An Islamic Critique of Feminist Anthropology: A Summary of *Feminism in Organization and Management: A Foundational Reflection with an Islamic Approach* by Latifi et al

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Chapter 1: Theoretical Foundations of Feminism

Feminism is a socio-political movement and intellectual tradition aimed at advancing women's status and eliminating gender-based discrimination. Its evolution can be traced through three major waves:

- **First Wave (19th to early 20th century):** Primarily focused on securing legal and political rights, most notably women's suffrage.
- **Second Wave (1960s–1970s):** Shifted toward workplace equality, reproductive rights, and challenging systemic sexism in civil society.
- **Third Wave (1990s onward):** Emphasized intersectionality, incorporating race, class, and cultural differences into feminist discourse.

Key Feminist Frameworks

Feminist thought encompasses several major theoretical approaches:

1. **Liberal Feminism:** Advocates for gender equality through legal reform and dismantling institutional barriers.
2. **Radical Feminism:** Views patriarchy as an entrenched system of oppression requiring fundamental societal transformation.
3. **Marxist Feminism:** Analyzes gender oppression through the lens of class struggle under capitalism.
4. **Cultural Feminism:** Celebrates distinctly feminine traits and values as counterpoints to patriarchal norms.

Core Tenets of Feminist Thought

Despite internal diversity, feminist theories share several unifying principles:

- Opposition to patriarchal structures as systems of domination.
- The centrality of gender in social, political, and economic analysis.
- The conceptualization of gender relations as inherently conflictual.
- The promotion of woman-centered epistemologies and narratives.
- A critical stance toward traditional family structures.

Philosophical Underpinnings

Feminism is grounded in several anthropological and philosophical assumptions:

- **Humanism:** Prioritizes human agency and secular reasoning.
- **Secularism:** Rejects religious doctrine as a basis for gender norms.
- **Gender Essentialism/Constructivism:** Debates whether gender differences are innate or socially constructed.
- **Modernism:** Aligns with progressive, emancipatory ideals.
- **Egalitarianism:** Demands equal rights and opportunities across genders.

As both an intellectual and activist tradition, feminism interrogates power dynamics through the prism of gender. Its historical development and theoretical diversity remain critical to contemporary gender studies and social critique.

Chapter 2: Feminist Anthropology

Feminism, which originated as a movement advocating for women's rights, has since developed into a comprehensive intellectual tradition. This chapter explores its anthropological foundations, which are structured around four key propositions:

1. The Absence of a Shared Essence Between Genders

Radical feminist theorists posit that men and women constitute fundamentally distinct categories of being, lacking any inherent common essence. This position draws upon:

- **Socio-biological critiques** challenging deterministic interpretations of gender.
- **Technological determinism**, arguing that advancements in science redefine human nature.
- **Philosophical rejections** of classical essentialism (e.g., Aristotle's teleology or Kant's universalist frameworks).

2. The Social Construction of Physical Differences

A subset of feminist thought minimizes the significance of biological distinctions, contending that perceived bodily differences are secondary to sociocultural conditioning. According to this view:

- Physical disparities are rendered irrelevant by patriarchal narratives that naturalize inequality.
- Personality and psychological traits attributed to gender are products of structural power dynamics rather than innate qualities.

3. Technological Transcendence of Biological Constraints

Some feminists, such as Shulamith Firestone, acknowledge anatomical differences but argue for their irrelevance in a technologically advanced society. Key tenets include:

- The potential for reproductive technologies to dismantle gendered divisions of labor.
- The elimination of biological determinism as a prerequisite for eradicating systemic domination.

4. The Myth of Psychological Divergence

Another strand of feminism rejects the notion of intrinsic psychological differences between genders, asserting that:

- Observable behavioral contrasts are artifacts of oppressive social systems.
- Claims of innate male superiority rely on circular logic that reinforces patriarchal hegemony.

Critical Implications

Feminist anthropology engages in a radical re-examination of human nature, seeking to:

- Decouple gender from essentialist frameworks.

- Establish absolute equality in rights and social participation by negating naturalized hierarchies.

However, these propositions face criticism within Islamic thought, which emphasizes divinely ordained complementarity between the sexes and views the denial of inherent differences as philosophically reductive.

