

## **Feminism: The Forbidden label**

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### **Authors Note**

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## **Abstract**

Nowadays, although feminism is a topic discussed more and more around the world, there's still some people who avoid the concept of it. Feminism is an issue that affects the society in general and it doesn't refer only to the female audience. Huge personalities have called themselves feminists, but society instead of trying to study more and understand what feminism stands for, prefers to judge them. That's a problem that feminism it's facing throughout the years. The fact that people are not aware of what it is and often translate it as the extreme version of it, called feminazi. As we see, this misunderstanding it's caused because people are not willing to find out more about this movement. Feminism, they believe, is incompatible with their values and way of life. That, however, is not correct. Equality is central to feminism. That is something to which we should all agree. In this paper, we will delve into the reasons why society is so distant from this movement. We will try to understand their point of view and find out if their arguments are actually correct through a study we conducted on a randomly selected sample from around the world. The study included questionnaire related to the most important approaches: How do you classify yourself as a feminist, the sample and society's knowledge of the feminist movement, the sample's view of why societies distort the feminist movement, is it because they consider it against customs and traditions or hostile to religion? We have concluded that although 75% of them are considered feminist, more than half of them are ignorant of the goal of the feminist movement and believe that society is not aware of the movement as well. They believe that feminism has not yet achieved its goals too.

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## **Introduction**

Although in 2022 people are discussing more about the feminism movement, there are still some of them who refuse to self-identify themselves this way. The misconception of the term that our society has nowadays is one of the reasons why more and more people refuse this movement. Women particularly, even if they agree with everything that it's mentioned in feminism, they deny to be called feminists. We have understood that this denial is created from the fear to be called men haters and feminazis. In order to find

out the reason for society's aversion to the feminist movement, we had to draw conclusions from various aspects. Therefore, the entrances to the research were developed as follows: the extent to which a person considers himself /herself as a feminist, the question of the sample about the extent of knowledge and society about the feminist movement. Moreover, we inquired the rule of societies for feminist and whether they consider them men haters, anti-religious, or even in contrary to traditions. Finally, we planned to know the extent to which the feminist movement reached its goals.

### **State of Art**

Feminazis is used to describe the supporters of the feminism movement but in a derogatory way. It refers to a group or an individual whose feminist thoughts are considered irrational. A feminist though believes that all genders should be equal to every social, political and economic situation. So, as a term, it shouldn't be confused with feminazi because they are two different concepts. While feminism is all about equality, feminazi aims to promote gender segregation, which implies as written at the Encyclopedia Titanica, the existence of a group that considers itself superior to another, to the point where it seeks to exterminate them. As we see here, society has a stereotype about the word feminism itself. "This has led women to think that if they labelled themselves as feminists, they will automatically be portrayed as man haters and as feminazis". (Vergara et al., n.d.). It's common for society to use the word "feminazi" to refer to any woman who adopts the principles of the feminism movement and that's mostly caused from the lack of knowledge that we have about the topic. Unfortunately, this word is being used by people who feel as a victim of feminism. "The term of feminazi widely used by those who try to smear feminism". (Horan, n.d.). It is a fact that feminazi in particular has become a well-known insult, used in mass and online media to discredit and stigmatize women whose views or behavior are regarded as not only feminist, but moreover threateningly "radical" or "extreme". Since a lot of women have been called publicly as feminists, the use of feminazi has increased.

Feminism though it's so far away from all that. Furthermore, it's irritating when people don't even try to learn more about the topic, preferring instead to judge everyone else who does. By far, the main problem here is the lack of information that as a society we have. "So, when a woman says that she's a feminism, it is believed that she is making a statement about her political viewpoints. However, re-search has consistently shown that, although a majority of women hold what would be considered feminist ideologies,

there is a great hesitance among women to call themselves feminists. For example, in a recent study investigating predictors of feminist self-identification, 63% of the sample did not self-identify as feminists but were in support of feminist goals". (Williams & Wittig, 1997; see also Renzetti, 1987; Sommers, 1994 cited in Liss et al., 2000). One more possibility here is that people do not identify themselves as feminists because they do not understand what feminism is. Feminism, as a terminology, was aforementioned presented; however, its carries on a lot of philosophies from the terminology users.. Although these viewpoints are distinct and may have very different implications for social policy, a woman who subscribes to any one of them may say she is a feminist.

