

The Fourth Wave of feminism: Digital Activism between New Media and Artificial Intelligence



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◆◆Introduction

The integration of new media and the evolution of feminism has brought about a dynamic and transformative era in the fight for feminism, as new media, encompassing various digital platforms and technologies, has revolutionized the way information is disseminated, conversations are held, and communities are formed.

Simultaneously, feminism, as a social and political movement, has experienced a significant shift with each wave and has adapted to changing societal dynamics through different waves, embracing new modes of activism and inclusivity. Today, we stand examining the current scene of feminism that coincides with the rise of social media and the high integration of AI in new media, ushering in a profound shift in the fight for gender equality.

And the question rises; are we witnessing the fourth wave of feminism, mobilized by rapid technological advancement and the rise of AI?

With the current and rapid integration of new media and the current evolution of feminism, feminism itself has been propelled into uncharted territories with the advent of technology and its diverse tools as artificial intelligence (AI), encompassing a myriad of digital platforms and technologies, which has transformed how information is disseminated, conversations are held, and communities are formed.

Here we examine the powerful intersection of new media, AI, and the fourth wave of feminism, exploring how these elements have not only facilitated feminist activism but also shaped the very nature of contemporary feminist discourse. **By examining the impact of new media and its AI-driven tools on feminist movements, successes, challenges, and the implications for gender equality, we aim to unveil the transformative potential of this unique convergence, offering insights into a future that is both technologically advanced and socially just.**

By examining the influence of new media on feminist movements, successes, challenges, and implications for gender equality and feminism, we seek to unravel the transformative potential of this unique combination, paving the way for a new wave of feminism, toward a more inclusive and equitable future. **And we aim to pave the way for other feminist and media scholars, and for activists and social workers to set the ground for building a constructive public discourse on feminist issues.**

◆◆ **Concept of Feminism and its Evolution through Waves**

Feminism, as a social and political movement, has traversed through various waves, each marking significant milestones in the pursuit of women's rights and gender equality.

Throughout history, women have been subjected to systemic discrimination and limitations, being confined primarily to the domestic realm while men held sway over public life. In medieval Europe, women were denied basic rights such as property ownership, educational opportunities, and participation in public affairs. Social norms required women in France to cover their heads in public, and in certain areas of Germany, husbands retained the right to sell their wives.

Even as we progressed into the late 19th century, women's rights were still severely restricted. Most European countries and many parts of the United States denied women the right to vote or hold elected positions. Additionally, married women lacked autonomy, requiring their husbands' permission to conduct business or even exercise control over their own children.

Furthermore, access to education and entry into various professions were heavily barred for women during that time. The gender-based restrictions and inequalities prevalent then persist in some parts of the world even today.

Feminism emerged as a powerful movement seeking to challenge and eradicate gender-based disparities such as access to education, and entry into various professions that were and still are heavily barred for women.

At its core, feminism advocates for gender equality, promoting the belief that all individuals, regardless of their gender, should have equal rights, opportunities, and treatment. It strives to dismantle the entrenched patriarchal structures and societal norms that perpetuate discrimination and inequality based on gender.

Over time, feminist efforts have brought significant changes to the status of women, leading to advancements in their rights and opportunities.

However, it is vital to recognize that gender equality is an ongoing battle, as remnants of historical gender-based prejudices still persist in certain societies. Therefore, contemporary feminism continues to push for progress, advocating for policies that promote equal representation, equal pay, and the eradication of gender-based violence and discrimination in all its forms. The goal is to create a world where individuals can freely express their identities and pursue their aspirations, unrestricted by arbitrary gender roles and stereotypes. Ultimately, the aim of feminism is to foster an inclusive and equitable society, where every individual has the opportunity to thrive and contribute their talents and capabilities, irrespective of their gender.

The First Wave of Feminism

The first wave of feminism emerged during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with a primary focus on suffrage and securing basic legal rights for women, including the right to vote. This wave aimed to challenge the prevailing notion that women were second-class citizens and sought to dismantle the systemic barriers that limited their political participation and representation. The first wave of feminism in the Arab world emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as women began to challenge traditional gender roles and seek gender equality. According to an article on the Imperial & Global Forum early Arab feminists rejected the separate-spheres ideology and sought to empower women to find their place in society. However, the movement was not as widespread as in the Western world, and it was often limited to educated and elite women. The movement focused on legal issues, such as women's right to vote, and was characterized by a moderate and conservative approach. The movement was also influenced by the broader feminist movements in the West and the nationalist and anti-colonial movements in the Arab world.