Chapter 3: Anthropological Critique of the Feminist School from an Islamic Perspective

Introduction

Contemporary feminist anthropology has advanced radical claims about gender, often rejecting biological and psychological differences between men and women in pursuit of absolute equality. While this perspective has gained traction in modern discourse, it stands in stark contrast to the Islamic worldview, which affirms both the shared humanity and complementary distinctions between the sexes. This chapter presents a systematic Islamic critique of core feminist anthropological assumptions, drawing upon Quranic principles, philosophical reasoning, and scientific evidence to demonstrate the coherence of Islam's balanced approach to gender.

Core Critiques

1. The Fallacy of Denying Shared Human Essence

Feminist theory's rejection of a common human essence between genders contradicts both Islamic theology and rational anthropology. Allameh Motahhari illustrates this by describing men and women as "two branches of one human tree"—distinct yet rooted in the same ontological reality. The Quran explicitly affirms this unity:

"O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul (nafs) and created from it its mate..." (Quran 4:1).

To deny this shared essence is to undermine the metaphysical foundation of human dignity in Islam.

2. The Natural Reality of Physical and Psychological Differences

While feminists often attribute gender differences solely to socialization, empirical research in biology, neuroscience, and developmental psychology confirms innate distinctions in:

- Cognitive processing styles
- Emotional responsiveness
- Physiological capacities

Motahhari clarifies that these differences reflect divine wisdom (hikma), enabling complementary roles rather than hierarchical superiority.

3. The Limitations of Cultural Determinism

The feminist claim that gender is entirely culturally constructed fails to explain:

- The cross-cultural persistence of certain gender-linked traits
- The biological basis of sexual dimorphism in humans
- The Quranic acknowledgment of *fitrah* (primordial nature) as shaping gender characteristics

Historical records from diverse civilizations—from ancient Mesopotamia to classical Islam—demonstrate consistent recognition of natural gender distinctions.

4. The False Dichotomy of Superiority vs. Absolute Equality

Feminism oscillates between asserting female superiority or demanding undifferentiated equality. Islam transcends this binary by teaching:

- **Qualitative equality:** Equal value before God (*"Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous"* Quran 49:13)
- **Functional distinction:** Differential roles aligned with innate capacities

For instance, motherhood's unique physiological and psychological demands justify specific legal provisions without implying inferiority.

5. The Necessity of Differentiated Rights and Responsibilities

Islamic jurisprudence links rights to ontological realities:

- Women are exempt from military duty but guaranteed financial maintenance (nafaqa)
- Inheritance laws reflect differing familial obligations
- Testimony rules account for gender-based cognitive strengths

As Motahhari notes, *"Justice requires giving each their due, not treating all identically."*

6. The Destructive Implications of Anti-Family Ideology

Radical feminism's devaluation of motherhood—exemplified by Shulamith Firestone's call for artificial reproduction—contradicts:

- The Quranic honor bestowed upon mothers (*"Paradise lies at the feet of mothers"* Hadith)
- Sociology demonstrating family as the cornerstone of civilizational stability

7. Misdiagnosing the Roots of Gender Injustice

Feminism blames patriarchy, whereas Islam identifies:

- Pre-Islamic ignorance (jahiliyya) as the source of oppression
- Divine guidance as the corrective, granting women:
  - Property rights (7th century)
  - Consent in marriage
  - Educational access

8. Islam's Integrative Gender Framework

The Islamic model balances:

- **Ontological equality:** Equal spiritual worth
- **Functional complementarity:** Distinct but interdependent roles
- **Contextual justice:** Rights tailored to biological and social realities

The Islamic critique reveals fundamental flaws in feminist anthropology: its rejection of shared human essence, denial of natural differences, and utopian pursuit of undifferentiated equality. In contrast, Islam offers a sophisticated paradigm where:

1. Gender distinctions are celebrated as part of divine wisdom (hikma)
2. Rights are calibrated to biological and social realities
3. The family system is sacralized as a microcosm of civilizational order

This approach neither reverts to patriarchal oppression nor succumbs to feminist excesses, instead providing a timeless framework for gender harmony. As the Quran states:

"And the male is not like the female" (3:36)—a verse affirming difference without hierarchy, guiding humanity toward balance (mizan) in all aspects of life.

