
Feminist Culture: The Impact of Social Media Towards Young Working Women in Klang Valley

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Abstract

Feminist culture, in a nutshell, is a vibrant and ever-evolving movement that seeks to promote gender equality and empower women. The term feminist culture is used to describe the beliefs, practices, and expressions that are influenced by feminist ideology. It encompasses various social and cultural aspects, including feminist art, literature, music, film, and activism. The core principle of feminist culture is the belief that gender equality and women's rights are fundamental to creating a just and equitable society. The paper also explores how social media platforms have played a significant role in promoting and advancing feminist culture by engagement of young working women. These platforms have provided a space for individuals to share their experiences and amplify their voices, leading to increased awareness and engagement with feminist issues. However, the paper also acknowledges the potential negative impact of social media on feminist culture. The perpetuation of harmful norms and stereotypes on social media can undermine feminist principles and discourage engagement. It is also worth noting that some individuals may perceive the push for gender equality and the empowerment of women as a threat to their own privileges or social norms. However, this viewpoint is not a reflection of the negative impact of feminism itself but rather a resistance to change and progress towards a more equitable and just society. Considering these challenges, the paper concludes by offering recommendations for young working women to navigate social media in ways that promote feminist culture and create a safe and inclusive space.

Keywords: *Feminist culture, Social media, Young working women, Engagement, Empowerment*

Introduction

The origins of the word "feminism" can be traced back to 1837, when the French philosopher Charles Fourier first used the term "féminisme" to describe qualities and attributes traditionally associated with women. However, the current meaning of the term has evolved considerably since then. In the late 19th century, feminism became synonymous with the movement advocating for equal rights for women and was closely linked with the suffragist movement. Today, feminism encompasses a broad range of social, cultural, and political issues, and continues to be a vital movement for promoting gender equality and addressing issues such as gender-based violence, reproductive rights, and workplace discrimination.

The characteristics of feminism can vary depending on the individual or group's specific beliefs and goals. However, some common characteristics include a commitment to social justice, advocacy for women's rights and issues, challenging gender stereotypes and norms, and promoting gender equality in all aspects of life.

As modern communicative technologies continue to evolve, social media plays a vital role in shaping public opinion regarding various issues. One of the most significant impacts of social media is its role in promoting feminist causes and generating awareness about gender-based issues. Social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook have played a crucial role in amplifying feminist voices and enabling online activism (Hafiz Burhan Ul Haq Hashmi, 2021). Through the use of social media, feminist activists can disseminate information and garner support for their causes more easily than ever before. Additionally, social media has provided a space for women to share their personal experiences and connect with other like-minded individuals.

Furthermore, social media has facilitated the creation of new online communities and spaces that are focused on feminist issues. These online spaces have proven to be powerful tools for promoting intersectionality and encouraging dialogue among individuals from diverse backgrounds. Moreover, social media has helped to challenge traditional gender norms and stereotypes through the promotion of feminist discourse. Furthermore, social media has provided a platform for exposing instances of gender-based violence and harassment. Social media has also enabled individuals to hold those who perpetrate such acts accountable and demand justice.

Empowerment drives from social media

Empowerment through social media has become a defining characteristic of the digital age, with individuals and communities using the platform to advocate for their rights, connect with others, and create positive change. Social media has given marginalized communities a platform to share their experiences, amplify their voices, and organize collective action. In this essay, we will explore how social media has driven empowerment and contributed to positive change for individuals and communities.

One of the most significant ways in which social media has driven feminist empowerment is through its ability to amplify the voices of women. Social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook have made it possible for women to share their experiences of sexism, harassment, and discrimination, in ways that were not previously possible (Skalli, 2013). These platforms have given women a powerful tool to challenge the patriarchal norms and practices that have long suppressed their voices.

Social media has also made it possible for women to organize and mobilize for collective action. Feminist movements like #MeToo, #TimesUp, and #BringBackOurGirls have used social media to raise awareness about critical issues affecting women and to advocate for change. Social media has also enabled women to connect with each other across geographic

and cultural boundaries, building powerful networks of support and solidarity (Pruchniewska, 2019).

Another important way in which social media has driven feminist empowerment is through its ability to provide access to information and resources. Social media platforms have made it possible for women to access news, educational resources, and professional networks that were previously unavailable. This has empowered women to pursue their goals and aspirations, connect with others who share their interests, and access resources that are critical to their success.

Women bringing up other women

Historically, women were often in competition with each other for limited positions of power (Gloria Cowan, 1998). However, social media platforms like LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have enabled women to connect, share experiences, and offer support and advice (Guérin, 2013). Women's networking groups have emerged on social media, providing a space for women to connect, promote each other's work, and offer mentorship and guidance.