The Second Wave of Feminism

The second wave of feminism gained momentum in the 1960s and 1970s, addressing a broad range of issues beyond suffrage. This wave delved into areas such as reproductive rights, workplace equality, and the fight against gender-based violence. Women's liberation movements during this time sought to challenge societal norms and fought for access to contraception, legal abortion, and equal pay for equal work. The second wave aimed to redefine women's roles in society, advocating for greater autonomy, self-determination, and agency over their bodies and lives.

The second wave of feminism in the Arab world was influenced by the broader feminist movements in the West and the nationalist and anti-colonial movements in the region. According to an article on the Imperial & Global Forum(Imperial & Global Forum)¹

The second wave of feminism in the Arab world emerged in the 1970s and focused on issues such as women's rights, gender equality, and social justice. The movement aimed to challenge the patriarchal structures and cultural norms that oppressed women and to empower women to participate fully in society. A diversity of voices and perspectives, including liberal, socialist, and Islamic feminists characterized the movement. The movement also faced challenges, including opposition from conservative and religious groups and state repression. Many women who were involved in the civil rights movement in the Arab world turned towards the feminist movement in the 1970s, as they experienced gender discrimination and sexual harassment within the movement (Women in the Civil Rights Movement).

¹ <https://imperialglobalexeter.com/08/07/2019/tracing-the-origins-of-early-feminism-in-the-arab-world/>)

The second wave of feminism in the Arab and MENA region took on diverse forms and manifestations in each country, with some common themes and objectives, the specific challenges and progress of the feminist movements varied significantly due to the distinct socio-cultural, political, and religious contexts of each nation. For example, Egypt's feminist movement gained momentum with the formation of various women's rights organizations, which focused on legal reforms, advocating for changes in discriminatory laws, and seeking greater gender equality in personal status laws, while campaigning against gender-based violence to increase women's political representation. Tunisia on the other hand has been known for its relatively progressive stance on women's rights in the Arab world, as Tunisian feminists played a crucial role in advancing legal reforms, securing women's rights to divorce and strengthening protections against domestic violence. Tunisia also actively focused on advocating for greater representation of women in politics and leadership roles. In Morocco, the feminist movement was deeply connected to broader social justice and human rights struggles which campaigned for legal reforms to protect women's rights and fought against gender-based violence. They also worked to address issues like child marriage and access to education.

While the United Arab Emirates' feminist movement gained momentum in the second wave, as women took on prominent roles in various sectors, and worked to challenge stereotypes and promote women's empowerment through education and economic opportunities. The country made efforts to increase women's political participation, leading to some advancements in women's representation in the government. The feminist movement in Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, faced unique challenges due to the country's strict interpretation of Islamic law and the patriarchal guardianship system, therefore activists advocated for reforms, such as the right to drive and increased participation in the workforce. They also worked to challenge gender segregation and fought against discrimination in various social and economic spheres.

In Lebanon, the feminist movement was diverse and multifaceted, reflecting the country's religious and ethnic diversity. During this wave, Lebanese feminists worked on issues related to personal status laws, domestic violence, and representation in politics, in addition to tackling cultural norms that perpetuated gender inequality.

Last but not least, the feminist movement in Yemen faced significant challenges due to the impact of armed conflict and conservative social norms. Second-wave feminists in Yemen were active in raising awareness about women's rights and advocating for reforms to protect women from violence and discrimination.

The Third Wave of Feminism

The third wave of feminism emerged in the 1990s and emphasized the importance of intersectionality and inclusivity within the feminist movement. Intersectionality recognizes that women's experiences are shaped by the intersections of various identities, including race, class, sexual orientation, and disability. The third wave aimed to challenge the notion of a singular "universal woman" and instead embraced diversity, acknowledging the unique struggles faced by women with different backgrounds and lived experiences. This wave also saw the rise of digital media, enabling feminist voices to reach a broader audience and fostering global connections among activists.

