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Understanding Fake Feminism or Pseudo-Feminism: Its Impact on Women Autonomy and Decision Making

Praveen Kumar¹, Dr. Arvind Kumar²,

¹ Research Scholar, Department of Political Science, Monad University, Hapur, (UP-245304)

² Professor, Department of Political Science, Monad University, Hapur, (UP-245304)

Abstract: The present study titled “Understanding Fake Feminism or Pseudo-Feminism: Its Impact on Women Autonomy and Decision Making” examines the perception of feminism and analyzes how distorted or misleading feminist narratives influence women mental decision-making ability. In recent years, discussions surrounding feminism have increased significantly, particularly through social media platforms. While genuine feminism aims to promote gender equality and women empowerment, certain misinterpretations or exaggerated narratives often referred to as Pseudo-Feminism or Fake Feminism may create confusion regarding its true objectives. The study adopts a quantitative research methodology using a descriptive research design. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire from 100 women respondents selected through a convenience sampling method. The questionnaire included demographic information and statements related to perceptions of feminism, pseudo-feminism, and its impact on mental decision-making power. The collected data were analyzed using percentage analysis and graphical representation. The most respondents recognize feminism as a movement promoting equality and confidence among women. However, many participants also perceive that misleading feminist narratives, especially on social media, may distort the meaning of feminism and influence personal perceptions and decisions. The genuine feminist awareness strengthens women confidence and decision-making ability, distorted interpretations may create misunderstandings. Therefore, promoting accurate and balanced awareness of feminist principles is essential for supporting women empowerment and informed decision-making.

Keywords- Pseudo-Feminism, Fake Feminism, Mental Health, Women Decision-Making Power, Gender Equality, Psychological Influence, Women Empowerment, Feminist Ideology, Social Media Impact

1. Introduction: According to **Mary Wollstonecraft** (1792) published book “A Vindication of the Rights of Women” in 1792, and while she’s considered a feminist icon today, that term wasn’t applied in her time. The term became more well-known in the 1890s in Great Britain and America.

There have always been cultures where women held power, like ancient Sparta where women could own and inherit property, make business transactions, and receive a good education. There have also always been women who fought back against patriarchal cultures. According to **Human Rights Careers**, However, “feminism” as we know it is a fairly new concept.

Influenced feminism refers to a contemporary form of feminist understanding that is significantly shaped by internet discourse, social media narratives, and digital activism rather than by engagement with classical feminist scholarship. The rapid circulation of simplified or fragmented interpretations of gender equality online often shapes perceptions of feminism among young audiences. In certain contexts, this digital influence contributes to the emergence of pseudo-feminism, where the core objectives of feminist thought may be diluted, misrepresented, or used in a performative manner rather than advancing substantive gender justice.

Jagernath, Jayseema & Nupen, Dominique. (2023), This research paper seeks to provide

insight into the phenomenon of pseudo-feminism as it appears across genders, explored in the personal and professional contexts of South African citizens. This study used a mixed-methods approach to collect data. Primary data were gathered via the use of anonymous online questionnaires, distributed via the researchers’ professional and social networks. These findings add to the body of knowledge and are valuable to gender equity activists, gender studies researchers, and academics.

Period	Development Level	Characteristics
Late 19th - Early 20th C.	1st Wave	Focused on legal rights, education, and suffrage.
1960s - 1970s	2nd Wave	Addressed cultural issues, domestic violence, and workplace harassment.
1990s - Present	3rd Wave & Beyond	Focused on intersectionality; emergence of digital activism and “performative” feminism.

Modern Era	Rise of Pseudo-Feminism	Growth of social media “influencer” feminism and the misuse of protective laws for personal vendettas.
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Table: 1 shows history of the fake feminism

Table 1 presents the historical development of feminism and the emergence of fake feminism over different periods. The first wave of feminism (late 19th–early 20th century) focused on basic rights such as education, legal equality, and women suffrage. The second wave (1960s–1970s) expanded the movement to address social issues including workplace discrimination, domestic violence, and gender inequality. From the 1990s onward, the third wave of feminism emphasized intersectionality and digital activism, highlighting diverse experiences of women. In the modern era, the concept of pseudo or fake feminism has emerged, often associated with social media influence and the selective or exaggerated use of feminist ideas.

