

Narratives of Feminism among Gen Z Filipino Women

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Abstract. Research on Gen Z women's perspectives on modern feminism is scarce in the Philippines despite its unique patriarchal culture. This study fills the gap by exploring how Filipino Gen Z women navigate work and family dynamics through a feminist lens. Using a phenomenological descriptive approach, the research involved fourteen (n=14) co-researchers in Bacoar, Cavite, aged 20–26. Data were collected through semi-structured online interviews, selected via snowball sampling. A combination of latent narrative and thematic analysis was employed to analyze the responses. The findings reveal that Gen Z Filipino women perceive modern feminism as central to promoting (1) gender equality and inclusivity and (2) women's empowerment and autonomy. However, they face significant challenges, including (3) enduring stereotypes and (4) societal and cultural expectations that hinder the full realization of feminist ideals. Despite these barriers, respondents view feminism as (5) a transformative force capable of reshaping societal norms and advancing genuine gender equality. This study contributes to the understanding of how global feminist ideals intersect with local traditions in the Philippines, offering insights that may inform policies and initiatives aimed at fostering gender equality in culturally conservative contexts.

Keywords: Filipino women; Generation Z; Modern feminism; Phenomenological study; Thematic analysis.

1.0 Introduction

The rise of modern feminism has significantly shifted how women, mainly Gen Z women born between 1997 and 2012, perceive their roles in society, family, and work (Feger, 2024; Saladino, 2020). In the Philippines, feminist movements have gained momentum, focusing on women's empowerment and gender equality. Over time, these movements have made significant strides in advancing economic, political, and social equality. However, challenges such as unequal political representation, limited economic opportunities, and the persistence of patriarchal violence continue to hinder women's full participation in society (Hega et al., 2017). Despite these advancements, the evolving role of Filipino Gen Z women remains underexplored, especially in terms of how modern feminist ideals shape their work and family dynamics.

Global research on Generation Z and feminism has focused on this generation's distinct characteristics and challenges. Gen Z women, in particular, are often seen as driven and valuable in the workforce, yet they face criticism for being perceived as lazy, entitled, or unprofessional (Di Meglio, 2023; Bieleń & Kubiczek, 2020). In the Philippines, however, Gen Z is viewed as romantic and ambitious, prompting companies to reconsider their work policies to attract and retain this new generation of workers (Dagooc, 2023). Furthermore, a 2021 Pew Research Center survey reveals a global trend among Gen Zers to delay or forgo traditional family roles, prioritizing career and wellness instead, which challenges societal norms within Filipino families.

While these global trends are important, limited attention has been given to how Filipino Gen Z women specifically navigate their feminist ideals in the context of family and work, particularly within the Philippines' unique cultural and socio-political landscape. Much of the existing literature on feminism in the Philippines centers on broader historical and structural issues. However, it overlooks the specific ways in which young Filipino women engage with feminist principles in their day-to-day lives. This gap in the literature calls for an examination of how modern feminism influences Filipino Gen Z women's perspectives and experiences, especially within a society still shaped by traditional gender roles and patriarchal norms.

Bacoor, Cavite, in the Philippines, presents a unique blend of urban and rural landscapes, diverse economic activities, numerous educational institutions, and a rich cultural heritage (Bacoor City, Cavite Profile – PhilAtlas, 1990). Despite these favorable conditions, online information from Bacoor that addresses feminism and Generation Z perspectives is scarce. The local government's gender and development initiatives have evolved, emphasizing equality for all individuals, regardless of gender. Projects aligned with these goals, such as women's welfare programs, reproductive health services, and career development activities, reflect a local commitment to gender equality. According to the 2015 Census, Bacoor has a substantial population in the Gen Z age range, with 56,997 individuals aged 15–19 and 9.40% of the population (56,464) aged 20–24. This demographic, alongside high social media engagement and active community involvement, makes Bacoor an excellent location to explore how young women embrace and apply feminist principles. These factors offer valuable insights into the shifting dynamics of gender equality within a society undergoing rapid transformation.

