

Exploring How Industrial Relations Theories Either Overlook or Can Better Integrate Gender Dynamics

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Abstract: This work is a critical review of the traditional industrial relations (IR) theories that have been sidelining the gender dynamics aspect of the labour systems for a long time. The major class conflict and institutional arrangements are at the heart of the gender, powered relations that through these changes in the work, representation, and labour policies, typical IR frameworks, like unitarism, pluralism and Marxism, are inclined to focus solely on these aspects thereby ignoring the ways in which gendered power relations are affecting work, representation, and labour policies (Acker, 1990; Rubery & Fagan, 1995). This paper looks at how this neglect changes the concepts of workforce participation, union activity, and employment outcomes. The paper layers feminist institutionalism and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989; Mackay et al., 2010) to present gender, aware methods that reconstruct labor as a mix of female and male, dominated, part, time, and full, time jobs. It also avows the rethinking of core IR ideas such as "worker", "collective action" and "labour market" along with the use of gender, sensitive research tools as a means to arrive at fair and more inclusive studies. The document ends its argument by proposing a complete overhaul of IR theory as a way of achieving a more nuanced, gendered perspective of modern day labor relations.

Keywords: Industrial relations, gender dynamics, feminist theory, intersectionality, labour market, union representation.

1. Introduction

Industrial relations (IR) theories have always been one of the major tools that help to understand the relationships between employers, employees, trade unions, and the state. These frameworks have been concentrating on such problems as collective bargaining, workplace conflict, labour law, and the institutional regulation of employment (Blyton & Turnbull, 2004). Nevertheless, more and more feminist scholars assert that the dominant paradigm of IR gets rid of gender issues by taking a gender, neutral position, which leads to the perpetuation of male, dominated work and labor perspectives (Acker, 1990; Ledwith, 2012). They argue that mainstream IR theory usually leaves out or sidelines gender as a major theme when it comes to employment relations.

The omission of gender as one of the axes of power is very significant when taken in context with the fact that modern day labour markets have been influenced by the gendered divisions of labour, care responsibilities, and unequal access to resources and representation (Rubery & Fagan, 1995). For instance, women are crowded in part, time, informal, and precarious positions more than men. These are the sectors that have traditionally been neglected in IR literature (Munro, 2001). Besides that, the central concepts in IR, like "conflict," "worker," and "voice," are usually understood in terms of men's experiences of stable, full, time employment, thereby they completely miss the point of a diverse and segmented workforce (Colgan & Ledwith, 2002).

One of the goals of this paper is to reconsider and analyze the ways in which IR theories have sidelined gender and to find out how these theories could be modified or extended to better explain gendered power relations. The paper through the use of feminist, intersectional, and institutionalist perspectives intends to be a catalyst in the progression of industrial relations models that are more diverse and versatile enough to tackle the intricacies of present, day work and employment.

2. How and Where Gender Dynamics Are Overlooked

Even though it is well known that gender has a very important role in the labour markets and employment relationships, the classical industrial relations (IR) treatment still largely ignores the gendered and disparities in the treatment of the employees. The main reason for this omission lies in the difference between theory, practice, and analysis. As a consequence, these theoretical frameworks provide only partial accounts of the phenomena of work, power, and representation.

2.1. Exclusion of Unpaid and Reproductive Labour

The main focus of traditional industrial relations (IR) frameworks is on the formal, paid side of the market, while the unpaid domestic and caregiving sectors are largely neglected, areas that are the result of gender division of labor with women being the major contributors (Fraser, 1994). The invisibility of women's work means that the limitations of women's work in the labor market caused by the need for childcare or eldercare are seldom accounted for in labor relations studies (Folbre, 2001). Accordingly, the separation between "productive" and "reproductive" labor is reaffirmed, with the latter acting as a "no, go" zone for IR theory.

2.2. Gendered Labour Market Segmentation

One of the main criticisms of the industrial relations (IR) theoretical framework is that it fails to consider the extent of gender, based market segmentation. Women constitute the majority of those who are concentrated in low, paid, part, time, and insecure jobs, as well as in the informal sector, especially in such areas as care, cleaning, and retail, which are, on the whole, male, dominated industries that have fallen outside the scope of the IR scholars' traditional studies (Rubery & Fagan, 1995). These occurrences are the result of the perpetuation of social norms that dictate "proper" jobs for both men and women, yet the different genders are rarely questioned regarding the logic behind the separation of the professions in the IR theories (Charles & Grusky, 2004).

