

Image of feminism in Russian media

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Abstract. The purpose of the paper is to analyze Russian news content about feminism from the point of view of the event structure that is presented in the news. The research material is a corpus of headlines of Russian media publications demonstrated in the media news aggregator smi2.ru from 2014 to 2021. News headlines related to feminism (8,954) are automatically extracted from the entire array of texts to study the representation of feminism in the news agenda. The resulting subcorpus is analyzed in the IS Semograph, which allows carrying out a multilevel classification of content and automatically obtain data on the frequency of certain classes and their connection closeness. A three-level classification based on the analysis of events indicated in the news is created as a result of the material thematic analysis. It has been established that events in which the interacting parties are social groups, are covered most often. Actors oppose something (specific people, performances, etc.), and the news is mainly associated with coverage of actions and reactions of media people and the field of art. Frequency analysis of connections between event components allows modeling the event structure associated with feminism: the most typical structure of an event includes either feminist movements as a protagonist, or cultural and media figures who act for feminism and/or against specific individuals and organizations, trying to influence society as a whole, and these actions take place in the media space or in the cultural sphere. Therefore, the feminism image, which core is not the real problem and women rights, but mainly scandalous and illegal actions related to the field of art and media people, is constructed in the media.

Keywords: feminism, media, text corpus, modelling.

1 Introduction

Feminism as a complex socio-cultural phenomenon is considered, on the one hand, as a social movement for the rights of women, which has a long historical experience, on the other hand, as a complex of socio-philosophical, sociological, psychological, and cultural theories that analyze the situation in society in relation to women [1]. Feminism, understood in a broad sense, depends on national traditions of particular culture, the mentality characteristics of specific societies, the nature of the country's political system, the ability to freely express one's opinion in a particular culture or state structure, and many other factors of socio-cultural nature [2].

Feminism is reflected in the media, which in contemporary world is a full-fledged institution capable of shaping public consciousness, purposefully influencing individual social groups, setting standards of behavior for the masses and determining main directions for the society development. Media transform the existing reality or create it; form views, addictions or hatred towards something or someone in a specific audience using various mechanisms of media influence [3].

Experts from various fields of knowledge are engaged in the study of women's problems and issues of

sexes social equality [4–7], who note that the acceptance or rejection of feminist ideas depends on the presentation, construction of the phenomenon in the media space. Considering the reflection of women's rights and interests in the media, Russian researchers come to the main conclusion: the media do not reflect the real position of women in society, and the issues that haunt them on a daily basis [8, 9, 10]. The purpose of the paper is to analyze Russian news content about feminism in terms of the event structure that is presented in the news.

2 Material and Methods

The material of the study is a corpus of texts – headlines of Russian media publications (more than 65 million), presented in the news aggregator smi2.ru (<https://smi2.ru>) in the period from January 2014 to June 2021. The corpus contains information about the date of the material publication; url-address of the original publication; publication source; publication title and the material abstract (headline).

News headlines related to feminism were extracted to analyze the representation of feminism in the news agenda from the entire array of the studied material. The selection was made automatically using the Apache Solr

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full-text search system (request of “фемин*” in Russian). A subcorpus of 10 479 feminist headlines (8954 are unique) was made available upon request. The resulting subcorpus was loaded into the Semograph Information System, conducting a multi-level classification of content according to any criteria and automatically providing data on the frequency of certain classes, as well as on their connection closeness [11].

A three-level classification based on the analysis of situations (events) presented in news reports was created in IS Semograph as a result of the material thematic analysis. 6,100 headlines were analyzed (selected by continuous sampling). The headlines were dissected by two experts; each headline was considered as the presence of individual characteristics' indications of the described event and, on the basis of the given information, was correlated with a certain section of the classifier. If one news headline contained information about various aspects of the event taken into account in the classification (and this type of contexts make up the majority of those presented), then the headline correlated simultaneously with several sections of the classification. Thus, when analyzing the headline of *Bashkirskie feministki potrebovali legalizovat' aborty na pozdnieh srokah* (In Russ.) (*Bashkir feminists demanded to legalize late-term abortions*), the following components were singled out: the actor (feminists as a group of people united by a common goal, interests and views) and actions (advocating for abortion (for the implementation of medical rights)). Therefore, the given headline is assigned to the corresponding classes of the two sections of the classification – ACTORS and ACTIONS.

3 Results and Discussion

Four main sections of the classification, describing the situation basic characteristics, were identified as the analysis outcome of the events behind the news: actors, actions, areas of activity and objects that the actors' actions were directed at (Table 1). The main divisions include second-level classes and third-level subclasses (for a complete classification, the Feminism Project: <https://semograph.org/project/1445>).

ACTORS

The classifier section ACTORS includes the following classes: SOCIAL GROUPS, PERSONS, GENDER GROUPS, SOCIETY. As can be seen from the Table, the SOCIAL GROUPS class is the most frequent class in the ACTORS section: the mention of various social groups is updated in 5572 headlines. Being an ideological and social movement, feminism is naturally included in the social context, which, on the one hand, opposes such gender communities as men and women, and on the other hand, attracts representatives of social groups (or, conversely, is rejected by them) formed on other features.

