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DIGITAL FEMINISM IN THE AGE OF ALGORITHMIC CULTURE: MAPPING ACTIVISM, INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESISTANCE

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Abstract

This paper investigates digital feminism as both a response to and a product of contemporary algorithmic culture. Drawing on techno feminist theoretical frameworks and empirical data from global feminist campaigns, the research examines how activists mobilize digital platforms to combat gender-based violence while navigating platforms' embedded biases and political economies. The study presents findings from an analysis of 352 digital feminist campaigns collected across five languages, supplemented by case studies of South Korean and Chinese feminist responses to deepfake pornography. The research reveals that digital feminist activism operates along a spectrum from event-based symbolic mobilization to systemic infrastructural critique. The paper concludes by proposing a framework for understanding post digital feminisms that accounts for the blurred boundaries between online and offline feminist organizing in an era of algorithmic hegemony.

1. Introduction

The proliferation of digital technologies has fundamentally transformed the landscape of

feminist organizing and gender justice advocacy. What began with cyberfeminist utopian visions of the internet as an inherently liberatory space for women and marginalized genders has given way to a more complex and ambivalent reality.

Digital platforms have enabled unprecedented forms of global solidarity, hashtag activism, and consciousness-raising around issues ranging from sexual violence to reproductive justice. Yet these same platforms have simultaneously become sites of networked misogyny, technology-facilitated gender-based violence, and the algorithmic extraction of value from gendered subjectivities.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 From Cyberfeminism to Techno feminism

The theoretical foundations of digital feminism scholarship trace back to early cyberfeminism interventions that celebrated the internet's potential to disrupt gendered hierarchies and enable new forms of identity and community. However, as Hurley and Evans note in their call for post digital feminist scholarship, "a cyberfeminist utopia has been replaced by digital labour



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practices, both paid and unpaid, that remain acutely gendered". This recognition has given rise to techno feminist approaches that attend to the mutual shaping of technology and gender, understanding both as products of social relations rather than pre-existing categories.

2.2 Algorithmic Culture and Gendered Subjectification

The concept of algorithmic culture captures how computational systems increasingly mediate cultural production, circulation, and consumption. Fisher's observation that "algorithms have become close companions" embedded in "almost every realm of life" highlights the pervasiveness of algorithmic governance. For feminist scholars, the question becomes how algorithmic systems transform gender into actionable categories for prediction, classification, and value extraction.

Research on algorithmic bias has documented how these systems reproduce and amplify existing social inequalities. Safiya Noble's work on search engine algorithms demonstrates how they "present themselves as being neutral and authoritative, when in fact they are often at the service of powerful commercial interests". Similarly, research on large language models and generative AI reveals how these technologies encode and perpetuate gendered and racialized stereotypes, with material consequences for marginalized communities.

2.3 Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence

A significant body of scholarship has emerged around technology-facilitated gender-based violence, including image-based sexual abuse, deepfake pornography, online harassment,

and doxxing. Research by Mendes and colleague's documents how digital feminist activism has emerged precisely in response to these forms of violence, with survivors and advocates using platforms to share experiences, build solidarity, and demand accountability.

The rise of generative AI has dramatically escalated concerns about deepfake pornography, which disproportionately targets women and girls. Bartolozzi, Corsaro, and Nguyen's research on South Korean and Chinese feminist activism against deepfakes reveals how activists have mobilized social media campaigns to combat this form of abuse while navigating different regulatory environments. Their work highlights the importance of comparative analysis for understanding how digital feminism adapts to varying political and cultural contexts.

2.4 Post digital Feminisms

Recent scholarship has proposed the framework of "post digital feminisms" to capture the blurring of boundaries between digital and non-digital experience. As Hurley and Evans explain, the post digital perspective recognizes that "digital platforms have not completely cancelled out creative approaches to challenging sexism and misogyny" while also acknowledging that social media has "become a limited channel for feminist consciousness-raising, legal arbitration, or political participation".

