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Feminism through the Lens of the Gen Z

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ABSTRACT

With minimal pieces of literature to explain the phenomenon, this study explores the experiences of Filipino Generation Z (Gen Z) on feminism. Ten participants, born between 1997 to 2012, from diverse backgrounds, were selected and interviewed using semi-structured, open-ended questions. The researchers discovered that the experiences of Gen Z are rooted in their perceptions of feminism. Their perceptions view feminism as women's empowerment that seeks gender equality and is anchored as a feminist movement. Cultural identity and practice, socio-political affiliation, and social media influence how they perceive feminism. However, it is misunderstood as a claim for women's superiority toward men or other genders, and gender stereotypes still exist. Gender discrimination and sexism urge the need to advance feminism. Hence, educational institutions, local governments, and non-governmental and private organizations must provide avenues to deepen Gen Zs understanding, appreciation, and involvement in feminism and feminist movements. Further research exploring specific contexts or cases about it is encouraged.

INTRODUCTION

Feminism seeks to confront the patriarchal culture that produces repressive political institutions, attitudes, and practices against women. The broad support for anti-feminist movements may be attributable to few individuals properly comprehending what feminism entails (Teitel, 2014). According to Delmar (1987), the meaning of feminism appears obvious and can be taken for granted. Most related research studies on feminism mainly focus on its approaches, epistemologies, and methodologies (Zaragocin & Caretta, 2021; Wigginton & Lafrance, 2019). Duncan (2010) believes that a person's viewpoint on feminism is influenced by the generation in which they were raised. Her research reviews revealed that Baby Boomer women, those born between 1943 and 1960, were more likely to firmly identify as feminists than Generation X women, those born between 1961 and 1975. Stewart and Healy (1989) contend that a person's core values and expectations are shaped by critical social events throughout their formative years. Generation X, who were young adults during the 1980s feminist backlash, identified less strongly with the feminist cause. The postfeminist generation has been teens and twenties since the early 1980s. This generation is seen to have benefited from the women's movement through increased access to jobs and education but does not advocate for further political change (Aronson, 2003). In turn, this would suggest, following Duncan's research, that the experience of the current generation's young adults would influence their values, expectations, and feminist identity.

Moreover, the social and political lives of Generation Z (Gen Z) have predominately been structured around increasing participation in, and dependence upon, the internet throughout their lifetime (Fogarty & Riley, 2022). Specifically, the continuous opportunity to interact with

various cultures, organizations, and social media platforms has primarily defined their outlooks and involvement in concerns revolving around feminism.

The Filipino feminists of the new generation, like all youths, have distinct experiences from the older generations (Africa-Verceles, 2021). Broadening and deepening it with Gen Zs experiences, regardless of gender, is vital for building and strengthening organizations and the movement and nurturing a veritable inter-generational feminist solidarity. Understanding their perspectives is essential as they have the potential to become activists and impact the future of the feminist movement. The belief in and objectives of feminism are widespread and vary from person to person. Hence, to gain a profound discovery of feminism in the context of the lives of Filipino Gen Zs, this study seeks to develop a relevant perspective of the phenomenon.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Feminism builds movements that comprise numerous ideologies and moral philosophies concerning gender inequity and advancing women's equal rights. It dates back to the late 1800s. French utopian philosopher and radical socialist Charles Fourier coined "feminism" to describe the 'disease' of womanly features developing in men (Delap, 2007). First appearing in the United States and Europe, the feminist movement moved to Asia, Africa, Latin America, and eventually to other continents. It is an umbrella word for numerous cultural issues associated with the patriarchal subjugation of women (Dicker, 2008). In certain countries, it also combats forced marriage, female infanticide, public veiling, widow burning, and female gentile cutting (Peay, 2005).

Historically, feminism is related to the liberation or emancipation of women. In 1892, a feminist conference

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was held in Paris. It led to a more widespread acceptance of the phrase in the 1890s, with its use first appearing in Great Britain and subsequently in the United States in about 1894. Undeniably, most contemporary societal structures are patriarchal and organized, so men make the bulk of political, economic, and cultural decisions. It is primarily the result of European colonization and empire. Part of the cultural genocide wrought by imperialism was the replacement of the world's numerous matrilineal communities with Western patriarchy (Lewis, 2021). Because women comprise half or more of the population at school, work, and in organizations, feminism emphasizes that genuine social development can never be achieved without full and voluntary participation.

