

# The Impact of the Development of Feminism on the Construction of Women's Psychological Environment in the Internet Era

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**Abstract.** Under the influence of feminism in the Internet era, women's psychological changes have been widely discussed, but there are still shortcomings in Internet communication. This article will analyze the impact of the Internet age on the development of feminism and the construction of women's psychological environment. This article will conclude that the Internet has a certain positive impact on the spread of feminism, including expanding the number of people who understand feminism and promoting the improvement of women's social status. Women's psychological environment has become more and more positive under this development, which not only liberates their thoughts but also makes their ideas more open. Of course, Internet communication also has the problem of single extreme information caused by the echo chamber effect, as well as the spread of false information and the release of emotional and guiding comments. These problems all affect the further promotion of feminism in society. Based on the existing problems, this article puts forward the following suggestions: the Internet platform updates the push mechanism, the communicator publishes the content carefully, the Internet users improve their ability to distinguish, and psychological counseling makes reasonable use of feminist ideas.

**Keywords:** Internet; social media; feminism; women's status; mental health

## 1. Introduction

Nowadays, people are in an era of high digitalization and widespread access to information. The wide use of the Internet has gradually connected people all over the world together, and social media has provided a more convenient platform for people to express their views. People's access to information has become diverse. Feminism has always been one of the hot topics. Through the Internet, more women can realize feminism, and feminism has gradually entered the public's vision, which has made great new developments in feminism. In the propaganda of the Internet, the actual meaning of feminism has also appeared in some deviations. For example, many people call it women's rights (women's status is higher than men's), but feminism is the pursuit of equality, the equality of men and women, rather than women's status is higher than men's. Many people's understandings of feminism are not comprehensive, leading to the strengthening of the public's malice towards women. Of course, in many cases, feminist propaganda gives many women a new understanding of their gender and the current situation in society. For example, they no longer see 'housewives' as the only way out for women, nor do they see 'men should be respected more than women' as a moral code. Under the traditional thinking of 'men are superior to women', women who have been subjected to gender discrimination and stereotypes for a long time have also changed their mentality. Many of them suffer from mental illness due the Internet violence, and some of them get rid of their past because of the promotion of new ideas, overcome psychological difficulties, and move towards a better future. This article will discuss how the development of feminism has a positive or negative impact on the construction of women's psychological environment in the Internet era. This issue is analyzed by analyzing the way feminism spreads on the network platform, the propaganda content, and the audience's response to it. Through this research, people can better understand the psychological condition of women, and guide the corresponding help of this society to build a more favorable network environment for gender equality.

## **2. The Impact of the Internet Era on Women and Feminism**

### **2.1. The Wide Spread of Feminism**

With the development of the Internet era, feminism has gradually entered people's lives, making more and more people understand feminism and contact with new ideas. Flores et al. Pointed out that compared with traditional communication methods, social media broke the cultural and geographical restrictions, promoted the spread of feminism, and provided people in remote areas with opportunities to learn about feminism [1]. Moreover, social media has become an important teaching tool in the field of education, allowing students to have a deeper understanding of the idea of gender equality and foster a good growth environment.

Social media, such as Twitter, has opened up a low-cost and efficient way for feminist movements to spread their message around the world by simply Posting with their fingers, rather than marching in the streets and attracting only a few people's attention. This greatly broadens the channels of voice. Social media allows people who, due to geographical, security, or other restrictions, cannot directly participate in offline protests and actions to freely express their opinions and support online [2]. This has greatly stimulated the enthusiasm of more individuals to participate, especially young people and minority groups to have their opinions heard.

### **2.2. The Improvement of Women's Social Status**

The network platform provides a place for people from all over the world to communicate so that people can better express their views on feminism freely. These all promote the globalization of feminism. Feminism can also have different forms of propaganda and expression in different regions. For example, in China, Chinese feminism emphasizes collectivism rather than individual rights and freedoms. To a certain extent, it promoted the social status of a new generation of women. Chinese feminism developed in the following ways: Due to the previous one-child-only policy, each family could only have one child. If there was only one girl in the family, the family would devote its resources to the training of the girl, instead of focusing on the training of the boy as before when there were both boys and girls, which gradually resulted in more outstanding women in China and greatly promoted the progress of women's status [3]. In the Internet era, those women who go out of society have greater freedom and more opportunities to promote women's independent thoughts on the Internet, deeply affecting the next generation of women.

The Internet and social media platforms have connected women around the world, providing women with better platforms to advocate and express their ideas, as well as opportunities for women to organize and mobilize social action faster, and for women of different backgrounds and identities to work together. For example, in the MeToo movement launched in the United States in 2017, the female star Alyssa took the lead in the social media Twitter post and got a lot of other stars' responses, and through the establishment of theme tags (tag) and other methods, so that the workplace sexual harassment and other women received the incident has been widely spread, causing attention and attention around the world. Through data analysis, Levy showed that the 'MeToo movement' in 2017 became an important issue in the media at that time, changed the public's attitude towards "gender equality" to some extent, and even prompted many companies to formulate new policies and some countries and regions to enact new laws [4].