As we already described, these days we have the feminist movement that emerged from the last century and the idea or goal is unfortunately still unknown, despite its adoption by thousands of men and women. According to Ogletree et al., 2019, a citing research was conducted by Texas university in 2015 on students (182 females, 87 males).The majority were between the ages of 18 and 23 (88%). 218 of the answers to the open-ended question asking participants to describe a feminist, 183 included the topic of "equality/respect." Many have used the word "equal" or "equality", as in the following example: "A feminist is a person of any gender, sexual orientation, race, or SES who wants and fights for peace and equality for all ". Regarding negative themes, 17 responses coded for negative feelings towards men, and 14 were coded for women with a problem. Examples of those coded for the previous topic include, "In my experience, women care more about women and don't care about men" and "Feminism is one that sees men only as creatures that belittle women and don't see the good in men. They don't even like marriage. Because they have to play a "reducer role".This way it becomes clear to us why societies are alienated from the feminist movement. It's because of the ambiguity and the misunderstanding of its goal or because of the different meanings that its purpose has for some people.

Even if women are fully informed about feminism though, they still reject to be called like this. This happens because they believe that feminism movement victimize them. Many women think that they already have won the freedom that they deserve. For example, they can vote, they have the same access to jobs and education as men, they can dress how they want and they have an equal place in a relationship as their partners. This leads to the fact that they consider feminists victimize themselves instead of accepting what they already have. But sexism is not dead. And all the above are not things that women all around the world can have. It's true that women have come a long way, but

their “mission” is still not over. For example, based on Knowles-Carter, n.d. research, today women make up half of the U.S. workforce, but the average working woman earns only 77% of what the average working man makes. But unless women and men both say this is unacceptable, things will not change. Men have to demand that their wives, daughters, mothers, and sisters earn more—commensurate with their qualifications and not their gender. Equality will be achieved when men and women are granted equal pay and equal respect. We have to teach our boys the rules of equality and respect, so that as they grow up, gender equality becomes a natural way of life. And we have to teach our girls that they can reach as high as humanly possible. We have a lot of work to do, but we can get there if we work together.

One more reason why women do not approve the feminist label it’s because they think that it is against their traditions and rejects traditional gender roles. Women who like the traditional way of living and prefer being homemakers and traditionally feminine, believe that feminism threatens that type of lifestyle. In their minds this is against traditional gender roles, although feminism just tends to get rid of the assumption that girls should be more feminine and boys more masculine. As Blackstone et al., (2003) said; The feminist perspective points out that gender roles are not simply ideas about appropriate behavior for males and females but are also linked to the different levels of power that males and females hold in society.

As an example at Blackstone et al., (2003) research, we learn that maintaining economic control over themselves and their families is one way that men experience greater power in society than women. Because men are expected to be the primary breadwinners for their families, women often find themselves to be in poverty if their marriages dissolve. In this case, a feminist perspective would assert that men tend to hold more power in their marriages than women since men are less likely to lose power or social status if their marriages dissolve. So, political movements such as the feminist movement continue to work to deconstruct gender stereotypes and offer alternative visions of gender roles that emphasize equality between women and men.

Furthermore, the interaction between feminism and religion exists. People with a restricted religion reference believe that feminism significantly goes against the religions. Scoping on the research conducted by Noble (2018) she responds to a slew of questions about this subject. She interviewed women who were Christian, Jewish and Muslim. At the end of her article she came to the conclusion that: “ It’s harmful to assume that religion and feminism simply don’t mix. Although the three Abrahamic religions may

differ in some ways, they all are very old religions, written in times when roles and expectations of genders were strictly adhered to. The writings of these religions haven't changed too much, but cultures have, and we are starting to see differences being played out between cultures and religion. Some tensions arise as interpretations of texts become more broad and more fitting to modern day culture, which has caused secular and religious people alike to re-think and start to interpret religious writings in ways that are subjective to each religious person." The article accepts the view that feminism and religion can coexist, but some societies took religion in the way of customs and traditions and refused to change from this idea.

Overgeneralizing feminism as a male-hate movement is a scare tactic to keep people away from the idea of feminism, even when their actual values and beliefs can be described as feminist. Islamic feminists are interested in developing an ethical reading of the two pillars of Islam, the Qur'an and the Sunnah, in order to find a religious interpretation that supports their feminist viewpoint. Thus, it becomes legitimate to talk about the production of a new Islamic discourse, and about appropriating what is religious, in a general sense.

