Feminist Knowledge Translation for Research Impact

What is Feminist Knowledge Translation?

In traditional research practice, **"knowledge translation"** is the process of taking research findings and making them relevant and actionable for different audiences, such as policymakers, practitioners, or the general public. The primary purpose is to bridge the "knowledge–action gap", ensuring that information reaches and influences those who can put it to use. Sometimes called "knowledge synthesis" or "knowledge mobilization", having a well-defined knowledge translation plan is not only good research practice but also increasingly a requirement of donors and funding agencies.

"Feminist knowledge translation" is an approach to knowledge translation that extends the principles of feminist research methodology into the process of communicating and disseminating research findings. Specifically, feminist knowledge translation embeds core considerations around research impact, ownership, accessibility, and power relations. This approach is not just about adding a 'feminist or gender lens', but fundamentally integrating feminist principles into every step of the knowledge translation process.

Ultimately, feminist knowledge translation recognizes the power of research as a tool for transforming gender norms and inequalities. It aims to enhance the uptake and use of research findings to inform gender-transformative policies, programs, and decision-making. It also prioritizes sharing findings with participants and communities—especially women, girls, and gender-diverse people—to ensure that those who contributed to and are most impacted by research can effectively use and benefit from it.

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This brief outlines the principles, processes, and challenges of feminist knowledge translation, offering practical guidance and resources for researchers aiming to increase the gender-transformative impact of their work.

Key Principles of Feminist Knowledge Translation

Support gender-transformative change

Position research findings and evidence for use to inform policies, programs, and decision-making aimed at transforming gender norms and inequalities.

Consider the role of power

Critically examine the power relations that shape how knowledge is created, shared, and used in specific research contexts.

Value situated knowledge

Ensure that research outputs center the voices, perspectives, and lived experiences of individuals involved in the research, especially women, girls, and gender-diverse people.

Recognize the politics of representation

Actively challenge and avoid essentializing or patriarchal representations of women and other marginalized groups in the presentation of research findings.

Embed an intersectional lens

Emphasize the intersectional nature of identities and inequalities in the analysis and communication of research results.

Be non-extractive

Co-create knowledge with research participants and communities, ensuring that findings are meaningful and useful to those who contributed to it.

Practice inclusive communication

Make research outputs accessible and engaging for target audiences, regardless of ability or background, to ensure equitable access to knowledge.

Do no harm

Take action to mitigate the potential negative impacts of disseminating research findings, prioritizing the safety and well-being of research participants and communities.

Integrating these feminist principles enhances the value of research by making findings more accessible, relevant, and actionable for target audiences, ultimately increasing their impact in transforming gender norms and inequalities.

Creating a Feminist Knowledge Translation Plan

Effective feminist knowledge translation requires careful and detailed planning, ideally starting early in the research process. This approach can help to ensure that future communication and dissemination activities are properly planned and budgeted for. A typical **knowledge translation plan** will start with research objectives and include detailed information on: target audiences, key messages, research outputs, accessibility and design considerations, budget needs, dissemination opportunities and timing, and strategies for evaluating reach and impact.

Knowledge translation plans are living documents, intended to be revised and adjusted as the research process evolves. This flexible and dynamic approach ensures that knowledge translation plans remain relevant and effective by allowing researchers to address emerging needs, incorporate feedback from participants and other stakeholders, and respond to changes in context, understanding, or resources.

Researchers interested in creating a feminist knowledge translation plan can download a fillable template from the FemDev website.

Developing and Sharing Research Outputs

Different audiences need different information, presented in different ways. To strategically position research findings for use, researchers should consider the most relevant, appropriate, and accessible types of **research outputs** for each target audience. A key strategy is to consult research participants and stakeholders – particularly women, girls, and gender-diverse people – early and continuously throughout the research process to determine the types of research outputs that would be most beneficial and useful to them.

Be thoughtful and creative when selecting which research outputs to develop. Numerous formats are available, each serving different audiences and objectives. Academic publications like journal articles and book chapters cater primarily to other researchers, while policy briefs are tailored for government stakeholders seeking concise, actionable insights and recommendations. Popular media such as blog posts and op-eds, along with creative works like poster campaigns and videos, are particularly effective for engaging community members and the general public, making complex research findings more accessible and compelling. Each of these formats offers unique opportunities to effectively convey research findings and foster engagement among different audiences.
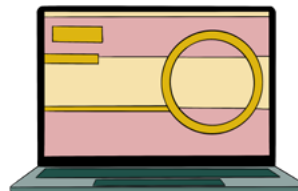
Decisions on how, when, and to whom research findings are shared are fundamentally shaped by power relations. Feminist knowledge translation recognizes that these decisions are both practical and political.

Journal articles and book chapters

Policy briefs

Blog posts and op-eds

Poster campaigns and videos

Design research outputs to be inclusive and gender-sensitive by carefully analyzing and presenting results through a gender and intersectional lens. Ensure that the perspectives and experiences of women, girls, and gender-diverse individuals are represented in their full diversity and agency. Actively challenge and avoid essentialist or patriarchal portrayals in the presentation of findings.