Chapter 4: Feminism in Management and Organization Theory

Introduction

This chapter explores the various dimensions of feminism within management and organization theory. The goal is to identify the essential

core of feminism that influences managerial teachings. Despite the abundance of works related to women and gender, determining genuine feminist researches remains challenging. Addressing women and gender issues does not necessarily imply a feminist perspective, and with restricting the scope to explicitly feminist titles might end in ignoring some significant contributions.

The criterion for identifying feminist research in management lies in its objective _ not merely its topic. If the research aims to solve problems or improve conditions for women in the workplace—without engaging with feminist principles—it cannot be classified as feminist.

Classification of Approaches

Feminist works in management are generally divided into two major approaches:

1. **Managerial Approach**

   The goal is to demonstrate the efficiency and suitability of women in various management arenas. This approach emphasizes women's advantages or unique traits.

   o *Example*: Studies that show women perform better than men as leaders or succeed more in entrepreneurship.

2. **Critical Approach**

   The goal is to critique the status quo and promote change in the principles or practices of organizations. Rather than showcasing women's efficiency, this approach seeks fundamental transformations in organizations and power structures.

Main Feminist Critiques

1. **Critique of Power and Hierarchy**
   o Feminists oppose hierarchical structures and concentrated power.
   o They suggest decisions should be based on situational contexts, not formal positions.

2. **Critique of Freedom:**
   o Women in organizations often lack the freedom to express their individuality.
   o Classical management suppresses women's emotions and sentiments, whereas feminists emphasize emotional expression.

3. **Critique of Justice and Equality:**
   o Gender discrimination persists in organizations (e.g., "prove yourself again," "tightrope walking," "maternal wall," and "tug of war").
   o Feminists advocate for policy and regulatory changes to increase women's participation.

4. **Critique of the Family System:**
   o The traditional family structure imposes many limitations on women.
   o Household labor should not be gender-based; fathers must also take part in child-rearing.

Additional Critiques and Solutions

- **Career Advancement Pathways for Women**

  Studies propose new models for women's professional development.

- **Changing the Image of Women in Business**

  Feminists protest the misrepresentation of women in media and business contexts.

- **Strategies for Increasing Women's Participation**

  Recommended measures include setting specific goals, broadening evaluation criteria, and cultivating a productive, innovative culture.

Feminist Duality in Management

Feminists diverge in the managerial and critical approaches:

- In the managerial approach, gender equality is overlooked, and gender differences are highlighted.
- In the critical approach, gender equality is the central principle.

A Path to Liberation

Feminists may argue that the conflict between feminist principles and managerial efficiency stems from the modern concept of business. However:

1. Full implementation of feminist principles in the real business world is not feasible.
2. Feminists themselves often rely on conventional productivity metrics to assess women's performance.

3. Feminist principles fall short in meeting foundational needs, such as financial security.

Conclusion

Feminism influences management theory through both managerial and critical approaches. However, the dichotomy between feminist principles and managerial performance presents ongoing challenges. There is a continuing search for appropriate solutions to reconcile these contradictions.

Chapter 5: Organized Heterogeneity and Feminist Bureaucracy

This article explores a novel organizational structure termed **"organized heterogeneity,"** which represents a strategic blend of bureaucracy and feminist principles. The objective is to answer the question: Can feminism offer an innovative alternative to traditional management theories?

1. Introduction to the Issue

Feminist organizations, due to their commitment to gender justice and women's empowerment, typically adopt anti-bureaucratic approaches. However, in practice, these organizations often face operational necessities that make the complete avoidance of bureaucratic structures unrealistic. So the concept of "organized heterogeneity" is introduced as a strategic integration of bureaucratic and feminist elements that aims to manage existing tensions among power, equality, efficiency, and commitment.

2. Case Study: SAFE Organization

SAFE is a feminist nonprofit organization supporting victims of domestic violence. It exhibits a bureaucratic structure while simultaneously promoting feminist values such as emotional awareness, egalitarian interaction, and consensus decision-making. Despite a belief in equality, members often encounter hierarchical structures and power imbalances in practice.

Key Challenges in SAFE

- **Leadership and Followership:** Members adhere to a system of "ethical communication," which emphasizes honest expression and emotional awareness. However, supervisors retain power through tactics such as cautious facilitation and invoking collective commitments.