Social media has also enabled women to build their personal brands, showcase their skills and expertise, and establish themselves as thought leaders. This increased visibility has created new opportunities for women and raised awareness of critical issues affecting women. Furthermore, social media has allowed women to challenge patriarchal norms and practices by calling out sexism, harassment, and discrimination and advocating for gender equality and social justice (Celestine Lugaye Ukpere, 2014).

Acceptance of differences

One of the core values and beliefs of feminism is the support for acceptance of differences. This includes acknowledging and embracing diverse experiences, perspectives, and identities, such as those related to race, class, sexuality, ability/disability status and religion, among others (Mansfield, 2007).

In this way, feminism supports the acceptance of differences and the celebration of diversity. It recognizes that all individuals have inherent worth and dignity, and that everyone should have access to the resources and opportunities they need to thrive. By embracing and celebrating differences, feminism can create a more inclusive and equitable world for all people.

Feminism's support for acceptance of differences involves dismantling systems of oppression and challenging the status quo that perpetuates inequalities. Furthermore, one of the major goals of feminism in promoting acceptance of differences is to empower individuals who have been historically marginalized and underrepresented (Scott, 2001). By empowering members of traditionally disenfranchised groups, feminism aims to create a society where everyone has equal access to opportunities and resources.

Commitment to the end of gender-based discrimination, harassment, and violence against women

Gender discrimination refers to the unequal treatment or opportunities based on gender, and it can affect women and other marginalized communities in various ways. Feminists seek to dismantle the systems and attitudes that perpetuate gender discrimination, and advocate for equal rights and opportunities for all people, regardless of their gender (Banwell, 2012). This includes addressing issues such as unequal pay, limited representation in leadership roles, and gender stereotypes that limit individuals' choices and opportunities. By working to end gender-based discrimination, feminists aim to create a more just and equitable society where everyone can thrive (Sanjel, 2015).

Harassment and violence, women are disproportionately affected by these issues, which can include sexual harassment, assault, and domestic violence (Banwell, 2012). Feminists recognize that these forms of violence are rooted in societal attitudes that perpetuate gender inequality and a culture that often blames and shames survivors. Feminist activism seeks to raise awareness about these issues, advocate for policies and laws that protect survivors, and support survivors in healing and seeking justice (Flood, 2011).

This violence can take many forms, including physical abuse, sexual assault or harassment, emotional abuse, and economic coercion (The Center for Health and Gender, 1999). Violence against women can occur in many settings, including homes, workplaces, schools, communities, and online spaces. This violence not only causes physical harm and emotional distress to the victims but also perpetuates gender inequality and undermines women's participation in social, economic, and political spheres. Various factors contribute to violence against women, including social norms and attitudes that condone or justify it, unequal power relations between men and women, poverty, lack of education and awareness, and inadequate legal protection (Gunilla Krantz, 2005).

Ultimately, feminists believe that everyone deserves to live free from the fear of violence and harassment, and that ending these forms of oppression is essential for achieving gender equality.

Women's March movement on social media

On social media, the Women's March used various platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, to share information about the movement and its goals. The hashtag #WomensMarch was created, and it quickly gained traction, becoming a trending topic on social media. This hashtag was used by millions of people to share their stories, pictures, and videos of the marches (Maznah Mohamad, 2006).

One of the most significant advantages of social media in the Women's March movement was the ability to connect with people from different parts of the world. Social media allowed organizers to reach out to people who might not have known about the march and its purpose. The movement also used social media to coordinate logistics, organize volunteers, and share updates on the progress of the movement.

Malaysia's recent Women's March back at 12th March 2023 at Sogo, Kuala Lumpur. The manifesto for this march is freedom of choice, decent work standard and living wages, child marriages, equal political participation, gender equality and many more.

Child marriages

In Malaysia, feminists are actively involved in the fight against child marriages, which predominantly affect girls and violate their fundamental human rights. Feminist activists in Malaysia are aware that child marriages have negative implications for girls and perpetuate gender inequality (Kohno, 2020). They argue that girls who are married off at an early age are often deprived of education, career opportunities, and autonomy (Ayako Kohno, 2019). Feminists also contend that child marriage reinforces patriarchal norms that degrade women and promote their subordination.

To combat child marriages, feminists in Malaysia engage in public awareness campaigns and advocate for policy changes. They also collaborate with various stakeholders such as communities, religious leaders, and the government to transform attitudes about early marriage and promote the rights of girls (Dr Ambikai S Thuraisingama, 2021).

Feminist organizations in Malaysia provide girls who are at risk of child marriage with support and resources, including education and training on reproductive health and legal rights. They also empower girls to make their own choices and help them gain access to education and job opportunities.

