



Gender Equality and Feminism: Similar and Same yet Drastically Different

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Abstract: *Feminism means a belief that women should have same rights and opportunities as men. Gender equality is states of equal access to resources and opportunities regardless of gender. However, while obviously both seem to mean one and same thing, the perception of feminism is one that evokes images of belligerence and bellicosity whereas gender equality seems to be more amicable and conciliatory approach to achieve the same ends.*

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I. Introduction

Feminism is a range of socio-political movements and ideologies that aim to define and establish the political, economic, personal and social equality of the sexes. Gender Equality is the state of equal ease of access to resources and opportunities regardless of gender, including economic participation and decision making.

Clearly, both gender equality and feminism mean one and same thing. In fact if one were to use a microscope one can't find any difference between feminism and gender equality. And yet whereas gender equality is accepted at least in developed nations by one and all, including men in 21st century, feminism still causes discomfort due to perhaps its image if not content.

This paper explores if feminism needs to tone down its image and perception to be better able to get to its goals. Feminism perhaps has to learn from the old adage – 'She Stoops To Conquer' – even as feminism works in tandem with men to achieve gender equality.

Feminism is hated

There is no need to deliberate on exact difference between feminism and gender equality. There could be some hair splitting difference. We are discussing here the perception of feminism. And that is a significant number of both men and women hate feminism even though they are advocates of gender equality, which is what feminism is all about.

Here are the reasons:

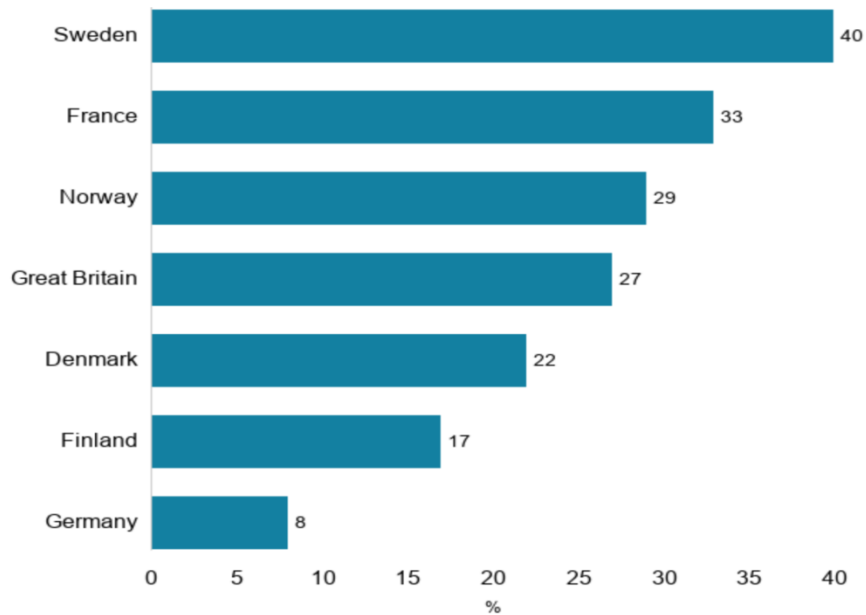
1. Feminism is associated with strong and angry forceful women.
2. Many people fear that men will lose down due to feminism.
3. Many believe that feminists want to control the world and put men down.
4. Many believe that feminism will overturn traditions, religions and gender roles.
5. Many believe that feminism will impact relationships and marriages negatively.

Feminism is not popular though Gender Equality Is

While gender equality is widely accepted feminism is not. In nations with almost similar levels of gender equality the acceptance of feminism varies by vast margins. And we are discussing OECD nations of Europe here, not underdeveloped nations in Asia and Africa.

Here is the image of how many counted themselves as feminism in European Nations

Are you a feminist?