Media and technology have played a significant role in shaping the third wave of feminism in the region, and is characterized by a more intersectional and inclusive approach, recognizing the interconnectedness of various forms of oppression and advocating for the rights of marginalized groups. It is characterized by providing new platforms for feminists to connect, organize, and amplify their voices. Social media, in particular, has been a powerful tool for mobilizing support, sharing experiences, and fostering solidarity across borders.:

In Egypt, the third wave of feminism has embraced social media and digital platforms to raise awareness about women's rights and intersectional issues. Feminist activists have used hashtags and online campaigns to address gender-based violence, challenge patriarchal norms, and advocate for greater inclusivity within the movement. In Tunisia, Tunisian feminists have been focused on leveraging media and technology to advocate for women's rights and challenge traditional gender roles, where social media platforms have been instrumental in organizing protests and United Arab Emirates. In Morocco, Moroccan feminists have been active in using media and technology to promote gender equality and raise awareness about women's rights. Social media campaigns have focused on addressing violence against women, advocating for legal reforms, and challenging societal norms that perpetuate discrimination. In the UAE, the third wave of feminism has been driven by a new generation of feminists who are well-versed in digital media, where they have used online platforms to engage with diverse audiences, foster dialogue, and advocate for gender equality and women's empowerment amplifying voices against gender-based violence and discrimination. In Saudi Arabia and despite the challenges, the third wave of feminism has been intertwined with the broader movement for social reforms and women's rights, where women activists have used social media to document their struggles, share stories, and campaign against the male guardianship system and other discriminatory practices.

During the third wave, Lebanese feminists have embraced technology to create online spaces for dialogue and activism, as they have utilized social media to address a wide range of social justice issues, including gender equality, LGBTQ+ rights, and refugee rights.

In Yemen, the ongoing armed conflicts have posed challenges for feminist activism, limiting the widespread use of technology and media. However, Yemeni feminists continue to utilize whatever means available to address gender-based violence and advocate for women's rights.

The use of media and technology in feminist activism may vary based on factors such as internet accessibility, government restrictions, and the level of digital literacy in each country. Nonetheless, media and technology have undoubtedly played a crucial role in facilitating communication, awareness-raising, and mobilization for gender equality and women's rights in the Arab and MENA region.

This wave of feminism in the Arab world represents a significant shift in the fight for gender equality, as it tackles unique challenges and addresses the complexities of the region's social, cultural, and political landscape. This wave emerged in the late 20th century and gained momentum in the early 21st century, propelled by a new generation of Arab women who sought to challenge gender norms, patriarchal structures, and oppressive societal expectations. One of the defining features of the third wave of feminism in the Arab world is its emphasis on intersectionality.

The backlash against Orientalist feminism in the Arab world

There has been a backlash against orientalist feminism in the Arab world that alleges the impartiality of feminism in the Arab world by imposing cultural imperialism on the movement. Since then, there has been a growing call for more collaboration and solidarity between feminists from different regions. This involves recognizing and respecting the agency and autonomy of Arab women in shaping their own liberation movements and advocating for gender equality within their cultural contexts.

However, in recent years, there has been an increasing awareness among Western feminists about the dangers of Orientalism in their activism, and efforts have been made to promote a more inclusive and collaborative approach. By centering the voices and experiences of Arab feminists and recognizing the complexity of their struggles, feminists from different regions can work together in a more meaningful and respectful way to advance gender equality and women's rights globally.

Cultural Imperialism: According to many Arab feminists and researchers, Orientalist feminism is a sort of cultural imperialism in which Western feminists impose their ideals, norms, and solutions on Arab communities without fully appreciating their intricacies and historical backgrounds. This approach ignores Arab women's agency and voices, assuming that Western feminists know what is best for them.

Stereotyping: Orientalist feminism frequently presents Arab and Muslim women as homogeneous and universally downtrodden, ignoring the diversity and complexity of their experiences. This stereotyping adds to the marginalization of Arab women by reinforcing negative perceptions about Arab cultures.

Issue Oversimplification: Some critics believe that Orientalist feminism oversimplifies the complex social, political, and cultural issues that Arab women face. It fails to recognize the rich and multifaceted character of their battles by simplifying their experiences to a single narrative of oppression.

Disregard for Local Activism: The backlash against Orientalist feminism emphasizes the significance of recognizing and supporting grassroots feminist movements and action inside the Arab world. It encourages Western feminists to be allies rather than saviors, and to listen to and learn from Arab feminists' experiences and opinions.

Intersectionality and Contextualization: The pushback emphasizes the necessity for a more intersectional and contextualized approach to feminism that takes into account Arab women's different identities and experiences. It advocates for a better understanding of how different types of oppression, such as gender, interact with race, class, religion, and other variables.

Arab feminists recognize the interconnected nature of various forms of oppression. This understanding highlights the need to address multiple dimensions of identity and the diverse experiences of Arab women, taking into account factors such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and geographic location.

