



*Dr. Blosa Science*

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+256 778 633 682, 753 802709  
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### Comprehension story 6

Read the passage below and answer the questions that follow.

Structural intersectionality is when individuals are situated at intersection of multiple systems of oppression, so that the reality of multiple identities (race, gender, ethnicity, class etc.) results in complex and compounded effects. These multiple systems of oppression such as racism, sexism, homophobia etc. interact with one another and affect the particular experience of an individual. For example, a Native American woman who is the victim of intimate partner violence not only experiences this violence as a woman, but also as a member of a racial minority where there are particular and specific cultural expectations and gendered norms. 05

Political intersectionality refers to the way that political and legal discourses and rhetoric 'erase' particular individuals and communities by highlighting or 'favouring' specific forms of violence or discrimination, or specific kinds of victims, at the expense of others. In other words, the narratives we choose to explain and examine a specific instance of discrimination can erase a particular individual's experience if they fall off this narrative. The voices of these individuals and communities are silenced and their differing experiences of exclusion are relegated to a place of irrelevance or even complete denial, displacing the experiences and voices 'to location that resist telling,' thereby distinguishing the need for discourses and services which appropriately address diversity. 10 15 20

Thus, following from our earlier example, a Native American woman may find that programmes or campaigns aimed at victims of intimate partner violence unintentionally marginalize or exclude her by failing to take into account the relative geographic and social isolation of Native American communities, which 25

could result in difficulty of access to health and support services. She therefore experiences additional discrimination based on the race and ethnicity which compounds and changes the reality of how gender-based violence impacts her.

Both human rights law and practice have tended to treat human beings as though we have linear identities, by focusing on one “problem” at a time, whether it be racial discrimination, gender injustice or child labour. The current fragmentation of conventions and human rights instruments such as treaties and treaty bodies is due to these attempts to address one issue at a time and to make human rights frameworks workable.

People are not dimensional, however. A woman is not only a woman-she is positioned (and she positions herself) in multiple identities of race, ethnicity, class and sexual orientation, for example. Women’s experiences of social or ethnic discrimination often differ radically from those of men. We need instruments and theories which deal approximately with the complexities of being a human being. Intersectionality helps us understand how this structural complexity works its way through people’s daily lives, influencing their relationships and moulding their decisions.

Human rights instruments, such as international treaties, as well as interventions in conflict situations can be strengthened, improved and made more effective through the application of an intersectional framework. For example, proving labour rights on paper, while important, does not take into account the way women experience institutional gendered discrimination and how this intersects with class or ethnicity.

Institutions and processes which address racism, sexism and other forms of oppressions as separate and mutually exclusive, can create exclusionary practices as they embrace mono-causal frameworks. Political, legal and social practices create and recreate frameworks through which we understand oppression and victimhood and often ‘erase’ marginal voices. The prioritization of particular human right issues, and how these are addressed, is strongly influenced by the dominant voices within the global human rights community. Thus, how a problem is framed, and hence the solution, are often the result of how those with access have understood a particular issue. In addition, it is worth noting that oppression (its nuances and how one experiences it) not

only varies across multiple identities and locations but also across time. At both the macro and micro levels, systems of oppression and domination have historical significance. Dominant and subversive discourses on identities such as gender, race, sexual orientation and class (among others) change over time, as they interact with one another and with other factors such as economics, law and mass media. Because intersectionality emphasizes the importance of context, it can be used to reshape and reframe how human rights theory and praxis approach identities, human nature and international law in line with the realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

## Questions

- (a) Suggest a suitable title for the passage (02 marks)
- (b) What does the author mean by the following expressions
- (i) "... reality of multiple identities ..." (line 2-3) (03 marks)
  - (ii) "... dominant and subversive discourses ..." (line 61) (03marks)
- (c) In not more than 100 words, summarize the author's view on intersectionality. (10marks)
- (d) Explain the meaning of the following words and phrases as used in the passage, using you own words wherever possible
- (i) Compound effect (line 03) (02 marks)
  - (ii) Gendered norms (line 09) (02 marks)
  - (iii) rhetoric (line 11) (02 marks)
  - (iv) relegated (line 27) (02 marks)
  - (v) linear identity (line 30) (02 marks)
  - (vi) differ radically (line 38) (02 marks)
  - (vii) interventions (line 44) (02 marks)
  - (viii) exclusionary practices (line 50 -51) (02 marks)
  - (ix) marginal voices (line 53) (02 marks)
  - (x) nuances (line 58) (02 marks)
- (20 marks)

Spellings, Punctuation and Grammatical Expression (SPGE) (10 marks)

## Suggested answers

- (e) Suggest a suitable title for the passage (02 marks)  
INTERSECTIONALITY
- (f) What does the author mean by the following expressions
- (iii) “... reality of multiple identities ...” (line 2-3) (03 marks)  
Cumulative effect of
- (iv) “ ... dominant and subversive discourses ....” (line 61) (03marks)  
General perception/feelings on identities
- (g) In not more than 100 words, summarize the author’s view on intersectionality. (10marks)

### AUTHOR’S VIEW OF INTERSECTIONALITY

According to the author structural intersectionality is a complex situation that an individual experiences when faced with a variety of discriminations based on race, gender, ethnicity, and class and so on. While political intersectionality is a complex situation an individual feels when victimized and marginalized by political, legal and verboseness practices at the expense of other people. Intersectionality helps us to know how structural complexity work through people’s daily lives and hence design more effective interventions to conflict situations based on intersectional frameworks rather than solutions to each of the independent forms of oppression.

- (h) Explain the meaning of the following words and phrases as used in the passage, using you own words wherever possible
- (i) Compound effect (line 03) (02 marks)  
Significant result  
Substantial result  
vast outcome
- (ii) Gendered norms (line 09) (02 marks)  
societal expectations regarding the behaviors of women or men.
- (iii) Rhetoric (line 11) (02 marks)  
Impressive/persuasive speeches/languages/writings
- (iv) relegated (line 17) (02 marks)  
taken as trivial/minor  
or  
assigned a low importance/status  
or

taken as inferior  
or  
disregarded/ignored

- (v) linear identity (line 30) (02 marks)  
similar personality/needs/difficulties/challenges
- (vi) differ radically (line 38) (02 marks)  
differ fundamentally  
differ totally  
differ basically
- (vii) interventions (line 44) (02 marks)  
mediation
- (viii) exclusionary practices (line 50 -51) (02 marks)  
method that deliberately leave out certain people or groups
- (ix) marginal voices (line 53) (02 marks)  
Interests of the minority or the oppressed
- (x) nuances (line 58) (02 marks)  
forms/differences/grades/distinctions
- (20 marks)

Spellings, Punctuation and Grammatical Expression (SPGE) (10 marks)

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Thanks

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