

Who are the Misogynists that Stigmatize Feminists in Chinese Cyberspace?

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BACKGROUND & LITERATURE REVIEW

RESEARCH METHODS



METHOD

What Is a Stigma?

- Stigma is caused by the possession of a socially devalued identity (Crocker et al., 1998).
- Goffman's (1963): A stigmatized identity represents failure or shame.
- Stigmatization occurs when power is exerted to identify, stereotype, and label differentness in socially devalued individuals, which ultimately leads to disapproval, rejection, exclusion, and discrimination (Link & Phelan, 2001).

Feminism as a Stigma:

- Feminism has long been stigmatized for its anti-establishment nature (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000).
- Stigmas related to feminism reduce men's self-report of feminist activism (Conlin & Heesacker, 2018).
- Social media: BOTH feminists AND misogynists (e.g., Suk et al., 2021).
- Anti-feminism strategies on social media (e.g., Hong et al., 2021; Huang, 2022):
 - Attacking feminist womanhood
 - Framing feminists as national traitor
 - Chastising feminists for requesting rights without responsibilities

Why China?

- Traditional cultures relevant to Neo-Confucianism (i.e., women are inferior to men) have largely shaped the patriarchy of Chinese modern society (Lee, 2022).
- Gender gap is large: Globally ranked 102/146 in gender equality (World Economic Forum, 2022).
- Sexism and anti-feminism are prevalent in China (Huang, 2022).
 - Anti-feminism strategies on social media (e.g., Hong et al., 2021; Huang, 2022).
- Nationalism intertwined with anti-feminism and feminism:
 - Huang (2022): Feminists are believed to be supported by overseas hostile forces
 - Yin & Fang (2022): Feminists who love the big brother

Online Survey

- Population: Chinese adults who've heard of feminism.
- Sampling: Snowball sample (n = 305).
 - Online censorship prevented the researchers from drawing a more representative sample.
- Measures (seven-point Likert-type scales):
 - IV: Nationalism (adapted from Hyun & Kim, 2015, $\alpha = .92$, $M = 4.22$, $SD = 1.53$), patriarchal beliefs (adapted from Yoon et al., 2015, $\alpha = .92$, $M = 2.05$, $SD = 1.09$), life satisfaction (Diener et al, 1985, $\alpha = .92$, $M = 3.87$, $SD = 1.33$), & intergroup contact with feminists (e.g., "I know many feminists in my real life." $\alpha = .89$, $M = 4.46$, $SD = 1.14$)
 - DV: Stigmatization of feminists (adapted from McLaughlin & Aikman, 2020, $\alpha = .82$, $M = 2.10$, $SD = .97$)
 - Control variables: gender, age, sexual-orientation, self-identification as a feminist, & marital status.
 - IRB approval: August 1, 2022



RESULTS

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

System Justification Theory & Inter-Group Contact

- **System-Justification:** "A psychological process whereby an individual perceives, understands, and explains an existing situation or arrangement with the result that the situation or arrangement is maintained" (Jost & Banaji, 1994, p.10).
 - Similarities between nationalism and sexism: defense of existing political institutions and gender dynamics
- **Inter-Group Contact Hypothesis:** Intergroup contact helps to reduce prejudice between majority and minority groups under certain circumstances (Allport, 1954).
 - Low-status men increase female-directed hostility to minimize their loss of social status resulting from women's increasing competitiveness (Kasumovic & Kuznekoff, 2015).

HYPOTHESES

- H1: Stigmatization of feminists will be positively related to nationalism.
- H2: Stigmatization of feminists will be positively related to patriarchal beliefs.
- H3: Stigmatization of feminists will be negatively related to life satisfaction.
- H4: Stigmatization of feminists will be negatively related to intergroup contact with feminists.

Multiple Regression on SPSS

- VIF < 1.84—No collinearity problem.
- Multiple Regression analysis: The model was significant ($F = 14.81$, $p < .001$, adjusted $R^2 = .29$, $\Delta R^2 = .13$).
- As expected, inter-group contact was negatively related to stigmatization of feminists ($\beta = -.14$, $p = .012$).
- In line with hypothesis, patriarchal belief was positively related to stigmatization of feminists ($\beta = .38$, $p < .001$).
- Contrary to our prediction, nationalism was negatively related to stigmatization of feminists ($\beta = -.21$, $p < .001$).
- Inconsistent with hypothesis, life satisfaction was not related to stigmatization of feminists ($\beta = .06$, $p = .28$).
- Therefore, H2 and H4 garnered support, while H1 and H3 were not validated.

Discussion & Limitations

- Nationalism was negatively related to stigmatization of feminists, indicating the prevalence of nationalist feminism in China (Yin & Fang, 2022).
- Intergroup contact with feminists (offline) indeed reduced negative stereotypes and stigmatization of feminists.
- Patriarchal beliefs advocate for traditional gender power dynamics, which increased stigmatization of feminists who deviate from traditional feminine ideals and gender roles.
- However, the current sample is not representative in terms of gender (men underrepresented), partly because women are more likely to offer help when being asked (Ipsos, 2020).
- This study only focused on womanhood-based stigmatization, while other types of stigmas (Huang, 2022) will be studied in the upcoming studies.

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