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POWER AND EQUAL RIGHTS – THE ROLE OF WOMEN AND THE EMERGENCE OF FEMINISM IN HISTORY

The article focuses on the concept of feminism, as it is often misunderstood nowadays. To support this, the study also takes into account the different types and waves of feminism, while addressing the history of women in leadership positions, including Margaret Thatcher, Cleopatra VII Philopator, Elizabeth I, and Maria Theresa.

The main aim of the feminist movement was to promote equality between men and women. However, there are still various instances, even today, when this notion is interpreted incorrectly, as many people think that the feminist movement is driven by misandry. For this reason, this study attempts to analyse this concept in order to clear up misunderstandings.

Feminism consists of various categories, including liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, socialist feminism, radical feminism, ecofeminism, cultural feminism, black feminism, postmodern feminism, as well as neoliberal feminism. Therefore, to gain a more comprehensive view on this concept, the study also aims to examine these types, as each of them approaches gender equality from a different perspective.

Regarding the waves of feminism, four can be distinguished, which the article also emphasizes. The first wave of feminism can be dated to the beginning of the 1800s. During this period, efforts were made to find solutions to such problems as women's right to work and study, as well as property rights, restrictions on reproductive rights, and the struggle for women's rights to vote.

The second wave of feminism can be placed between the 1960s and 1980s. This period focused on the women's roles in the workplace, the family, and questions regarding sexuality.

The third wave, which began in the 1990s, was concerned with the self-representation of women in the media and also placed emphasis on racial and queer minorities, among others.

Lastly, the formation of the fourth wave of feminism can be dated to the 2010s. This period involved protests against the abuse of women and children, while also addressing gender equality and fostering the representation of women in the media, politics, and society.

Furthermore, the study also involves the history of four women who held positions of power during their eras. It explores the reign of Cleopatra VII Philopator (69-30 BCE), who was the last Ptolemaic ruler of Egypt. Following this, the study investigates Elizabeth I (1533–1603), also known as the “Virgin Queen”, whose reign is frequently referred to as the “Golden Age of England”. This is followed by an exploration of the reign of Maria Theresa (1717–1780), who was the only female ruler of the Habsburg dynasty. Last but not least, the study examines the rule of Margaret Thatcher (1925–2013), also known as the “Iron Lady”, who was the first female prime minister of the United Kingdom.

Key words: *feminism, types of feminism, first wave of feminism, second wave of feminism, third wave of feminism, fourth wave of feminism, Cleopatra VII Philopator, Elizabeth I, Maria Theresa, Margaret Thatcher.*

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ВЛАДА ТА РІВНОПРАВНІСТЬ – РОЛЬ ЖІНОК І СТАНОВЛЕННЯ ФЕМІНІЗМУ В ІСТОРІЇ

У статті розглядається поняття фемінізму, яке в наш час часто неправильно розуміють. На підтвердження цього в дослідженні також аналізуються різні види та хвилі фемінізму, а також розглядається історія жінок на керівних посадах, зокрема Клеопатри VII Філопатор, Єлизавети I, Марії Терезії та Маргарет Тетчер.

Головною метою феміністичного руху було сприяння рівності між чоловіками та жінками. Однак навіть сьогодні існують різні випадки, коли це поняття тлумачиться неправильно, оскільки багато людей вважають, що феміністичний рух рухається мізандрією. З цієї причини це дослідження намагається проаналізувати це поняття, щоб розв'язати непорозуміння.

Фемінізм складається з різних типів/рухів, включаючи ліберальний фемінізм, марксистський фемінізм, соціалістичний фемінізм, радикальний фемінізм, культурний фемінізм, екофемінізм, постмодерний фемінізм, а також неоліберальний фемінізм. Тому, щоб отримати більш комплексне уявлення про це поняття, дослідження також має на меті розглянути ці типи, оскільки кожен з них підходить до гендерної рівності з іншої перспективи.