- **Equality vs. Inequality:** Members use strategies like highlighting operational constraints and humorously mimicking dominant/submissive roles to mitigate or challenge existing power disparities.

- **Democracy vs. Efficiency:** SAFE continuously balances its democratic ideals with operational efficiency, resulting in dialectical tensions, elaborated in the article's tables.

3. Power Management Tactics in SAFE

SAFE members employ several strategies to navigate power dynamics:

1. **Cautious Facilitation:** Supervisors frame decisions as suggestions and depersonalize them to avoid direct confrontation.

2. **Appealing to Collective Commitments:** Supervisors refer to ethical communication codes to subtly enforce centralized authority.

3. **Highlighting Operational Constraints:** Leaders remind members that power imbalances are inherent in organizational settings, and perfect equality is unattainable.

4. **Undermining Domination:** Members counteract managerial authority by emphasizing personal connections or shifting discussions to the public domain.

5. **Humorous Performances:** Role-playing dominant/submissive relationships (e.g., parent-child, teacher-student) is used to question authority.

4. Findings and Recommendations

- **Innovation of Structure:** *Organized heterogeneity* is introduced as a novel hybrid model for managing tensions between equality and inequality, centralization and decentralization.

- **Challenges**
  - Ethical communication may inadvertently suppress genuine emotions and dissent due to over-rationalization.
  - An imbalance between bureaucracy and feminism risks undermining the feminist ethos of the organization.

- **Recommendations:**
  - Reinforce the egalitarian and decentralized components within the power dialectic.

- o Hold public reflection sessions to sustain awareness of organizational tensions.
- o Incorporate emotional and private concerns into the formal organizational structure.

5. Theoretical Significance of Organized Heterogeneity

- This theory questions traditional management foundations (e.g., unity of command) and views tensions as beneficial for organizational growth.
- Emphasizes the interdependence of structure and action, rejecting the primacy of structure over process.
- Serves as a potential model for other organizations seeking to navigate the tensions between power, equality, and efficiency.

Chapter 6: Rethinking Gender; An Islamic Perspective

Introduction

This chapter examines the concept and position of gender within Islamic sources. Its aim is to critique and reconsider feminist perspectives that often view gender as the primary axis of critical discourse, whereas Islam regards gender as a natural attribute upon which specific duties and rights are founded.

1. Various Classifications of Gender's Influence in Islam

1.1. Human Relationships

- **Relationship with God:** Gender has no direct impact on dignity or closeness to God, although there are differences in the modes of worship.
- **Relationship with the Self:** Gender does not affect self-knowledge or spiritual fulfillment, though differences in aptitude between men and women may influence how they achieve personal goals.
- **Relationship with Others:** Gender plays a significant role in social rights and responsibilities (e.g., inheritance, custody).
- **Relationship with Nature:** Gender has minimal impact, though differences in aptitude may affect how individuals interact with nature.

1.2. Domains of Human Life

- **Personal:** In Islam, men and women are equal in identity and individuality.

- **Familial:** This area is significantly influenced by gender, with notable differences in rights and duties (e.g., alimony, custody, polygamy).
- **Social:** There are differences in some areas such as leadership, jihad, and judiciary roles; however, in many other rights (e.g., ownership), there is no distinction.

1.3. Categories of Islamic Rulings

- Acts of Worship: Gender has minimal influence, though there are procedural differences in practices like prayer and pilgrimage.
- Contracts and Unilateral Acts: Limited gender influence.
- Legal Rulings: Gender has the most significant impact.

1.4. Areas of Islamic Knowledge

- Theology: Least influenced by gender
- Ethics: Moderately influenced
- Jurisprudence: Most influenced

1.5. Dimensions of Human Existence

- Spiritual: Gender has little to no effect.
- Physical: Gender plays a substantial role.

2. Classification of Islamic Rulings on Gender Differences

2.1. Rulings Favoring Men

- Preference in post-mortem matters.
- Differences in required clothing during prayer.
- Women are not permitted to lead Friday prayers.
- Men are allowed multiple wives.
- Divorce rights rest with men.
- Inheritance shares differ.