Supporting women's rights based on their political, social, and economic equality with men defines feminism (Gwiazda, 2021). However, it has distinct meanings for others. The most active viewpoint held by a feminist nowadays is that women experience discrimination due to their sex (Steelfisher, Findling, & Bleich, 2019), that they have particular needs that remain unacknowledged and unfulfilled (Cobbina-Dungy, 2022), and that the fulfilling of these needs would necessitate a significant shift in the social, economic, and political order.

Many individuals decide whether they are pro-feminist or anti-feminist based on the definition of feminism they consider accurate. A pro-feminist supports feminism but is not necessarily a member of the feminist movement. People who have feminist ideals or advocate on behalf of feminist issues but do not consider themselves to be feminists use the term pro-feminist on occasion (Yang, Qiu, & Zhu, 2022).

Moreover, feminism examines the conditions of women in social, political, and economic aspects (Adawo, Gikonyo, Kudu, & Mutoro, 2011). It attempts to achieve the objectives of equality, dignity, rights, emancipation, and empowerment for women (Tong, 2009). Hence, it is the struggle against sexism that demonstrates the superiority of men.

Mills (2003) emphasizes that sexism asserts that discrimination against women is systematic, forced on women by people in authority, and rooted in social institutions. It served all men's interests. Women encounter challenges in education and literacy, human rights, political and leadership participation (Rashidi, 2022). Rashidi (2022) added that men hold key positions, such as executives, managers, and directors, internationally. Its use illustrates the balance of power. The less powerful people, primarily women, are constantly subjected to cultural imposition. Ruthven (1991) claims sexist rhetoric frequently advances male superiority. Sexism in language, however, according to Spender (2020), impacts socialization, encoding and transferring cultural meanings, reality perception, awareness, and socialization. It leads to men being seen as the norm and women as inferior (Mille, 2002).

Recently, the internet has been the new virtual space for all feminist conversations (Alter, 2014). A massive

player in how feminism is also framed and understood by individuals is based on social media. One may determine how a topic is framed and portrayed, which an audience consumes and comprehends (Sundén & Paasonen, 2020). How feminism is displayed in the press might reveal people's sentiments regarding it, including whether they favor it. The variety of concerns, communication, and feminism-related information surfacing online has started to demonstrate the voice women receive from going online.

Furthermore, Generation Z, or Gen Z, born in the 1990s and raised in the 2000s during the century's most profound changes, lives in a world with the internet, smartphones, and digital media (Bascha, 2011; Brue Tulgan & Rain Maker Inc., 2013). Generation Z is raised with the social web. They are technology-driven and digitally oriented (Singh & Dangmei, 2016). They are born and raised in the digital age, and what distinguishes them from other generations is that their existence is more related to electronics and the digital world (Singh & Dangmei, 2016).

The Institute for Emerging Issues (2012) describes Gen Z as the most ethnically diverse and technologically sophisticated generation. Social media is important to Gen Z, who communicate informally and directly. DIY generation. In Dan Schawbel's (2014) study, Gen Z tends to be more entrepreneurial, trustworthy, tolerant, and less motivated by money than Gen Y. They expect less from work and are more optimistic. Gen Z is impatient, instant-minded, lacking ambitions, has acquired attention deficit disorder with a high dependency on technology and a low attention span, and is individualistic, self-directed, most demanding, acquisitive, materialistic, and entitled generation yet (Singh & Dangmei, 2016). Gen Z is concerned about environmental issues and water shortages, indicating a strong sense of environmental responsibility. Slavin (2015) finds that Gen Z wants to be heard regardless of age. They seem less likely to vote and participate in their communities than previous generations (Institute for emerging issues, 2015).

With the characteristics of Gen Z, it becomes necessary to explore how they view feminism with all the developments that go with their time. Hence, this study sought the answers to the following: (a) what are the experiences of Gen Z on feminism; (b) what are the factors influencing Gen Z's support or rejection of feminism; and (c) how does feminism impact gender relations?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

This exploration employed a phenomenological type of qualitative research as it can study people's experiences, how people construct meaning in their lives, and commonalities which transverse individuals experiencing a specific phenomenon (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). Using face-to-face semi-structured interviews, it investigates a phenomenon's nature, quality, various expressions, and how it might be perceived. The primary

objective of this method is to characterize the nature of the specific phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). It enables the interpretation of the studied phenomenon and the formation of understanding based on how an individual perceives and interprets their social world.

Research Setting

This qualitative study was investigated in the Philippines, particularly in Maasin – the capital city of Southern Leyte, where the participants reside.