Consider the potential barriers different groups might face in accessing research outputs – such as lower literacy levels, visual or auditory disabilities, or limited access to technology – and adjust your design and dissemination methods accordingly. Ensure that your communication and dissemination strategy provides access to research findings for participants and communities directly affected by the issues. Apply an intersectional lens and take steps to ensure that all members of your target audience, regardless of ability or background, can easily access and engage with the information being shared. Take care to avoid unintentionally reinforcing existing power imbalances in access to knowledge and evidence.

Challenges for Implementing Feminist Knowledge Translation

Feminist knowledge translation can shift traditional power dynamics in the communication and dissemination of research findings and promote gender-transformative change. However, it also presents challenges that researchers should be aware of and address.

- **Awareness and training gaps:** Researchers and research partners may lack the awareness and skills needed for effective knowledge translation, especially feminist knowledge translation. As knowledge translation is often not covered in academic programs or training, researchers may have limited exposure to key concepts and practices.
- **Project-specific constraints:** Certain research projects may be less conducive to integrating feminist knowledge translation principles and practices due to constraints related to the project context, timeframe, resources, and other factors.
- **Funding and support limitations:** Donors and funding agencies may be unaware of or disinterested in knowledge translation or place strict limitations on the amount or use of research funds for this purpose. Others may be supportive in principle but fail to provide sufficient time or resources for its effective implementation.
- **Evaluation challenges:** Evaluating the reach and impact of knowledge translation strategies – feminist or otherwise – is complex. Attributing changes in policies or programs to research is difficult, and it can take years or even decades to observe shifts in gender norms and inequalities.

- **Power imbalances:** A high level of commitment, openness, and flexibility is needed to genuinely share power with research participants and enable them to shape research communication agendas and dissemination plans. It requires a shared understanding and commitment from researchers, participants, and funders alike.

Researchers should be mindful of these challenges and plan accordingly while maintaining their commitment to feminist knowledge translation principles. Effective implementation involving research partners, participants, and funders may require strategic advocacy, awareness-raising, and skill development throughout the research process.

Conclusion

Knowledge translation is a core part of effective research and advocacy. By incorporating principles of feminist research methodology, feminist knowledge translation further positions research for impact and ensures that research findings are used to transform gender norms and inequalities.

It also prioritizes sharing research with participants and communities—especially women, girls, and gender-diverse people—to ensure that those who contributed to and are most impacted by research can effectively use and benefit from it.

Appendix: Guiding Questions for Researchers to Implement Feminist Knowledge Translation

Support gender–transformative change

- How does the research address gender norms and inequalities, and how are findings being strategically positioned to inform gender-transformative policies, programs, or decision-making?
- What opportunities are being sought to share research findings with key stakeholders who can put them to use, such as research participants, community members, policymakers, practitioners, civil society organizations, or the media?
- Have you developed clear, actionable recommendations tailored to the needs and capacities of your target audiences?

Consider the role of power

- Have diverse stakeholders, including women, girls, and gender-diverse people, been consulted in setting the research communication agenda?
- What barriers exist for research participants and communities, particularly women, girls, and gender-diverse people, to access the findings and evidence generated?
- If familiar dissemination channels and outputs are used, who has access to them, and who might be excluded?

Value situated knowledge

- Do research outputs center the voices, perspectives, and experiences of individuals involved in the research, particularly women, girls, and gender-diverse people?
- Are there opportunities for research partners and participants to lead, organize, or participate in dissemination activities?
- In public events and research communications, whose voices are included and presented as 'experts'?

Recognize the politics of representation

- Do research outputs capture the experiences of women, girls, and gender-diverse people in their full diversity and agency?
- Are you actively challenging and avoiding essentializing or patriarchal representations of women and other marginalized groups in the presentation of research findings?

Embed an intersectional lens

- Do research outputs carefully analyze and discuss results through a gender and intersectional lens?
- Are data and findings being disaggregated to capture gender differences and other relevant characteristics (e.g., age, race, ethnicity, geographic location, socioeconomic status, education level, disability, sexual orientation, citizenship status, etc.)?

Be non-extractive

- Have research participants, including women, girls, and gender-diverse people, been consulted about how they would like to receive research results?
- What kinds of dissemination activities are planned to share the research findings and recommendations with participants and community members?
- Have you acknowledged the contributions of research partners and participants properly in all research outputs?

Practice inclusive communication

- Are research outputs designed to be accessible to people with disabilities, including the use of clear fonts, sufficient contrast, alternative text for images, and other inclusive practices?
- Are research outputs available in multiple formats (e.g., print, digital, audio) to accommodate different needs and preferences?
- Is the language used in research outputs clear, jargon-free, and inclusive, avoiding terms that might alienate or exclude certain groups?

Do no harm

- What strategies have been considered for effectively communicating gender-related research findings on sensitive or controversial topics?
- Have steps been taken to safeguard potentially harmful or identifying information from being shared in the communication of research findings?
- Do you have informed consent for any images or videos used in research outputs and communications?