Щодо хвиль фемінізму, можна виділити чотири, на що також наголошується в статті. Першу хвилю фемінізму можна датувати початком 1800-х років. У цей період докладалися зусилля для пошуку рішень таких проблем, як право жінок на працю та навчання, а також майнові права, обмеження репродуктивних прав та боротьба за виборчі права жінок.

Другу хвилю фемінізму можна віднести до періоду між 1960-ми та 1980-ми роками. Цей період був зосереджений на ролі жінок на робочому місці, ролі сім'ї та питаннях, пов'язаних із сексуальністю.

Третя хвиля, що розпочалася у 1990-х роках, була пов'язана з самопредставленням жінок у ЗМІ, а також, серед іншого, приділяла увагу расовим та квір-меншинам.

Нарешті, початок четвертої хвилі фемінізму можна датувати 2010-ми роками. Цей період ознаменувався протестами проти насильства над жінками та дітьми, а також був присвячений питанням гендерної рівності та сприянню представництву жінок у ЗМІ, політиці та суспільстві.

Крім того, дослідження також охоплює історію чотирьох жінок, які обіймали впливові посади у свої часи. По-перше, воно досліджує правління Клеопатри VII Філопатор (69–30 рр. до н. е.), яка була останньою правителькою Єгипту з династії Птолемеїв. Далі дослідження розглядає Єлизавету I (1533–1603), також відому як «Дівоча королева», правління якої часто називають «Золотим століттям Англії». Далі йде дослідження правління Марії Терезії (1717–1780), яка була єдиною жінкою-правителькою династії Габсбургів. І наостанок, у дослідженні розглядається правління Маргарет Тетчер (1925–2013), також відомої як «Залізна леді», яка була першою і до сьогодні єдиною жінкою-прем'єр-міністром Сполучених Штатів Америки.

Ключові слова: фемінізм, типи фемінізму, перша хвиля фемінізму, друга хвиля фемінізму, третя хвиля фемінізму, четверта хвиля фемінізму, Клеопатра VII Філопатор, Єлизавета I, Марія Терезія, Маргарет Тетчер.

Problem statement. Feminism encompasses a movement whose main aim is to create equality between women and men, enabling both genders to have equal rights in all aspects of life, as women have historically been oppressed across many areas. However, the concept of feminism is frequently misinterpreted. Even nowadays, there are many people who confuse this notion with misandry and perceive it in this way. That is why it is essential to analyse this topic comprehensively.

Exploring the different types of feminism (liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, socialist feminism, radical feminism, ecofeminism, cultural feminism, black feminism, postmodern feminism, neoliberal feminism) is meant to help create a broader picture of this notion. In addition, investigating the different waves of feminism also facilitates the understanding of its origins and development. Furthermore, analysing women in leadership positions helps place this topic in a more historical context and examine the role of

women and feminism in specific historical eras, which enhances the exploration of the topic in a more engaging and comprehensive way.

It is also important to mention that many people believe feminism is no longer needed nowadays, as equality is “already achieved” and women “possess the same rights as men in all areas of life”, despite the fact that inequality still exists. For this reason, this study also addresses why feminism is not outdated but still needed today.

The examination of all the aforementioned factors enables the creation of a broader picture of feminism and helps to clarify misunderstandings.

Analysis of recent studies and publications.

There have been many researchers who have dealt with the concept of feminism and the questions surrounding it. Delmar is one example of this. She notes that it is difficult to provide a precise definition of feminism, as various categories exist, and that feminism as a concept is frequently not properly treated (Delmar, R., 1986).

Another researcher who examined the concept of feminism, Haradhan, provided a clear definition and description of the various branches of feminism. He also described feminism as a movement which emerged to support women’s rights in society against sexism and the patriarchy (Haradhan, K., M., 2022).

In addition, Bala (Bala, P., 2019) and Butler (Butler, J. M., 1989) write about the period before the emergence of feminism and its origin, emphasizing that certain women had already questioned and opposed the oppression of women at that time.