2.3. Assumption of Full, Time, Linear Employment

Several industrial relations (IR) models often hinge on the idea of a full, time, continuous work history, a pattern that seems to reflect men's employment better (Crompton, 1999). Women's work histories, on the other hand, are generally marked by part, time employment, taking time off for career and having an irregular career path mainly due to caregiving (Ginn et al., 2001). These facts are often silent in the prevalent discourse, resulting in a theoretical bias that silences women's experiences.

2.4. Narrow Conceptions of Worker Voice and Representation

Conventionally, the focus has been on official methods of worker voice, e.g., trade unions and collective bargaining. However, the emphasis tends to overshadow the non, formal and different voices of women who challenge the existing order, bargain for better working conditions, or take collective action (Ledwith & Colgan, 2002). On top of that, unions themselves have been patriarchal in their nature and structure, thereby inhibiting women's access to leadership and the marginalization of issues like sexual harassment, work, life balance, and flexible working arrangements (Kirton & Healy, 2013).

2.5. Lack of Intersectional Analysis

The majority of traditional international relations (IR) theories focus chiefly on class as the main source of inequality and quite frequently they disregard other intersecting areas of social issues like gender, race, and migration (Crenshaw, 1989; McBride et al., 2015). Such a limited perspective not only diminishes the extent to which these IR models can unveil the confluence of different identities but also uncomfortably positions the discrimination or seclusion that employees and labor organizations experience in those workplaces.

2.6. Embedded Male Norms in IR Concepts

Firstly, the basic terms in international relationships, such as "worker," "employer," "conflict," and "employment" have been, quite often, implicitly put together around the idea of the typical male (Acker, 1990). One illustration would be the norms set up for working hours, geographical mobility, and dedication to work, which indirectly assume that employees are not responsible for the care of others. Thus, they put those who have care needs (mostly women) at a double disadvantage, first, they are marginalized in the working environment, and second, they lack the means to adjust with the existing policies (Lewis, 1997). As a result, these assumptions not only influence the content of both policies and theoretical models, but they also deeply, rooted characterize employment from a male, centric perspective.

2.7. Underrepresentation in Empirical Studies

Empirical research in industrial relations (IR) has generally concentrated on areas such as the factory and the transport industries, which are unionized and dominated by men, while ignoring the sectors that have a high number of female workers (Munro, 2001). Such an empirical bias has resulted in the creation of the theory which only considers the lifestyles of a small proportion of the workforce. Besides, these studies frequently do not collect sex, disaggregated data or conduct gender differences analysis as a part of their systematic research.

2.8. The Overlooking of Gender Issues in International Relations (IR) Scholarship

Gender, related topics are often viewed in the academic area of international relations (IR) as a small area of interest or an insignificant issue, leading to the idea that gender is not a central issue in IR (Ledwith, 2012). Those researchers who deal with gender issues are at times pushed to the periphery, and their work is separated rather than combined with the rest of the theoretical or policy discussions. Such a culture within the discipline is a major factor in the ongoing dominance of gender, blind perspectives in the mainstream IR literature.

2.9. Neglect of Gendered Power Relations

Power is usually a major focus in class struggles or the relationship between employers and employees in international relations (IR) theories, but the latter rarely take into account how gendered power works inside and outside the businesses (McDowell, 1997). Among such issues are those of sexual harassment, abuse of women because of their gender, and unofficial power structures based on patriarchal standards, coexisting in workplaces that are still mostly invisible to traditional IR models.

2.10. Weak Integration of Family and Social Policy

In general, close to the opposite, IR theories are seen treating the issue of family responsibilities and social reproduction as completely separate from the field of labour relations, however, these have a very strong influence on the labour supply, bargaining power, and workplace participation (Pascall & Lewis, 2004). The non, integration of family policies like the provision of childcare or parental leaves in the IR framework is one of the reasons why they cannot fully account for the gendered employment experiences.

3. How and Where Gender Dynamics Are Overlooked

Besides that gender is the main factor that determines how labor markets operate and thus, how people perceive their work, the theory of industrial relations (IR) has for a very long time been ignoring the influence of gender on these matters. The major part of the classical IR research has been carried out under the premise of gender, blind assumptions which have deepened male, dominated norms and have not at all acknowledged the extent to which women and other socially excluded categories of workers living their lives have been taken into account in the statistics of the labor market.

One of the biggest areas that the scholars have left unnoticed is the relationship of unpaid labor with industrial relations. In a traditional way, IR only pays attention to paid and formal employment, leaving out domestic work and caregiving, activities that are done mostly by women. Without characterizing this vital reproductive labor, the theory of IR

disregards how women's responsibility for care affects their possibilities of participation in the formal economy as well as their bargaining power and choice of work (Fraser, 1994; Folbre, 2001).

