

Content Analysis of Twitter as Primary Tool for Promotion of Feminism among Women of Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Study Background: Female activism has long existed in Pakistan but reached new heights during the #MeToo and #AuratMarch movements on Twitter. There is a consistent clash between those who mean to empower women and those who aim to discourage.

Aim of Study: The aim of this study is to analyse Twitter's mobilization in a society split between liberal and religio-political formations.

Methodology: By employing a content analysis, 400 tweets were examined via manual deductive coding and evaluated to determine emerging perspectives of feminism in Pakistani community.

Findings: The results showed a moderate effect in the opposite direction than hypothesized: Pakistani women are divided between liberal and Islamic feminism and therefore have not formed a unified entity. Furthermore, these movements only speak for those who orchestrated them: the elite-class.

Conclusion: Women with weak economic and social backgrounds were completely omitted from these feminist demonstrations. This impacts the views held by other members of society on what feminism in Pakistan is meant to be and how its agendas need to be questioned.

Keywords: Twitter, Feminism, Women, Tweets, Content Analysis.

Introduction

Twitter is gradually becoming a platform for the discussion of progressive political and social issues (Weber & Davis, 2020). Moreover, Twitter has been found to be appropriate for the promotion of feminist paradigms among newer and diverse audiences. Pakistan is a developing nation and increasingly becoming divided over the feminist discussion. Also, the usage of social media has spread throughout Pakistan widely. Various feminist and activist groups have formed on the Internet over the past few years. It is essential to understand where and how these formations are taking shape and what is Twitter's part in this advancement.

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Feminism in Pakistan

Feminism is always considered to be a stigma in Pakistan. The cultural framework in Pakistan always portrays the term “feminism” in an undesirable manner. Fatima (2021) proposes that there are two understandings of feminism in the Pakistani context: the first appears to contest our socio-cultural arrangements with the proliferation of Western narratives into our ideals and the second one can be related to the idea of Islamic feminism which expresses the need to guarantee equality amongst all genders according to the principles of Islam, and pledges women all essential rights.

The divide between Pakistani perspectives can also be observed in ‘Aurat March’; the Pakistani adaptation of the infamous worldwide ‘Women’s March’ from 2017. The march in Pakistan was instigated by women belonging to the privileged upper-class protesting minor issues that only pertained to them. On the other hand, there are a few people who highlight real problems faced by women from different classes and backgrounds such as forced child marriages, harassment in the workplace, domestic violence etc. Despite the importance of these issues, right-wing feminists in Pakistan manage to attract more attention towards themselves and the latter group is not given a chance to speak up. Due to their status in society, not only are they unable to voice protest for themselves, they also do not have the means to do so.

Collective Identity

Collective identity is one of the factors that ensures the triumph of a social movement. The main concept of collective identity “as defined by Melucci is ‘a collaborative definition generated by a variety of people concerning the alignments of their activity and the area of opportunities where such activity is to occur’” (Hamilton, 2016). This originates from the emotional connections participants form to one another and to the movement itself. Hamilton (2016) implies that the emotional connection to the collective/group is suggestive of the success or failure of the social movement.

Feminist Movements in Pakistan

Pakistan’s history indicates that predominant issues faced by women have been kept from gaining public recognition. The #MeToo movement in Pakistan gained full momentum only after Pakistani singer and actor Meesha Shafi made sexual harassment allegations against Pakistani singer and actor Ali Zafar (Saeed, n.d.) in 2018. Shafi is still deemed as the instigator of the #MeToo movement in Pakistan. Her allegation statements received an outpour of support from Pakistani women on Twitter. Hashtags such as #IStandWithMeeshaShafi became top trend on the social media platform.

In order to keep the energy of the #MeToo movement steady, several women’s collectives organized a socio-political demonstration dubbed as “Aurat March” (Women’s March). This protest rally was inspired by the Women’s March held worldwide in January of 2017, after the inauguration of Donald Trump as the US president. The first Aurat March (Women’s March) was held on 8th March 2018 in Karachi. The purpose of this annual protest is to resolve problems faced by Pakistani women such as reproductive rights, equal pay, sexual harassment (in public, at home, and in the workplace) as well as challenging the patriarchy (Khushbakht & Sultana, 2020).