Moreover, some people don't like the way feminists present themselves through social media. It is believed that "the more one shouts, the less they will be heard. And that is also where a lot of feminists have gone wrong. The only way we can make people understand the importance and relevance of women empowerment in the country is by discussion, not by shutting them nastily on social media."(Masood & Akhtar, n.d.). But to be honest, the social media part is not something that it's actually connected to the movement itself. Because what you choose to post to the media, is part of your preferences as an individual and it doesn't have to do with what truly feminism stands for.

Summing up, after our research about the topic, we came to the conclusion that most of the disputes that society has around feminism are not true. It is important to study about this movement and try to adopt its beliefs in our everyday life. Because feminism does not refer only to women but to the whole society in general. So, we shouldn't be afraid to call ourselves this way!

## **Methods**

In the first stage, what we had to do before starting to work on our article, is to find a question that expresses our concern and describes the main topic of our research. Our research was based on our thoughts and doubts about the topic, which we wanted to know if they were true. Therefore, we began looking for articles and research by third parties so that we could verify that our original ideas could be confirmed, somehow. During our research, we realized that there were other authors who were as immersed in the same topic as us, but nevertheless, we did not find a related article that brought all this information together. Therefore, what we have tried to do at this point is to collect all our arguments, which were based on the topic of our article and present our final work along with a small survey that we created ourselves. In our case, we created a questionnaire in May 2022 that runs until today, to collect qualitative data to see if other people (perhaps around our age) generally agreed with the findings we gathered during our research. The sample was randomly selected from around the world and our questions were answered through Google forms, because it is the easiest to collect data. The questions were based on the feminist movement and how respondents view it. Next, we'll compare the results of our survey with what we've found through our own research.

## **Results**

Now, when it comes to the results, we had 36 people that replied to our questions. Our first question was about the gender of our respondents, just because we wanted to be sure that we have a variety of opinions when it comes to their replies. So, from the 36 persons, 28 of them were females (77,8% of the answers) and 8 of them males (22,2% of the answers). We will discuss more about it further.

## **Consideration as a feminist**

We continued our questionnaire by asking if our respondents, define themselves to be feminists. We already gave a definition of feminism, at the beginning of the questionnaire, just to make sure that everyone understood what we are talking about and answer based on this. So, from our results we got that 27 people replied yes to this question (75% of the answers), 4 of them replied no (11,1% of the answers) and 5 of them did not want to answer it (13.9% of the answers).

### **Acquaintance with the feminist movement by oneself and society**

Our 3<sup>rd</sup> question was based on their knowledge around the feminism movement and we had various results to this one. Ten people admitted that they are very well informed about the movement (27,8%), 8 admitted that they are quite well informed (22,2%), 6 replied that they are fairly well informed (16,7%), also 6 replied that they are perfectly informed about the movement (16,7%), 5 of them said that they are very little informed (13,9%) and only 1 admitted that is not at all informed about it (2,8%).

Moving on, we kept going on the same path, but this time we asked if they believe that the general public is aware of the feminist movement. Our results to this question was that 17 people believe that society is somewhat informed about it (47,2%), 7 people replied that society is slightly aware about the movement (19,4%), 7 people also replied that society is moderately aware of the movement (19,4%), while 3 of them replied that the general public is not at all aware about the movement (8,3%) and 2 believe that we are actually extremely aware of it (5,6%).

### **Public opinion about feminists**

On our 5<sup>th</sup> question we got deeper into our main issue and we asked their opinion about those who identify themselves as feminists and the society's attitude towards them. Specifically, we mention the word "judge" and whether or not society is going to judge feminists. Our replies here were very interesting here since, 15 people replied that this is more true than false (41,7%), 11 of them replied that the answers is somewhere in between (30,6%), 5 replied that this is a true thing (13,9%), 3 replied that it's more false than true (8,3%) and 2 replied that it's false (5,6%).

### **Feminism as a men haters**

On the 6<sup>th</sup> question we gave them a statement. That in today's society, feminists are frequently considered as men's haters. We were curious to see how many people agree with this statement or not. So, 15 people strongly disagree with it (41,7%), while 9 agree with the statement (25%). Five of them disagree with it (13,9%), 4 of them strongly agree with it (11,1%) and 3 of them neither agree or disagree (8,3%).