Regarding the four waves of feminism, Malinowska can be mentioned, as she extensively analysed each wave while defining their time periods and historical context, as well as emphasizing the issues each wave addressed (Malinowska, A., 2020).

In terms of the connection between feminism and female rulers, several researchers can be mentioned who have analysed this relationship, each examining different women in power. Thus, Burstein (Burstein, S. M., 2007) and Lartey (Lartey, S., 2024) studied Cleopatra VII Philopator. Moreover, King (King, J. N., 2020) and Heisch (Heisch, A., 1980) analysed Elizabeth I. Furthermore, Maria Theresa was studied by Goldsmith (Goldsmith, M., 1936) and Stollberg-Rilinger (Stollberg-Rilinger, B., 2020), among others. Finally, Margaret Thatcher was examined by Cannadine (Cannadine, D., 2016) and Purvis (Purvis, J., 2013).

This article aims. The main aim of the research is to analyse and interpret the concept of feminism, taking into account its major types and approaches, including liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, social-

ist feminism, radical feminism, ecofeminism, cultural feminism, Black feminism, postmodern feminism, and neoliberal feminism. The study also aims to identify the main waves of feminism and examine the origins, historical development, and transformation of feminist ideas. Particular attention is paid to the role of prominent women in different historical periods, including Cleopatra VII Philopator, Elizabeth I, Maria Theresa, and Margaret Thatcher, whose political activities and historical legacies contributed to the changing position and perception of women in society. Another objective is to clarify common misconceptions about feminism and critically examine the assumption that feminism is no longer necessary because gender equality has already been achieved and women have the same rights as men. Therefore, the study seeks to demonstrate why feminist ideas and the struggle for gender equality remain relevant in contemporary society.

Presentation of the main material. As Bala states in her work, for a long time, women were oppressed in various ways. For this reason, they could not even study or teach. In addition, men formed various ideas about women, coming up with exaggerated and false assumptions, which also contributed to the oppression of women. These factors played a significant role in the emergence of feminism (Bala, P., 2019: 171).

Most of the time, they used the Book of Genesis (from the Bible) to prove their own assumptions, emphasizing that Adam’s creation took place first, and Eve’s only after that. They also compared women to Eve from the Bible, claiming that all women have the same characteristics as Eve, and by nature they are all disobedient, unfaithful, and prone to temptation, among others (Bala, P., 2019: 171).

According to Alcoff, the root of the oppression of women by patriarchy comes from the biological differences between men and women, notably that women can create new life, and bring children into the world, while men cannot (Alcoff, L., 1988: 410).

As Bala stated, feminism emerged from the Latin word “femina”. The concept of feminism was first formulated around 1830 by Charles Fourier, who was a French utopian writer. However, it only entered the public consciousness around 1892 with the help of a female politician and actress, Marguerite Durand. She was the one who convened an assembly to press for women’s social rights (Bala, P., 2019: 170–171).

However, based on the research of Bala (2019), the first person who recognised the injustice toward women was a man, namely Francois Poullain de La Barre. As a theologian, he wrote and published a tract in 1673 titled “*The Equality of the Two Sexes*”. In this work he directly argued that women are, by nature,

no less intelligent than men, and that they would be able to hold their own in both creative and intellectual fields if they were provided with the same opportunities as men, including access to studying in educational institutions (Bala, P., 2019: 170).

In contrast, based on earlier research, Christina de Pizan, who in her work *“The Book of the City of Ladies”*, in 1405, already stood up against the misogynistic literature of her time, while utilising history and the deeds of great women in the past (such as Queen Esther from the Bible, the Sabine women, Clothilda, and other saints, including the Virgin Mary) to defend women from the misogynistic views of that time, such as the supposedly innate sins associated with women, and women’s supposed weakness (Butler, J. M., 1989).

Feminist movements addressed several issues and topics. They aimed to combat gender inequality, workplace inequality, and to promote reproductive rights, among others. They also focused on intersectionality and the elimination of gender-based violence (Bala, P., 2019: 170–175).