One more shortcoming is the way in which gender segregation in labor markets is approached. The women, who are usually put together in part, time, poorly paid, and unstable jobs, especially in feminized sectors such as care, retail, and education. The working categories that are employed in such lines of business as care, retail, and education are usually out of the picture in the most common IR analyses, and these have traditionally focused on the unionized, male, dominated sectors like manufacturing and construction (Rubery & Fagan, 1995). This sharp emphasis reinvigorates the invisibility of the systemic inequalities that are deeply entrenched in "women's work".

Besides that, the theory of IR still majorly pictures a straight, full, time, and continuous career as the standard, the experience which is more usual for men. The employment tracks of women characterized by stoppages, part, time works, or informal deals because of caregiving are seen as abnormal or not present at all in these models (Crompton, 1999; Ginn et al., 2001). Such a thing contributes to the concept of the theory that is still far from being neutral in terms of workers who do not match the traditional male breadwinner model.

Moreover, the topic of employee voice in IR has usually been centered on formal collective bargaining and trade union representation. Although these organizational forms are essential, they frequently do not depict how women, primarily those in shaky jobs, either come together, raise their voices for change, or feel empowered in their work environment. It is well documented that traditional unions have not always concentrated enough on gender, specific issues like sexual harassment, flexible working and work, life balance, and at the same time, women are still insufficiently represented in union leadership (Kirton & Healy, 2013; Ledwith & Colgan, 2002).

Besides, limited treatment of intersectionality is another example of oversight. While gender has been discussed as an issue in IR, these concerns have been predominantly viewed through the lens of class, with balkanized traditional IR theories overlooking how gender interconnects with race, ethnicity, migration status, and disability to create novel forms of oppression within the labour system (Crenshaw, 1989; McBride et al., 2015). This single, axis approach stunts the ability of IR to see how different inequalities get intertwined in the workplace.

IR discourse and associated categories also reflect the very same male, chauvinistic assumptions that underlie the rest of society. The meaning of words such as "worker," "employer," and "conflict" are strongly influenced by historical examples of full, time availability, geographic mobility, and independence from caregiving responsibilities, characteristics going back to the times work and life were separated and men were the breadwinners (Acker, 1990; Lewis, 1997). These background standards not only mould the area of research and policy, but also those who are cast unfairly by the standards of life and work which are different from those norms.

On the ground also, the discipline has been slow in its transition. The majority of current IR studies have heavily focused on industries where men dominate and have scarcely looked into work settings with female majorities. In cases where research includes women, their experiences are usually regarded as marginal or atypical, rather than as a reflection of employment system dynamics (Munro, 2001).

Moreover, in IR academia, gender, related research is very often neglected and not really considered as an independent concern but as a subfield. The sidelining of this theme handicaps theoretical creativity as well as the engagement of feminist perspectives with the mainstream IR debate (Ledwith, 2012). In the absence of this fusion, IR theory remains to be only half done and still quite off from the labor scene of today.

Besides, traditional IR has persistently refused to acknowledge how the concept of gendered power operates both in the immediate surroundings of formal employment and outside of it. Problems like sexual harassment, informal workplace hierarchies, and even more, the wider society norms that influence workplace dynamics, are typically neglected in IR research (McDowell, 1997). On the other hand, there is only a small overlap between the policy areas of family life, parental leave, affordable childcare, elderly care, and employment relations, although research shows that people, especially women, changing their work stamina directly, affects those policies (Pascall & Lewis, 2004).

By themselves, these holes in the fabric of IR as a discipline open the door for gender inequalities to be perpetuated by the very same IR theory which fails to bring the gender issue squarely into the center of its realm. To come to terms with these faults requires not only reckoning with the gendered aspects of existing frameworks but going the whole reel and reconsidering the assumptions that underpin them.

4. Empirical Illustrations of the Oversight

Industrial relations (IR) theory's failure to sensitize gender issues is not merely theoretical intricacies but can also be found beyond the boundaries of the labor markets and different industries. Research keeps reasserting that while the gendered nature of work, representation, and inequality constitute the women issue in the labor movement, these are either downplayed or even completely ignored in both academic and workplace policy dialogues.

A particularly illustrative example is the care and service sectors, from which a pool of female workers largely draws. Jobs related to these spheres, e.g., nursing, childcare, aged care, and hospitality, are, by and large, low paid and often accompanied by unstable working hours and little union support besides a high emotional burden on participants (England, Budig & Folbre, 2002). Though the economic and social importance of these sectors has been continuously growing, and even more so during crises such as that caused by COVID, 19, they have barely been acknowledged by the mainstream IR literature, which still concentrates on 'classic' male, dominated industries like manufacturing and transport (Grimshaw & Rubery, 2007).