### **Misunderstanding of the feminist movement**

The next question is referred to the misunderstanding that many people have these days about the concept of feminism. Twelve people replied that this is true of what they believe (33,3%), 9 of them were neutral (25%), 7 of them replied that is somewhat true of



what they believe (19,4%), 7 also replied that it's very true of what they believe (19,4%) and only one replied that is somewhat untrue of what they believe (2,8%).

### **The feminist movement's non traditions stance**

The 8<sup>th</sup> question is about conservatism and the traditional values and how much responsible these things are for the feminist movement's current disapproval. Twelve people replied that it's mostly responsible (33,3%), 13 of them replied that is somewhat responsible (36,1%), 5 of them replied that it's not at all responsible (13,9%), while 5 also replied that it is completely responsible (13,9) and only 1 didn't want to answer to this question (2,8%).

### **Anti-religious movement**

Our 9<sup>th</sup> question was about feminism and religion and if the first one goes against the other one. 18 people said definitely not (50%), 13 people said that they are uncertain about this topic (36,1%), 3 people said definitely yes (8,3%) and 2 did not want to answer to this (5,6%).

### **The feminist movement's impact on both genders**

We continued with a more general question about who do people believe that is the most affected by the feminist movement. Is it a topic that impacts all of us as individuals? 33 people replied that both men and women are affected from the movement (91,7%), while 1 of them said that only impacts women (2,8%), also 1 said that no one is affected from it (2,8%) and finally 1 did not want to answer to the question (2,8%).

### **Achieving the objectives of the feminist movement**

Last but not least, we asked our respondents if they believe that the feminist movement has achieved its goal. 18 of our responses were quite a bit (50%), 16 of them were a little (44,4%), 1 of them replied completely (2,8%) and 1 of them did not want to answer (2,8%).

Closing, we were really satisfied with our results and we would like to thank all the people that participated in this and helped us with our research. Even though we were expecting more results, just so that we could be more accurate, we are still going to work and take into consideration the replies that we have.

### **Discussion**

One of the first questions that we examined in our questionnaire, apart from the gender, was if people define themselves as a feminist. Of course, we gave a definition about what feminism stands for in the beginning of our questionnaire just to be sure that all of our respondents know in what we are referring to. Most of our replies, especially 27 of them (75%) said yes to this question, while 4 replied no (11,1%) and 5 (13,9%) did not want to answer. It was a good thing for the evolution of our questionnaire that we have answers from both supporters and non-supporters of the feminist movement. This way we will examine both of their approaches to the topic.

The first thing that we examined in this paper, is the fact that nowadays there is a misconception of the feminism term. A lot of people are not well informed about the feminist movement and this leads them to not consider themselves as a part of it. With a quick questionnaire that we made, we tried to understand if people are aware of feminism and how well are informed, of what it represents. So, one of our questions was if they (the respondents) believe that they have a proper knowledge around feminism. It is important to mention here, that from the 36 results that we got from our questionnaire, only 6 of them (16,7%) felt brave enough to say that they are perfectly informed about the topic. This makes us confirm our first thoughts that not a lot of people these days have actually read things about the movement or try to participate or fight for it. Our other replies to this question were being fluctuating between the “Very little informed” and the “Very well informed”, while there was one person who admitted that he’s not at all informed about feminism.

Continuing with that, we wanted to broaden the question so we chose this time to ask, if they believe that society in general is well informed about the movement. This way we would understand more, not only about their personal knowledge, but also what their thoughts are about others. Again, here, our results were somewhere in between. Only two people chose the option that nowadays the general public is extremely aware of the feminist movement (5,6%), when the majority of our responses was the “Somewhat aware” (47,2%). We can confirm here, that society, as we were already thinking is not very well informed about the feminism issue, but also each person as an individual doesn’t feel very confident about his own knowledge of the movement.

Part of the misconception, is the fact that a lot of people characterize feminists as sexists or feminazis too. We made this statement in our questionnaire and asked our respondents if they agree with the fact that women who label themselves as feminists are also men haters. Luckily, most of our results strongly disagreed with it (41,7%) but there

were 4 people (11,1%) who supported it by choosing that they strongly agree with the statement and 9 (25%) that said they agree. We can tell that this question divided our respondents since half of them seem to understand that feminism is referring to equality, while others still stick to this old fashioned idea, that if you call yourself as a feminist, that means that you automatically hate men and maybe you want to be above them.