Problem Statement

This study is a qualitative analysis of Twitter establishing feminism among Pakistani women and introducing new forms of socio-political protests. The researcher highlighted the commencement of multiple Twitter uprisings beginning from 2017 to 2021. Researcher considered two immensely popular online movements i.e., the #MeToo movement and the #WomensMarch movement which flourished globally. Along with other countries, Pakistani women not only participated in these movements but also accomplished their own interpretations like #AuratMarch. Through content analysis, the researcher determined what role Twitter played in these events.

Study Objectives

- To examine how trends on Twitter boost social movements regarding women's issues among people of Pakistan.
- To find out Twitter's role in establishing an online Pakistani feminist community and forming a "collective identity".
- To assess whether Twitter acts as a progressive gateway in transforming the perspective through which feminism is viewed in Pakistani society.

Research Questions

This study aimed to answer the following questions by analysing feminist trends on Twitter:

1. How has Twitter influenced discussions about feminism and feminist terms in Pakistan?
2. What are the implications of using the term feminist on Twitter over the years?
3. Do certain aspects of feminism attain either negative or positive sentiments among Pakistani community?

Hypotheses

- H1: It is more likely that people of Pakistan use twitter to promote feminist ideals.
- H2: It is more likely that twitter is used to highlight the problems faced by women in Pakistan.
- H3: It is prospected that women of Pakistan have utilized Twitter to create a collective identity.
- H4: It is more likely that discussions on twitter have impacted perceptions about feminism in Pakistan.

Theoretical Framework

Feminist Theory

The aim of this research was to measure how Twitter has revitalized feminism in Pakistan and the influence it has made on our society in recent years. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the concept of feminism itself. Feminist theory, or more widely known as feminism, is the belief that women should possess equal rights to men (Ferguson, 2017). Some of the main ideas of this theory are eliminating the wage gap between men and women, abolishing sexual violence, and providing women more freedom and choices over themselves. There are several different approaches to this theory such as radical, socialist, and liberal feminism. This plethora of opinions, ideas and attitudes provides this research with strong theoretical insight and support. This theory is used to support the idea of feminism used in this study as this research is focused on identifying how twitter has strengthen feminism in Pakistan. This theory supports this research by explaining the concept of feminism.

Collective Identity Theory

Collective identity theory provides crucial context to this study because it tackles the socio-psychological aspects of activism. The concept of collective identity was first put forward by Alberto Melucci. The theory asserts that by participation in social activities, an individual can develop an identity that transcends their own self (M. L. Heinrich, 2017). The persons partaking in the movement's activities adopt similar ideas and beliefs, strengthening the influence the movement has on society. Thus, it is vital for any kind of social movement to develop a collective identity to ensure its success. This research is related to the idea of activist movements to promote feminism through twitter, and with help of the results of this study the collective identity theory was tested and approved.

Literature Review

The purpose of this research is to determine whether Twitter is the favoured social media platform for the promotion and enrichment of feminism among women of Pakistan. This study is significant due to its analysis of Twitter trends and the influence of Twitter content in Pakistani society. Twitter is notoriously more dependable as a source than other social media platforms such as Facebook or Instagram. Since the people of Pakistan are coming face-to-face with problems that were either previously ignored or pushed under the rug, it is vital to understand how these interactions are taking place and where they are receiving their information.

In “Encountering #Feminism on Twitter: Reflections on a Research Collaboration between Social Scientists and Computer Scientists”, Kirkwood et al. (2018) explored the ways in which feminist topics were discussed and exhibited on social media, more particularly on Twitter. The researchers utilized an artificial intelligence (AI) to pick out relevant tweets from 1 December 2012 till 31 May 2014. The collected tweets were then analysed according to criteria such as the topic of discussion, tone of tweet and the message exhibited by the tweet. The results revealed that the majority of tweets about feminism came from the US and UK (as English key words were used to collect the data), and there was a rise in the number of tweets over selected periods of time.