Paving the Way for the Fourth Wave of Feminism

Some argue that this fourth wave of feminism began around 2012, with an emphasis on sexual harassment, body shaming, and rape culture, among other topics. The fourth wave seeks greater gender equality by focusing on gendered norms and the marginalization of women in society, as it focuses on sexual abuse, sexual harassment, sexual violence, the objectification of women, and sexism in the workplace.

Talking about sexual harassment and exposing harassers has become a trend on all social media platforms in the past period. Examples are the **#MeToo** movement which started in the US and infiltrated into Arab and European society, and the "Assault Police" platform in Egypt, followed by 315k Instagram followers to report sexual harassment and promote awareness about what sexual harassment is from a feminist perspective. **Harass Trackers**, is a platform in Lebanon that allows for the reporting of sexual harassment in Lebanon and attempts to follow up on instances legally. Nevertheless, these cases still not obtain the requisite court follow-up, particularly in the Arab world, as they may, on many occasions, remain limited to discourse and discussions on social media.

These are few among many examples of how the discourse on feminism is influenced by the integration between new media and feminism and is shaping the new wave of feminism- to an extent.

It is noticeable that SRHR, sexual, and reproductive health, and rights have been featured intensively in most discourse about feminism, and we can claim that the conversation on women's sexual and reproductive health has come a long way. Social media platforms and other feminist online projects played a critical part in extending the conversation, boosting awareness for women, and shattering the taboo around this topic, and Internet activism is a significant aspect of the fourth wave, and social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram have been utilized to enhance feminist awareness and mobilize feminist activity.

We can say that the key aspect of the fourth wave is its reliance on social media, which has allowed feminists to interact with one another, share information, and organize rallies and campaigns on the cyber sphere that would transcend mobilization in the public sphere. However, the idea of a feminist 'fourth wave' has been contested by many who argue that greater internet usage is insufficient to define a new era, as much as the internet is accused of increasing gender inequalities, especially by online harassment, bullying, and sexual objectification that is supported by algorithms that promote emotional content against any other educational content.

However, not all of these platforms adopted a radical feminist language, as not all addressed the LGBT population and their sexual reproductive rights, and radical movements emerge, particularly in the Arab world, as there is still a need for sensitizing the content in order for it to be accepted by a larger segment of the population. Hence, it might be soon to identify the features of the new wave of feminism. Mauj for example, a platform on Instagram for sexual education for women has been exposed to hate speech and threatened to be shut down at many occasions because it promotes sexual pleasure for women and it narrates true stories of gender inequalities in the Arab world. Abortion, rape, menstrual cycle, early marriage, domestic sexual harassment were all topics that Mauj tackled by telling stories of women by other women, and kept them anonymous for their own wellbeing and safety from the attacks on the account.

The Impact of New Media on the Emergence of the Fourth Wave of Feminism

Each wave of feminism has built upon the achievements and challenges of its predecessors. The evolution of feminism through these waves showcases the movement's adaptability and responsiveness to changing societal contexts and challenges.

As new media, particularly social media, and AI-driven platforms, become prominent, the fourth wave of feminism is characterized by its digital activism and the power of online organizing and mobilization. The ability to connect with

like-minded individuals, share experiences, and amplify marginalized voices has brought a new dimension to feminist discourse and activism. This dynamic intersection between feminism and new media sets the stage for exploring how digital platforms can facilitate feminist activism and shape the contemporary feminist dialogue in the era of the fourth wave, especially since new media is able to formulate a critical mass across continents around a specific topic, that becomes a trend with the integration of #hashtags which has the ability to mobilize users and stakeholders.

1/ Online Feminist Activism and its Influence on Public Opinion

The current wave of feminism has transcended into Digital feminism which refers to the use of digital media, such as social media platforms, blogs, and websites, to promote feminist activism and raise awareness about feminist issues.

Digital feminism has become an increasingly important aspect of feminist activism, as it allows feminists to connect with each other, share information, and organize protests and campaigns. It has had a significant influence on public opinion, as it has enabled feminists to reach a wider audience and engage with people who may not have been exposed to feminist ideas before.

For example, **The women's strike** was organized by **Reem Mahmoud**, a Syrian feminist activist who called for a protest and strike on July 2022 ,6, against femicide throughout the Arab world, which was rising at the time (Egypt, Jordan, and Palestine), and created a Facebook page for the event called "Women's Crossing Borders Strike 07-06" and supported women's organizations. The page gained over 20,000 followers, with the following hashtags trending: #Solidarity_cross_border_, #Women_General_strike, #Women_against_violence. The call spread throughout the Arab world thanks to hashtags and social media pages. This strike caught momentum at a time when stories of femicide and honor crimes, domestic abuse, and child abduction were under the religious institutions' watch and blessings.