Moreover, this makes us realize that society in general, may judge feminists and the feminism movement. Because instead of feeling the need to educate themselves, they prefer to criticize them. This was one of our questions in the questionnaire too. If people believe that society actually judges those who identify as feminists. For one more time we see that most of our results have the same belief as we do. Fifteen people answered this question (41,7%), that this argument is more true than false and five of them (13,9%) chose the option “True”. But there are still some answers in between and of course, 5 people who are on the opposite site and don’t believe that society has anything “against” feminists. We have come to a conclusion that all the above have been “created” because of the lack of proper information that we have around the topic.

But for sure, it’s not only that. As we have discussed above in our article, traditions and religion, are two things that feminism’s non-supporters usually mention. It is believed that these two don’t go along with the idea of feminism. We referred to that in our questionnaire too. Firstly, we asked if conservatism and traditional values are responsibly for feminism’s current disapproval. This time our results were somewhere in between. Specifically, 13 people (36,1%) believe that these two things are somewhat responsible while 12 (33,3%) answered that it’s mostly responsible. On the other hand, we had the same number of answers for the complete opposite. What we mean here is that 5 people (13,9%) think that traditions are completely responsible about the feminist movement’s current refusal, but also 5 (13,9%) of them believe that they’re not responsible at all. For one more time we can see here the confusion that a lot of people have around the topic since for them, the answer is always somewhere in the middle.

When we are talking about religion though, not many people take place. There are specific religions that want women to be inferior to men, but society is not well informed about every religion’s beliefs. For that reason in our questionnaire, we have 13 people (36,1%) who are uncertain when we asked if the feminist movement is anti-religious. We were surprised when we saw that 18 people (50%) actually said that feminism is definitely not anti-religious though. I think that it’s important to mention here that we shared this questionnaire to individuals who share different kinds of religion, so it was

very important to us to see the answers that this question had. Of course, there were 3 people (8,3%) who said that yes, feminism is anti-religious and 2 (5,6%) who did not want to answer. In a research done by Nobel (2018) she is giving answers to the quandary between feminism and religion explaining that some religions were written so many years ago but cultures have changed so much since then. So the same changes need to happen to these religions, adopting the new way of life.

Feminism is a movement that impacts both men and women. It helps women to be more equal and earn what they deserve when they have a man in front of them, but it also helps men be more emotional, open with their emotions and sensitive rather than the strong, mature figure that society forces them to have. We used a question related to this, about who is the most affected by the feminist movement. We are glad that most of our answers 33 out of 36 (91,7%) were “both of them”. It is important that many of them understand the good impact that feminism is going to have for both genders.

Closing our questionnaire, we were wondering if people believe that nowadays the feminist movement has achieved its goals and if there's no reason to try to fight about it, still. 18 of the answers (50%) believe that feminism has accomplished its goal quite a bit while 16 of them (44,4%) believe that this has happened only a little. Only 1 person thought (2,8%) thinks that feminism has achieved its goals completely while another one (2,8%) did not want to answer. It is good that people think that feminism has a lot more to change in our society, but of course we need to recognize that some small changes are already happening. If more and more people start getting involved, then the more feminism will approach its goals.

## **Conclusion**

All in all, we are really satisfied with our final result. We managed to find valid sources to support our own arguments and to develop our article. It is true that nowadays feminism and people who fight for it have achieved some great changes and we are grateful about it. But it is also true, that the feminism movement has faced many obstacles due to its journey and people who criticize it.

The lack of knowledge, conservatism, the traditional way of living and religion, it's true that make people have second thoughts about the feminism movement. These things were being studied for so many years ago and we are still trying to find solutions to fight them. It is a good thing that a lot of people who are also international known, try to raise

awareness for the feminist movement.

Finally, it can be said that the entrance to the difference in the extent of the world's knowledge of the feminist movement and its goals represents one of the most important contemporary entrances now related to the study of women. The main objective of this paper is to study the conditions of women and their situations in their intersections with other different elements, such as race, ethnic groups and class, which gives this type of analysis an intellectual and theoretical impetus that enriches feminist theory and deepens its capabilities to understand women's living reality.

We will repeat for one more time here, that feminism is all about equality. Although there are still a lot of people who refuse this term, we hope for a future change, because this movement has a lot to offer to our society.

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