Here are several definitions of feminism:

By **Charles Fourier (1837)**, “The French socialist who coined the term defined it as advocating for the equality of women politically, socially, and economically.”

According to **UN Women** “Feminism is the belief that everyone, regardless of gender, should have equal rights and opportunities. It really is that simple. For all the different types of feminist theories and practices for all the different schools of political, economic, and social thought the grounding principle of feminism is equality. And in today’s intersectional feminism, we mean equality for everyone, regardless of gender identity, sexuality, race, class, or ethnicity.”

According to **Simone de Beauvoir (1949)**, In the *Second Sex*, she defined feminism as an existential quest for autonomy, where a woman asserts her identity as a free subject rather than a secondary “other”.

The term “Fake Feminism” or pseudo-feminism describes the co-option of feminist rhetoric to serve agendas that contradict the core goal of universal gender equality. Unlike authentic feminism, which seeks to dismantle systemic patriarchy, these distorted versions often prioritize individual gain, commercial profit, or social superiority.

In contemporary discourse, these types are broadly categorized by their focus. Corporate Feminism (or “Purple washing”) uses empowerment as a marketing tool without enacting structural change. Choice Feminism argues that any individual preference is

inherently feminist, often shielding harmful behaviors from critical analysis. White Feminism focuses exclusively on the struggles of privileged women, ignoring intersectional realities like race and class. Vengeance-based narratives shift the objective from equality to misandry or the misuse of protective laws. By replacing collective liberation with performative or self-serving actions, these “fake” variants can cloud a woman’s mental decision power and fragment the movement’s integrity.

2. Previous Research Study and Review of Literature:

In this research study conducted by **Deng Canyang. (2024)**, the influence of feminism in the Internet era, women 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 psychological environment. 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.

Lex Scripta. (2023), the concept of feminism has gained significant attention in modern India, with

women fighting for their rights and equal opportunities in various fields. However, there is a growing concern about the rise of fake feminism in India, which has created an illusion of gender equality while perpetuating patriarchal attitudes and practices. The paper analyses the legal framework for women rights and the laws enacted to protect Women rights. This paper also explores some of the legal strategies for combating fake feminism in modern India. Finally, the paper concludes by discussing the need for a more nuanced understanding of feminism in India and the importance of challenging fake feminism to ensure that legal practices are truly inclusive and gender-just.

Murphy, G., Murray, E., & Gough, D. (2021), false memories may be especially likely when one is exposed to misinformation that is consistent with one’s beliefs. Here, we assessed whether feminist attitudes predict susceptibility to feminism-related fake news. This study suggests that individuals are more susceptible to false memories for fake news stories that are ideologically congruent, even after a warning.

Kangere, M., Kemitare, J., & Michau, L. (2017), the article concludes that social media-driven feminist activism plays a significant role in expanding awareness and engagement on issues of violence against women across the region.

This study by **Yogendrarajah Rathirane (2013)**, the women empowerment through decision making authority at household level. The male headed household in Sri Lanka is the norm, and it is not accepted culturally to be female headed household. The concept of the head of the husband is not defined in anywhere. Further in the census record, ration card and other family survey reports also the name of the male has been given under head of the household and it is obviously stated that he is the breadwinner and the chief decision maker. The study recognizes that there is a strong relationship between decision making authority and women empowerment. However women are not allowed to take the decisions at household level due to the cultural norms and other personal issues.

In this research study conducted by **Kuppusamy Damodaran. (2022)**, Found that the women still lack their rights in decision-making. In terms of expenditure on their income, health care, purchase, visiting places and financial autonomy, gender inequality was found, and the states have a massive role in ensuring women rights and gender equality. Finally, a country cannot grow and develop by neglecting the role of women.

According to this research by **Deng Qi, and Ji Shaobo (2014)**, when faced with a variety of investment options, investors—individuals or groups—always have to make a selection that

involves some degree of risk. As a result, it's critical to evaluate risk attitudes and look at the variety of risk attitudes among various decision makers. We concentrate on the individual and collective risk preferences of men and women.

In this study conducted by **Alam M. (2011)**, the results suggest that education, occupation, income and gender-based awareness have significant effect in explaining the variance in household decision-making power. Overall, women education, income, occupation, gender-based awareness has a significant effect on household decision-making.