The post digital lens enables analysis of how feminist activism operates across and between online and offline spaces, recognizing that digitally-mediated organizing has material consequences and that offline events are increasingly shaped by digital dynamics. This framework is particularly



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useful for understanding how feminist movements in the Global South adapt digital tools to local contexts, challenging the Western-centric assumptions that have often characterized digital feminism scholarship.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a mixed-methods research design combining quantitative analysis of digital feminist campaigns with qualitative case study analysis. The research design is informed by techno feminist commitments to centering marginalized knowledges and attending to the material conditions of digital activism.

3.2 Dataset

The primary dataset for this research is the Digital Feminist Activism Against Sexual Violence Archive, which contains 352 digital feminist campaigns collected between June and September 2022. The campaigns were collected in five languages – English, French, Hindi, Mandarin, and Spanish – using digital ethnography and ethnographic approaches.

For each Campaign, the Dataset includes:

- Campaign name and temporal information (start date, end date, ongoing status)
- Geographic origin and global spread indicators
- Language(s) used
- Identifiable leaders or organizing groups
- Discovery method (academic sources, social media search, news media)

- For social media accounts: last active date, follower counts, and last post engagement metrics

This dataset provides a comprehensive snapshot of digital feminist activism against sexual violence across multiple linguistic and geographic contexts, enabling comparative analysis of campaign strategies, reach, and impact.

3.3 Case Study Selection

To supplement the dataset analysis, this research incorporates two in-depth case studies. The first examines South Korean and Chinese feminist activism against deepfake pornography, drawing on recent research by Bartolozzi, Corsaro, and Nguyen. This case study illuminates how feminist activists respond to emerging forms of technology-facilitated violence within different regulatory frameworks.

The second case study compares digital feminist activism in Italy and Finland, drawing on Bertocchi's research on how cultural and social specificities shape approaches to narrating gender-based violence. This comparison enables analysis of the distinction between event-based symbolic mobilization and systemic analysis-oriented approaches.

3.4 Analytical Approach

Data analysis proceeds through three phases. First, descriptive statistical analysis characterizes the dataset in terms of geographic distribution, temporal patterns, and campaign characteristics. Second, thematic analysis identifies recurring patterns in campaign strategies, discursive frames, and organizational forms.



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Third, comparative case study analysis examines how contextual factors shape digital feminist activism across different settings.

4. Findings

4.1 Mapping Digital Feminist Activism

Analysis of the 352 campaigns in the dataset reveals several significant patterns in the landscape of digital feminist activism against sexual violence. First, the geographic distribution of campaigns demonstrates both the global reach of digital feminism and persistent inequalities in visibility and resources. While campaigns originate from diverse locations across the Global North and South, campaigns documented in English and Spanish are overrepresented relative to those in Hindi, Mandarin, and French, reflecting both research design limitations and broader patterns of linguistic inequality in digital spaces.

Second, temporal analysis reveals waves of campaign emergence corresponding to high-profile events and hashtag movements. The dataset captures campaigns spanning multiple years, with notable clusters around MeToo (2017-2018) and subsequent national and regional mobilizations. This pattern suggests that digital feminist activism operates through both sustained organizing and event-driven mobilization, with the two forms often mutually reinforcing.

Third, analysis of campaign discovery methods reveals the importance of academic documentation in preserving digital feminist history. A significant portion of campaigns were identified through academic journal articles, highlighting the role of scholars in archiving

ephemeral digital activism that might otherwise be lost as platforms change or campaigns conclude.

4.2 Campaign Characteristics and Strategies

The dataset reveals considerable variation in campaign characteristics and strategic approaches. Campaigns range from hashtag-based awareness-raising efforts to structured advocacy campaigns targeting specific policy changes. Some campaigns are led by identifiable individuals or formal organizations, while others emerge from looser networks or remain anonymous – a strategic choice that may reflect concerns about safety and reprisal.