Research conducted by Flores et al. (2020) called “Reviving feminism through social media: from the classroom to online and offline public spaces” studied the communication between female students on social media in order to engage with feminist content and to combat street harassment. The researchers opted for a thematic analysis to find out whether it is possible to connect with the youth if personal experiences are supported with theoretical material. The data was gathered through organized steps: a syllabus was set, a documentary was produced, two forums were organized to discuss feminist topics and lastly, the respondents were asked to draft essays about their personal experiences. The results showed that giving women a space to express themselves can provide a sense of community and new knowledge towards feminism.

Khushbakht et al. (2021) used Van Dijk’s Ideological Square (1998) as a framework to examine how #MeToo is heavily swayed in Pakistan by patriarchal perceptions. In an article called “#MeToo as a Failed Movement of Women Empowerment in Pakistan: A Critical Discourse Analysis”, the researcher discovered that the movement has been manipulated and reformed to fit the narratives of certain individuals in society. Domestic violence is given more importance than sexual harassment that occurs daily in the lives of Pakistani women. While both matters are unacceptable, it is unfair that women can only receive justice when the patriarchal society deems fit. Moreover, Khushbakht et al. (2021) state that “victim blaming” is used as a weapon to shift the blame from accountable parties to #MeToo supporters and liberal feminists.

Methodology

The aim of this research was to examine whether Twitter is the leading social networking site (SNS) in regard to the endorsement of feminism among Pakistani women.

Approach: Current research is a quantitative study.

Method: The research has used content analysis method to acquire information pertinent to the study.

Sample: The researcher has taken the sample of 400 tweets posted with in the time frame of 2017-2021 (October 15th, 2017 to December 31st, 2021). Tweets having the following elements were selected:

1. The tweets consisted of pertinent hashtags and feminist terms such as #MeToo, #AuratMarch and women empowerment.
2. Majority of tweets used in the study were posted by Pakistanis and were related to feminism and #MeToo movements in Pakistan.

3. The selected time frame of tweets , obtained by researcher was between: October 15th, 2017 – December 31st, 2021.

Data Collection: Tweets were gathered manually using the advanced search tool available on Twitter, and within the tie frame of 2017 to 2021. These dates reflect the time period when #MeToo movement formed the pace within Pakistan. Although the initial “Me Too” phrase was used by Tarana Burke in 2006, it was American actor Alyssa Milano who suggested its use on Twitter in October of 2017. Hence, this time span was ideal to examine how #MeToo and other movements paved the way for online feminism in Pakistan.

Coding Categorization: The researcher applied Manual Deductive Coding (MDC) technique to the acquired data. Deductive coding is the best method for categorizing the qualitative data. In MDC, the researcher is aware of the themes of his/her research and is able to compile the data based on those themes. Keeping in view the themes of this study, 6 codes were chosen to classify the data. The codes were (1) Aurat March, (2) #MeToo, (3) Empowerment, (4) Harassment, (5) Sexual Assault, (6) Women.

The tweets were divided in to two groups, for analysis. Group one contained the tweets posted by General public and group two consisted of tweets posted by opinion leaders.

The researcher has divided all six coding categories into positive and negative segments in order to answer RQ3. Tweets favouring the feminism were considered as positive tweets and tweets which have used one or more words from the coding categories but not supporting the feminist movement were considered negative tweets.

Results & Analysis

Emergent themes in the data

A total of 400 tweets were compiled for content analysis. In order to answer RQ1, manual deductive coding (MDC) was employed to discover themes in the tweets, acquired by the researcher. MDC allows the researcher to collect and categorize data according to the study’s themes. With a predetermined set of 6 codes, tweets that fit into the parameters of the predetermined coding categories were harvested.

The content analysis showed that among 400 tweets collected by the researcher, the 6 codes were in fact the most frequently mentioned words that reflected feminist concerns. These codes can be viewed in Table 1.

Table 1: *List of coding categories and their frequency observed in the data*

Coding Categories	Frequency (n)
Aurat March	64
#MeToo	70
Empowerment	58
Women	70
Harassment	77
Sexual Assault	61

As seen in Table 1, the predetermined codes and their counts are Aurat March (n = 64), #MeToo (n = 70), Empowerment (n = 58), Women (n = 70), Harassment (n = 77), and Sexual Assault (n = 61). The analysis showed that the most frequent term used in the tweets was Harassment while the least frequent phrase was Empowerment.