Moreover, research on trade unions in different countries has pointed out how gender issues are usually left out of union programs. Even in the case of large female membership, women are still not adequately represented in leadership roles. Simultaneously, topics such as maternity rights, pay equity, sexual harassment, and work, life balance are usually presented as "special interests" rather than being at the forefront of the labour movement's general concerns (Kirton & Healy, 2013). In particular, studies of UK and European trade unions have indicated that while formal equality strategies might be in place, practical implementation often comes short and internal union cultures might still reflect patriarchal dynamics (Ledwith, 2012).

Another point is about immigrant women workers, who show us another area that IR theory fails to see. A considerable number of them are engaged in domestic service, agriculture, or informal economies where there are little or no employment protections. These women are typically the targets of exploitation that is not only class, based but also intersect with gender, race, and immigration status (Anderson, 2000). Besides, the traditional IR frameworks have difficulties to encompass their stories since they are away from the IR theories' mostly discussed formal employment structures.

Besides this, the research on part, time and temporary workers shows the real life side of the issue that these jobs are mostly held by women and an apparent disparity between IR theory and the workers' lives. The workers seldom if ever get the kind of collective bargaining or union protection that is usually the case in modern economies. Regular IR models that primarily concentrate on full, time and stable employment labor will hardly be able to figure out or support such made, up groups (Fudge & Owens, 2006).

The findings from cross, national comparisons of different countries are the same. For example, in Nordic countries, which combine social democratic models and have strong union traditions, gender equality has been better implemented through both workplace practice and union representation. Nevertheless, even in these cases, scholars have recognized that gender inclusion is often merely superficial unless accompanied by deeper institutional reforms and an earnest commitment to intersectional analysis (Borchorst & Siim, 2008).

These empirical examples point out that the issue of gender and representation is not marginal, but central in the understanding of labor market functions. By going on to overlook these issues, IR theory will not only lose its significance but also will be unable to provide complete accounts of the inequalities embedded in the contemporary employment systems. The testimonies leave no doubt that there is a great need for the theoretical frameworks that acknowledge and engage with the diverse realities of workers across gendered and intersecting lines of identity.

5. How IR Theories Can Better Integrate Gender Dynamics

To address the traditional critique about IR theories' inadequacy in handling gender, scholars, and practitioners might want to stop merely adding on, the, fly solutions to existing frameworks, where gender is just another variable, and instead aim at a significant reorganization of theoretical frameworks. This means changing the whole picture of the way gender interacts with work and different organizational cultures, besides just including it as the main topic for analysis.

5.1. Reconceptualizing the 'Worker'

The first step should be to disavow the portrayal of the "worker" in industrial relations as a gender, neutral character, which is the basis for most IR theory. The standard worker, according to the tradition, has generally been a full, time, male breadwinner who is detached from caregiving and is well entrenched in the formal employment sector (Crompton, 1999). Consequently, to be more inclusive, working terms should be diversified along gender lines especially in cases of women and other less privileged groups. In this regard, part, time, informal, unpaid, and care work should not only be recognized but also treated as the main source of labor rather than as mere peripheral or secondary activities (Fraser, 1994; Lewis, 1997).

5.2. Incorporating Feminist and Intersectional Frameworks

One of the best ways to reshape the IR theory could be the adoption of the feminist point of view, particularly the one that is intersectional. The concept of intersectionality, once Crenshaw (1989) came up with it, says that people who experience all kinds of oppressions simultaneously (race, gender, class, and migration status) have different ways of coming to grips with work. By applying this perspective, the traditional class focus can be practically left behind, and IR can start to comprehend the intricate ways in which power manifests itself in work situations as well as in labor markets (McBride et al., 2015; Acker, 2006).

5.3. Expanding the Concept of Power and Conflict

IR theory must extend its comprehension of power in the workplace to encompass beyond employer, employee conflict of a formal nature. The gendered power dynamics that are mentioned have been portrayed as sexual harassment, informal hierarchies, and discrimination, though they are usually not a part of formal bargaining frameworks, they affect worker agency and well, being to a great extent (McDowell, 1997). When such aspects are recognized, it means that new and different ideas of resistance, negotiation, and conflict had to be created to cover those areas that go beyond the unionized workplace and collective bargaining model.