Social media engagement metrics, where available, demonstrate wide variation in campaign reach. Follower counts and engagement with last posts provide partial indicators of campaign visibility and sustainability, though these metrics must be interpreted cautiously given platforms' algorithmic amplification and suppression of content. The dataset's documentation of last active dates reveals that many campaigns are time-limited, suggesting that digital feminist activism often operates in bursts of intensive mobilization rather than as sustained organizing – a pattern with both affordances and limitations for movement building.

5. Discussion and Implications

5.1 The Paradox of Platform Politics

The findings reveal a fundamental paradox at the heart of digital feminism: platforms enable unprecedented possibilities for feminist organizing while simultaneously functioning as sites of surveillance, misogyny, and value extraction. This

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paradox cannot be resolved but must be navigated through strategic engagement that recognizes both platforms' affordances and their limitations. Feldman and colleagues' observation about the "enmeshment of geopolitical, technological and corporate power" highlights

How this paradox extends beyond individual platforms to encompass the entire political economy of digital technologies. As technology companies increasingly align with conservative political forces, the space for feminist organizing within platform ecosystems may narrow further. Yet the continued emergence of digital feminist campaigns documented in this research demonstrates that activists persist in claiming digital space for feminist purposes.

5.2 Algorithmic Resistance and Infrastructural Critique

The research suggests that digital feminist activism is evolving from event-based mobilization toward more sustained infrastructural critique. Activists increasingly recognize that addressing technology-facilitated gender-based violence requires not only responding to individual incidents but also challenging the algorithmic systems that enable and amplify such violence. This infrastructural critique takes multiple forms.

Some activists target platform governance directly, demanding changes to content moderation policies, transparency in algorithmic decision-making, and accountability for harm. Others engage in "algorithmic resistance" by developing alternative platforms, creating feminist datasets to counter bias in training data, or using tactics that subvert platform algorithms' logics.

6. Conclusion

This paper has examined digital feminism at the intersection of algorithmic culture, platform governance, and transnational activism. Drawing on analysis of 352 digital feminist campaigns and case studies from East Asia and Europe, the research reveals digital feminism as a dynamic and contested field characterized by both opportunities and constraints. The findings demonstrate that digital feminist activists navigate platform ecosystems strategically, leveraging affordances for mobilization while challenging algorithmic systems that enable gender-based violence and value extraction from gendered subjectivities. The emergence of infrastructural critique alongside event-based mobilization suggests an evolving movement attuned to the structural dimensions of technology-facilitated harm.

Data Set Diagrams

Diagram 1: Geographic Distribution of Digital Feminist Campaigns

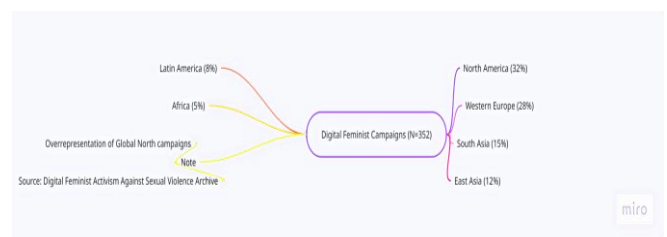


Fig. 1. Geographic distribution of 352 digital feminist campaigns by region, showing overrepresentation of Global North campaigns in documented dataset.

Diagram 2: Campaign Discovery Methods

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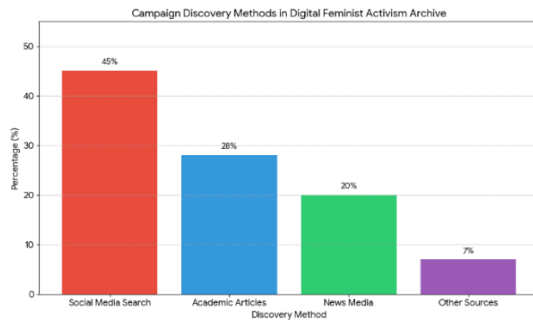


Fig. 2. Methods by which campaigns were identified in the Digital Feminist Activism Archive, highlighting the role of academic documentation. Activism Archive, highlighting the role of academic documentation.

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