In this article by **Hains Rebecca (2009)**, the author argues that the fetishistic commercial function of girl power as transformed by power feminism rhetoric actively undermines true work towards equality. It serves corporate interests at the expense of girls and women personal interests.

Eagly, Alice & Eaton, et. al., (2012), the considerable dissemination of this research is evident in its dispersion beyond gender-specialty journals into a wide range of other journals, including psychology's core review and theory journals, as well as in its coverage in introductory psychology textbooks. In this formidable body of research, psychological science has reflected the profound changes in the status of women during the last half-century and addressed numerous

questions that these changes have posed. Feminism served to catalyze this research area, which grew beyond the bounds of feminist psychology to incorporate a very large array of theories, methods, and topics.

3. Research Gaps:

Existing studies on feminism mainly emphasize empowerment, gender equality, and social justice; however, limited research has critically examined the concept of fake feminism and its potential influence on women mental decision-making. There is a lack of empirical studies exploring how misleading feminist narratives in social media and public discourse may affect women psychological perceptions, value systems, and independent choices. Furthermore, few interdisciplinary analyses combine psychology, sociology, and media studies to evaluate this issue. Therefore, research is needed to understand Fake Feminism: Affecting Mental Decision Power of Women.

4. Research Objectives:

- To examine the concept and perception of feminism among women.
- To identify the presence and perception of fake feminism in society.
- To analyze the impact of fake feminist narratives on women mental decision-making power.

- To study the role of social media in shaping perceptions of feminism.
- To evaluate how genuine feminist awareness influences women confidence and decision-making ability.

5. Research Methodology:

5.1 Research Design: The present study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to examine the influence of fake feminist narratives on the mental decision-making power of women. The research focuses on understanding perceptions, attitudes, and psychological influences through structured data collection and statistical analysis.

5.2 Nature of the Study: The study is quantitative in nature, supported by descriptive interpretation. The research focuses on collecting measurable data from respondents to understand their opinions and perceptions regarding feminism and its influence on decision-making.

5.3 Sources of Data: The study is based on both primary and secondary data sources.

(i) Primary Data: Collected through a structured questionnaire distributed among respondents; and

(ii) Secondary Data: Collected from books, academic journals, research articles, and reliable online sources related to feminism, gender studies, and women empowerment.

5.4 Sample Size: The study includes a sample of **100 women respondents**. The participants were selected to represent different age groups, educational backgrounds, and occupations to obtain diverse opinions regarding feminism and its impact.

5.6 Sampling Technique: The respondents were selected using a convenience sampling method, which allowed the researcher to collect data easily from available participants.

5.7 Research Instrument: A structured questionnaire was used as the main research instrument for data collection. The questionnaire consisted of two sections: (i) Demographic information such as age, education, occupation, marital status, and frequency of social media use. (ii) Statements related to perception of feminism, perception of fake feminism, and impact on women mental decision-making power. These statements were measured using a five-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree).

5.8 Data Analysis: The collected data were organized and analyzed using percentage analysis and graphical representation. Charts and figures were used to interpret the responses and identify trends related to perceptions of feminism and its influence on decision-making power.

6. Result and Discussion:

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(A) Demographic Profile of Respondents:

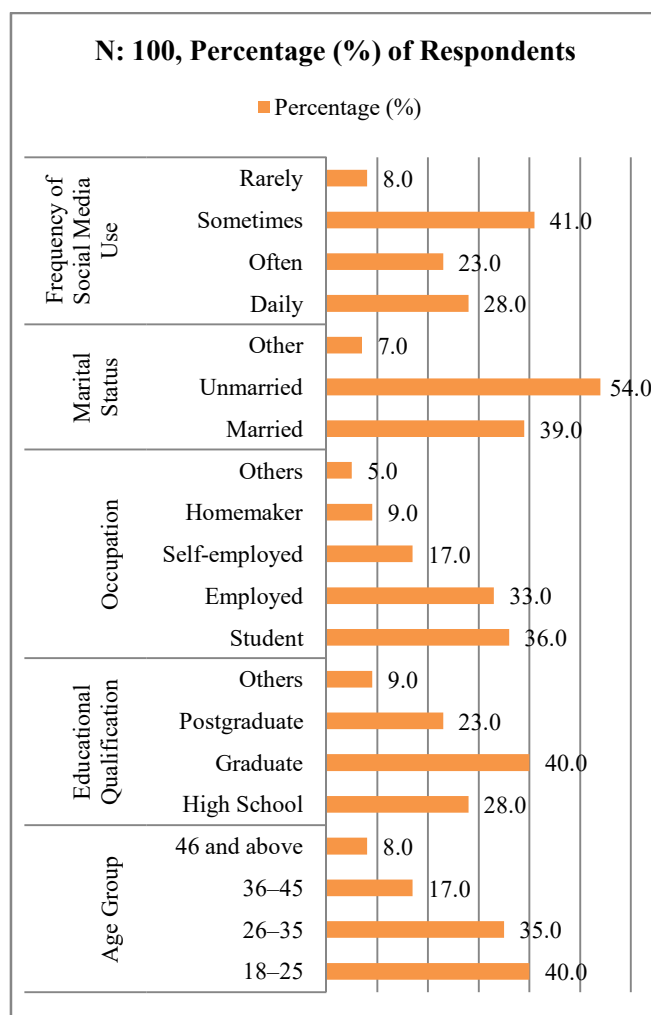


Figure: 1 shows of the percentage of respondents (Data Source: Questionnaire)

Figure 1 show of the demographic characteristics of the respondents involved in the study. The distribution includes age group, educational qualification, occupation, marital status, and frequency of social media use among the 100 participants.

With respect to age group, the largest proportion of respondents (40%) belongs to the 18–25 age groups, followed by 35% in the 26–35 age groups. Respondents aged 36–45 account for 17%, while 8% belong to the 46 years and above category. This indicates that the study primarily represents young adult women, who are generally more active in social discussions and digital platforms.

Regarding educational qualification, the majority of respondents (40%) are graduates, followed by 28% who completed high school and 23% who are postgraduates, while 9% belong to other educational categories. This suggests that most respondents possess moderate to higher levels of education, which may contribute to their awareness of gender-related issues and feminist discussions.

In terms of occupation, 36% of respondents are students, making them the largest occupational group in the study. 33% are employed, 17% are self-employed, 9% are homemakers, and 5% belong to other occupational categories. This distribution reflects a mixture of young learners and working women, which provides diverse perspectives on the research topic.

The marital status distribution shows that 54% of respondents are unmarried, while 39% are married, and 7% belong to other categories. The higher proportion of unmarried respondents

suggests that many participants are in early stages of career or education, where social awareness and identity formation are significant.

With regard to social media usage, the largest group (41%) uses social media sometimes, followed by 28% who use it daily and 23% who use it often. Only 8% of respondents rarely use social media. This indicates that most respondents are active users of digital platforms, where discussions related to feminism and gender equality frequently occur.

(B) Perception of Feminism:

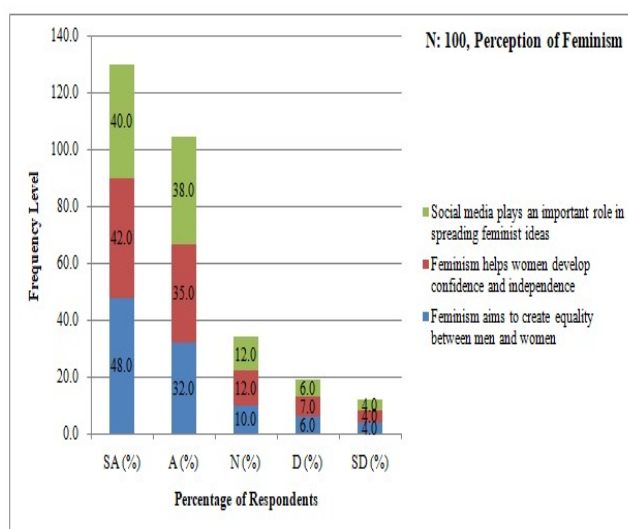


Figure: 2 shows of the percentage of respondents regarding perception of feminism

Figure 2 presents the perception of respondents regarding feminism based on three key statements: Feminism aims to create equality between men and women; Feminism helps women develop confidence and independence; and Social media

plays an important role in spreading feminist ideas.

