

Manuscript ID:
IJEBAMPSR-2026-030403

Volume: 3

Issue: 4

Month: August

Year: 2026

E-ISSN: 3065-9140

A Feminist Analysis of Mental Healthcare for Indian Women

Dr. R. Vani¹, Dr. Arpana D², Nethra R³

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Management St. Joseph's College of Engineering, Chennai, Tamil Nadu

²Professor, Department of Management Studies St. Anthony's College, Bengaluru, Karnataka

³Assistant Professor, Department of Management St. Francis College, Bengaluru, Karnataka

Abstract

Feminism has different literary definition and some of them are based on ideology or philosophical. Though "the state of being female" is the definition offered to the word feminism, it is also understood as the way of demanding the rights of the women and gender equality". The state of mental wellbeing among women is a challenging status in Indian context, due to the myths and gender dominance that prevails from ancient times. Hence, the risk of mental illness is highly common among majority of the women population in India. The primary objective of the paper is to understand the necessity of Feminist Psychology in the Society. This paper also tries to address the causes for mental illness among women and tries to speak about the non-familiar concept known as feminist therapy that is associated with the Mental Health of the Women.

Keywords: Feminism, Feminist Therapy, Indian Women, Mental Health

Submitted: 07 July 2026

Revised: 12 July 2026

Accepted: 10 Aug. 2026

Published: 31 Aug. 2026

Address for correspondence:

Dr. Arpana D
Professor, Department of
Management Studies
St. Anthony's College, Bengaluru,
Karnataka
Email: drarpana2019@gmail.com

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.22336801

DOI Link:
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22336801>



Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0):

This is an open access journal, and articles are distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License, which allows others to remix, tweak, and build upon the work noncommercially, as long as appropriate credit is given and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms.

Introduction

Desiderato Otells (1976)¹ defined the term psychology, as the exploration of the behavioural activities of human and animals and the physical outcomes of those behaviours. Supporting the definition, Clifford T. Morgan et. al (1993)² defined psychology as the solution for issues and constraint in the human behaviour and they also mentioned it as a branch of science that deals with the behaviour of human and animals. According to Saundra K. Ciccarelli (2008)³, psychology deals with the concepts that combines mental and behavioural approaches, which includes the actions and reactions like regular physical activities and social behavioural activities. The concept of feminism to be included in psychology emerged during 1970s and feminists made the efforts to coin feminist psychology as a term. Mary Parlee, a feminist writer first mentioned the need for adding the gender-based behaviour as a branch of psychology (Abigail Stewart, Andrea L. Dottily, 2006)⁴. Jeanne Marecek (1995)⁵, a psychologist in 1970s have shared the experience of analysing women studies and how it relates to feminist psychology. The author has stated that feminists who were also psychologists perceived that the women studies and their psychological behaviour were considered to a marginalized concept and even the feminists who were not psychologists also understood that the psychology has not afforded more space for women studies. Lorraine Radtke (2017)⁶ also highlighted the point that feminist psychology has not attained its deserving place in the traditional psychological theories that has been emerged in North American Region. Vande Kemp (1999)⁷ highlighted the statements of Bernstein & Russo, (1994)⁸ stating the need for creating a new era in psychology and highly projects women studies and psychology which were already researched and analysed by the feminists and other psychologists. Vande Kemp (1990)⁹ in his previous works also mentioned that the feminist psychology also supported in creating concepts like in psychology like psychoneuroimmunology that specifically concentrates on finding solutions to issues like AIDS, Health, Sanitation etc. Based on the understanding and the experiences gained by the feminists towards psychological behaviours and moral attributes, the term feminist moral psychology has been termed¹⁰. The works and contribution towards the feminist psychology and its significance based its outcomes were classified into different layers.

How to Cite this Article:

R. Vani, Arpana D, & Nethra R. (2026). A Feminist Analysis of Mental Healthcare for Indian Women. International Journal of Economic, Business, Accounting, Agriculture and Management Towards Paradigm Shift in Research, 3(4), 15–18. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22336801>

The first layer is highly focusing on emotional attributes and the second later deals with the domination and the voices of the feminine, affected by such dominations. The final layer is the responsibility of the feminists who worked on the concept and how they put efforts to take it towards further progressions.