This study is grounded in intersectional feminism, a framework that recognizes how overlapping social identities—such as gender, race, class, and ethnicity—shape individuals' experiences of oppression and access to power. For Filipino Gen Z women, this perspective is crucial as their feminist experiences are not only shaped by gender but also by cultural, social, and economic factors unique to the Philippines. By focusing on the intersection of gender and generation, this research aims to provide insights into how feminist ideals influence Filipino Gen Z women's work and family dynamics.

The primary goal of this research is to examine how modern feminism shapes Filipino Gen Z women's perspectives on work and family dynamics. Given the gaps in existing literature, particularly in the Philippine context, this study seeks to explore how feminist ideals are interpreted and enacted within a society still grappling with traditional gender expectations. By addressing this gap, the study aims to contribute to global discussions on feminism while offering recommendations for fostering a more inclusive and equitable society for the next generation of Filipino women.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

A qualitative research design was employed to explore Gen Z Filipino women's perspectives on modern feminism and its influence on work and family dynamics. Phenomenological inquiry, based on the work of Edmund Husserl (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2013), was used to explore participants' lived experiences and the significance of those experiences, aiming to uncover the essence of modern feminism from their perspectives. Descriptive phenomenology was chosen to describe these experiences without interpretation or bias, focusing on how participants make sense of their world. The narrative, thematic analysis with a latent approach was used to uncover implicit meanings and themes within the participants' stories. Initial coding helped identify explicit themes, and deeper analysis revealed latent themes that provided insights into the participants' perspectives and experiences.

2.2 Research Locale

The study was conducted in Bacoor, Cavite, Philippines, a city known for its blend of urban and rural landscapes, diverse economic activities, and cultural richness. According to the 2015 Census, the city has a significant Generation Z population, with a notable number of individuals aged 15–19 and 20–24, making it a relevant setting for exploring these issues.

2.3 Research Participants

Participants were selected through snowball sampling, where each participant referred another Generation Z woman they knew personally. Fourteen women, aged 20 to 26 and residing in Bacoar, participated in the study. While this method provided efficient access to the target group, it may have limited the diversity of perspectives, as the sample may reflect participants' social networks. To mitigate this, participants were encouraged to refer women from varied backgrounds, helping broaden the sample's diversity. However, future research could consider using stratified random sampling to enhance the diversity of participants further.

2.4 Research Instrument

The researchers developed an interview guide to collect data from the participants, seeking input from members of the University Research Board (URB) to validate the questionnaire. The URB's comments and suggestions were incorporated into the final version of the guide.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

Data were collected through a structured survey, following institutional protocols and with prior approval from the University Research Board. Participants were initially recruited through email invitations, and data were gathered in stages through snowball sampling. This approach expanded the sample as new themes emerged, and data saturation was achieved after 14 participants.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were meticulously addressed throughout the research. An informed consent statement was presented at the beginning of the survey, ensuring that participants were fully aware of the study's purpose and rights before participating. The consent process emphasized the protection of participants' anonymity and the confidentiality of their responses. By committing to these ethical standards, the researchers ensured that all data were handled with the utmost care and that participants' privacy was maintained throughout the study. This approach was designed to foster trust and integrity in the research process while upholding ethical research practices.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Gen Z Filipino Women's View Modern Feminism

Gender Equality and Inclusivity

A prominent theme from the interviews is the perception of modern feminism as a powerful vehicle for achieving gender equality and inclusivity. Many participants articulated that feminism is fundamentally about establishing equal rights for all genders. GF2 expressed,

"Modern feminism is about believing in and working towards equal rights for all genders, aiming to eliminate gender-based inequalities and create a fairer and inclusive society."

This perspective highlights a broader understanding of feminism as inclusive, motivating women and men to fight for gender equality. The importance of men's involvement in feminist causes was underscored, with GF11 acknowledging that *"gender inequality affects not only women but also society as a whole."* This acknowledgment emphasizes that gender equality is a societal issue that requires participation from all individuals, regardless of gender, thereby fostering a more inclusive movement.