For the first statement, 48% of respondents strongly agree and 32% agree that feminism aims to create equality between men and women. Meanwhile, 10% remain neutral, 6% disagree, and 4% strongly disagree. This indicates that a significant majority of respondents recognize the fundamental purpose of feminism as promoting gender equality.

Regarding the second statement, 42% strongly agree and 35% agree that feminism helps women develop confidence and independence. 12% of respondents are neutral, while 7% disagree and 4% strongly disagree. These findings suggest that many participants perceive feminism as a positive force that strengthens women's self-confidence and autonomy.

In relation to the third statement, 40% strongly agree and 38% agree that social media plays an important role in spreading feminist ideas. 12% remain neutral, 6% disagree, and 4% strongly disagree. This indicates that respondents widely acknowledge the role of digital platforms in promoting feminist discussions and awareness.

The analysis reveals that a clear majority of respondents have a positive perception of feminism. Most participants associate feminism with gender equality, empowerment, and

confidence-building among women. Additionally, the findings highlight the significant role of social media in disseminating feminist ideas and influencing public perception. The respondents possess a relatively strong awareness of feminist principles, which provides an important basis for examining how different narratives both genuine and misleading may influence women mental decision-making power in contemporary society.

(C) Perception of Fake Feminism:

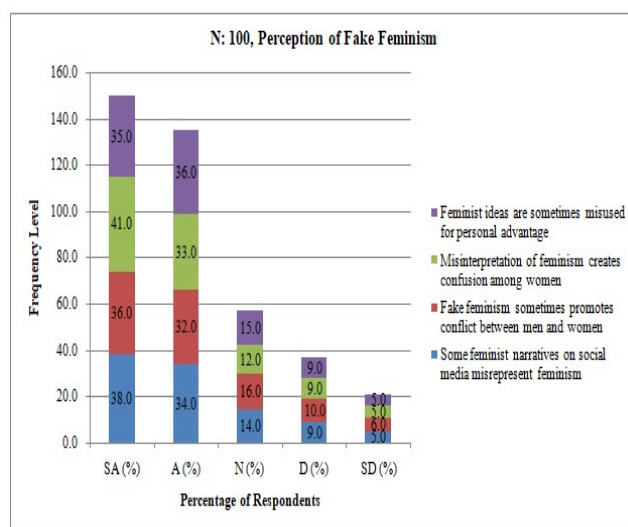


Figure: 3 shows of the percentage of respondents regarding perception of fake feminism

Figure 3 presents the perception of respondents regarding fake feminism based on four statements: Some feminist narratives on social media misrepresent feminism; Fake feminism sometimes promotes conflict between men and women; Misinterpretation of feminism creates confusion

among women; and Feminist ideas are sometimes misused for personal advantage.

For the first statement, 38% of respondents strongly agree and 34% agree that some feminist narratives on social media misrepresent the true meaning of feminism. 14% remain neutral, while 9% disagree and 5% strongly disagree. This indicates that a large proportion of respondents believe that social media may sometimes present distorted interpretations of feminist ideas.

In the second statement, 36% strongly agree and 32% agree that fake feminism sometimes promotes conflict between men and women. Meanwhile, 16% remain neutral, 10% disagree, and 6% strongly disagree. These responses suggest that many participants perceive that certain misrepresented feminist narratives may contribute to misunderstandings or tensions between genders.

Regarding the statement that misinterpretation of feminism creates confusion among women, 41% strongly agree and 33% agree, representing the highest level of agreement among the four statements. 12% of respondents remain neutral, while 9% disagree and 5% strongly disagree. This indicates that respondents widely believe that misunderstanding feminist principles can lead to confusion about gender roles and empowerment.

For the final statement, 35% strongly agree and 36% agree that feminist ideas are sometimes misused for personal advantage. In contrast, 15% remain neutral, 9% disagree, and 5% strongly disagree. These findings reflect a perception among many respondents that feminist narratives may occasionally be used in ways that deviate from their original purpose.