A question rises here, have these cases increased, or the new media have gained more ability to expose these stories, due to the decentralization of information? Do the new media, while shaping the new wave of feminism, have a positive influence on feminism?

Digital feminism strives to challenge sexist and misogynistic online behavior, such as online harassment hate speech, trolling, and body shaming to create safe spaces for women to share their experiences and support each other. It might be too soon to answer this question, but observing the public cyber sphere gives several indicators. It is true that examining this phenomenon requires more time, however, the digital media has been able to formulate public opinion on social issues and institutionalize advocacy campaigns beyond the public sphere.

For example, in a legislative movement mobilized by a critical mass on social media after the killing of Naira Ashraf in Egypt, a court requested a legislative modification that would allow live broadcast of the execution processes of the convicted of "premeditated murder" to stop such cases from recurring.

Digital advocacy on feminism has created the concept of digital feminism, that has been used to challenge and critique mainstream media representations of women and to create alternative narratives that center on women's experiences and perspectives. However, the impact of digital feminism is not without its challenges, as it has been criticized for being exclusionary reinforcing existing power structures, and promoting a narrow and privileged version of feminism. Nonetheless, digital feminism remains an important tool for feminist activism and has the potential to bring about significant social and political change (JOUËT, 2018)²

Looking at the Iranian movement during the recent demonstration; **Mahsa Amini** was conveyed as an icon of the Iranian revolution to mobilize people from around the globe towards a public discourse that started on social media and invaded legacy media to become the top news on the agenda of media organizations. After her death in September 2022 while in custody at an Iranian police center, significant protests erupted in over 80 cities calling crossing lines of different sorts of Iranian societies, to an extend that the slogan of the protests, woman, life, freedom was initiated in Kurdish "

The protests against Hijab obligation in Iran were not only a reformation for women's rights, these protests were against the government's corrupted practices that left Gen Z with high unemployment, inflation, and economic crisis. **The public dialogue on the Iranian protests shifted into a women's revolution led by Gen Z, who were the game changers on the front lines of the cyber sphere to counter the public dialogue of the Iranian regime.** This time it was different! Feminism was the main social issue instead of putting women's issue under a generic social agenda.

Women in Iran thrived to showcase the inequality to the global audience by utilizing social media that allows them to share their views within a single click of a button, opening up an essential new channels for the narrative of their fight for freedom and equality. Social media has paved the way for many channels and tools to rise and leverage reform movements. For example, the Iranian actress Taraneh Alidoosti shared a selfie of herself sans a headscarf on her Instagram account, holding a sign that reads, "Woman. Life. Freedom, with approximately 8 million Instagram followers. This post had an unprecedented reach!

² <https://univ-pantheon-assas.hal.science/hal03835853-/document>

2 / Digital Activism, A Threat or Opportunity for Feminism?

The question raised here is controversial when looking at the pros and cons, as feminist discourse increasingly moves into online spaces, questions arise about the effectiveness and potential drawbacks of digital activism. Is digital activism a threat or an opportunity for feminism?

The rise of digital activism has transformed the landscape of feminist movements, offering both opportunities and challenges in the fight for gender equality.

One of the significant advantages of digital activism, as mentioned previously, is its ability to raise awareness about gender inequality and feminist issues through hashtags, viral campaigns, and storytelling, as it has been able to capture public attention, challenge societal norms, and spark conversations that may have otherwise remain confined to smaller circles. The viral nature of online activism has enabled feminist movements to reach larger audiences, including those who may not have previously engaged with feminist ideas or been aware of the magnitude of gender-based discrimination.

Moreover, **digital activism has been instrumental in creating spaces for marginalized voices within the feminist movement, providing platforms for intersectional feminist discourse, and centering the experiences of women from different racial, ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Online communities and forums have facilitated conversations that transcend geographical boundaries, fostering solidarity and collaboration among feminists from diverse cultures and contexts. This inclusivity has contributed to a more nuanced understanding of feminism, highlighting the interconnectedness of various forms of oppression and the need for intersectional approaches to activism.**

Today we witness the rise of many feminist platforms in the world. In the Arab region, many platforms have scored some progress in spreading awareness on women's rights, especially topics that are related to domestic violence and sexual abuse, economic violence, mansplaining, and public discourse. Tools like podcasts, such as **Nawa** media network, founded in Palestine in 2018, that transmits news of Palestinian women in various regions, precisely incidents of women's murder, harassment, in addition to success stories of women entrepreneurs in Palestine. Another example is podcast "Sawt in Jordan, a podcast, **Masaha**, tackling different social, economic, and political issues.