5.4. Restructuring Analytical Categories

Concepts like "voice, " "representation, " and "solidarity" which are central to IR need to be revisited from the perspective of gendered realities. In the past, worker voice has basically been identified with formal mechanisms such as trade unions, but the truth is that in many cases women might have gained voice through informal or community, based organizing which is prevalent especially where union presence is minimal (Healy et al., 2004). Therefore, gender, sensitive methodology cannot help but broaden the concept of worker agency and representation in order to reflect the new realities.

5.5. Addressing Reproductive Labour and Work, Life Integration

A gender, aware social science theory including such aspects as gender and global politics must focus on the role of social reproduction, which are the processes related to caregiving, child, rearing, and the maintenance of households. These activities are the lifeblood of the labor market yet are unhappy with the way they are constantly depicted as being outside the sphere of employment relations. By incorporating reproductive labor into IS research, the authors make visible the structural limitations that restrict women's work and power at the negotiation table (Folbre, 2001; Pascall & Lewis, 2004).

5.6. Embedding Gender into Institutional Analysis

Basically, Sex issues in the IR area should not be handled as one of the controlled variables, but rather as a fundamental feature of institutions themselves. Feminist institutionalism is helpful in shaping the synthesis of the various actors' prevailing institutional rules, norms, and routines that are not only gendered in design but also outcome (Mackay et al., 2010). As a result, IR scholars who understand the connections between traditional and non, traditional institutional practices and the bias issues will be in a better position to detect the stumbling blocks of fair representation and labor rights.

5.7. Improving Empirical Methodologies

Innovations in empirical research on gendered labor experiences, international relations research must employ gender, inclusive techniques as well. This means collecting data that are separated by sex, carrying out qualitative investigations where women's voices are overemphasized, and creating studies which are sensitive to the disadvantages caused by the intersection of different social identity groups (Ledwith & Colgan, 2002). The change in methodology lessens the likelihood that the conditions of the marginalized workers are neglected in the labor market studies.

5.8. Policy Engagement and Practical Application

Another way of performance improvement for the IR paradigm, policy engagement, and legal frameworks also come into play. Hence, issues such as paid parental leave, flexible working hours, legislation on equal pay, and protection from harassment at the workplace must be at the very core of industrial relations rather than just be concerns of social policy. The said approach corresponds with IR as being closest to the daily lives of workers of diverse backgrounds, in particular, women, and thus furthering its involvement in the policy dispute (Rubery & Fagan, 1995).

6. Theoretical Frameworks that Offer Promise

Firstly, the scholars not only incorporate gender to the IR theories but also consider power relations and social inequality which is a concern that moves beyond one single aspect i.e. gender.

Such paradigms do not only emphasize the limits of traditional IR but also indicate the possibilities of rethinking the field more inclusive and more profoundly analytical ways.

6.1. Feminist Political Economy

The criticism of how capitalism deals with gender issues is better understood through the feminist political economy framework, especially when the issue concerns the interaction between productive (paid) and reproductive (unpaid) labour (Bakker, 2007; Bezanson & Luxton, 2006). Conventional IR theories stress mainly formal employment and wage labour, whereas this new perspective identifies care work, domestic responsibilities, and social reproduction as the backbone of economic life. Feminist political economy, by emphasizing the role of these invisible types of labour, contests the representation of the formal as the primary industrial relations site and suggests that IR scholars intending to broaden their focus might do so.

6.2. Feminist Institutionalism

According to feminist institutionalism, gender inequality is ingrained both in the formal structures (which include labour laws, unions, and workplace policies) and in the informal norms (such as gendered expectations and organizational cultures) (Mackay et al., 2010). It draws the attention of the academic community to the fact that the same institutions may signify limitations as well as opportunities, power is negotiated in them, and gender is always either reproduced or challenged. It advances from static forms of institutions with the added legitimacy of the fluid nature of interaction between actors, rules, and norms, thus offering a more dynamic gender perspective in industrial relations.

6.3. Intersectionality

The originator of the concept of intersectionality, which today is widely used in different disciplinary contexts and is recognized as one of the important feminist concepts, is the legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989). According to the principle of intersectionality, the systems of oppression such as racism, sexism, classism, and ableism do not merely co-exist but in fact intertwine and coexist in a way that the social identities of the oppressed, such as race, sex, class, or physical ability, are inseparable and cannot be understood in isolation from each other. With respect to IR, intersectionality helps, among other things, to unravel the complex pattern of inequalities, the reasons for gaps in representation, and why there is a lack of success in the general policy approach (McBride et al., 2015).