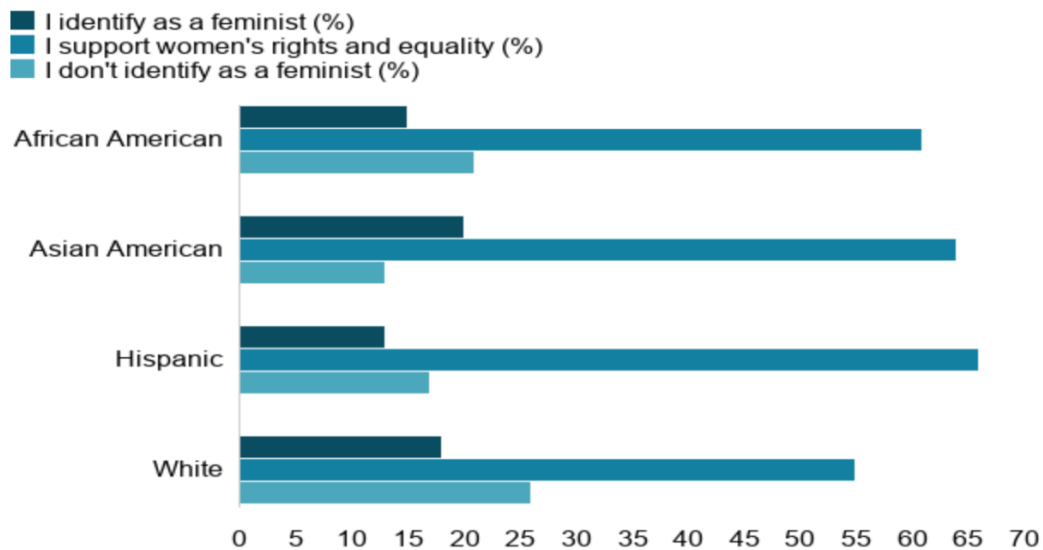


Source: YouGov survey 2018



Gender Equality in the above nation is similar yet perception on feminism is so drastically different. But if we are to compare apples to apples and oranges to oranges we are better of comparing a given group of population and its variation in perception of feminism versus gender equality.

Which of the following comes closest to your view?



Source: GenForward survey, 2018



The above figure is from survey in USA. Clearly for instance 55% of white women believed in gender equality only 20% believed in feminism and while nearly 70% hispanics believed in gender equality only 15% Hispanics believed in feminism. And while 65% of Asian American identified themselves with gender equality only 20% believed in feminism. And while 65% of African American agreed with gender equality only 15% believed in feminism.

Perception and Stereotypes

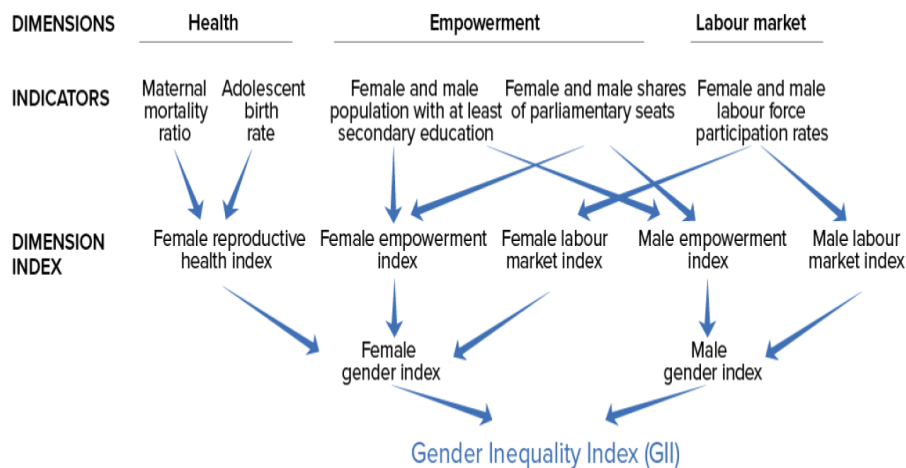
Feminists are perceived as spinsters and their sexual preferences are unknown. Feminism is associated with man hating lesbianism or lack of femininity. Many people do not want to be associated with feminism because they do not want to be associated with these traits. The perception of feminism is one of man hating and religion hating bitch. One stereotype of feminism is those feminists are abortion advocates. This is not true. Though feminist are for Planned Parenthood. The second stereotype of feminists is that feminists hate men and want power over men. This is not true either. Feminists want to end male domination and patriarchy.