In addition, feminists in Malaysia are urging the government to take concrete action to address child marriages. They are calling for the government to raise the legal age of marriage to 18 and to enforce existing laws that prohibit child marriages. Feminists are also pushing for the government to allocate more resources to protect girls' rights and provide support to those who are at risk of child marriage.

Sexual & domestic abuse

Sexual and domestic abuse are serious problems that have a widespread impact in Malaysia, affecting people of all genders, ages, and socioeconomic backgrounds. However, many instances of abuse often go unreported due to the fear of retaliation, stigma, and cultural attitudes.

Sexual abuse, which includes sexual harassment, rape, molestation, and sexual assault, is particularly prevalent among women and children, with many incidents involving family members, acquaintances, or individuals in positions of power (Zuriatunfadzliyah Sahdan, 2021). Regrettably, many victims of sexual abuse face various challenges when trying to report their abuse, including limited access to support services and cultural norms that blame the victim.

Domestic abuse, or intimate partner violence, is also a prevalent issue in Malaysia. It encompasses physical, emotional, sexual, and economic abuse that occurs within intimate relationships (Noraini Ismail, 2022). Women are often the victims of domestic abuse, and they face significant challenges when trying to leave abusive relationships, including the fear of further harm and economic insecurity.

Feminists advocate for policies and laws that protect the rights of women and children, such as the Domestic Violence Act and the Sexual Offences Against Children Act, which were passed in Malaysia to prevent domestic abuse and sexual violence (Noraini Ismail, 2022). They also promote awareness campaigns and education programs that focus on healthy relationships, consent, and gender equality. Feminists are also working to improve support services for survivors of sexual and domestic abuse in Malaysia. They advocate for better access to

counseling, legal aid, and safe shelter for victims, especially those who are marginalized or vulnerable (Najimudeen M, 2019).

Furthermore, feminists are calling for accountability for perpetrators of sexual and domestic abuse. They seek to ensure that perpetrators are held responsible for their actions and receive appropriate punishment, regardless of their status or position in society (Siti Hajar Abdul Rauf, 2020).

Finally, feminists are challenging the cultural attitudes and gender stereotypes that contribute to sexual and domestic abuse in Malaysia. They seek to create a society where women and children are valued and respected, and where gender-based violence is not tolerated.

Negativities emerge from empowerment: "Anti-men"

The term "anti-men" generally refers to attitudes or behaviors that are hostile or discriminatory towards men as a group. It suggests a belief that men are inherently inferior, dangerous, or undesirable, and that they should be treated unfairly or excluded from certain opportunities or privileges. In a few cases, a self-proclaim feminist who overlook the actual idealism of being pro-feminism, may act "anti-men" when they are triggered to retaliate to men.

It is important to clarify that while there may be individual cases of anti-men attitudes or behaviors, there is no widespread movement or ideology of "anti-men" that is equivalent to the feminist movement. Feminism is a movement that seeks to promote gender equality and social justice for all individuals, regardless of gender, and does not seek to discriminate against or harm men (Okin, 1998).

Feminism recognizes that gender inequality harms everyone, including men, and seeks to challenge and dismantle harmful patriarchal structures that perpetuate gender-based oppression and discrimination. Feminists advocate for equal rights and opportunities for all individuals, regardless of gender, and work to promote gender equity in all areas of life.

It is a common misconception that feminism is anti-men, but this is not the case. Feminists recognize that men also face societal pressures and expectations related to gender and that these can be harmful to men's mental health and well-being. Feminism seeks to dismantle these harmful gender norms and create a society that values all individuals regardless of gender. It is crucial to promote mutual respect and understanding between all genders to create a more inclusive and equitable society. Stereotyping and discrimination based on gender are harmful and can lead to further marginalization and oppression of individuals and groups (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the impact of feminism on social media has been significant in promoting gender equality and social justice. Feminist activism on social media has brought critical issues to the forefront, empowered marginalized communities, and challenged traditional gender roles and stereotypes. However, social media can also perpetuate harmful stereotypes and contribute to online harassment and abuse. To ensure that the impact of feminism on social media remains positive, it is important to continue to engage critically with these platforms, actively promoting diverse voices and perspectives, and advocating for social justice and gender equality.

Social media has been a crucial tool for young working women in Malaysia to express their opinions and share their experiences, which has facilitated the formation of a supportive

community of like-minded individuals. Nonetheless, social media presents certain challenges, such as cyberbullying and the dissemination of false information. Thus, it is imperative to create secure online spaces that empower young women while also promoting responsible use of social media and critical thinking. In general, social media has provided a conducive environment for feminist culture to grow in Malaysia, and it is vital to maintain efforts to encourage and empower young women in their quest for gender equality.

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