

# *The Impact of Feminism Movement on Chinese Teenagers' Mental Health through Social Media: A Metoo Perspective*

Yutong Wu

Wuxi Tianyi High School, Wuxi, Jiangsu, China

**Keywords:** Metoo movement; Feminism; Teenagers; Social Media; Mental Health

**Abstract:** This study examines the impact of the feminist movement on young individuals through social media. A mixed-methods approach, utilizing survey questionnaires and one-on-one interviews, was employed to collect data from participants in Chinese high schools and universities. The findings demonstrate that the feminist movement has gained significant traction, with active engagement from both genders. Social media plays a crucial role in disseminating feminist ideas and generating discussions. However, female adolescents exposed to feminist content on social media reported negative impacts, such as increased anxiety and self-doubt, affecting their overall well-being. Addressing these challenges is crucial for fostering an inclusive and supportive environment for the next generation of activists and advocates.

## 1. Introduction

Gender discrimination may be found in several faiths, governments, and groups across the world. The disparity in treatment of men and women in the global market is represented in various dimensions, such as job treatment, workload, salary, and so on. The disparity in treatment of men and women in the global market is represented in various dimensions, such as job treatment, workload, salary, and so on. Gender-based discrimination begins at birth and continues throughout one's life <sup>[1]</sup>.

The Hollywood film industry's reputation is well-known globally, but not all famous actors possess the character to match their fame. In approximately 2017, numerous renowned Hollywood stars were accused of sexual assault or harassment. Regardless of fame, gender, wealth, or age, anyone can become a victim. According to the General Campaign to End Violence Against Women, 83 percent of girls aged 12 to 16 have experienced some form of sexual assault at school <sup>[2]</sup>. Scholars have increasingly recognized the rising proportion of gender-based crimes within overall crime rates <sup>[3]</sup>.

The increase of fermenting crime rate leads to more and more serious injuries to women, and the Metoo movement is slowly fermenting among women. According to Special Report, from 1995 to 2010, female nationwide experienced rape or sexual assault has increased from 270, 000 to 556, 000. There are more than 50% of the total rape or sexual violent victimization from 1995 to 2010 <sup>[4]</sup>. As these crimes escalated, some men began exhibiting more extreme behaviors, while some women

chose silence in response to underestimation. However, brave individuals stood up for the victims. The Metoo movement emerged as a social movement against a culture of sexual abuse, harassment, and rape. It involves individuals sharing their experiences of sexual abuse or harassment. The term "me too" was first used on social media in 2006 by sexual assault survivor and activist Tarana Burke. In October 2017, after the extensive sexual abuse allegations against Harvey Weinstein were exposed, American actress Alyssa Milano tweeted about women writing 'me' as a status, raising awareness of the problem. The tweet quickly became a viral hashtag on social media. Pressured by public opinion, Hollywood faced significant repercussions in the short term. The Metoo movement created a societal wave, resonating with numerous victims. It transcended social media, reaching the streets and communities, and had a profound impact on American society. Different countries also witnessed varying degrees of change [5].

Studies have explored the impact of the Metoo movement on men and women in specific regions, primarily focusing on adults rather than different age groups. This paper aims to address the impact of the Metoo movement on teenagers through social media and propose potential positive solutions.

## 2. Result

### 2.1 Survey

The survey includes data from Chinese adolescents in various high schools and universities, with 52% women and 48% men participating. Participants have varying levels of understanding regarding the feminist and anti-feminist movements. The collected data is presented in figures (Figures 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5) in the paper, and interview responses are presented separately.

Figure 1 shows how participants engage with feminist posts on social media and participate in related discussions. 40 participants read feminist tweets, while 5 did not. 37 participants not only read the tweets but also engaged in discussions. Figure 2 reveals the frequency of reading tweets related to feminism, ranging from never to daily. Figure 3 illustrates the level of involvement in feminist discussions, with some choosing to be bystanders and others expressing their views. Figure 4 displays participants' attitudes towards these discussions, with some finding them non-offensive and others offensive. Figure 5 presents the psychological anxiety scores of 10 participants after viewing feminist statements on social media.

These figures offer a comprehensive overview of participants' interactions with feminist content on social media and their attitudes towards related discussions.