Sampling

To effectively conduct the study, the method of purposive sampling was applied. This phenomenological study selected 10 participants that fit the suggestion of Creswell (2013) as an ample number of participants to generate meaningful themes and valuable interpretations. These participants were born between 1997 to 2012 (11-26 years old) and therefore categorized as Gen Z. Aside from age, carefully selected participants include students (high school and college, private and public schools, leader and non-leader), out-of-school youths, a non-governmental organization worker, a church youth leader, and a fraternity member-leader. Preliminary personal interviews were conducted to verify whether the selected participants were indeed Gen Z.

Data Collection

To improve the instrument's quality, the researchers subjected it to expert validation and pilot testing using a sample participant who shared the same demographics as the target participants. The instrument included open-ended questions that allowed the researchers to learn about Gen Z's lived experiences with feminism. The semi-structured interviews were then conducted individually for 15 to 20 minutes, and their comments were recorded using an audio recorder. Following the discussion, the audio recordings were carefully transcribed. The truthfulness of the transcripts was validated with the participants days following the interviews. The verbatim transcriptions were then translated into English and peer-reviewed by an English critic. To enforce the study's confirmability, the researchers kept correct written notes and recorded audio, and verified and rechecked the data regularly. Furthermore, personal biases were eliminated by using bracketing to analyze the data from a new and different perspective, as guided by the suggested strategies adopted by Chan, Fung, and Chien (2013).

Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, the researchers ensure they set aside their personal beliefs and biases about the topic under investigation. They employed an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA is used to investigate participants' experiences (Spier & Smith, 2019). Then, each stage of analysis, including initial note-taking, identifying emergent themes, and the final report, followed (Larkin, Flowers, & Smith, 2021).

Ethical Considerations

Because human subjects were employed in this study, the researchers' first responsibility is to protect the participants. They wrote letters to the authorities where the participants studied, worked, or belonged. Following that, participants were given consent forms to fill out. These individuals were informed that their participation was voluntary, and the study's objectives and procedures were outlined. To safeguard the participants, the acquired data in this study were kept confidential, and their responses were anonymous.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings were grounded in four major themes: (a) Gen Z Perceptions of Feminism, (b) Factors Influencing Gen Z on Feminism, (c) Feminism on Gender Relations, and (d) Relevance of Feminism. The participants were labeled as Participants ([P]) 1 to 10. Transcripts from semi-structured interview respondents were the primary source of the data. Relevant statements ([RS]) and the pages are expressed to support the emerging themes. The emerging themes are discussed in detail using excerpts from the participants' interviews and relevant related literature to support the justification for each theme.

Gen Z Perceptions of Feminism Women Empowerment

Most of the participants perceived feminism as a movement toward women's empowerment.

Feminism is a good move for women to empower themselves and their rights. Feminism is a good campaign to empower women. [P2] [RS17]

Feminism is recognized as a powerful movement for women's empowerment as it gives women political, social, and economic rights. The movement has dramatically impacted women subjected to oppression, abuse, and discrimination.

Feminism is a movement to empower and develop the capabilities of women, which were not given to them in the past. [P3] [RS33]

Women's dissatisfaction is justified in the study of Vakkayil (2021) that women's unfair treatment through the ages created a sense of restlessness among women, which initiated the movements and processes of women empowerment. The word 'women empowerment' indicates that women should realize their power to regulate their daily social, political, and economic activities.

Feminism is a movement for women for them to be empowered as they were traditionally seen as inferior beings to men before. [P6] [RS61]

The patriarchal system rooted in the culture has created nonsensical stereotypes supporting women's exploitation and subjugation. Women are forced to meet the unrealistic standards that patriarchal culture has imposed. It outlined how patriarchal society disadvantaged women by slowly raising them into submission and hindering their productivity and capabilities.

Based on studies and prior knowledge, feminism discusses women's equality in society and a fight for women's rights. In the past, their

rights and roles were very limited. [P4][RS40]

Friedan (1963) provides evidence of the widespread discontent among women. She justified the false notion that a woman's role in society is limited to being a housewife, mother, and caretaker – nothing more. It depicts the resentment and desperation of homemakers who felt constrained by their obligations as mothers and caretakers.

Gender Equality

The participants specified gender equality as the primary objective of women's empowerment. As defined by participants, gender equality implies that women have equal rights with men represented in society.

