

Empowering Voices: The Role of Technology in Global Feminist Movements

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Abstract: This paper examines the transformative role of technology in global feminist movements in India. The way feminist activism is conducted is revolutionised by the advent of digital technologies and online platforms. It is providing new avenues for women to challenge entrenched gender stereotypes and systemic inequalities. The main characteristics of inclusivity and intersectionality of Digital feminism, has created a space where diverse and multiples voices and experiences can be heard and shared, fostering a sense of unity and community among women worldwide. In India, digital feminism has emerged as one of the most powerful tools for social change. Internet and social media have become increasingly accessible and thus enabled Indian women to raise support, awareness and advocate their rights in an unimaginable size. Critical issues such as gender-based violence, workplace discrimination and societal expectations are easily highlighted through online campaigns, hashtags, and digital storytelling. The digital platforms are not only working as a highlighting tool but also allowing Indian women to facilitate global networking, thus enabling them to engage and learn from feminist movements around the world. Every coin has two sides, the rise of digital feminism also has to face challenges. While offering a powerful means of activism, it also can be an insular, reactive and myopic in terms of the responses when compared to offline movements. Sometimes only certain perspectives are validated, and thus potentially marginalising other important issues. Online harassment and trolling also act as significant barrier through which digital feminist has to navigate. The paper also identifies various research gaps that need to be addressed to further understand the digital feminism. Many studies do not explicitly describe their methodologies, which highlights the need for qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method approaches used to study digital feminism. There is also a need for more research on how various intersecting identities, such as caste, class, sexuality, and disability, are represented and engaged within digital feminist movements. Furthermore, the long-term impact of digital feminist activism on societal norms and policies remains underexplored. Comparative studies between digital and offline feminist movements could also provide valuable insights about the strengths and limitations of both the approaches. A detailed understanding and a strategic approach will help to reduce the challenges of online harassments, digital divide, trolling and such other things. Research on the nature and impact of transnational connections in digital feminism could shed light on how digital feminists collaborate with international movements. In conclusion, a significant social change can be witnessed through digital feminism, which represents a dynamic and evolving form of activism. Feminists are challenging patriarchal structures and advocating inclusive and equitable society by leveraging digital technologies and platforms. The continued growth and development of digital feminism will depend on the ability to navigate its challenges and harness its potential for positive impact. This paper aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on digital feminism by highlighting its transformative potential, identifying its challenges, and suggesting areas for future research.

Keywords – Digital Feminism, Online Feminism, Gender Equality, Cyber Feminism, Global Feminist Movements

INTRODUCTION

Today, feminism because of digitalisation has transformed the wave of feminist activism in to a different level. Traditional feminism has been out classed by the simplicity and power of digital technologies and online platforms. They have challenged not only gender inequalities but also systematic inequalities. They ensure inclusivity and intersectionality, by providing space for diverse experiences and voices, which can be heard and shared. The women across India have got an option that enables them to express their views and personal experience and to connect them with likeminded people. Thus, ensuring a sense of community and solidarity.

There is boom in internet and social media access. Which has become a crucial tool for increasing support raising

awareness and thus advocating the rights of the women. The medium of online campaigns, hashtags and online storytelling have been successful in increasing the attention towards violence against women such as gender based, workplace discrimination and expectation of the society. The digital platforms have not only facilitated women creating a a network within the nation but also global networking, thus allowing the men to engage in feminist movements around the world.

However, digital feminism has its own challenges. It offers a powerful mean of activism, but it can be reactive and myopic in the responses as compared to offline feminist movements. Digital feminism can amplify perspectives and thus may marginalise the important voices and issues. Despite of these limitations, it continues to evolve, adapt

and find innovative ways to solve the complexities of gender inequality.

This paper aims to explore a comparison between offline and online feminist movements, the area of preference from the perspective of women and try to study the potential reason of increase in digital feminism.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

The number of studies have been explored various aspect of emergence of digital feminism in India which highlights its potential, the challenges it faces and the impact on women's lives and societal norms.

1. Digital Feminism and Online Activism: According to U. Lakshmi Nair and Shanlax International Journal of English (2023), digital feminism has turned out to be more inclusive and intersectional compared to traditional method of offline feminism. Digital feminism provides an area 2 women where they can express their opinions, their views, their experiences and helps them to connect with others. However these movements can be myopic sometimes reactive in its responses as compared to offline feminist movements

2. Cyberfeminism and Technology: R. Gajjala's work in "Gender & Development" (1999) discusses, the way in which women in India and around the globe use Internet and digital platforms to put forward feminist causes. Cyber feminism he is all about women using Internet technology to empower and advance their causes. Internet has changed the way business and social activities are conducted, has encouraged women in and around the world to use computers, mobile and browse.

3. Impact of Information Technology on Women's Work: Rekjha Pande (2005) studies the impact of technology and globalization in the work of women in India. The focus being call centers. This paper focuses on women labour, their health and various environmental issues, thus highlighting the differences in developed and developing economies.

4. Social Media and Feminist Campaigns: Divya Titus (2018), studies the role of social media in the #IWillGoOut online campaign in India. In this case a major role was played by social media which transformed the online support into an offline action. Young women provided leadership in the movement. The campaign was successfully able to garner public support for women's safety in public places.