These insights exemplify how modern feminism advocates for women's rights and encourages a collaborative approach to dismantling traditional gender norms, ultimately leading to a more equitable society. Furthermore, participants noted that modern feminism has contributed to a shift in traditional gender roles, promoting shared responsibilities and equal decision-making within households. This evolution is supported by Pew Research, which indicates a significant rise in women entering the labor market and an increase in dual-income households (Blazina, 2022). As a result, there has been a greater emphasis on equitable distribution of household tasks, including both housework and childcare responsibilities. As GF2 emphasized,

"It is recognizing that both mothers and fathers can be nurturing caregivers and supporting the freedom for individuals to choose roles based on personal preferences and abilities rather than societal expectations."

This statement reflects a move towards a more balanced approach, challenging the notion that caregiving and household responsibilities should primarily be women's work and advocating for gender equality. GF11 added,

"...modern feminism has promoted equal decision-making authority for women within families, which has helped me and my partner make joint decisions and work together as equals in managing our household and finances."

These statements reflect a broader trend toward gender equality in domestic responsibilities and decision-making processes, underscoring the importance of collaboration and shared authority in fostering inclusivity within family dynamics. Additionally, respondents linked modern feminism to the recognition of historical gender oppression and the ongoing fight for justice. As GF1 explained, feminism is

"acknowledging that women have historically endured oppression and injustice as a result of their gender."

As a result, according to GF11, "modern feminism is a social, political, and cultural movement that advocates for gender equality and challenges the patriarchal systems..." Therefore, as GF12 emphasized, feminism is centered on the "rights of women," addressing crucial issues like "workplace discrimination, reproductive rights, and violence against women." According to the Cambridge Dictionary, feminism refers to the rights of women to be treated equally to men in all areas of society. As stated by the UN, women's rights are human rights (UN Human Rights, 2014), which include the right to live free from violence, slavery, and discrimination, to be educated, to own property, to vote, and to earn a fair and equal wage.

Modern feminism has also brought attention to the wage gap between men and women, which has led Gen Z female workers to seek employment in companies that offer equal pay and opportunities for both genders (How Gen Zers Are Bringing the Optimism on Gender Equity, 2024). GF11 shared,

"Firstly, modern feminism has taught me to be aware of the gendered dynamics in the workplace and to challenge them when necessary. For instance, I once noticed that a male colleague was being paid more than a female colleague for the same work despite the female colleague having more experience and qualifications. I realized that this was a clear case of gender-based wage discrimination and decided to speak up about it. I brought the issue to the attention of our HR department and advocated for the female colleague to receive equal pay. As a result, the company took action to address the pay gap, and the female colleague received a well-deserved raise".

This anecdote highlights how Gen Z workers, particularly women, are cognizant of wage gaps and motivated to address them because wages are a primary driver for this generation. Flores (2024) found that Gen Zs are deeply motivated by financial incentives, aiming to cover daily expenses and "enjoy the fruits of their labor." This alignment between their awareness of gender-based wage disparities and financial priorities underscores why equal pay is a non-negotiable aspect of their career choices and professional advocacy, tying feminist values to their practical motivations and career goals.

Moreover, modern feminism has increased awareness of workplace harassment and abuse (Hega et al., 2017). The #MeToo movement, which one respondent mentioned, has played a key role in highlighting the prevalence of sexual misconduct in the workplace. The respondent stated,

"The #MeToo movement has highlighted the prevalence of sexual misconduct in the workplace and has led to a shift in the way organizations address these issues. Many organizations are now taking a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment and are implementing policies and procedures to prevent it from happening in the first place."

As a result, Gen Z women are increasingly reluctant to work in environments where such misconduct is prevalent and instead seek companies that prioritize creating a safe and respectful workplace culture.