Feminism is the idea that women seek to have equal rights with men. The opportunities provided to men or the perceptions of people or society toward men should also apply to women. Women seem underestimated in society because they are considered less capable of their physical strength. [P1][RS6]

Based on gender equality, feminism promotes the rights of women. It acknowledges the biological differences between the sexes but insists on equal opportunity. The movement continually challenges patriarchy and strives to renounce gender roles that constantly put women at a disadvantage compared to men, as women are perceived as intellectually and physically less capable than men by nature (Tong, 2009).

Feminism exists because women like us are discriminated against. We are often seen as less capable compared to men when in fact, women are also capable of what men can do. [P10][RS138]

As a movement for equality, feminism aims to eradicate the notion that women are inferior to men. It indicates that feminism works to deconstruct the established roles that men and women portray in society, creating an avenue for women to be recognized and acknowledged.

Feminism is not about who or what or who that particular person is. It is what an individual is capable of doing for the nation. [P8][RS107]

Feminism denotes that every gender has its abilities, qualities, and characteristics. Women can be politicians, advocates, and educators—whoever they want to be. Women makes their identity on their own (Ripa, Mustari, Azam, Mithila, & Nayem, 2023). Ripa, Mustari, Azam, Mithila, & Nayem (2023) added that they contribute to financial support for their families. The social and cultural processes that form identities cannot determine an individual's full capacity.

There should always be gender equality, to empower women. [P8][RS111]

Feminism hopes to discover the reality of men's domination and women's subordination and subjugation and aims to overcome this oppression by promoting gender equality in various social contexts (Brunnell & Burkett, 2019).

Equality is the primary objective of feminism. Its main goal is equal rights with men in every aspect of society. [P1][RS14]

Feminism comprises a variety of social, cultural, and political initiatives that work to advance the right of men

and women on equal footing. In other words, feminism aims to eradicate gender stereotypes by proposing interventions for women's interpersonal and intrapersonal issues.

Feminism provides equal rights regardless of gender. [P5][RS70]

It offers a viewpoint for assessing the social experiences of groups and individuals regardless of their sex or gender. Feminism serves as a politics to achieve gender equality in societal spheres (Mohajan, 2022).

Feminist Movement

Participants define the feminist movement as collective efforts to advance the status of women or, broadly, as a movement that embodies feminist identity.

I am not a woman, but feminism is an idea about women and the individual's femininity. [P7][RS99]

Feminism has had a significant impact on promoting equality, especially for women. However, as feminism expands, it has been misconstrued as a movement exclusive to women.

Feminism is a feminist idealism and movement focused on or for women. It is what some men believe. [P9][RS119]

Men's attitudes toward feminism have been and continue to be contentious. Hebert (2007) contends that the notion that 'feminism belongs to women' is a significant impediment to men participating in it. It implies that men's relationship to feminism is impossible, as it highlights the conflicting perspectives of both men and women.

Factors Influencing Gen Z on Feminism Cultural Identity and Practice

Cultural gender inequalities include limited access to education, opportunities, and participation for and among women. The gender-based differences describe how discrimination occurs and how men and women portray culture-established roles.

I am part of the Indigenous people. My mother is a Manobo and a Blaan, one of the indigenous groups in Mindanao, meaning I am 25% Manobo and 25% Blaan. In the cultures of Manobo and Blaan, girls under 13 are compelled to drop out of school; they will either be married off or sold for a dowry. When you ask a sixth-grade student why they will not proceed to high school, they will casually say that their parents want them to get married. [P1][RS13]

In many cultures, prejudice against women is based on the cultural structure of gender. Therefore, it is impossible to interpret discrimination against women and girls as essential in certain cultures but not in others. Since cultures are neither uniform nor unchanging, they differ widely in terms of their stages of development and the extent to which patriarchy, sexism, and unequal practices that are detrimental to women and girls exist within them. *Based on the culture I was exposed to, I realized that discrimination against women is prevalent and that there is a need to strengthen women's empowerment. Women's capabilities should not be limited to marriage and being a homemaker. For instance, those who are part of the indigenous people should not be caged because there are a lot of indigenous women who are intelligent and capable of doing*

things. [P1][RS13]

Cultural practices in most cultures uphold gender disparities that serve as roadblocks to women's access to education and positions of power, thus resulting in gender inequality and male dominance. Though culture depicts one's identity, it has created traditional gender stereotypes that contribute to gender inequality. It entails that the exposure of women to cultural differences in gender has led them to embrace a feminist ideology, which advocates women's rights and the abolishment of patriarchy.

Socio-Political Affiliation

Participants affirm that their relationship with a particular person, group, or party impacts their perceptions of feminism.