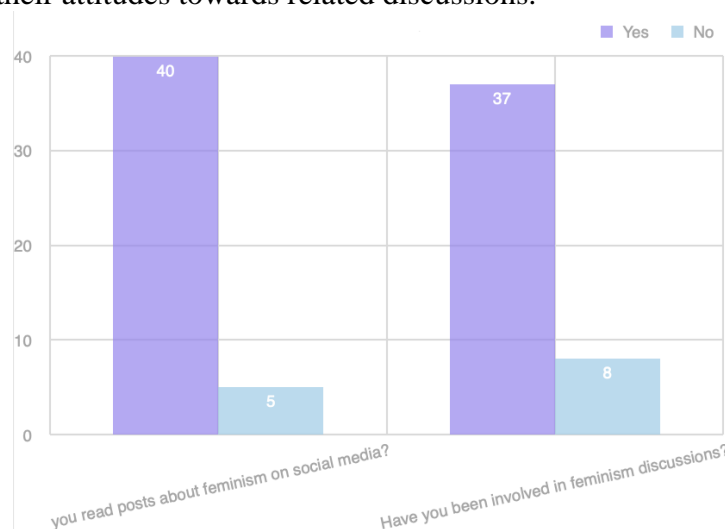


Figure 1: How people pay attention about feminism on social media

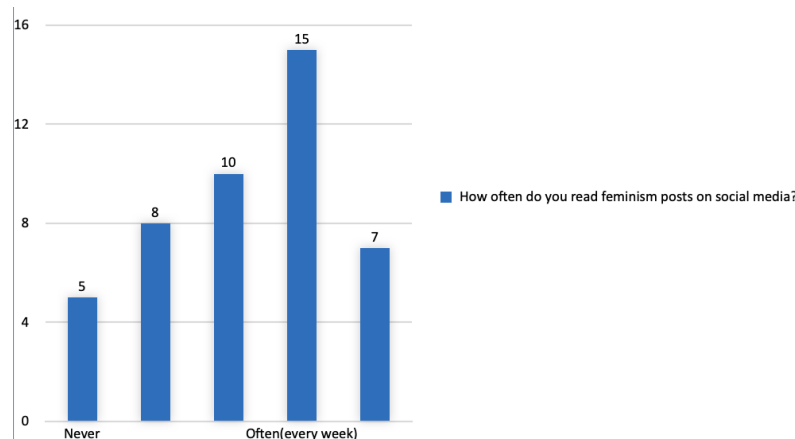


Figure 2: How often people read feminism posts on social media

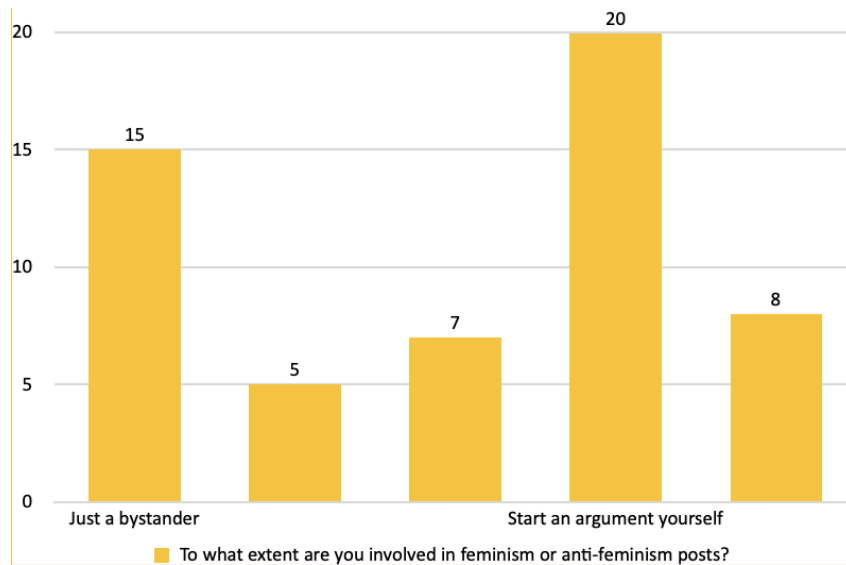


Figure 3: To what extent people involved in feminism or anti-feminism posts

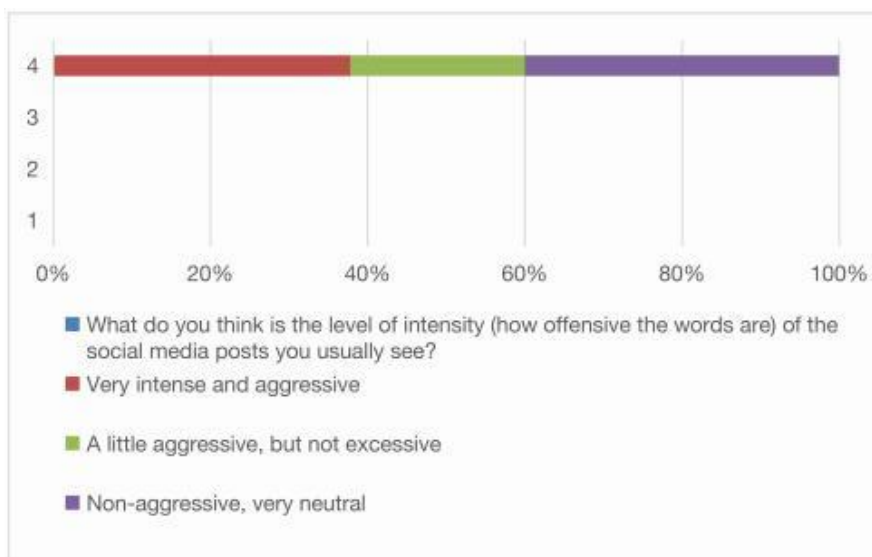


Figure 4: What people think ins the level of intensity of the social media posts they usually see