(D) Impact on Mental Decision-Making Power:

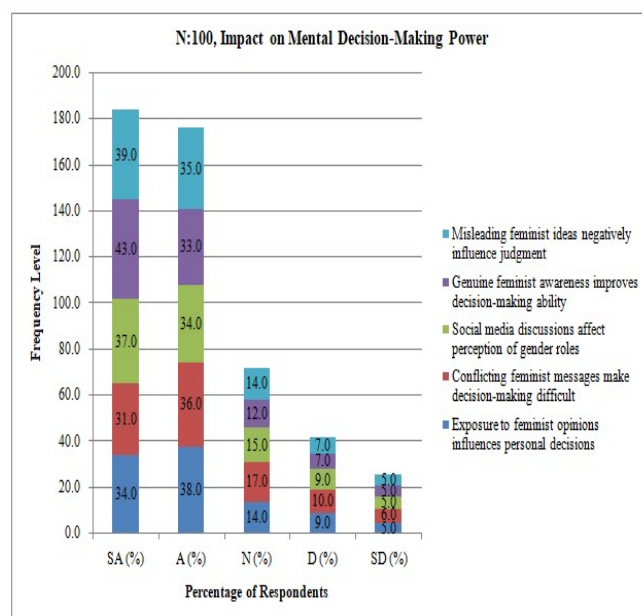


Figure 4 shows of the percentage of respondent of impact on mental decision-making power

Figure 4 presents the responses of participants regarding the impact of feminist narratives on women mental decision-making power. The analysis is based on five statements: exposure to feminist opinions influencing personal decisions, conflicting feminist messages affecting decision-

making, social media discussions shaping gender role perceptions, genuine feminist awareness improving decision-making ability, and misleading feminist ideas negatively influencing judgment.

For the first statement, “Exposure to feminist opinions influences personal decisions,” 34% of respondents strongly agree and 38% agree, indicating that 72% of respondents believe feminist discussions can influence their personal choices. Meanwhile, 14% remain neutral, 9% disagree, and 5% strongly disagree, suggesting that a smaller proportion of respondents perceive little or no influence.

Regarding the statement “Conflicting feminist messages make decision-making difficult,” 31% strongly agree and 36% agree, representing 67% of respondents who feel that contradictory feminist narratives may create confusion in decision-making. In contrast, 17% remain neutral, 10% disagree, and 6% strongly disagree.

For the statement “Social media discussions affect perception of gender roles,” 37% strongly agree and 34% agree, which means 71% of respondents acknowledge that online discussions influence their understanding of gender roles and social expectations. 15% remain neutral, 9% disagree, and 5% strongly disagree.

The statement “Genuine feminist awareness improves decision-making ability” received the highest positive responses, with 43% strongly agreeing and 33% agreeing, totaling 76% of respondents. Only 12% remain neutral, while 7% disagree and 5% strongly disagree. This indicates that respondents widely believe that authentic feminist knowledge can strengthen women confidence and independent thinking.

Finally, for the statement “Misleading feminist ideas negatively influence judgment,” 39% strongly agree and 35% agree, showing that 74% of respondents believe that distorted feminist narratives may negatively affect mental judgment. The remaining 14% are neutral, 7% disagree, and 5% strongly disagree.

7. Conclusion:

The research paper “Understanding Fake Feminism or Pseudo-Feminism: Its Impact on Women Autonomy and Decision Making” examined the perception of feminism and the impact of misleading feminist narratives on women mental decision-making power. The study was conducted using a quantitative research methodology, where primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire from 100 respondents. The collected data were analyzed using percentage analysis and graphical representation to understand respondents’ views

on feminism, fake feminism, and its influence on decision-making. The results and discussion indicate that most respondents are a positive understanding of feminism and believe that it promotes gender equality, confidence, and independence among women. However, the findings also reveal that many respondents perceive the existence of fake or misleading feminist narratives, especially through social media platforms, which sometimes misrepresent the true purpose of feminism.

The study further shows that exposure to feminist ideas influences women perceptions and personal decisions. While genuine feminist awareness helps women develop stronger confidence and better decision-making ability, misleading or conflicting feminist messages may create confusion and negatively affect judgment in some situations.

The study concludes that authentic feminist awareness plays a significant role in strengthening women mental decision-making power, whereas distorted interpretations of feminism may create misunderstandings. Therefore, promoting accurate knowledge and balanced understanding of feminist principles is essential to ensure that feminism continues to support women empowerment and social equality.

8. Conflicts of interest:

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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