Objectives of the Study

- 1) To understand the necessity of Feminist Therapy in the Society
- 2) To know the scenario of Mental Health issues among Women in India

Feminist Therapy

Feminist therapy is the concept that focuses on women empowerment and the way to overcome the issues faced by them in different circumstances in the social environment. The concept has been derived as the result of understanding the psychological issues faced by the women due to the hurdles and other setbacks in their personal growth and empowerment¹¹. It condemned that the traditional methods in the psychological treatment were not specific to the issues of women and this scenario had changed after the psychotherapists started questioning the traditional methods (Anne L. Israeli & Darcy A. Santor, 2000)¹². Sarah E. Conlin (2017)¹³ cited the statements of Enns, C. Z. (2012)¹⁴ mentioning that the main objective of feminist therapy is to empower the women and it could be achieved through enriching their interpersonal characteristics for being an active agent in the society. Rachael Crowder (2016)¹⁵ stated that the preliminary purpose of the feminist therapy to create an awareness to the women clients on feminism and to make them understand the role of gender dominance and discrimination in society, which plays a major role in creating issues related to women. Moreover, feminist therapy is a two-way process by which both the client and the therapist are mutually benefitted through understanding the way of transforming themselves to be empowered in the society and in their personal life (Brown, L. S., 2006)¹⁶. Laura S. Brown (2007)¹⁷ described the essence of feminist therapy is power of the within i.e., understanding the value of self. Stephanie L. Budge (2018)¹⁸ also stated in their work that feminist therapy is focusing on power and identifying the oppression towards the women empowerment. The feminist therapy also creates an optimistic relationship among the therapists and the clients (Worell, J., & Remer, P., 2002)¹⁹. Overall, the basic concept of feminist therapy itself insists on principles of egalitarian, through which it tries to console that the gender equity is the prime theme of feminist therapy (Laura S. Brown, 1991)²⁰.

Feminism & Mental Health in Indian Perception

The hierarchy system that is highly influential in Indian families is against the rise of feminist thoughts and theories in Indian Context. The dominance of men influences the women members in the family related to decision to work, marriage, education etc (Komal Verma (2014)²¹. The term feminist politics becomes familiar after the Independence and played a substantial role in bring the oppressions against the rise of women in several streams. The arguments from the fundamentalists are that the feminist concepts are against the traditions and the influence of feminism would affect the values and norms of Indian families (Neeta Sharma, 2018)²². Feminism made its impact in the second era ie. Post - independence era in the Indian History. The pre – independence era is comparatively slower in the growth than the post – independence. The three phases of feminism in India picture the rises of feminism thoughts in India. Moreover, the third phase after the Independence gave significant opportunities for the feminism growth in Indian Sub-Continent. The third phase speaks about the accommodation, crisis and the growth of feminism in India in detail (Rekha Pande, 2018)²³. Women in Indian mass media were projected as the commercial objects, marketing attractions, victims for sensational news etc. Such conditions are created due to the patriarchal influences and traces in almost all the departments and sectors in India (Himashree Patowary, 2014)²⁴.

In Indian Scenario, rural women were not much aware about the mental health issues and their remedial solution. Instead, they prefer non-professional practices that includes mystics, faith healers etc. Moreover, the details about the mental health awareness among women were not surveyed among the larger women population in India (Madhu Nagla, 2013)²⁵. Savita Malhotra and Ruchita Shah (2015)²⁶, elaborated the CMDs (Common Mental Diseases) prevailing among Indian Women which highly differs in the rate of occurrence from the Men. The symptoms would be too rigorous in women when depression and anxiety disorders are becoming continual among the women. The paper also reveals the fact that the symptoms and clinical features differ from men to women, where the women are affected more in terms of outcomes of disorders. There are no strong policies in the nation that makes a serious impact on women's physical and mental health (Thara & Patel, 2001)²⁷. When Psychiatrists conducted various research in India based on psychological issues, mental health, suicidal behavior etc, it is reported that the occurrence of somatoform disorders, anxiety and other Common Mental Diseases are comparatively high than in the cases of Men. It is also noted the persistent rate of