6.4. Gendered Organization Theory

According to Joan Acker (1990) gender organization theory, workplaces are constructed with gendered ideas at every step starting from job design and workplace hierarchies to norms and evaluation criteria, therefore, companies are not neutral in regard to gender. Acker explains that organizations are social constructs that are gendered in ways which are often that they advantage masculinity and disempower feminine modes of working and interacting. By employing this theory to industrial relations research, the scholars gain an insight as to how the issue of gender is deeply rooted into the daily functioning of labour institutions and they can also locate positions where structural change can be brought about.

6.5. Capabilities Approach

The Capabilities approach which is majorly linked to Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum aims at what people can do and be i.e. their abilities rather than focusing only on results like money or job title. Regarding gender and work, this viewpoint leads one to consider the chances and the rights that people have to take the lead role in the job market in a meaningful way (Nussbaum, 2003.). This concept/model is compatible with feminist criticisms that stress the value of alternative explanations such as choice, agency and well, being, rather than simplified economic metrics, hence providing a more comprehensive base in the discussion of fairness and equality in industrial relations.

6.6. Social Reproduction Theory

Social reproduction theory is a concept that is deeply entrenched in the Marxist and feminist ideologies and it puts emphasis on the idea that the process of life continuation, taking care of the young and the old, providing education, and emotional labour, has to be the basis of the capitalist economy (Bhattacharya, 2017). The issue of traditional IR is that it has these domains largely excluded; however, what Social reproduction Theory argues is that they are the core of the understanding of labor markets, power relations, and workers' well, being. Thus, it obliges the state, capital, and academics to rethink how the first two along with households are intertwined in keeping the labor force alive and how this load is unequally distributed between men and women with the latter bearing most of it.

6.7. Critical Masculinity Studies

One more outstanding example of the novel frameworks relevant to industrial relations is that of the critical masculinity studies which question the issue of how the dominant types of masculinity significantly impact the workplace cultures, labor institutions, and the collective identities. Masculine norms like competitiveness, presenteeism, and resistance to flexibility which are the focus of this approach (Connell, 2005) are not just one of the gender aspects but rather the critical masculinity studies in gender analysis is the most pertinent field, as it not only refers to these norms but also sets the question of how they do so. This theoretical perspective gains/enhances new possibilities for changing organization and management system via the insight of masculinity operation in the IR field thereby fostering the culture and leadership transformation.

7. Challenges and Risks in Integrating Gender

Although the incorporation of gender into industrial relations (IR) theory provides a major impetus to the field, the latter also offers a wide range of difficulties and possible mishaps which scholars as well as practitioners, need to cautiously

navigate. These difficulties arise not only from deeply rooted disciplinary norms but the complexity of gender, sensitive work in diverse and volatile labor contexts as well.

7.1. Resistance from Established Paradigms

One of the main barriers is the stronghold of traditional IR paradigms that have, for a long time, solely looked at issues through the lens of class, based analysis and formal labor market structures. These often tend to push aside gender as something that is either secondary or separate from the rest of the issues. The bureaucratic inertia and disciplinary conservatism make up a significant obstacle towards the implementation of gender, sensitive conceptual frameworks. Some IR scholars and practitioners refuse entirely to step out of their comfort zone, challenge the field's foundational beliefs, or expand the field's boundaries to include gender topics (Ledwith, 2012). Such opposition may hamper gender mainlining by keeping it in the margins and thus, not being at union with the rest of the theoretical conversations.

7.2. Risk of Superficial Inclusion

As well, there is a possibility of gender being superficially handled, treated as an isolated variable or “box, ticking” exercise without any concrete changes to theoretical foundations or methodologies. These tokenistic approaches are insufficient to portray the intricate nature of gender that informs workplace relations and may even perpetuate the already existing inequalities because they fail to break the existing power imbalances in the system. Significant integration involves profound conceptual changes rather than mere surface, level additions (Walby, 2011).

7.3. Complexity of Intersectionality

Taking into account intersectionality inevitably complicates things since it means dealing with the overlapping, multiple identities and oppressions that characterize workers' experiences. Whereas the enrichment provided by intersectionality to the analysis can complicate theoretical and empirical work, it also requires researchers to have advanced skills in methodology and to collect multi, layered data. Such complexity may make it hard for social scientists working within IR frameworks to come up with precise policy recommendations or practical applications (McBride et al., 2015).

7.4. Balancing Universalism and Particularism

Another issue that needs a solution is the tension between universal treatment of gender matters and recognition of the specificities of different groups and contexts. From the perspective of IR theory, it is too early to say how one can come up with the broadest principles of gender equality yet still keep the differences arising from race, class, culture, or nationality and not be negated. Being able to strike this balance, as a matter of fact, is central but difficult, task, since overly generic approaches run the risk of not taking unique local or sectoral realities into consideration (Anthias, 2013).