General Public vs. Opinion Leaders

RQ2 pursued the matter of whether feminism on Twitter represented women of different social, economic and cultural backgrounds. Table 2 exhibits how many tweets were posted on Twitter by opinion leaders and the general public for each coding category.

Figure 1. *The frequency of tweets per category*

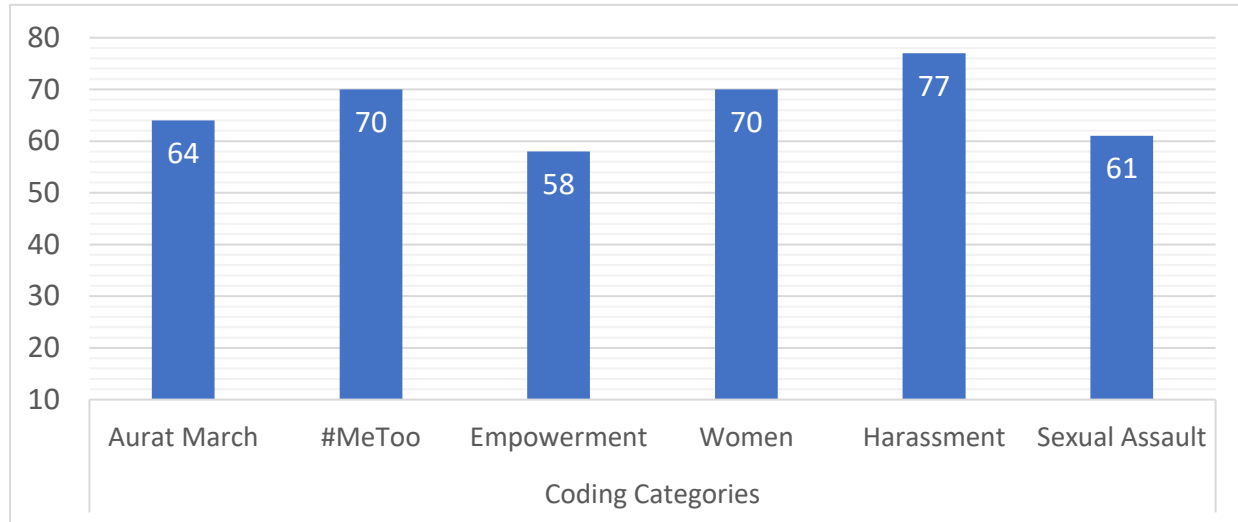


Table 2: *Tweets by the General public and opinion leaders*

Coding Categories	General Public	Opinion Leaders
Aurat March	30	34
#MeToo	29	41
Empowerment	38	20
Women	38	39
Harassment	39	22
Sexual Assault	43	27

The accounts considered by the researcher to be Opinion Leaders (O.L.) were accounts verified by Twitter with large followings. Whereas public accounts are those without verification or large amounts of followers. As observed in Table 3, the codes are subcategorized as Aurat March (Public = 30, O.L. = 34), #MeToo (Public = 29, O.L. = 41), Empowerment (Public = 38, O.L. = 20), Women (Public = 38, O.L. = 39), Harassment (Public = 39, O.L. = 22), and Sexual Assault (Public = 43, O.L. = 27). The analysis revealed that a lot of tweets containing the codes were posted by members of the general public, in the stead of O.L. (Opinion Leaders).