depression and other Common Mental Diseases is very high in Women. Such gender differences are the outcomes of domestic violence, social inequality, sexual violence etc Indira Sharma and Abhishek Pathak (2015)²⁸. Sunanda. G. T et.al (2016)²⁹ discussed the need for Mental Health Care and the barriers faced by women in addressing their biological risks towards the Mental Health. Women, in Indian Scenario are crucial caretakers of the family and such conditions lead them towards depression and anxiety. Epidemiological study proved that the Women mental health is worse since they undergo discrimination and alienation within their family environment itself. Women mental health cannot be considered as a disease, as it is socio political in nature, it is an ethical issue to be addressed with immense consideration. Tabassum, M. (2019)³⁰ highlighted the research work of Maselko & Patel (2008)³¹ on Chronic Mental Disease, through the references from suicidal behaviour of women in Indian Scenario. Domestic violence, isolation, disturbed interpersonal relationship resulting in Chronic Mental Disease pressurizes the affected women for suicidal attempts. Varma & Gupta (2020)³² speaks about the women's self-concept, thereby stating that traditional system that restricts women's self has been slowly degrading due to social and cultural changes. The authors represented the observations of many studies thereby concluding that the conflicts with in-laws, abusing partner, insufficient hold in childcare by the family members are all the reasons for the mental illness among women in Indian Society.

Conclusion

When there are concerns towards gender equality throughout the globe, it becomes mandate to include women mental health as priority subject to be discussed. The traditional culture has a vigorous impact on the women's mental illness in Indian context. Since gender becomes the crucial determinant for mental health and mental disorder, the psychological factors that liberate gender dominance must be identified and treated to overcome the Women's mental illness like Common Mental Diseases and Chronic Mental Diseases. When psychosocial factors are experienced with a negative environment, women face challenges in empowering themselves. It should be always understood by the entire society that the women should not be treated as "in relation" perception, but to be considered as "Independent Identity" (Varma & Gupta, 2020)³². Hence, more attempts must be carried out to ensure the mental wellbeing of the Women through enacting laws, empowering through awareness programmes etc. The ideology of feminism must be educated in a way by which, the ideology must be a

common principle among every individual in the nation.

Acknowledgement

The author sincerely acknowledges the support and guidance received from the institution, colleagues, and all those who contributed to the successful completion of this research work. Special thanks are extended to the participants and individuals who provided valuable assistance, information, and encouragement throughout the study.

Financial support and sponsorship

Nil.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References

1. Clifford T. Morgan et.al (1993), "Introduction to Psychology", Mc Graw Hill Education, ISBN – 13: 978-0-07-462250-6
2. Desiderato Otells, Howieson, D.B & Jackson. J.H, (1976), "Investigating Behaviour – Principles of Psychology", New York: Harper & Row
3. Saundra K. Ciccarelli, Glenn. E. Meyer (2008), "Psychology" South Asian Edition, Pearson, ISBN: 978-81-317-1387-7
4. Abigail Stewart, Andrea L. Dottolo (2006), "Feminist Psychology", Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 2006, Vol. 31, No. 2
5. Jeanne Marecek. (1995). "Psychology And Feminism: Can This Relationship Be Saved?". Feminisms In the Academy. 101-134
6. H Lorraine Radtke (2017), " Feminist theory in Feminism & Psychology [Part I]: Dealing with differences and negotiating the biological", Feminism & Psychology 2017, Vol. 27(3) 357–377, DOI: 10.1177/0959353517714594
7. Vande Kemp, Hendrika & Anderson, Tamara. (1999). Humanistic Psychology and Feminist Psychology, Humanistic and Transpersonal Psychology
8. Bernstein, M & Russo, (1994), "The History of Psychology Revisited: Or upwith our fore mothers. American Psychologists, 29, 130-134
9. Vande Kemp.H (1990), "Character armor or the armor of faith?" Reflection on Psychologies of sufferings. Journal of Psychology and Christianity
10. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-moralpsych/>
11. <https://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/theory-and-techniques-of-feminist-therapy/>
12. Anne L. Israeli & Darcy A. Santor (2000), "Reviewing effective components of feminist therapy", Counselling Psychology Quarterly, Vol. 13, No. 3, 2000, pp. 233–247