### **2.3. Psychological Level**

#### **2.3.1. Liberation of women's thoughts and self-identity**

Under the influence of feminism, many women get rid of gender stereotypes or social expectations of women, so that women's psychological environment can be maintained in a much healthier condition [5]. For example, traditional society requires women to be gentle, hard-working housewives who can cook and take care of their husbands and children. The requirement for women is to get married early and marry a good husband. Under long-term gender oppression, women will be in a long-term state of self-doubt and inferiority, which seriously affects their mental health. Women in

modern society are influenced by feminism. With the awakening of consciousness, they gradually break the shackles of stereotypes. They can be anything they become, and women can be brave, and resilient, the best investors in business, the surgeons with the highest success rates, and the scientists who benefit humanity. They can follow their happiness and thus achieve a healthy mental state.

The feminist movement strengthened women's sense of identity for their social identity and sense of collectivism, making them more identify with their female identity, and reducing the inferiority caused by the biological gender of women [6]. If women actively participate in the feminist movement, their social identity is closely related to their group identity. When women regard themselves as members of the feminist group, they are more likely to fight for the collective interests of feminism, and further deepen women's sense of identity and belonging to their own identity.

### **2.3.2. A more open mindset**

Online platforms provide a diversified aesthetic so that more women do not fall into the trap of chasing some useless trends, thus affecting their mental health. For example, Cohen et al. mentioned in their research the psychological situation of women facing their body image [7]. Compared with traditional media, such as magazines and newspapers, which display idealized body aesthetics, social media calls on women to accept all their healthy bodies. This improves women's self-esteem, helps reduce mental health issues such as anxiety and depression to achieve a more idealized body, and effectively reduces body discrimination and increases inclusion.

With the development of the Internet, people pay more and more attention to mental health, and the Internet platform plays a key role in this process. In the past, when the network was underdeveloped, due to limited information, people often lacked an understanding of mental illness. When they encountered physical discomfort, they were more inclined to think that it was a physical problem, thus ignoring the possibility of mental illness. However, the development of the Internet has broken this limitation and promoted the process of online psychotherapy services. Nowadays, people do not need to go out, or even make an appointment in advance, they can easily make an appointment with a psychologist through an online platform for consultation and timely adjustment of psychological state. Take BetterHelp, an online psychological counseling application, as an example, provides people with convenient, affordable, and even a variety of psychological treatment services, and has a positive impact on promoting people's mental health [8].

## **3. Existing Problems**

### **3.1. Limitations of Network Communication**

Due to the push mechanism of big data, there is the problem of the echo chamber effect, the algorithm will identify your preferences and biases according to the content people like or often read, to push new posts that fit your preferences. In other words, the information people receive on social media is selective and consistent with their views, rather than a variety of different views. For instance, people who follow traditional male chauvinism will rarely notice posts that promote the idea of gender equality, and those who follow feminist posts are mostly people who already know something about feminism or are interested in related topics. This can lead to people who hold the same views discussing what they agree with all the time, and lack of diversity in the discussion group. Moreover, in the long run, users will become more and more extreme and one-sided, they will only believe their point of view, ignoring other points of view. In particular, holding extreme views on sensitive topics such as politics and society is very detrimental to the shaping of personal views and world views. Moreover, if people are exposed to a single information environment for a long time, their judgment ability will be weakened and they may easily believe false or misleading information [9]. More seriously, the polarization of views will affect the democratic and objective nature of political decisions, and even exacerbate social divisions and conflicts due to the polarization of party opposition [10]. In general, the existence of an information cocoon makes people's views develop in the direction of extremes. These people who hold extreme views are likely to have extreme emotions

or induce extreme behaviors when facing conflicting views due to their firm belief in their views. All these pose great hidden dangers to feminism or social stability.

It is difficult to guarantee the authenticity of network information, and many people have an incomplete or wrong understanding of feminism. In the process of promoting feminism, there may be the problem of spreading wrong information, misleading others' understanding, and causing many people to misunderstand feminism. The rapid spread of false information, misleading information, and even allegations of disinformation will not only confuse the public perception of feminism but also reduce the credibility of the feminist movement. This kind of information not only marginalizes women's issues that need attention but also may affect the public's understanding and support for the feminist movement, bringing no small negative impact [11].