However, many people misunderstand this concept. This misinterpretation is caused by various aspects. One of these factors is the stereotype that feminists are man-haters, and that feminism is motivated by anti-male sentiment (Hopkins-Doyle, A., et al., 2024: 9). Moreover, another study suggests that many people think feminism is solely about women (probably because of its name), while it serves the interests of both women and men. Neeraja also suggests that the misinterpretation of this notion is also caused by the spread of pseudo-feminism, which involves content (including online content) labelled as feminist, while such content shows a false narrative and depict women as superior to men (Neeraja, S. S., 2023: 89–90). Bennett also includes neoliberal feminism as a cause of the misconceptions surrounding feminism (Bennett, S. L., 2024).

Regarding the categories of feminism, several can be highlighted, such as liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, socialist feminism, radical feminism, ecofeminism, cultural feminism, black feminism, postmodern feminism, as well as neoliberal feminism (Haradhan, K., M., 2022: 11–20).

Liberal feminism is an ideology which emerges from the liberal political theory inspired by the French revolution (Haradhan, K., M., 2022: 14), and based on two concepts, freedom and equality (Law, S. A., 2019). As Haradhan (2022) mentions, liberal feminism emphasises women’s equality, personal freedom, equal opportunities, and the protection of women’s rights. It criticises the perspective which states that women are, by nature, both intellectually and

physically weaker and more subordinate than men, and also states that these views are based on outdated beliefs. In addition, it also points out that women are often judged based on their gender rather than their individual merits, while men are judged according to their own merits, which also leads to inequality (Haradhan, K., M., 2022: 14–15).

According to Haradhan (2022), Marxist feminism is based on the political philosophy of Marxism (founded by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels), which claims that social development is determined by class struggles. Due to capitalism, two classes emerged, such as bourgeoisie (owners) and proletariat (working class). The main aim determined by Marxism is to abolish the oppression of the working class, which is caused by the ruling class (using tools such as religion, law, etc.) (Haradhan, K., M., 2022: 15–16). Based on MacKinnon (1982), both feminism and Marxism are about power and its distribution, as well as inequality (MacKinnon, C. A., 1982: 645). Thus, Marxist feminism states that it is not men who are responsible for women’s oppression, but rather capitalism (a system formed by both women and men). Therefore, women should not fight against men in terms of oppression, but against capitalism, which causes it (Haradhan, K., M., 2022: 15–16).

In contrast, socialist feminism emerged in response to criticism of Marxist feminism, arguing that capitalism is not the only factor causing the oppression of women, but also patriarchy (Armstrong, E., 2020). Thus, this approach examined inequality in terms of both social class and gender (Haradhan, K., M., 2022: 16–17).

According to radical feminism, the main idea is that women form a marginalised group, and their oppression is caused by patriarchy, which upholds the subordination of women. This ideology also states that the aforementioned system is supported by social institutions (e. g., law, religion, family) and cultural norms. Radical feminism suggests that women can never be safe from abuse carried out by men (Rowlan, R., Klein, R., 1996: 68). Therefore, they place special attention on topics connected to the different forms of abuse, such as sexual harassment and assault, domestic violence, and child abuse. Radical feminists also believe that society forces women into roles as mother, housewife, or sexual partner, thus institutionalising their subordinated position (Haradhan, K., M., 2022: 17–18).

The ideology of ecofeminism argues that patriarchy and male dominance are the causes of environmental destruction. For this reason, it believes that patriarchy should be abolished in order to solve environmental issues. However, this should not result in

matriarchy, but rather in the establishment of balance between the two genders (Howell, N. R., 1997).