Subclasses that unite various social groups and communities (28 subclasses in total) are included in the

SOCIAL GROUPS class. The most common are FEMINIST MOVEMENTS – among feminist movements, suffragettes and various modern feminist groups are mentioned, for instance, Pussy Riot, Femen, KazFem (Kazakhstan), Femband, and others (1683 in total); ARTISTS – film and theatre actors, writers, poets, photographers, artists, musicians, singers, directors, producers, etc. (1189); MEDIA – among the actors of the given subclass, journalists, TV and radio hosts, bloggers, news agencies, and press services are mentioned (930); POLITICS/AUTHORITIES – public authorities, for example, local administration, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Government, Federal Service, as well as subjects of government at various levels – presidents, ministers, members of the government, heads of subjects, deputies, diplomats, ombudsmen, prosecutors, political parties, and others (656). The remaining subclasses within the mentioned class have a frequency of 300 to 1.

Table 1. Frequency of event components updated in headlines, abs.

Classification sections	Frequency
ACTORS	6598
ACTOR-SOCIAL GROUPS	5572
ACTOR-PERSONS	939
ACTOR-GENDER GROUPS	330
ACTOR-SOCIETY	228
OBJECTS OF INTERACTION	5262
OBJECT-SOCIAL GROUPS	2094
OBJECT-SOCIETY	1952
OBJECT-GENDER GROUPS	1129
OBJECT-PERSONS	449
ACTIONS	4904
AGAINST	2576
FOR	2355
RADICALISM	710
AREAS OF ACTIVITY	4381

The second most frequent class – PERSONS (939) has no subclasses; this class is opposed to various social and gender groups, as well as to society as a whole. The main individuals represented in the given class are either individuals who are part of a particular social group, but acting on their own behalf, or individuals whose group identity may not be determined by the authors of news headlines. The designated classification group usually comprises individuals being unknown to the general public.

The next class GENDER GROUPS (330) is subdivided into two subclasses – WOMEN and MEN. There are significantly more gender types than traditional ones in modern social reality [12, 14, 15]. However, other gender groups are mentioned infrequently in the analyzed headlines, and more in the context of sexual than gender orientation. We consider it feasible to analyze only the main gender opposition since feminism embraces women's rights. Within this class, women are mentioned twice often as actors (232) than men (113), which seems natural since women's movement headlines are assessed. Nevertheless, the

mention of men as an opposing group that is being fought for equality of rights is also quite justified.

The class SOCIETY (228) has no subclasses; this class is a human community as an actor, the specifics of which are reflected in internal people relations, their forms of interaction and association. The main actors in the given class are *society, majority of people, population, citizens*, as well as groups by nationality, citizenship or place of residence: *Russian society, the British, the public of South Africa, of Yaroslavl, etc.* The mention of various forms of people association is updated in only 228 headlines.

The Table demonstrates that ACTORS are mentioned more often than other situational categories (6598 headlines), which is logical, since the activity subject reported in the title/abstract of the material is the most significant part of the reported information. However, actors are not observed in a number of news (in most cases, such examples are nominal sentences).

OBJECTS OF INTERACTION

The classification section OBJECTS OF INTERACTION comprises those social groups and people with whom the actors interact. The internal structure section completely replicates the section ACTORS, since they both reflect the same society structure – society as a set of people, social and gender groups, and individuals.

According to the Table, the SOCIAL GROUPS class is the most frequent (2094 headlines); FEMINIST MOVEMENTS (478), POLITICS/AUTHORITIES (389) and ARTISTS (378) are the most prevalent subclasses in the class. The remaining subclasses within the given class have a frequency of 199 to 1.

The second most frequent class is SOCIETY (1952), and the third is GENDER GROUPS (1129). The mention of women as objects of activity is more frequent (as well as among actors) and is updated in 873 headlines within gender groups, and the mention of men is only in 268, which seems logical, since feminism as a political and social movement is aimed at equalizing and empowering women. The PERSONS class is of the lowest frequency (449 headlines in total).

The Table demonstrates that OBJECTS OF INTERACTION are mentioned quite often (5262 headlines), however, the object of activity reported in the news is not always indicated by the media.

ACTIONS

Next in frequency is the ACTION class, which is featured in 4,904 headlines. The given class is represented by specific actions/deeds of various actors. Every action described in the news can be divided into three types of actions: actions performed against any laws, customs, persons, groups, and actions (AGAINST class – 2576 headlines); activities made in their support (FOR class – 2355 headlines); radical acts – rape, (suicide) murder, clashes with law enforcement, fights, acts of vandalism, as well as ruffianism, public nudity and other examples of

behavior that deviates from established social norms (RADICALISM class – 710 headlines).