5. Feminism in the Virtual Space: R. Bhatia (2022) explores, The way feminism has evolved and been articulated in the virtual space from the context of India. Online feminism Has evolved as an powerful tool to challenge the oppressive structures in the society. It provides space for diverse women in various parts of India to promote and increase feminism in complex ways.

6. ICT and Feminist Campaigns: Hajra Siddiqua (2019) describes the effect of information technology on global

feminism. Information technology tools helps in creating awareness about feminist campaigns and promote women's welfare.

7. Digital Feminism during COVID-19: Anhiti Patnaik (2022) examines the growth of digital feminism in India during the COVID-19 pandemic. This paper highlights the social disparities and risk cost by work from home.

8. Political Participation and Digital Media: S. Raj (2023) explores ways digital media has opened up political participation for women in India. Issues like sexual violence and gender discrimination has been highlighted and campaigns have been organised buy women using digital platforms. However, digital spaces have also become easy target of trolling and online harassment.

9. Dalit Activism and Intersectional Feminism: Laura O'Connor (2020) Focus focus on feasibility of Dalit activism and intersectional feminism, which has been on a rise through social media. Those unheard voices and perspectives have been brought into the mainstream by digital platforms and thus and ensuring social justice.

10. The #MeToo Movement in India: Several studies, including those by Ila Ahlawat (2022) and Paromita Pain (2020), examine the #MeToo movement in India. Twitter has become a powerful platform where women can raise their grievances and issues. It has become an area where women can demand accountability.

The various literature reviews underscores the transformative power of digital feminism in India. It proves to be and area to challenge gender stereotypes and gender inequalities. While these platforms also face various challenges such as online harassment and trolling.

Research Gaps:

Most of the research papers does not exclusively mention about the research methodologies and hence a detailed study in this topic can be done. The methodologies may include quantitative, qualitative and mixed methodologies.

Research Methodology:

This study follows a mixed methodology, where both quantitative and qualitative methods have been used to study to the perception of the women towards, Online and Offline Feminist movements. A survey had been conducted to collect the data among women to know their perception. A sample study on 120 women were conducted, out of which, 68 respondents were through internet and 52 completed the questions on paper.

H1: Online Feminism is more effective than offline feminism

H2: Youth prefer online feminism over offline feminism

H3: Women from rural areas are less likely to engage in online feminism compared to offline feminism.

Findings:

Effectiveness of Online vs. Offline Feminism (H0 and H1)
- As per the data the effectiveness ratings are very similar for both online and offline feminism. Since, there is no clear conclusion, we fail to reject H0 (Online Feminism is not more effective than offline feminism)

The chi-square value = 0.294
p – value = 0.961

Since the p value is much higher than 0.05, which means there is no statistically significant difference in effectiveness ratings between online and offline feminism. Preference of Age Group 18 – 25 for Online Feminism (H2)
- a major proportion of this group over 94% engages in online feminism though may be partially, thus supporting the H2.

The chi-square value = 4.171
p – value = 0.654

Since the p value is above 0.05, which indicates no significant difference in engagement preferences across age groups. While 18 – 25-year-olds show a trend toward online feminism, which is also not statistically significant.

Rural vs Urban and Engagement preferences
The chi – square Value = 2.97
p-value = 0.563

The p-value is above 0.05, thus indicating no significant difference in engagement preference between rural, semi urban and urban women participants.

CONCLUSION

The main objective of this study was to compare and analyse the engagement preference of women in different demography such as young, rural women etc. The findings provide insights about the perception across various online platforms. The findings are as follows:

1. Online and Offline Effectiveness:

- a. Since $P = 0.961$, both online and offline are perceived equally effective.
- b. It can be concluded that both mediums play important role in driving as well as raising awareness of social change.

2. Engagement Preferences as per Age:

- a. Approximately 94% of the women aged 18 – 25 engage in online feminism, also showing that 45.9% exclusively engage in online feminism and 48.6% in combination of Online and Offline feminism.
- b. However, $P = 0.654$, which shows that the preference of Online and Offline is not significantly different. This means that though younger women engagement is higher in online, but it is not exclusively limited only to them

3. Rural Women engagement in Online Feminism:

- a. With the spread of internet services, contrary to what was expected, rural

women also engage equally in both online as well as offline feminism, this is supported by the 50% respondents of rural women engaging in online feminism.

- b. $P = 0.563$, which confirms that rural women's participation in online activism is not significantly different compared to urban women.

Implications and Recommendations:

- Younger generation mostly prefer online feminism, however efforts should be made to encourage offline feminism also, so that the activism is sustained beyond the digital world.
- The participation of rural women in online feminism, breaks the traditional assumption about the digital access. However further research is proposed to understand the barriers impacting the deeper engagement, which may be due to digital literacy and network issues.
- As both Online and Offline feminism are perceived effect, a blended approach integrating both means can be more impactful strategy.
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Limitations and Future Research:

- Since the study relies on self-reported perception of women regarding effectiveness of online and offline feminism, it may not fully picture the real-world impact. Longitudinal studies could be used to measure the actual effectiveness.
- A wider and more diverse sample may be used to validate the findings in different regions including social and economic backgrounds.
- The engagement barriers can be studied to understand the reasons of women being neutral to feminist movements.

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