According to Alcoff (1988), the main focus of cultural feminism is the re-evaluation and strengthening of the female nature, as well as the characteristics associated with women (e.g., care, cooperation, creativity). Cultural feminists believe that female values are underestimated in patriarchal society, therefore, one of its aims is to protect and liberate those (Alcoff, L., 1988: 409). To achieve this, another aim is to create places and communities for women which are free from patriarchal influences, such as women-only galleries, gyms, and magazines, among others (Haradhan, K., M., 2022: 19).

In his work, Haradhan (2022) explains that Black feminism stands up against the oppression of women, while emphasising that women of colour are also valuable, and that their liberation is essential. This highlights that women of colour face two forms of oppression at the same time, involving both their racial identity and their gender. Later, the Black Feminist Movement fought against racism and sexism toward women of colour, as well as class-based oppression (Haradhan, K., M., 2022: 19–20).

The era of postmodern feminism, due to various changes in society (such as increased divorce rates and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases), raised many questions, which led to the re-evaluation of the relationship between women and men. The movement's main aim was still the protection of women's social rights and interests. However, it also led to the questioning of those feminists who attempted to undermine the traditional family model. Postmodern feminists did not believe that patriarchy is the only factor which leads to the oppression of women. They argued that women cannot be placed into one unified group, and that there is no such phenomenon as a unified feminist viewpoint or approach, as the identity of all women depends on various factors such as class, ethnicity, and sexuality. Therefore, oppression can be caused by these elements, including patriarchy (Haradhan, K., M., 2022: 20).

Lastly, neoliberal feminism can also be added. As Bennett (2024) mentions, this type of feminism views individual success and personal empowerment as the main tools for creating equality between the two genders. This kind of feminism helps women to take control of their lives and strive to achieve their goals. However, Bennet sees it as problematic because, based on her viewpoint, it creates a competitive environment among women. Instead of defining common goals to achieve equality, it focuses on individual empowerment rather than collective action. She argues that, in this kind of feminism, feminist

ideology becomes a marketing tool, for example in the form of feminist slogans and advertisements on cosmetics (Bennett, S. L., 2024).

In her work, Malinowska (2020) explains that feminist movements unfolded in four waves. The first wave of feminism can be traced back to the 1800s. Its starting point was the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848. This movement was the most active in the United States of America and Western Europe. During this period, efforts to solve such problems as women's right to work and study, as well as property rights, restrictions on reproductive rights, and the struggle for women's right to vote took place. In the latter, the International Women Suffrage Alliance played a significant role (Malinowska, A., 2020: 1–3). This era also involved topics as anti-colonialism, sexual sovereignty, racial injustice, as well as struggles for peace and immigrants' rights (Marino, K. M., Ware, S., 2022: 2–49). Based on Malinowska (2020), in this wave women of colour were not included yet. The main tools of this wave's movements were public gatherings and both oral and written manifestations, while the press also played an important role in these movements. However, feminist activists were often portrayed in the press as rude, unfeminine, and man-hating individuals. In this wave, several achievements were made, including the emergence of the first newspaper edited by women in America, "The Lily", as well as the French magazine "Le Voix des Femmes". These allowed women to make their voices heard. Women could also achieve financial independence as a result of the "Married Women's Property Acts". In addition, women's suffrage was achieved as well (Malinowska, A., 2020: 2–3).

The second wave of feminism emerged after World War II and was present between the 1960s and 1980s. This period focused on the role of women in the workplace and in the family, and questions regarding sexuality, women's place in society and women's experiences (Malinowska, A., 2020: 3–4). Gosse (2005) mentions that women spoke out in support of changing the division of labour between women and men, and women's entry into such fields which were dominated by men, such as construction sites, coal mines, as well as law and engineering schools, among others (Gosse, V., 2005). At that time, television broadcasting also emerged. Therefore, there was a struggle for women's presence and representation in television. However, men dominated this field as well, and women were only placed in administrative or entertainment roles (Malinowska, A., 2020: 3–4). Gosse (2005) reports that during this wave most achievements happened regarding the workplace and within families (Gosse, V., 2005). For the representation of women, the "National

Organization for Women” and the “*Media Workshop*” played a big role, as well as media projects such as “*Electra Rewired*” and “*Womankind*”, as these were the first radio programmes which dealt with women’s problems. Furthermore, feminist magazines can also be mentioned, such as “*Ms. Magazine*”, while the “*Media Report to Women*” observed in the US that women are equally represented in the media as men. The regulation on gender equality in the media was finally adopted by the Council of Europe in 1984 (Malinowska, A., 2020: 3–4).