Before the rise of podcasts, Facebook and Instagram were the main social media platforms that were popular among youth and women. (Center, 2021)³

³ <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/07/04/2021/social-media-use-in2021-/>

Masahat hob wa da'am **مساحة حب ودعم** is a group that was established in August 2019, with high and quick interaction from women, who were suffering from the patriarchal system in Lebanon. As much as the page created an entrusted space for discussing women's issues within the insecure and bias cyberspace, it had been hindered by hate speech and discourse around conspiracy theory, as it was perceived by suspicious, extraneous and Western-funded influence.

It has been visible that these social media tools encourage solidarity between people who have shared experiences and have redefined activism as a whole, making it more inclusive to anyone with the desire to spread awareness and engage in activism (Hammoud 2023)

3/ Challenges and Limitations of Digital Feminism

While digital activism has undeniably expanded the reach and impact of feminist movements, it is not without its challenges and limitations. One of the primary concerns is the digital divide, which restricts access to digital platforms and technology. Inequitable access can marginalize certain groups, perpetuating existing inequalities and excluding the voices of those who do not have the means to participate in online activism. Additionally, online spaces can be fraught with harassment, cyberbullying, and trolling, creating barriers to meaningful engagement and potentially silencing marginalized voices. For example, algorithms of social media which prefer entertaining content, including sexual appealing content over educational material has been influencing how users behave in their filtered bubbles; in other words, it has been engineering the taste of audience through algorithmic filters that push content as it sees engaging, thus profitable, as the fleeting nature of online activism can pose challenges for sustaining long-term change. The fast-paced nature of digital platforms often prioritizes short-term, attention-grabbing campaigns, potentially overshadowing the need for sustained activism and engagement. This has been more challenging with algorithms that push content that would generate engagement no matter how much its negative influence would be.

The digital realm can also give the illusion of activism without necessitating tangible action in the offline world, "Slacktivism", a term used to describe low-effort online activism that does not translate into real-world impact, remains a concern, leading many activists to limit their activism to screens. Meaning that some social media users with a high reach and engagement may be identified as feminists or activists despite their inactivity beyond the cyber sphere and their lack of education in media literacy and its influence on societal issues especially feminism and how it shapes public discourse.

◆◆The controversy of AI in Digital Feminism

We cannot disregard the influence of artificial intelligence on the public discourse of the fourth wave of feminism, which has emerged as a powerful tool within the realm of digital feminism, shaping the landscape of feminist activism and public discourse. The integration of AI technologies in various digital platforms has brought new opportunities and challenges for feminist movements worldwide.

AI-powered algorithms have the potential to amplify feminist voices and facilitate inclusive dialogue. They can help identify and analyze patterns of gender inequality, providing valuable insights into the root causes of discrimination, as these tools can also assist in detecting and combating online harassment and hate speech, creating safer spaces for women and marginalized communities in digital environments.

One of the significant contributions of AI in digital feminism is its ability to bridge language barriers and facilitate global collaboration. AI-driven translation services enable feminists from different linguistic backgrounds to engage with each other, share resources, and build solidarity across borders. This connectivity enhances the exchange of ideas and experiences, fostering a more comprehensive and diverse feminist movement.

However, it is essential to acknowledge the challenges and potential risks associated with AI in digital feminism.

Bias in AI algorithms can perpetuate existing gender inequalities reproducing discriminatory practices and reinforcing stereotypes in several ways. AI algorithms may inadvertently discriminate against certain groups, including women and marginalized communities. For example, facial recognition technologies have been shown to have higher error rates for women and people of color, leading to biased outcomes and potential harm.

AI systems are built on the basis of machine learning, natural language processing, and sentiment analysis, in addition to many other tools that help these intelligent systems learn to make decisions based on training data, which can include biased human decisions or reflect historical or social inequities, even if sensitive variables such as gender, race, or sexual orientation are removed. For example, research has uncovered large gender and racial bias in AI systems sold by tech giants like IBM, Microsoft, and Amazon. Given the task of guessing the gender of a face, all companies performed substantially better on male faces than female faces. The companies evaluated had error rates of no more than %1 for lighter-skinned men. For darker-skinned women, the errors soared to %35 (BUOLAMWINI) ⁴

⁴ <https://time.com/5520558/artificial-intelligence-racial-gender-bias/>

Furthermore, AI algorithms that rely on user engagement metrics, such as clicks, likes, or shares to determine relevance or popularity might favor sexually explicit or sensationalized content. This is because such content tends to elicit strong reactions and garner more attention, leading the algorithms to perceive it as more engaging or popular. As a result, these algorithms may further amplify the visibility of sexualized content, creating a feedback loop that perpetuates its prominence.