The AGAINST class involves the following subclasses: AGAINST A PARTICULAR PERSON/ORGANIZATION (938) and AGAINST FEMINISM (678). Most of the news about actions against something highlights the objects of protest, naming either particular people (most often politicians and artists who have stained themselves in the eyes of feminists), or the actions of these people or the products of their labor. The AGAINST FEMINISM subclass reflects specific actions and statements directed against feminism as a movement. The analyzed subcorpus of headlines also contains news that covers the actions AGAINST VIOLENCE/HARASSMENT and AGAINST MEN as a gender group. However, there are not many of them in the total array (309 and 259 headlines, respectively). The remaining subclasses within the given class (33 subclasses in total) have a frequency of 259 to 1.

The FOR class includes the most frequent FOR FEMINISM subclass (1,139). The subclasses of FOR A PARTICULAR PERSON/ORGANIZATION and FOR FEMINITIVES, which are subsequent in terms of frequency of mention, have a significantly lower frequency (171 and 163 headlines, respectively), which allows us to consider actions aimed at supporting feminism as the most essential for actors of the analyzed headlines. The remaining selected subclasses within the FOR class (32 subclasses in total) have a frequency of 78 to 1.

The RADICALISM class, which rarely characterizes feminism as a radical movement, but is often associated with vandalism, public nudity, (suicide) murder, fighting, and involves headlines that describe radical methods used against feminist actions.

Therefore, news headlines generally cover actions against something, but actions for feminism as movements are observed twice as often as actions against feminism (1582 and 678 headlines, respectively).

AREAS OF ACTIVITY

The FIELD OF ACTIVITY section describes the area within which the actors operate. References to the field of activity are found in 4,381 headlines. The next area of activity is most often mentioned – MEDIA (1815), more than 41% of all named areas. ART (1124) occupies more than a quarter of all areas of activity, FASHION (639) – a little more than an eighth. POLITICS (341), BUSINESS (243), JUDICIAL SPHERE/INVESTIGATION (213) and LAW (202) are significantly inferior in frequency to art and fashion; the remaining subclasses, namely, SPORT (70), EDUCATION (69), ARMY (56), RELIGION (56), SCIENCE (52), MEDICINE (23) and others in general make up approximately 10% of all the mentioned areas of activity. Thus, most of the news concerns the media world, as well as the world of art and fashion. The reflection of such efficient areas of social and economic life as education, medicine, sports, the army and the economy is minimal in the news agenda.

Consider the relationship of the most frequent subclasses in the form of a matrix revealing the number of relationships between subclasses – components of the described event (Table 2). Presented in the mentioned

form, the analysis outcomes of the event structure in headlines can be considered as an event model in the media space.

Table 2. Matrix of connection strength between event components, abs.

	ACTOR-FEM. MOVEMENTS	ACTORS-ARTISTS	OBJECT-WOMEN	OBJECT-SOCIETY	FOR FEMINISM	AGAINST FEMINISM	AGAINST PERSON	ART	MEDIA
ACTOR-MEDIA	33	22	354	334	131	71	107	134	691
ACTOR-FEM. MOVEMENTS		51	107	144	373	23	435	220	176
ACTORS-ARTISTS			53	736	388	172	97	560	317
OBJECT-WOMEN				19	236	41	27	84	381
OBJECT-SOCIETY					501	190	70	552	649
FOR FEMINISM						44	55	323	234
AGAINST FEMINISM							66	57	164
AGAINST PERSON								164	303
ART									99

According to Table 2, the strongest connections are most often established between large subclasses. Summarizing the obtained data, there are several standard news structures dedicated to feminism:

ACTOR	MEDIA	ARTISTS	FEM. MOVEMENTS
OBJECT	–	SOCIETY	SOCIETY
ACTION	–	FOR FEMINISM	AGAINST FEMINISM
SPHERE	MEDIA	ART	–

4 Conclusion

The conducted analysis of the headlines corpus allowed modelling the event structure associated with feminism in the same way as in the media. Events in which: 1) interacting parties are social groups, and, frequently, feminist movements, artists and media representatives; 2) actors oppose something, while in the vast majority of news, actors oppose some particular people, performances and other events, actions of particular people; 3) news is mainly related to coverage of the actions and reactions of media people and the field of art, most often were covered in the news.

The connection analysis between the event components in the news has revealed that often the news with actors among media representatives, are closed in the same area. News where artists are the actors reflects a situation in which the action is directed in support of feminism, and the whole society is the object of interaction. Besides, in the case of the media, artists are mostly featured in art news. When the main actor is the

feminist movement, then the main object of its interaction is society as a whole, and they oppose particular individuals or organizations. Neither women's rights nor women fall into the structure core of the described event in the news agenda.

Therefore, the media construct an image of feminism, the core of which is not the real problems and rights of women, but mainly scandalous and illegal actions (or the presentation of such actions as scandalous and illegal) associated with the arts and media people. Obviously, the media reality constructed by the mass media is significantly various from tangible issues that should be solved in the field of feminism when covering the given topic.

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