The third wave of feminism, which began in the 1990s, was concerned with the self-representation of women in the media and (Malinowska, A., 2020: 4–5), in contrast to the previous waves, it also paid attention to racial and queer minorities (McRobbie, A., 2004). During this period, the emergence of the internet took place, and feminists saw cyberspace as a great tool for emancipation and creativity (Malinowska, A., 2020: 4–5), (the emergence of cyberfeminism in 1991, whose main aim was to draw attention to gender power differences experienced in the digital sphere) (Hawthorne, S., Klein, R., 1999). This gave women opportunities for communication as well as self-representation. At that time, DIY culture also spread, which enabled women to create content individually. During this wave, great emphasis was placed on individuality and diversity. However, as women began to gain more independence both socially and professionally, antifeminism appeared, which according to Susan Faludi, was sustained by antifeminist myth spread by the media (Malinowska, A., 2020: 4–5). Besides that, the ideology of postfeminism also played a major part in this. According to McRobbie, it was stated that “*feminism is dead*” and attempted to merge the traditional female role with modern independence (McRobbie, A., 2004). This leads to the appearance of a hybrid female image, which combines these two roles while frequently ridiculing feminism and situating it within consumer culture. Programmes with such female characters include *Sex and the City*, *Bridget Jones’s Diary* and *Ally McBeal* (Malinowska, A., 2020: 4–5).

The fourth wave of feminism began to form during the 2010s. This happened both through hashtags, campaigns (e.g., *MeToo*), projects (e.g., *Everyday Sexism Project*) on the internet, as well as through street protests addressing abuse committed against women and children. Building on this, the period of the fourth wave involved protests against the abuse of women and children, while also addressing gender equality and fostering the representation of women in the media, politics, and society. These efforts included research institutions such as the “*Geena Davis Insti-*

tute on Gender in Media”, films such as the “*Miss Representation*”, and last but not least, online platforms such as “*A Women’s Thing*” (2014) (Malinowska, A., 2020: 5).

As for women in positions of power, *Margaret Thatcher* (1925–2013), also known as the “*Iron Lady*”, can be mentioned, as she was the first female prime minister of the United Kingdom between 1979 and 1990. She entered Parliament in 1959 (Purvis, J., 2013). However, as Cannadine states, her breakthrough in the political field only occurred in the 1970s (Cannadine, D., 2016). At first, she held the position of Minister of Pensions, and later she became the Secretary of State for Education and Science, where she was the only female member of the Cabinet. Following this, she was elected leader of the Conservative Party in 1975 (Purvis, J., 2013).

Margaret Thatcher is significant in history because she transformed Great Britain’s socio-economic system. She integrated a radical free-market programme, privatised those utilities which were owned by the government, decreased government spending, including student loan systems, among others. Regarding international relations, she urged an end to the Cold War and took a strong stance on the Falklands War. She also maintained a strong partnership with Ronald Reagan, as she was strongly opposed to Soviet Communism (Purvis, J., 2013).

At the time when Margaret Thatcher entered the House of Commons, she was already criticised for her clothing, hairstyle, and voice. For this reason, she also took voice training lessons. Moreover, it was often suggested that her femininity opened the path to success for her. Based on the work of Purvis, one Conservative representative wrote in his diary that he “*became distracted because of Thatcher’s ankle*”. The French president at the time also made a sexist remark about her. However, as Purvis argues, her parliamentary success cannot be explained solely by these assumptions (Purvis, J., 2013).