Women's Empowerment and Autonomy

GF1 highlighted that "feminism entails autonomy, allowing individuals to explore any endeavor regardless of gender constraints." This autonomy encompasses the freedom to make autonomous decisions, whether regarding one's body, life choices, or career path, reinforcing the importance of consent to respect individual autonomy and personal boundaries. Empowerment is further linked to feminism's role in fostering a supportive environment

among women, where imperfections are embraced and displayed confidently. As GF5 noted, feminism cultivates the “freedom to make autonomous decisions,” which promotes “a culture of women supporting and empowering women”. These statements directly align with the study of Madrona et al. (2023), which highlights the strong preference of Filipino youth for “Openness to Change,” including stimulation and self-direction. This finding indicates a desire for novel experiences, independence, and self-determined goals. The emphasis on autonomy in feminism resonates with these values, providing a cultural framework through which Filipino Millennials and Zoomers navigate personal and professional aspirations. Moreover, GF3 shared a matriarchal perspective, stating that

“...some women's perspective is way more than that ... women are now above men because of the main reason that we, women, are child bearers.”

This statement reflects a matriarchal viewpoint, wherein women are seen as dominant, an interpretation supported by historical research linking matriarchy to motherhood and societal resource distribution (Matriarchal Studies, n.d.). The belief that women hold primary political and familial power challenges traditional patriarchal structures, which typically position men as the leaders (Population Media Center, 2024b).

Empowerment through autonomy manifests in the workplace as Gen Z female workers prioritize jobs that allow for a healthy work-life balance. As GF11 observed,

“Modern feminism has emphasized the importance of work-life balance and flexible work arrangements. Women are no longer expected to sacrifice their personal lives for their careers.”

This focus on autonomy encourages women to pursue their well-being alongside their professional goals, with flexible options like remote work or adjustable hours making it easier to balance work and personal responsibilities. Feminism advocates recognizing shared responsibilities between men and women beyond the workplace (Rodriguez, 2017). This emphasis on flexible work arrangements aligns with the findings of Racolța-Paina & Irini (2021), who observed that besides wages, among the most expected elements from the workplace include a flexible work program, with the main argument being that most Generation Z employees are enrolled in a higher education program.

Autonomy also drives the push for leadership roles, as GF11 shared

“Women are no longer expected to conform to traditional gender norms, such as being submissive or nurturing. Instead, they are encouraged to pursue leadership roles and take on positions of authority.”

This shift has led to a more diverse and inclusive workplace, where women are encouraged to succeed in male-dominated fields, including IT and criminology. GF6 echoed this sentiment:

“It defeats the thought of di yan trabahong pambabae; hence, it gives women a chance to explore further and find their passion.”

Modern feminism has thus empowered women to challenge societal expectations, pursue leadership, and carve out opportunities in fields where they were previously underrepresented (Santosh, 2024). The statements of the respondents reveal a significant shift in reproductive decision-making dynamics, particularly concerning women's autonomy and agency. They highlighted that women, as the primary caregivers during pregnancy, are asserting their right to decide whether to have children, emphasizing bodily autonomy. As GF7 explained,

“Women may decide if they want to have a child or not since they are the ones who are caring for the babies; it is their body.”

Modern feminism has brought attention to reproductive rights; as GF1 stated,

“...The relevance of family planning and reproductive health has been underlined by modern feminism. As a result, women now have more access to contraception and reproductive health services, giving them more choice over their reproductive life.”

This advocacy has improved access to family planning resources, empowering women with greater control over their reproductive decisions and enhancing their autonomy. This shift in reproductive autonomy provides a more complex layer to the findings of Agdagdag et al. (2024), which identified reluctance to have children due to challenges like parenthood difficulties, career prioritization, and environmental complexities. While these factors reflect practical and social reasons for delaying or avoiding pregnancy, the emphasis on bodily autonomy adds a more profound, personal dimension to these choices, underscoring that women's decisions are shaped not only by external factors but also by their inherent right to control their own bodies and reproductive futures.