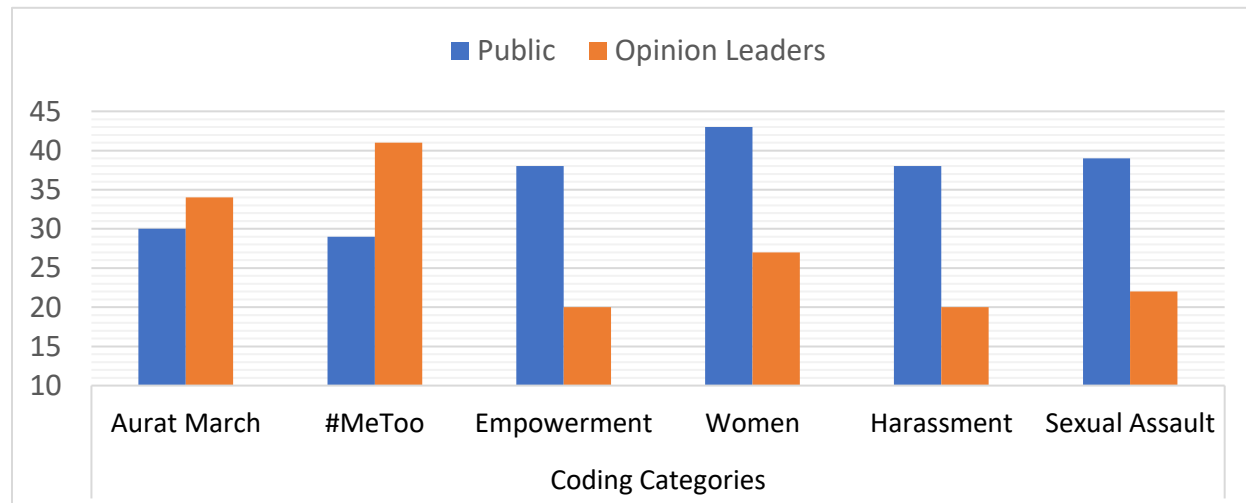


Figure 2. *Comparison between tweets posted by public and opinion leaders*

Figure 2 illustrates the differences between tweets posted by the general public in conversations about feminism and the opinion leaders. It can be noted here that there is a noticeable difference between the two groups. This indicates that there is also a clear difference between which facets of Pakistani society were/are present on Twitter to discuss feminist issues.

Trending Feminist Terms

RQ3 sought to examine the implication trending feminist terms have had on Pakistani society. The terms being referred to here are the coding categories set by the researcher. Each coding category was examined separately to determine the height of their mentions on Twitter in the selected time period i.e., October 15th 2017 – December 31st 2021.

Figure 3 demonstrates the usage of all coding categories i.e., “Aurat March, #MeToo, Empowerment, Women, Harassment, Sexual Assault” from October 2017 up to December 2021. **Figure 3** also reveals how often each code was mentioned in Tweets over the course of 5 years. “Aurat March” was used the most in 2020, the hashtag “#MeToo” was utilized largely in 2018, the highest mentions of “Empowerment” were in 2019, “Harassment” was used most generally among all the coding categories but also mentioned in 2018 the most, and “Sexual Assault” was also used the most in 2018.