13. Sarah E. Conlin (2017), "Feminist therapy: A brief integrative review of theory, empirical support, and call for new directions", *Women's Studies International Forum* 62, 2017, 78-82
14. Enns, C. Z. (2012). *Feminist approaches to counseling. The Oxford handbook of counseling psychology* (pp. 434–459). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
15. Rachael Crowder PhD, RSW (2016) Mindfulness based feminist therapy: The intermingling edges of self-compassion and social justice, *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought*, 35:1-2, 24-40, DOI: 10.1080/15426432.2015.1080605
16. Brown, L. S. (2006). Still subversive after all these years: The relevance of feminist therapy in the age of evidence-based practice. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 30, 15–24.
17. Laura S. Brown and Tracy C. Bryan (2007), "Feminist Therapy with People Who Self-InFLICT Violence", *Journal of Clinical Psychology: In Session*, Vol. 63(11), 1121–1133 (2007)
18. Stephanie L. Budge and Bonnie Moradi (2018), "Attending to gender in psychotherapy: Understanding and incorporating systems of power", *J. Clin. Psychol.* 2018; 74:2014–2027, DOI: 10.1002/jclp.22686
19. Worell, J., & Remer, P. (2002), "Feminist perspectives in therapy: Empowering diverse women", John Wiley & Sons
20. Laura S. Brown (1991), "Ethical Issues in Feminist Therapy", *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 15 (1991), 323-336. Printed in the United States of America
21. Komal Verma (2014), "Feminism in India- A Perspective ", *International Research Journal of Management Sociology & Humanity*, Volume 5 Issue 1, Pg No 435 -440
22. Neeta Sharma (2018), "Feminism in India", *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews*, December 2018, Volume 5, Issue 4, ISSN 2349-5138
23. Rekha Pande (2018), "The History of Feminism and Doing Gender in India", *Special Section - Revista Estudos Feministas*. 26 (3)
24. Himashree Patowary (2014), "Portrayal of Women in Indian Mass Media: An Investigation", *Journal of Education & Social Policy*, Vol. 1 No. 1; June 2014
25. Madhu Nagla (2013), "Gender and Health", Rawat Publication, ISBN 978-81-316-0578-3
26. Savita Malhotra, Ruchita Shah (2015), "Women and mental health in India: An overview", *Indian journal of psychiatry*, 57. S205-11. 10.4103/0019-5545.161479
27. Thara R, Patel V. (2001), "Women's mental health: A public health concern", *Regional Health Forum- WHO South-East Asia Region*, Vol. 5, World Health Organization; 2001.Pg. 24-34.
28. Indira Sharma and Abhishek Pathak (2015), "Women mental health in India", *Indian J Psychiatry* 57 (Supplement 2), DOI: 10.4103/0019-5545.161478
29. Sunanda. G. T et.al (2016), "Women: Mental Health Care Needs", *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, Volume 3, Issue 4, No. 68, DIP: 18.01.206/20160304, ISSN 2348-5396 (e) | ISSN: 2349-3429 (p)
30. Tabassum, M. (2019), "Women's Mental Health: Indian Perspective", *Multilingual Academic Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, 7(1), 119–127
31. Maselko, J., & Patel, V. (2008), "Why women attempt suicide? The role of mental health and social disadvantage in a community. Cohort study in India", *Journal of Epidemiological Community Health*. 62: 817 – 22. NCS
32. Varma. R & Gupta M (2020), "Self Construal and Mental Health of Women in India", *International Journal of Academic Research in Psychology*, 7(1), 17–28.