Moreover, the shift in household power dynamics reveals an intriguing divergence from traditional gender roles, highlighting how evolving norms and female solidarity influence decision-making within families. GF3 observed,

"...the household's father will not have the last words to say. Always the mother. In today's generation, the mother has the first and last things to say and to do. So rather than counting the efforts of both parties, the father of the household will always be the one who will follow the mother's order."

This statement underscores a household where women, including mothers and daughters, hold significant authority. Similarly, GF3 added,

"We are three women in the household. It speaks for itself; we have the upper hand. Even if our father is the 2nd eldest in the family (mom is the eldest), my sister and my voice will always be heard."

These remarks point to a broader trend of female empowerment and collective agency that goes beyond the individual maternal authority highlighted in previous studies. Supporting this shift, a 2008 Pew Research Center study in America found that women lead decision-making in 43% of surveyed couples, compared to just 26% where men hold that role, while 31% share the responsibility equally. This data highlights the growing recognition of women's leadership within family dynamics and a move toward more equitable decision-making processes, further advancing women's autonomy in the domestic sphere. However, research in the Philippines suggests that mothers with lower education levels exhibit higher maternal authority and communicate more with their children, and mothers with lower incomes tend to be less authoritative (Bernal et al., 2022); the respondents' experiences mentioned above present a more nuanced perspective. Here, power dynamics seem less tied to socio-economic factors and more influenced by a redefinition of familial roles and the solidarity among women within the household. This divergence enriches the findings by illustrating that maternal authority is context-dependent; it may vary based on socioeconomic circumstances, evolving cultural norms, and internal family dynamics. The respondents' experiences show that female empowerment within the household can transcend traditional socio-economic boundaries, suggesting a broader cultural transformation.

3.2 Challenges of Gen Z Filipino Women about Their Feminist Perspectives

Persistent Stereotyping

Stereotyping emerges prominently in the respondents' narratives, reflecting the persistence of gender biases both in the workplace and within personal relationships. Gender stereotypes continue to limit opportunities for women, often originating from the opposite sex and even within the same gender. GF6 recalled,

"A manager once told me that women are good at multi-tasking; hence, being a supervisor is the best fit for us, but we cannot be in a higher position than that because men can do critical thinking better than we are. Hence, the highest post in our company fits only men."

This statement exemplifies the deeply ingrained bias that women are less capable in leadership roles due to perceived deficiencies in critical thinking, perpetuating the stereotype that women are "*fragile*" or less competent in decision-making. This bias is further reflected in the Women in Power study, which found that while 75% of respondents expressed trust in women leaders, there remains a skepticism about the impact of more female politicians. This reluctance, especially in lower-income and Mindanaoan communities, could stem from unmet political promises or a lack of representation (Del Mundo, 2022). Similarly, the study on female managers in Metro Manila revealed that although women exhibited strong personality traits like openness and conscientiousness, these traits did not always correlate with higher leadership levels (Barcelona, 2022). While women are trusted in

leadership roles, these findings highlight the persistent barriers and biases that women continue to face—both in public office and the workplace—reinforcing the stereotype that women are less capable or suited for higher leadership positions. Thus, despite demonstrated leadership potential, the intersection of gender biases and societal expectations continues to limit women's advancement in both politics and management.

Further reinforcing these stereotypes, some superiors assume women are less committed to their careers, prioritizing family over professional growth. This leads to missed opportunities, as bosses hesitate to invest in women, expecting them to prioritize family. These assumptions undermine women's career advancement and reflect broader societal expectations that women must balance work with caregiving responsibilities. Respondents highlighted how traditional gender roles often require women to manage household chores, marginalizing their input in decision-making. As GF11 shared,

"balancing work and family life can be particularly stressful, involving negotiating flexible work arrangements and juggling our schedules to accommodate our children's needs,"