Margaret Thatcher proved that a woman can also rule a major Western country. Therefore, there were several ambitious women who looked up to her (Purvis, J., 2013). However, as the relevant literature suggests, she did not take significant steps to advance gender equality laws (Ribberink, J. C. A. P., 2005). For this reason, many women were disappointed in her leadership (Purvis, J., 2013). She did not pursue women-friendly policies, thus not advancing childcare, nursery provision, and equal pay. Based on Purvis’ work (2013), she did not even employ women in her cabinet. During her time in office, only one woman held a position, Baroness Young, as Leader of the House of Lords. According to Ribberink, this was

likely because she did not want others to see her as feminist or weak (Ribberink, J. C. A. P., 2005: 177). Purvis further explains that Margaret Thatcher did not consider herself a feminist and later even stated, *“Feminism is poison”* (Purvis, J., 2013).

In addition to Margaret Thatcher, *Cleopatra VII Philopator* (69–30 BCE), the last Ptolemaic ruler of Egypt, can also be mentioned. She is often portrayed in history as a symbol of sexuality and power (Hopkins-Doyle, A., et al., 2024). As Lartey explains, Cleopatra has frequently been referred to in history as a *femme fatale* and seductress, an image that derives solely from Roman propaganda and later Eurocentric historiography (Lartey, S., 2024). Another example of a female ruler is *Elizabeth I* (1533–1603), also known as the *“Virgin Queen”* (Heisch, A., 1980), whose reign is frequently referred to as the *“Golden Age of England”*. As Feaver explains, John Knox stated in one of his works that women are not fit to rule, as they are considered to be by nature weaker. He also mentioned that the only exception exists when God himself makes an exception. Elizabeth I utilised this exceptionality, presenting herself as someone placed on the throne by God. Thus, this exceptionality applied only to her and not to others. This also shows that if a woman comes to the throne, the system does not become less patriarchal, as a woman can also play a role in maintaining this system (Feaver, A., 2018). Apart from Elizabeth I, *Maria Theresa* can also be noted, as she was the only female ruler of the Habsburg dynasty. Goldsmith suggests that Maria Theresa believed that the place of women was at home, in service to their husbands, not in the state councils. She thought of herself as an exception and believed that she was chosen for this task by God (Goldsmith, M., 1936).

Although many believe that equality has already been achieved, feminism is still necessary and remains important today. As Pathak and Kariwala mention, there are still issues that are in need of solutions, such as the high rates of sexual violence, discrimination in the workplace, the restricted pro-

tection of reproductive rights, and the increase in online harassment (Pathak, Ms. A., Kariwala, Ms. H., 2251–2253). Furthermore, based on a report issued by the European Union in 2024, the employment rate is still higher among men than among women within the member states. In addition, the wage gap is still above 10%. Even in 2022, there were countries in which this rate exceeded 15%. In addition, further work is still required to achieve equal representation. Moreover, *“The Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2024”* annual report states that gender equality in parliaments will only be achieved approximately in 2063. What is more, at least 137 years are needed to bring women and girls out of extreme poverty. Another problem, among others, is child marriage, as one in four girls are married as children (UN Women & United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs., 2024: 2–13).

Conclusion. Feminism promotes equality between men and women, and during the different eras these movements addressed several issues and topics. They aimed to combat gender and workplace inequality and to promote reproductive rights, among others. They also focused on intersectionality and the elimination of gender-based violence. However, the topic of feminism involves various misconceptions and misinterpretations, as many people think that the movement of feminism is driven by misandry. This movement involves various types and four waves. To provide a more historical perspective on this topic, the examination of female rulers is also important. For this reason, during this study the names of Margaret Thatcher, Cleopatra VII Philopator, Elizabeth I, and Maria Theresa are also mentioned. In opposition to common misconceptions, feminism is still needed today, as various issues still need to be addressed, including the high rates of sexual violence, workplace discrimination, the restricted protection of reproductive rights, the increase in online harassment, and the rates of child marriage, among others.

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