Here are common perceptions of stereotype feminist

1. Feminism believe women are better than men
2. Feminism is essentially about Male Bashing
3. Feminists hate men.
4. Feminists are stuck up and crazy.
5. Feminists are against marriages
6. Feminists don't want to have children
7. Feminists are trying to disrupt family structure
8. Feminists are lesbians
9. Feminists are man haters
10. Feminists have had bad relationships.

Gender Equality is Quantitative and Precise; Feminism is Qualitative and Nebulous

Lord Kelvin, the physicist, is reported to have said that unless you are talking numbers you don't know what you are talking about. Gender Equality or for that matter Gender Inequality can be measured. GII – Gender Inequality Index reflects gender-based disadvantage in three dimensions— reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market—for as many countries as data of reasonable quality allow. It shows the loss in potential human development due to inequality between female and male achievements in these dimensions. It ranges from 0, where women and men fare equally, to 1, where one gender fares as poorly as possible in all measured dimensions. GII values are computed using the association-sensitive inequality measure suggested by Seth (2009), which implies that the index is based on the general mean of general means of different orders—the first aggregation is by a geometric mean across dimensions; these means, calculated separately for women and men, are then aggregated using a harmonic mean across genders.



Similarly Gender Equality Index can also be measured. Gender Equality covers 6 core domains – Work, Money, Knowledge, Time, Power and Health. In addition Gender Equality has 2 domains – Violence against Women and Intersecting Inequalities with 31 gender indicators, which are both qualitative and quantitative. Gender indicators have been devised to show gender gaps in access to resources and opportunities in areas such as education, employment, decision making and gender-based violence. Gender indicators can be used to measure progress and allow for comparisons in gender equality progress over time, across different geographical areas, countries and between different groups of women and/or men as well as in organisations, institutions and systems.

Feminism is Nebulous. Read any book by a Feminist and you cannot nail down precisely what they are talking about – Germaine Greer, Simon de Beauvoir, Betty Freidan and none of these can precisely quantify what is that feminists want?

What Feminist Want? Is even a greater puzzle than the age old question What Women Want? And Feminists are particularly not very dexterous or adroit in articulating what it is that they want. Feminists complain and harangue and shout and scream. But they are unable to delineate concisely and precisely in numerical and quantitative terms their goals.

In fact in precise communication of same goals of equality of sexes, gender equality and feminism are as different as chalk and cheese and hence the failure of feminism to get substantial fan following is not surprising.

Governments around the world are taking steps to address the problem of gender inequality with affirmative actions and measurable targets. However there are not visible indicators of acceptance of feminism in government. Presuming governments to be reflection of society in democratic nations, it is safe to say that while gender equality has a fair degree of acceptance, feminism lacks acceptability.

II. Conclusion

How you say something is as important as what you say. Style is as important as Substance. Feminism is tactless way of putting what gender equality does diplomatically. Feminism does not have political correctness of Gender Equality. Feminists are lacking in the greatest of feminine quality of softness and are seen as aggressive.

Feminism has to become less violent in words and emotions. Gender equality is not about US against THEM, but about US TOGETHER. That is where feminism misses the point. Gender Equality Cooperates whereas Feminism Competes.

Men and women are supposed to love each other, which is what Gender Equality tries to achieve. Feminism makes women hate men. Feminist Men are an exception, but men are as a norm now equal believers in gender equality.

This is not to deride feminists, but to suggest that they approach their goals in a more tactful, diplomatic, graceful, feminine and soft manner with tender loving care.

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