Highlighting women's ongoing struggle in challenging traditional gender norms and striving for equality at home and in the workplace. The findings of the 2021 study *Women in the Philippine C-Suite* conducted by UN Women Asia and the Pacific support these observations, revealing how deeply rooted Filipino cultural values of close family ties intensify women's challenges. These values often compel individuals to prioritize family obligations over career advancement. For example, single respondents in Mindanao, many of whom serve as breadwinners, feel pressured to place family first. Married respondents and those with children further underscore how family responsibilities influence career decisions, with women disproportionately bearing the caregiving burden. Traditional gender roles also hinder women's access to leadership programs, with only 74% of women compared to 82% of men participating in such programs. Additionally, many women, especially in the Visayas (52%), experience guilt over neglecting caregiving duties. Despite women in Mindanao (94%) emphasizing the importance of work-life balance, societal expectations continue to perpetuate stress and inequity, limiting their professional opportunities and reinforcing traditional gender norms.

Additionally, while some respondents acknowledged workplace harassment, they provided limited information on the types of harassment they face. However, studies by Stewart and Davison (2019) highlight why Generation Z, particularly women, may be more vulnerable to workplace harassment. Many Gen Z workers may not fully understand what constitutes sexually harassing behavior and may be reluctant to report incidents, especially when the harasser is a supervisor. This reluctance is compounded by the blurred lines between work and social relationships, with younger workers often connecting with supervisors on social media platforms. The informality of these digital interactions can increase their vulnerability to harassment as they may seek approval without fully recognizing the power dynamics involved. These concerns are supported by findings in the Philippines, where one in seven women report experiencing sexual harassment at least once a week. However, the issue remains underreported due to fear of retaliation. The banking industry has been particularly noted for creating a hostile work environment for women. For instance, the Philippine National Bank conducted a case study highlighting how beauty standards influence the hiring of frontline employees, such as tellers, and how male-dominated upper management contributes to this issue. Additionally, a study by the Lloyd's Register Foundation and Gallup revealed that 22% of women and 18% of men in the Philippines have faced sexual harassment at work, with many reporting that the harassment occurred multiple times. Among women who experienced workplace harassment, 13% reported sexual harassment, 9% experienced psychological and physical harassment, and 12% faced all three forms of harassment, according to a report published by *Phil Star Global* (2023).

Deeply Rooted Social Norms and Cultural Expectations

Many respondents shared how deeply ingrained societal expectations and cultural norms create resistance to change, particularly when traditional gender roles are challenged. As GF12 noted,

"Some family members resist or feel uncomfortable with changes that challenge traditional gender roles and expectations."

This resistance can arise from long-standing beliefs about the roles of men and women, often rooted in cultural and societal norms. A lack of awareness about feminist ideals also contributes to the challenges women face in implementing gender equality within the family. As GF1 stated,

"It may be difficult to argue for feminist ideals and gender equality if family members are unaware of these concepts. It could be difficult to encourage a more gender-neutral style of parenting, for instance, if a youngster does not comprehend why both parents must provide care".

Family Pressure from extended relatives presents another significant barrier to challenging traditional gender roles. As GF11 described,

"One of the biggest challenges has been societal expectations and pressure from extended family members who may not share our values and beliefs. For example, we have faced criticism and skepticism from some family members who disagree with our decision to share childcare responsibilities or believe that women should prioritize domestic work over paid employment".

Despite efforts to share childcare responsibilities or prioritize paid employment over domestic work, individuals often face criticism and skepticism (Pew Research Center, 2020). In response to these challenges, some respondents demonstrated Resilience and Collaboration. They remain committed to their values and work with their families to find solutions that align with their beliefs. They also seek support from like-minded friends and community members, emphasizing the importance of open communication to foster a more equitable and supportive family environment. This collaborative problem-solving and reliance on a supportive network reflect the respondents' determination to navigate these challenges while staying true to their feminist ideals. However, not all respondents felt empowered to challenge these cultural norms openly. Some admitted to avoiding family conflicts, opting to remain silent rather than confront opposition. As GF8 expressed, *"No, I would rather stay silent than cause a family conflict,"* reflecting the problematic choices women may face when navigating deeply rooted cultural expectations within their families. This narrative demonstrates the tension between advocating for change and maintaining familial harmony, underscoring the complexities of navigating familial expectations while striving for change (Pew Research Center, 2020).