7.5. Potential for Backlash and Tokenism

The initiatives aiming at gender integration might be at the root of a situation where there is a backlash either in a workplace, a union, or an institution which is against the change. Incrementally, such putting into practice of gender equality may be judged as dangerous to the already established power systems and hence result in mere lip service instead of commitment to the cause (Kirton & Healy, 2013). Furthermore, organizations risk the implementation of gender policies aimed at enhancing their image only and not being committed to tackling the root causes of the inequalities.

7.6. Methodological Constraints

The implementation of gender in empirical research faces several practical challenges related to data availability, measurement, and representation. A number of labor market surveys and administrative datasets do not have gender, disaggregated data in detail or do not capture informal and unpaid work. On the one hand, qualitative methods are more insightful; on the other hand, they can be time, consuming and less generalizable, which impedes the performance of large, scale IR studies (Fudge & Owens, 2006).

7.7. The Challenge of Changing Institutional Cultures

Moreover, embedding gender into IR theory necessitates a change of mindset also at the institutional level, it affects the faculties of the universities, the unions, and the workplaces and the policymakers. Changing deeply rooted organizational cultures that are historically male, dominated and have a track record of resistance to gender issues is a long, haul journey, usually confronted with structural and financial constraints (Acker, 2006). The theoretical developments run the risk of being kept as impractical if they do not become visible through the institutional buy, in.

8. Case Study / Hypothetical Example

Imagine a big tech company that wants to change the way it deals with industrial relations and make those relations more inclusive.

At that, the company's strategies for handling labour relations have been centered around the usual union negotiations and employee grievance procedures that are quite formal in nature. These mechanisms largely embody the experiences of the primarily male, full, time staff in the engineering department.

But all this is changing as the firm is growing; it hires a staff that is diversified with women working part time in the fields of the contract, caregiving, and so on. Although women constitute a fairly large part of the segment of the workforce, their needs, such as those for flexible working hours, parental leave, and protection against harassment, are still not adequately met in the framework of IR that is currently in place.

Moreover, the company's union does not seem to be in line with the concerns of the employees since the leadership of the union, as is the case with the management, is predominantly male and geared toward the technical side of the workers.

In light of this, the company undertakes a gender, sensitive review of its industrial relations policies. This would involve the use of feminist institutionalist inputs to examine the role of norms and informal practices in the workplace whereby women become the victims. The company also employs the intersectional approach to the study of the overlapping of identities, such as being of a certain race and taking care of children, thus exacerbating the inequality in the workplace.

The outcome is a more comprehensive method of industrial relations that widens the means of employee representation beyond full, time workers, part, time and contract workers are given the right to vote, the company carries out its commitment to conduct training sessions specifically designed to prevent harassment in the workplace, and negotiates flexible working arrangements reflecting the needs of caregivers. By redesigning the 'worker' as not only the male full, time traditional model, the company not only becomes more inclusive but also opens up better channels for labour, management cooperation.

Such a case study illustrates how the application of traditional industrial relations theories largely fails to identify those gendered aspects of work which are critical and, thereby, may benefit greatly from the integration of feminist and intersectional frameworks to develop more equitable industrial relations practices.

9. Implications for Theory, Policy, Practice

The incorporation of gender issues in industrial relations (IR) has a wide ripple effect in areas like theoretical conception, policy formulation, and practical application. Considering gender not only keeps the door open for diverse IR researches but also ensures the success and justice of labor market management.

9.1. Theoretical Implications

When gender is taken into account, a rethinking of the major concepts of IR like power, conflict, and representation becomes necessary. It stimulates theorists to go beyond pure class, centric models and look into the ways the gender interacts with other social categories to determine worker relations. Such a shift leads to the development of more comprehensive and intersectional frameworks that are better at mirroring the varied faces of the current working world.

Hence, IR theory becomes capable of including, being more insightful, and consequently, it can deal with the issue of structural inequalities in a more proper way (Acker, 2006; McBride et al., 2015).

9.2. Policy Implications

When it comes to policy, the recognition of gender as a vital element in IR issues through the lens of gender underlines the importance of labor regulations and company standards that are responsive to the different needs of the workers. These policies should not only be based on the traditional rights of labor but also entail the aspects of work, life balance, caregiving, and gender, sensitive issues such as the prevention of discrimination and harassment. Gender, sensitive policymaking not only leads to a more fair labor market, but it also helps keep a balance in hiring practice that is made so as to reflect equity in employment outcomes (Rubery & Fagan, 1995; Pascall & Lewis, 2004).