### **3.2. The Negative Impact of the Internet on the Spread of Feminism**

Radical anti-feminists also have the opportunity to publish their opinions online and spread their views, but they are often full of malice, and their words show great anger and contempt, and they will spread their ideas by creating fear or anger. They adopt specific emotional expression and discourse strategies, which are not only detrimental to people's cognition and shaping but also aggravate the outside world's misunderstanding and prejudice against feminism. It can also cause people's mental health problems. These remarks directly aggravate the gender antagonism between men and women and aggravate the conflict of people's opinions, emotions, and identities. This closed emotional discourse system makes it more difficult for anti-feminists to communicate with feminists, thus hindering the promotion of feminism and the process of gender equality.

Others who oppose feminism take advantage of the low threshold and immediacy of social media to deliberately spread disinformation in an attempt to undermine the legitimacy, influence, and trust of the feminist movement by creating confusion and controversy. This behavior intensifies the complexity and untrustworthiness of the information environment and increases the difficulty of the promotion of feminism.

## **4. Suggestion**

The use of network platforms as a new era of information dissemination tools is developed. Proper utilization of these platforms for publicity can help in promoting feminism and spreading its new ideas to a wider audience. Online platforms should update their push mechanisms to expose people to more views different from their own. It is not promoted according to gender differences, and it is no longer limited to pushing feminism to women. The online platform also organizes cross-cultural exchange activities, international feminist forums, online courses, and other activities, and even unites relevant organizations or institutions to promote the discussion and understanding of feminism around the world. Online platforms should also strengthen review mechanisms, raise review standards, block comments with serious emotional guidance, delete hate speech and inappropriate content on time, and punish users who violate the rules.

Communicators, as a group with the ability to influence the behavior, attitudes, and opinions of others, should pay special attention to the content of the publication when formulating the content. They should publish positive content and pay attention to the accuracy of the dissemination of information. In the promotion of feminism, efforts should be made to improve the credibility of the feminist movement. At the same time, spread positive energy and avoid emotional or extreme statements.

As the participants of the Internet era, it is crucial to effectively recognize and address the negative content on the Internet rather than easily believing in others. People should also strictly follow the legal and moral guidelines, and actively seek diversified information sources, including different types of media, different perspectives, and viewpoints, to broaden their horizons and enrich their cognition. Use platforms that facilitate information discrimination, such as Chamber breakers, to mitigate the echo chamber effect and improve resolution [12]. At the same time, it is also essential to

timely pay attention to people's mental health, and are in a better state to participate in network life. The network platform can also increase the science popularization related to psychological problems, and provide psychological counseling-related services so that more people pay attention to their well-being.

Feminism has enriched women's psychology, helped them build mental health, and improved their psychological quality. When they face domestic violence, sexual harassment, sexual assault, and other incidents, they can better deal with and solve them. According to Thompson's article, it can be seen that through feminism, it can better understand the causes of women's institutional trauma (the article defines institutional trauma as the sustained violence or oppression of individuals in an institutional environment, which is closely related to inequality) [13]. It can analyze more reasonable and relevant solutions to shape women's psychological environment more positively. Instead of abusing medical resources, direct use of medication and other means, ignoring social factors, and the use of feminism in the treatment process can provide women with safer treatment and relief, because people need to be understood and respected in the process of post-traumatic treatment so that targeted and effective treatment can be achieved [14]. For example, after women experience sexual assault in the workplace, people should look at the social problems faced in the workplace such as gender inequality, and provide effective social assistance and legal support for women who experience mental illness based on targeted counseling treatment, rather than direct drug treatment.

## 5. Conclusion

This essay focuses on the development of the Internet era and discusses the new spread of feminism and the influence of the Internet on women. The development of the Internet era has promoted the further spread of feminism. Under the influence of the Internet and feminism, women's social status has been promoted, their ideas have been further liberated, and their psychological state has tended toward healthy development. Of course, there are also many problems in this process. For example, due to the existence of the echo chamber effect, the information received by people is closed. In particular, many emotional speeches by anti-feminists are not conducive to the spread of feminist ideas. This can be explained by the following statement. The Internet can make information spread to all parts of the world in a timely and rapid manner, making feminism accessible to more people. Women who come into contact with feminism are no longer bound by traditional gender roles and pursue higher life ideals. In the future, the network platform should update the push mechanism, and users should pay more attention to the comprehensiveness of the information they receive. People should also pay more attention to their mental health and make good use of psychological counseling services on the Internet. The main contribution of this paper is to analyze the current network era's help to feminism and its impact on women's psychological status. This paper analyzes the limitations of the spread of feminism in the Internet era and points out the ways to change it in the future. Finally, because this paper is based on the existing data and conclusions, there is no actual investigation and data analysis, and the analysis may be one-sided or subjective. In the future, questionnaires may be used to investigate the implementation of feminism specifically, and psychological scales may be used to analyze the changes in women's mental states specifically.

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