At home, I am surrounded by many women who are leaders and speakers. Based on what I observed, they can lead and do what men can do, and even more than that. They made me define feminism through their examples. [P2][RS23]

The gender ideologies of the family, which are considered normative beliefs, impact one's attitudes toward gender roles. Regardless of explicit or implicit gender-normative framing, the familial relationship of an individual influences them to embrace values concerning feminism. Moreover:

During elections in the Philippines, I was one of those who supported a feminist candidate. I have been joining political campaigns as I did not perceive her gender as hindering what she could do for the country. It was a fulfilling exercise of my right to suffrage and citizenship as a Filipino. I knew that I could benefit from her governance in winning the elections. [P8][RS110]

The struggle for women's rights and suffrage has given women the visibility to participate in the electoral process. However, researchers have tried to pinpoint why people favor or reject feminism. Bolzendahl and Myers (2004) claimed that people are more inclined to support feminist beliefs when they benefit from gender equality.

Social Media

Social media has carved a new path for advancing the feminist movement. The platform has promoted feminist causes and built a support network, allowing female voices to be heard and represented.

Through social media posts, I realized feminism needs to be acknowledged. Though I am not vocal about my choice, I know deep inside that it is what I started to believe in. [P4][RS55]

Cariappa (2020) noted that regardless of location, social media can shape the ideas and perceptions of its viewers. How feminism is presented on the internet dramatically influences how individuals understand and absorb it.

Video content on violence against women is spread on social media platforms. It made me understand the existence of feminism. [P6][RS84]

By raising awareness of issues on women's rights, facilitating effective communication, supporting feminist organizations, and inspiring individuals to become advocates of greater equality, social media has become a proponent of feminist movements.

Because of feminist movement campaigns on social media, people like me were enlightened. [P9][RS125]

Nguyen (2022) asserted that the digital age, especially with social media algorithms, has facilitated a personal passion for feminism. In many cultural contexts, Gen Z appears enthusiastic about feminism, exhibiting faith in the power of activism, mainly through social media (Spiers, 2019). Spiers (2019) emphasized that internet feminist campaigns like #everydaysexism, #MeToo, and #TimesUp draw energy from this generation's new consciousness.

Feminism on Gender Relations

Misconception about Women Superiority

As feminism reflects a history of different struggles, the term has been construed more complexly. Although feminism is perceived as a movement for gender equality, some participants believed that the ideology has become overly patronized, paving the path for women's superiority in society.

When we talk about equality, I think LGBTQIA+ also have their campaign on it, the same with feminists. But, some think that feminism is making women superior to men – because they have neglected or forgotten the other gender. [P2][RS25]

The participants project that feminist initiatives may have solely focused on women's empowerment and failed to recognize the struggles of the other gender. Though it has provided women with the empowerment they sought, it is indisputable that there is a gap in the movement.

I thought it did not promote equality for all genders because sometimes feminism is decisively used to uplift women and criticize men. There is a misconception about feminism, especially regarding women, since it justifies that women are superior to men and, possibly, to all other genders. It provides equal opportunities, but the term is often misunderstood if we deeply reflect on others' experiences. It deviates from its actual meaning. [P4][RS56]

It implies that women are systematically pursuing female supremacy through the feminist movement rather than promoting gender equality. The superiority emerges as a response to long periods of inferiority in which women were not allowed to express their opinions or speak up for themselves.

Although men like me are aware of feminism, there are times when the ideology has wrongly been interpreted and applied. It is sometimes patronized as women are better than men. [P9][RS127]

Narasati (2019) argues that superiority and inferiority between men and women are part of feminism. The reasons to take over the superiority of men are caused by the disadvantages that women undergo. On the other hand, William & Wittig (1997) asserted that the label "feminist" remains coded as female. As a result, highly masculine men may also find the label "feminist" inconsistent with their gender roles and perspectives.

Gender Stereotypes

Gender stereotypes are not only visible in the workplace but also in households. In a patriarchal structure, the distribution of work is based on the roles established

within the family.

One factor is gender stereotypes. Although it was not imposed or taught explicitly that men should be at the top of the hierarchy, the father is usually the pack's leader. It implies that men are protectors and providers, whereas women are responsible for household chores such as washing dishes, washing clothes, and cooking. It seems like there is an established role between men and women. However, this should not be the case since women can do what men can. [P1][RS11]

It is a feminist perspective that sees how family becomes a constraining institution that prevents women from realizing their potential. Generally, men are perceived as more fitting for leadership than women (Heilman, 2012). Likewise, care-oriented positions and household responsibilities are perceived to be more suitable for women (Croft, Schmader, & Block, 2015)

Relevance of Feminism

Gender Discrimination

Most participants believe that feminism continues to be relevant in modern Filipino society because of gender discrimination.