Bias in AI algorithms is caused by bias in data sets, people designing AI, and the algorithms themselves, which if left unchecked, AI bias could perpetuate historical inequities and further marginalize already disadvantaged groups.

♦♦ Call to Action

Call to Action 1: AI Activism Towards Efficient Digital Feminism

Issues of bias in AI tend to most adversely affect the people who are rarely in positions to develop the technology. Therefore, it is important to have broader representation in the design, development, deployment, and governance of AI to ensure that AI systems are fair and unbiased in general, and specifically towards women.

Addressing the issue of bias in AI requires careful consideration and proactive measures, it involves diversifying and improving the training data to ensure a more balanced representation of content types. Additionally, algorithm developers need to implement bias detection and mitigation techniques to minimize the reinforcement of discriminatory patterns. Promoting transparency and accountability in AI systems is essential, allowing users to understand how algorithms make content recommendations and giving them more control over the content they encounter. Therefore, **educating technologists who design AI tools must be educated on feminism and gender equality to ensure neutrality.** By actively addressing algorithmic discrimination, more work towards creating more equitable and inclusive digital spaces that are free from the undue favoring content that objectifies women, therefore allowing for more efficient digital activism toward the fourth wave of feminism.

Call to Action 2: Balancing Online and Offline Feminist Activism

To harness the full potential of digital activism, it is essential to strike a balance between online and offline engagement. **Digital activism can serve as a catalyst for offline action, driving individuals to participate in protests, rallies, and community-based initiatives. It can also be used as a tool to mobilize resources and support grassroots organizations working on the ground.** Combining online and offline efforts can lead to a more holistic and impactful approach, ensuring that digital activism translates into tangible change.

In this call to action, we highlight fighting “Slacktivism” as a step into mobilizing activists outside the cyber sphere, and pulling individuals (couch potatoes) from

their comfort zones into the real battle field, and mostly bringing like-minded people together to formulate a critical mass inside the cyber sphere and beyond it.

Call to Action 3: Balancing Online and Offline Feminist Activism

Achieving gender equality requires a multifaceted approach that combines the power of both online and offline activism. Individuals passionate about feminist causes have a responsibility to actively engage in both digital and physical spaces to create meaningful change. It is crucial to move beyond the boundaries of the digital realm and translate online conversations into concrete actions in local communities such as attending rallies, participating in protests, and supporting grassroots organizations that work towards achieving gender equality.

In the fourth wave of feminism, it is essential to take advantage of the connectivity of digital platforms to amplify the voices of marginalized women, individuals, and communities, and to remember the importance of fostering offline connections and building relationships with like-minded activists.

Engaging in face-to-face conversations, organizing community workshops, and collaborating with organizations and institutions to advocate for policy changes that promote gender equality are all necessary activities to intensify the impact of feminism; by striking a balance between online and offline feminist activism, we can maximize our impact and work towards a future that is more inclusive, equitable, and just for all.

Call to Action 4: Process of Knowledge Production

To help feminism sustain and grow, it is essential to critically examine and improve the process of knowledge production within feminist circles across the globe to promote a more inclusive, intersectional, and sustainable approach to knowledge production in feminism. Essentially, embracing Intersectionality, and acknowledging the interconnectedness of various forms of oppression and privilege, including race, class, sexuality, and ability, and how they intersect with gender can help in producing an interconnected knowledge that centers the experiences of marginalized and underrepresented groups within feminism to ensure a more inclusive and comprehensive understanding of gender equality. This also requires encouraging diverse voices and perspectives in all aspects of feminist knowledge production, including research, literature, media, and leadership roles, to reflect the true diversity of feminist experiences. This leads in many occasions to the decolonization of knowledge to be able to deconstruct colonial and Eurocentric frameworks that have historically dominated feminist discourse. Recognizing and valuing the knowledge systems and practices of non-Western cultures, promoting a more equitable exchange of ideas and knowledge. For that Participatory Community-Based Research are encouraged to foster community-based research that actively involves and collaborates with grassroots feminist organizations and local communities. Prioritize and embrace the needs and priorities of those directly impacted by gender inequality, empowering them to actively shape research agendas and outcomes that involve women as active agents rather than passive subjects.