9.3. Practical Implications

On the ground level, a gender, sensitive IR scenario calls for unions, employers, and labor organizations to unfold the women's issues as well as those of the marginalized groups and find ways to overcome these obstacles. The ways are: representation of the non, standard employees, target training and sensibilization activities, and encouraging organizational cultures that not only support but celebrate diversity and inclusion. As a result, workplace relations can be more attuned to the needs of the diverse workforce that leads to both worker content and the organizational performance to be enhanced (Healy et al., 2004; Kirton & Healy, 2013).

10. Proposal: An Integrated Gender-Sensitive IR Framework

To tackle the ongoing sidelining of gender from the mainstream industrial relations (IR) theory and practice, a convention is needed which brings together the different domains of the existing theory and practice and places the analysis of gender issues prominently at the core. Besides that, such a framework would no longer consider gender as a remote area of concern, but rather as one of the essential dimensions characterizing the way people work, employment structures, and labor relations.

This concept relies on intersectional and feminist theories, which recognize that workplace discrimination is not only caused by gender but also the interaction of these with class, race, ethnicity, disability and migration status. A social justice, oriented IR framework must, therefore, incorporate a redefinition of work, which reflects paid and unpaid work, as well as formal and informal labor arrangements. It must also concede to the fact that the so, called 'reproductive labor' as well as caregiving duties are very much a part of the labor force.

At the institutional level, unions, employers, and the policy, makers need to scrutinize existing operational procedures and regulations with the purpose to identify if and how they promote or alleviate gender disparities as a result of this scheme. This will also imply a change in collective bargaining as it will go further than traditional negotiations with the issues addressed including flexible work arrangements, parental leave, gender pay equity, and anti, harassment protocols, matters which have been in the past left out of these negotiations.

Along with that, an inside look at power within the unions and employers, in general, might suggest incorporating diversity in those leaderships, hence the different workforce being the idea, and women as well as any other marginalized people having true participation at that, say, in the decision, making processes. Existing modes of representation have to be made more realistic so that they fit the facts about differently employed people, thus, part, time, temporary, and gig workers who generally are not under the purview of standard IR rules.

Within an IR framework that is gender, sensitive, data would be always the first priority, the data which leads to the identification of gendered outcomes and experiences. But in the absence of accurate data, gender, specific patterns of inequality become less obvious and as a result, will be more difficult to be tackled through policies and negotiations.

Finally, this paradigm also demands a transformation in the cultural and educational lives of organisations and IR respectively. Along with the offering of the gender equity curriculum, the academic institutes' IR syllabi should also mirror the feminist and intersectional scholars' contributions to the field, and by redesigning how future practitioners

and scholars get their labor relations knowledge through such changes, it can help to implant gender consciousness in the foundational aspects of the discipline.

11. Conclusion

The first account has touched upon the social neglect theme concerning the manner in which traditional industrial relations (IR) theories and models present themselves as successful in the male, centered world while they fail miserably in paying adequate attention to gender dynamics. The description of industrial work thinking has been based on the idea of standardized male full, time employment, which naturally led to overlooking the different works and ways for women and other marginalized groups to be involved in working. It follows that while based on the classical IR, genderized, mode patterns of oppression in areas such as representation, structure of the workplace, and participation of the labor market persist, they remain under, theorized and insufficiently addressed in practice.

It is found from the analysis that some advancement, primarily on the theoretical front, has taken place whether or not through numerous paradigms, feminist, intersectional, and critical approaches. Still the majority of IR scholars remain operatively constrained by the prevailing conceptual scope, which restricts their capability to engage with present, day issues; such issues are feminization of labor, precarious employment growth, and the persistence of the undervaluing of reproductive and care work culture, among others.

First of all, an industrial relations' course charted towards being a socially responsible and relevant discipline should be the one that traversed the necessary terrain of change. Gender, as a core analytical lens when implemented, would theoretically strengthen the present discourse, reflect in policy a design of equity and fair distribution of resources and help in the realization of inclusiveness in practice. Not only would the inclusion of gender in extant paradigms be enough but a complete restructuring of the way power, work, and representation are viewed would be needed.

The gender, sensitive IR framework, as endorsed, is just a single way to the future. Rather than providing a traditional and stereotyped account, it enables gender to be a parameter within the different labour organisations' structures, cultures, and practices, thus a deeper and more comprehensive depiction of work organization and work experience is drawn. The most imperative point that a more rigorous and gender, aware industrial relations approach becomes even more relevant as labor markets are scheduled to transform, is not only felt by scholars but also the practitioners and policy, makers.

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