Supporting these experiences, a study commissioned by Oxfam Pilipinas and conducted by The Women and Gender Institute (WAGI) sheds light on the deeply rooted gender norms in Filipino households. The research found that women still shoulder the majority of unpaid care work, even while holding full-time jobs, with a significant increase in responsibilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. These societal expectations continue to reinforce women's traditional roles as primary caregivers and men as breadwinners, contributing to the challenges women face in balancing work and family life. However, the study also highlights the potential for change, particularly in the BPO sector, where many women are employed, offering an opportunity to shift these gender norms and promote greater gender equality in the workplace and at home.

3.3 Gen Z Filipino Women's Vision of Modern Feminism in Work and Family Dynamics *Transformative Movement*

With the rise of Generation Z and their use of social media for feminist advocacy, modern feminism has become a powerful force for change. The National Organization for Women Foundation highlights the central role of social media in connecting feminists globally and raising awareness about gender inequality. Generation Z feminists, in particular, have spearheaded this movement, leveraging online platforms to amplify their voices and drive activism forward (Alfonseca, 2023).

Christian Nunes, President of the National Organization for Women, emphasized how the fourth wave of feminism prioritizes inclusivity and allyship, aiming for genuine equality for all women. This wave seeks to address the limitations of previous feminist movements, which often marginalized certain groups. By embracing a more inclusive approach, modern feminism has empowered women to tackle diverse issues affecting women and girls worldwide (Alfonseca, 2023). Respondents from the study also acknowledged this influence, noting that modern feminism promotes equality in parenting roles, reproductive rights, and healthy family dynamics based on mutual respect and shared responsibilities.

One key aspect of modern feminism's transformative impact is its emphasis on reproductive autonomy and healthcare access. Respondents affirmed that the movement advocates for women's autonomy in their bodies and reproductive health decisions. This includes access to contraception, safe and legal abortions, and maternal healthcare. Additionally, modern feminism stresses the importance of involving men in family planning and reproductive rights discussions, ensuring that gender equality encompasses all aspects of family life.

Modern feminism's impact extends beyond individual families to broader societal structures. Respondents expressed optimism about its potential to bring Unity to Filipino families, fostering more harmonious relationships by encouraging balanced roles and responsibilities. As GF6 put it,

"The world would be better if modern feminism can influence ALL families."

This statement suggests modern feminism influences women's roles and promotes healthier, more equitable family dynamics. However, the transformative nature of modern feminism is not without its challenges. One respondent acknowledged that modern feminism may cause systematic upheaval as it disrupts entrenched societal norms. They recognized both the positive outcomes and the potential drawbacks of such disruption, GF3 stating,

"...Modern feminism helps many people but also affects a lot. Everything will change when you change things that were supposed not to be moved."

This sentiment captures the tension between progress and resistance in the face of societal transformation. This includes the potential for a decline in birth rates, as modern feminism advocates for women's autonomy in making decisions regarding education, career, and reproductive rights. When women have greater access to education and career opportunities, alongside the right to make decisions about their reproductive health, they may choose to postpone or forego marriage and childbirth. This increased autonomy and choice can contribute to lower birth rates as women prioritize personal and professional goals over traditional expectations of early motherhood. For instance, the case of South Korea, which currently holds the lowest fertility rate globally, has been linked to the rise of feminism. Critics suggest that feminism fosters bitterness, worsens gender relations, and dissuades young women from embracing motherhood (Motin, 2024).