This can be sustained through collaborative networks that foster collaborative networks between feminist scholars, activists, and practitioners from different regions and backgrounds. It is very essential while supporting knowledge production to engage with Technology to enhance knowledge dissemination and accessibility, by leveraging digital platforms to share feminist knowledge widely, reaching a broader audience and encouraging global dialogue.

Last but not least, it is vital for feminists to be **Critical Self-Reflection: Continuously engage in critical self-reflection as feminists, acknowledging and addressing biases and blind spots in our knowledge production. Stay open to learning and evolving as the movement progresses.**

By actively engaging in these steps, the feminist movement can ensure that its knowledge production is relevant, responsive, and sustainable. An inclusive and intersectional approach will enable feminism to grow stronger and more effective in advocating for gender equality and social justice globally.

♦♦ **The Way Forward**

Digital feminism has the potential to create a more inclusive and diverse feminist movement, as it allows feminists from different backgrounds and identities to connect and collaborate on issues that affect them, as the integration of new media, artificial intelligence (AI), and the fourth wave of feminism has brought about significant transformations in the fight for gender equality, as this evolution of feminism through various waves has showcased its adaptability and responsiveness to changing societal contexts, with each wave building upon the achievements and challenges of its predecessors. The fourth wave, coinciding with the rise of social media and the high integration of AI in new media, has propelled feminist activism into uncharted territories, which has brought about significant transformations in the fight for gender equality emerging digital feminism as a powerful tool of activism and raising awareness, mobilizing movements, and challenging societal norms. Through social media platforms, blogs, and websites, feminists have been able to connect with each other, share information, and organize campaigns that have captured public attention and sparked important conversations, creating spaces for marginalized voices within the movement, fostering intersectional discourse, and promoting inclusivity.

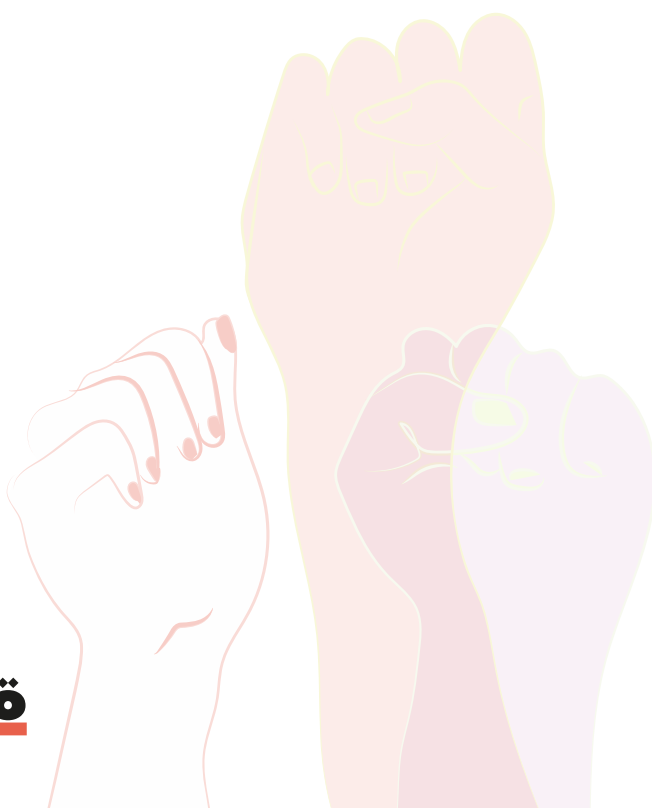
However, digital activism has its challenges and limitations. The digital divide restricts access to online platforms, potentially marginalizing certain groups and perpetuating existing inequalities. Online spaces can also be fraught with harassment and cyberbullying, hindering meaningful engagement and silencing marginalized voices, especially women, given that the fast-paced nature of digital platforms may prioritize short-term, attention-grabbing campaigns over sustained activism, and the phenomenon of slacktivism poses the risk of activism being confined to screens without tangible real-world impact.

To address these challenges, it is crucial to have a broader representation in the design, development, deployment, and governance of AI systems.

Diverse perspectives and voices are needed to ensure that AI is fair, unbiased, and aligned with the values of gender equality.

Efforts must be made to address bias in AI algorithms and promote transparency and accountability in their implementation.

As we navigate the complex intersection of new media, AI, and feminism, it is essential to recognize the transformative potential of this unique convergence.



♦♦ Sally Hammoud

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