Some women in the Philippines are already empowered. Some women have dominated workplaces and school settings. But I cannot deny that gender stereotyping still exists and discrimination persists, which makes feminism important in societal discussions. [P1][RS15]

Although women are provided with equal capabilities with men in some social, political, and economic aspects, the mentality that men are superior to women and women are inferior to men remains prevalent. Sizable fractions of women experience discrimination (Steel Fisher *et al.*, 2019).

There are still women who are not visible in the society. [P3][RS39]
The gender roles assigned to women have constrained them to be caretakers and homemakers. Some still are in the shadows or behind closed doors.

There are still arrogant men who do not recognize the rights of women. [P2][RS27]

Men often see women as objects lacking in potential and ability. The inequalities experienced by women led them to seek justice and freedom.

Until now, gender discrimination continues to exist, and feminist movements somehow help all genders, specifically women, stand against it. With that, I can conclude that feminism is truly relevant in society, especially on issues that include violence and abuse against women. Feminism will remain relevant until the future as long as gender discrimination exists. [P4][RS57]

The feminist movement that sought to protect women's rights has been deemed necessary in opposing gender discrimination and eradicating the pervasive norm about women. Gender-based discrimination is not a challenge only for women but for other genders as well, as it creates negative stereotypes about how individuals are treated in society. Thus, maintaining the relevance of feminism is crucial.

Discrimination is rooted in our culture, and it is still existing today. [P10][RS140]

Women's inclusive roles are typically diminished due to cultural expectations (Evangelista, 2017). Even with the presence of feminist movements, discrimination based on being a woman still happens.

Sexism

Sexism, a sex-based prejudice, influences participants' perceived relevance of feminism. They identify sexism as one of the reasons they support feminist movements. *I am a pro-feminist since I believe there is a need for women's empowerment against sexist men worldwide. [P1][RS10]*

The endorsement of sexism has established the traditional gender roles and stereotypes used to justify and perpetuate unjust gender relations. Men are described as having agentic traits, whereas women are frequently associated with communal features (Obioma, Hentschel, & Hernandez Bark, 2021).

Sexist ideologies make people reactive about patriarchy's strong presence. This observation makes me a pro-feminist. [P9][RS121]

There are still men who do not recognize women's rights due to their ingrained belief that they are intrinsically superior to women. Participants strongly emphasize the visibility of sexism, which, according to Cudd and Leslie (2005), is a prevalent type of oppression against women throughout history and across the globe.

Emerging Theme: Synthesis of the Phenomenon

A structure of the phenomenon was extracted from the qualitative data, which shows Gen Z Perceptions of Feminism, Factors Influencing Gen Z on Feminism, Feminism on Gender Relations, and the Relevance of Feminism as major themes. Gen Zs' experiences with feminism are rooted in their perceptions of the concept. Feminism is a notion of women's empowerment grounded in gender equality and the feminist movement. These ideas learned or perceived by Gen Zs come from cultural identity and practice, socio-political affiliation, and social media as influential factors. However, feminism is also misunderstood as a claim for women's superiority over men or other gender identities, and gender stereotypes still exist. It shakes the hopes for the balance of relations among genders as equals. Nevertheless, Gen Zs view it as an essential advocacy against gender discrimination and sexism.

CONCLUSION

Gen Zs' experiences of feminism are primarily based on their perceptions. Social and cultural controls or influences contribute to their proactiveness and reactivity to feminism and feminist movements. As women are seen empowering themselves, and some men support them, gender equality is hoped to be achieved in the process. With the social media presence, misconceptions about women's superiority as a goal of feminism and the prevalence of gender stereotypes can be addressed. However, socio-political affiliation and cultural identity and practice affect Gen Zs' reception of feminism. And the existence and persistence of cases of gender discrimination and sexism

further the advocacy for equality and deepen the need to educate the communities through Gen Zs.

Gen Zs need to broaden their understanding of feminism and gain deeper insights into why individuals support or reject feminism. Since most participants are students, educational institutions must promote and provide orientation programs or fora that inform Gen Zs of the meaning and purpose of feminism and address erroneous perceptions of feminism. Local governments and non-governmental organizations can collaborate with educational institutions to empower women through Gen Zs and the communities within and beyond them. Future researchers should explore other cases or contexts to deepen feminist conversations and support feminist movements to achieve the real essence of feminism.

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