Similarly, US Census Bureau data illustrates a significant decline in birth rates from 1990 to 2019, with only a slight increase between 2020 and 2023. Interestingly, while Gen Z and millennials exhibit lower fertility rates, there is a notable rise in childbirth among women over 35. It remains to be seen whether this trend will continue with Gen Z as they age. However, the pattern suggests a growing tendency to delay marriage and family planning, with an increasing desire among some to opt out of having children altogether (Dugan, 2023).

Furthermore, GF14 also suggests that modern feminism could contribute to an increase in marital dissolution. By challenging traditional power dynamics, feminism empowers women to leave marriages or partnerships that are unequal or unsatisfying. This shift encourages women to pursue relationships that reflect their values of equality, potentially leading to more frequent separations when those expectations are unmet. Historically, women were dependent on men for resources and survival due to their roles in pregnancy and childcare, with motherhood being an unavoidable aspect of life for sexually active women. However, today's women have gained the ability to control their fertility, plan their families, and focus on professional aspirations. Women now earn 57.3% of bachelor's degrees, 60.1% of master's degrees, and 53.5% of doctoral degrees while also making up 51.5% of the paid workforce. This newfound independence has transformed their relationships with men, as they no longer rely on men for survival or reproduction. Although women's workforce participation is associated with greater life satisfaction, better health, and increased company innovation, it has also contributed to evolving relationship dynamics, which can lead to divorce and conflict (Parker et al., 2022).

Modern feminism also advocates for Gender Equity and Inclusion within the workplace. Respondents noted the importance of fostering a more diverse and inclusive work environment where individuals of all genders can express qualities traditionally associated with the opposite gender. By challenging rigid gender norms, modern

feminism encourages workplaces to adopt diversity initiatives, training programs, and mentorship opportunities that support equity. As GF1 said,

“Both men and women will gain from a more varied, inclusive, and egalitarian workplace as a result of these changes.”

Additionally, modern feminism has brought attention to the need for a better Work-life Balance. Respondents emphasized the importance of flexible work arrangements, paid family leave, and caregiver support as part of this movement. By promoting policies that enable individuals to balance professional and personal obligations, modern feminism aims to create healthier, more supportive environments for everyone. Finally, modern feminism is a driving force for addressing systemic gender bias. Respondents suggested that it may lead to the development of new laws and policies targeting sexism, exploitation, and oppression. As GF3 noted,

“There will be more laws about this in the future, more talks about this, more against and support for feminism.”

This aligns with the existing legal framework in the Philippines, where various laws protect women’s rights and promote gender equality. For instance, the Expanded Maternity Leave Law (RA 11210) provides more time for women to recover after childbirth. At the same time, the Anti-Sexual Harassment Act (RA 7877) protects women from harassment in the workplace. The Magna Carta of Women (RA 9710) is a comprehensive law that ensures the recognition and protection of women’s human rights, especially for marginalized groups (Cudis, 2019). These laws reflect the government’s acknowledgment of the challenges women face and demonstrate how modern feminist advocacy has already contributed to legislative efforts aimed at addressing gender inequalities.

4.0 Conclusion

The study emphasizes the significant role modern feminism plays in shaping the lives of Gen Z Filipino women, particularly in promoting gender equality and inclusivity. This generation is leading efforts to challenge traditional gender roles, advocate for equal rights, and foster shared responsibilities within the workplace and family dynamics. However, despite progress, persistent challenges such as societal stereotypes and cultural resistance continue to hinder the full realization of gender parity. Participants were selected through snowball sampling, which, while effectively accessing the target group, may have limited the diversity of perspectives as it primarily reflected participants’ social networks. To address this, participants were encouraged to refer women from diverse backgrounds, and future studies could benefit from using stratified random sampling to enhance diversity. Moreover, the online interview format may have limited the depth of responses, as face-to-face interactions could provide richer insights. To further support the advancement of gender equity, it is recommended that institutions prioritize implementing inclusive policies, promote leadership opportunities for women, and encourage open dialogue about dismantling patriarchal norms. Empowering Gen Z women to continue leading these efforts will be critical to ensuring a more equitable future for Filipino families and society.

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