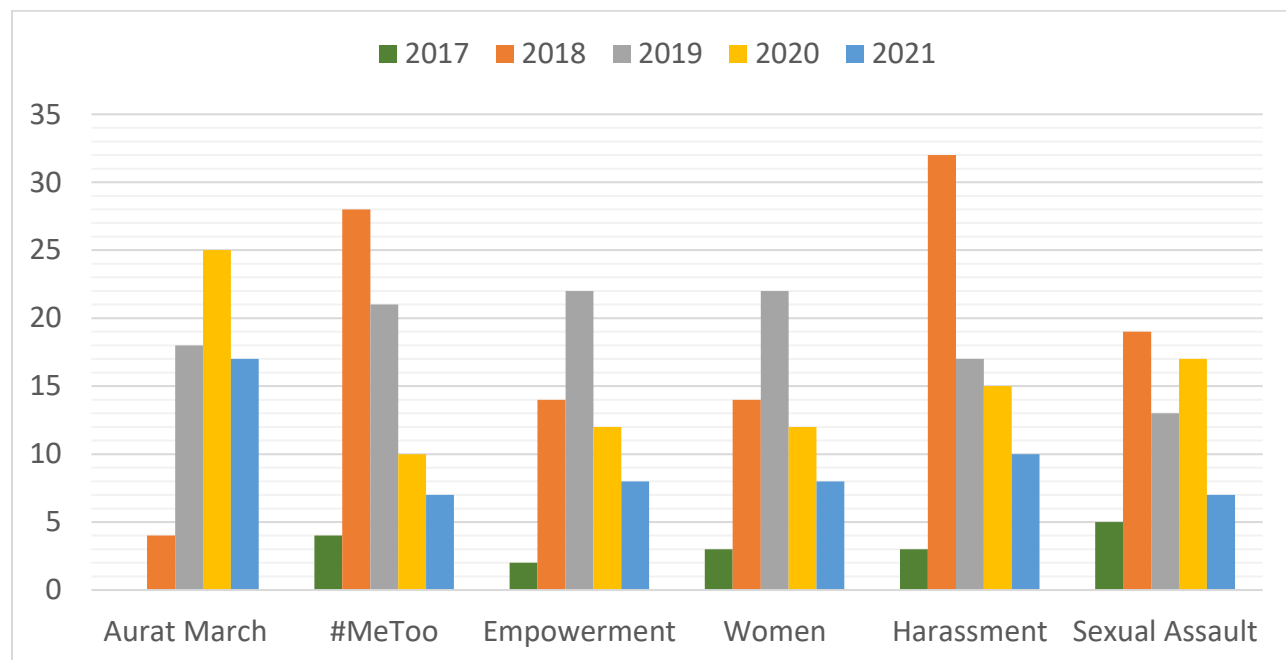


Figure 3. *Mentions of all coding categories from 2017 up to 2021*

Sentiment Analysis of Tweets

To answer RQ3, the researcher analysed all the tweets individually to seek out how the coding categories were being used on Twitter in Pakistan. With the aim to understand the implications of feminist discussions on Twitter, the contexts in which the tweets were made is crucial to the study.

Table 3 shows how many positive and negative responses each coding category garnered in the selected period of time.

Table 3: *Tweets Stance*

Coding Categories	Positive	Negative
Aurat March	29	35
#MeToo	34	36
Empowerment	39	19
Women	45	25
Harassment	53	24
Sexual Assault	38	23

As seen in

Table 3, all the coding categories accumulated responses as Aurat March (Positive = 29, Negative = 35), #MeToo (Positive = 34, Negative = 36), Empowerment (Positive = 39, Negative = 19), Women (Positive = 45, Negative = 25), Harassment (Positive = 53, Negative = 24), and Sexual Assault (Positive = 38, Negative = 23).

Figure 4 displays the differences between positive and negative responses per coding category. As can be observed, the most prominent feminist terms used in Pakistan, “Aurat March” and “#MeToo”, obtained higher negative tweets as compared to other coding categories.