2.2. Rulings Favoring Women

- Exemption from Friday bath while traveling.
- Exemption from funeral procession participation.
- Preference for women to pray at home.
- No obligation for women to attend Friday or Eid prayers.
- Men bear the financial responsibility of maintenance.
- Lighter penalties for women in some criminal cases (e.g., adultery).

2.3. Ambiguous or Innate Cases

These include differences in worship, transactions, rulings, ijtihad, ethics, and inherent natural distinctions.

3. Criteria for Gender Differences in Islam

3.1. Viewpoint of Ayatollah Motahhari

- **Shared Aspects:** Men and women are equal in humanity and fundamental rights.
- **Qualitative Differences:** Gender as a natural attribute affects duties and entitlements.
- **Three Categories of Rights:**
  1. **Natural and Ultimate Rights:** Have priority (e.g., maternal rights).
  2. **Acquired Rights:** Result from effort and work.
  3. **Contractual Rights:** Must align with natural rights.

3.2. Practical Criteria

- **Ethical and human-related issues:** Gender plays no role.
- **Educational and familial matters:** Gender-based distinctions are present.
- **Natural and ultimate rights** (e.g., motherhood responsibilities) take precedence and should be considered before acquired or contractual rights.

4. Conclusion

From an Islamic viewpoint, men and women are equal in their humanity and essential rights. However, there are natural and qualitative differences that must be acknowledged and respected in social and organizational structures. These distinctions should not be viewed as deficiencies but as complementary characteristics. Unlike feminist approaches that often aim for uniformity, Islamic management embraces these differences as foundational principles, creating organizations that honor the natural and ultimate rights of both men and women.

Chapter 7: Islamic Foundationalism in Organization and Management Theory

This chapter seeks to apply general criteria for evaluating the influence of gender across various management domains, focusing particularly on

two critical areas: **compensation** and **promotion and career advancement**.

1. Compensation

Definition

Compensation includes salaries, bonuses, and both monetary and non-monetary benefits provided to employees based on the value of their performance within the organization.

Current Status

- **Feminist Critiques:** One of the primary critiques involves gender-based pay gaps. Research indicates that in many countries, women earn significantly less than men (e.g., a 26.6% wage gap in South Korea).
- **Underlying Causes:** A key reason for this gap is the weaker position of women in salary negotiations. Societal norms often frown upon women who request higher pay.

Islamic Perspective

Using various relationship frameworks (e.g., individual with God, self, others, and nature), compensation is recognized as an area influenced by gender. However:

- From a contractual and commercial perspective, compensation should be gender-neutral.
- From social and cultural perspective, gender can play a role in shaping perceptions and practices.

Challenges and Questions

- Does gender influence compensation similarly across all job types?
- Can gender be used as justification for benefits or pay reductions?

Proposed Islamic Criterion

Based on Islamic principles, the concepts of **"Ma'ūna"** (assistance/support) and **"Mu'ūna"** (hardship/strain) offer guidance. For example:

- If women's physiological traits reduce the burden of certain tasks, this could justify granting them additional benefits.

2. Promotion and Career Advancement

Definition

Career advancement refers to the process of progressing to higher organizational positions.

Current Status

- Feminist Critiques: The most common critique concerns the "glass ceiling" that prevents women from reaching top managerial roles.
- Challenges: Certain roles may be less suitable for women due to requirements like frequent travel or confidential meetings.

Islamic Perspective

- Promotions should be merit-based, emphasizing **competence** and **effectiveness**.
- However, where roles involve **guardianship** or **judiciary functions**, the principles of **non-interference** and **non-mixing** must be respected:
  - Non-interference: Professional duties should not conflict with familial responsibilities (e.g., motherhood or spousal roles).
  - Non-mixing: Workplace interactions must avoid illicit or inappropriate gender mixing.

Challenges and Questions

- Is gender's impact on career progression consistent across professions?
- Can women be justifiably restricted from certain high-level organizational positions?

Proposed Islamic Criterion

According to Islamic standards:

- If a position interferes with a woman's maternal or spousal responsibilities, it should not be held by her.
- If a job requires significant gender mixing, it should be avoided.

Conclusion

In both examined areas—compensation and career advancement—gender does influence outcomes. However, this influence varies depending on job type, organizational context, and Islamic principles. Applying these criteria enables managers to make fairer and culturally aligned decisions within Islamic frameworks.