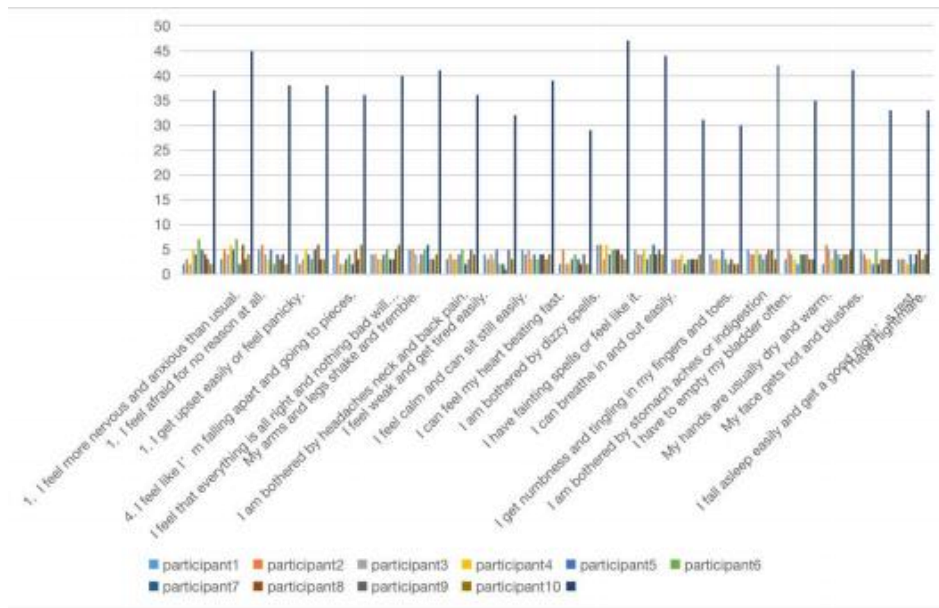


Figure 5: The mental health of people after seeing the posts

## 2.2 Qualitative Data

Four participants from the questionnaire, three women, and one man, were selected for one-on-one interviews to gain deeper insights into the attitudes and influences of youth knowledgeable about the feminist movement. The interview questions ranged from surface-level inquiries to more profound discussions, exploring how they learned about feminism through social media and which platforms they used.

The two female interviewees mentioned learning about feminism through Weibo, with one discovering it through articles shared by a blogger on a WeChat official account, providing theoretical knowledge.

Regarding their reactions to feminist issues on social media, the female interviewees observed discussions but did not actively participate, raising questions about women's reluctance to discuss gender-related topics publicly due to societal expectations or fear of backlash. The male interviewee expressed hesitancy in participating in discussions surrounding female issues, suggesting potential gender differences in engaging with feminist discourse.

Regarding the impact of the feminist movement on women's development, the female interviewees held diverse opinions. Two believed incidents targeting women fostered unity and mutual support, positively affecting development, while one emphasized self-perception's role, minimizing external influences. The male interviewee held a pessimistic view, suggesting certain articles and events could negatively impact women's development and lead to stagnation. These findings highlight the need for further research on gendered attitudes shaping perceptions of the feminist movement.

## 3. Conclusion

The feminist movement has gained significant traction in the public sphere, with high engagement from both men and women. Social media plays a crucial role in disseminating feminist ideas and generating discussions. However, this study reveals that female adolescents exposed to feminist content on social media can experience negative impacts, including increased anxiety and self-doubt, affecting their overall well-being.

Future research should explore the attitudes of male teenagers towards feminism and how social media influences their perspectives. Understanding how adolescents engage with feminist content online and its impact on their outlook would provide valuable insights. This study's limitations include the small sample size and short-term data collection, suggesting the need for larger samples and longer observation periods for more comprehensive findings.

Addressing the negative effects of social media on adolescent mental health requires a collaborative effort involving parents, network supervision departments, policymakers, educators, and healthcare professionals. Interventions and strategies to support adolescents experiencing self-doubt and anxiety, including therapeutic techniques and preventative measures, are essential.

In conclusion, this study highlights the complex relationship between social media, feminism, and adolescent well-being. It serves as a starting point for further exploration and interventions to safeguard the mental health of future generations. Prioritizing efforts to support adolescent mental health and developing effective strategies to mitigate social media's negative impacts are crucial for promoting healthy development and well-being among young people.

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