyn Merritt-Gray have recommended that GT is not necessarily implicitly feminist, but rather an explicit methodology [Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 2001].

The feminist methodology is the social realities of women that are dominated by men and that neglect consideration of the gendered nature of social life [Landman, 2006]. FGT tries to capture the diversity of women's experiences, explores the gendered manifestation of power, and interrogates the operation of gender norms. It is a widely used method in women's health research [Wuest et al., 2002]. It is extensively used in women's health research. Many GT researchers restrict themselves to women's subjective experiences as a source of data for theory development [Benoliel, 2001]. Feminist research is grounded in the concept that knowledge is generated through social exchange. Feminism has been shaped through social, historical, cultural, political, and linguistic forces [Canning, 1997]. Women are caregivers of a family. Hence, they not only see their own health but also see the health of their children and partners [Armstrong, 1996].

## **8. Research in Women's Health**

Chronic diseases prevalent among women are coronary heart disease, cancer, diabetes, AIDS, etc. Women's health depends on women of color, women with disabilities, lesbian and bisexual women, older women, etc. [Ruzek et al., 1997]. Feminist research methods reveal that women's health is neglected worldwide. Consequently, both women's health and feminist methods need to discuss, theorize, and problematize. More research is necessary for the area of women's caring work [Olesen et al., 1997]. To change women's lives gender inequalities need to be understood as extending beyond gender to include those based on class, race, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, disability, age, and place of residence [Ruzek et al., 1997].

In the field of women's health, researchers, practitioners, and policymakers have a common goal to improve the quality of life of women. The curative policy has shifted to prevention and health promotion. Social determinants of health depend on income, employment, environment, education, working conditions, health services, and social support [Wuest et al., 2002]. The seven most common key research areas of women's healthcare are; reproductive health, diseases more common in women than in men, leading causes of death among women, gender influences on health risk, societal influences on women's health, violence against women, and women and healthcare policy [Chesney & Ozer, 1995]. Triangular attempts from researchers, practitioners, and policymakers have a common goal of the development of the quality of the life of females [Wuest et al., 2002].

A disease-free woman is not quite healthy; rather woman's health is beyond traditional science and epidemiology, and it depends on multiple social factors, such as education, employment, working conditions, income, environment, health services, social support, etc. [Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Wuest et al., 2002].

## **9. Conclusion**

In the study, we have observed that feminist theory can easily be augmented the GT research and can serve society more than any researcher of other variants of GT. Because, the majority of the women in the world, especially in developing and non-developed countries, are vulnerable, researches on feminist principles will help them effectively. Feminist research is grounded in the experience of women that indicates the role of emotions and gendered characterization.



(online) = ISSN 2285 – 3642

ISSN-L = 2285 – 3642

*Journal of Economic Development, Environment and People*

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URL: <http://jedep.spiruharet.ro>

e-mail: [office\\_jedep@spiruharet.ro](mailto:office_jedep@spiruharet.ro)

Feminist grounded theory is a widely used approach in women's health research. We believe that using feminist theory to augment GT when carrying out research with vulnerable groups of women disrupts the androcentric roots of GT. Thus, we recommend that nurse researchers draw on feminist principles to guide their use of GT for better serving the interests of women by surfacing issues of gender and power that influence the health experience.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is no universal agreement concerning whether feminist research is a postpositivist or constructivist approach; research that are beneficial for women, researchers will modify and adapt them cordially. A feminist research perspective is necessary for qualitative approaches to enrich the social science research areas. In this study, we have tried to develop social change for global gender inequalities, remove women's subordination, and ending of social inequality in all forms.

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(online) = ISSN 2285 – 3642

ISSN-L = 2285 – 3642

*Journal of Economic Development, Environment and People*

Volume 11, Issue 3, 2022

URL: <http://jedep.spiruharet.ro>

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(online) = ISSN 2285 – 3642

ISSN-L = 2285 – 3642

*Journal of Economic Development, Environment and People*

Volume 11, Issue 3, 2022

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(online) = ISSN 2285 – 3642

ISSN-L = 2285 – 3642

*Journal of Economic Development, Environment and People*

Volume 11, Issue 3, 2022

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(online) = ISSN 2285 – 3642

ISSN-L = 2285 – 3642

*Journal of Economic Development, Environment and People*

Volume 11, Issue 3, 2022

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(online) = ISSN 2285 – 3642

ISSN-L = 2285 – 3642

*Journal of Economic Development, Environment and People*

Volume 11, Issue 3, 2022

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