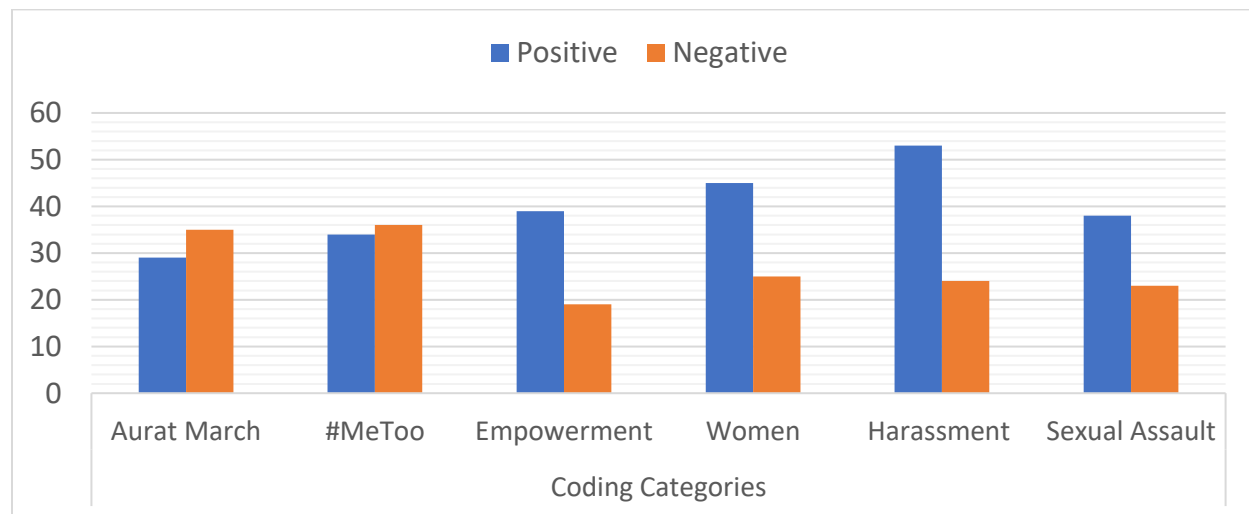


Figure 4. *Positive and negative responses per coding category*

Discussion

Feminist deliberations on Pakistani Twitter

This study identified coding categories that were terms used most in feminism-related tweets in Pakistan. In order to do so, Manual Deductive Coding was employed to examine how Pakistanis discussed feminism and feminist-related matters from 2017 up to 2021. The researcher narrowed down the coding categories to 6 terms: (1) Aurat March, (2) #MeToo, (3) Empowerment, (4) Harassment, (5) Sexual Assault, (6) Women, that best represented feminist issues and collected 400 tweets accordingly. Only these terms were analysed in this study, which were applied both by SMOs (Social Movement Organizations) and the public.

Many academic articles and papers have examined how hashtag activism have the ability to drive a social movement forward and obtaining a strong foundation in the digital age (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015; Chang, n.d.; Khushbakht et al., 2021; Kirkwood et al., 2018; Lopez et al., 2019; Lukose, 2018; Worthington,

2020; Xiong et al., 2019). Despite this, there is a lack of research regarding Twitter feminism in developing and under-developed countries. The results imply that strong cultural and religious backgrounds have a significant impact on the way feminism is viewed in Pakistan.

Kirkwood et al., (2018) found that the tweets they collected were diverse with varying opinions about feminism (such as supporting, opposing, contradicting, uncertain, and impartial views etc.) although containing the same keywords. While their research was focused on gathering tweets from the United States and the United Kingdom, my study concentrated the same questions on Pakistan. This research's findings showed that majority of the discussions on Twitter about feminism tackled issues such as sexual harassment and sexual assault. This theme seemed to be carried both by leaders of SMOs (Social Movement Organizations) present in Pakistan as well as members of the public. While both of these issues and their variations are immensely damaging to the women in our society, there was little to no debates on matters such as inequality in pay based on gender, financial autonomy for married women in both rural and urban areas, equal career opportunities, forced child marriages, forced genital mutilation etc. The development of the #MeToo movement in Pakistan brought forward many sexual harassment/assault allegations against men of high stature. A lot of these allegations were not taken to court, and the ones that were introduced a new layer of disbelief in the victims (Saeed, n.d.). It could be observed that the true purpose of these feminist movements diminished under cultural and religious reprobation. In many instances, the coding categories Aurat March and #MeToo were used to mock, discredit, disregard, and ridicule the movements instead of offering support.

Similarly, Khushbakht et al., (2021) gathered tweets according to feminist hashtags to find out how patriarchal discourse impacts the narrative of #MeToo and other movements among Pakistani society. They discovered that patriarchal discussions portrayed #MeToo in a severely negative light, completely discounting women who came forward with their stories and belittling them for supposedly making “false” accusations. Results of this study showed that a lot of negative responses came from males while majority of females saw the #MeToo and Aurat March movements as an opportunity to reveal the truths of our society. Many women argued that conservative Pakistani culture held them back from exposing harassment incidents in the past.

The motives of individuals who expressed their opposition or support to feminist ideas on Twitter cannot be distinguished, however, the differences between pro-feminism and anti-feminism stances were very evident on Twitter (Kirkwood et al., 2018). A user on Twitter (@Gulalai_Ismail) conveyed an appeal to support feminism in Pakistan in a tweet:

Ismail, Gulalai (@Gulalai_Ismail). *“With Aurat Marches across Pakistan, our younger women are shaping an inclusive women rights movement, and the only thing we need to offer to them is SUPPORT. Please learn to be proud of your countrywomen. #IamMarcher #AuratMarch #AuratAzadiMarch”* 21 March 2019, 8:15 p.m. Tweet.

Alternatively, another user (@tanuj_garg) expressed their disappointment and distrust in the #MeToo movement in the following tweet:

Garg, Tanuj (@tanuj_garg). *“These defamatory and belated #metoo bombs, sans substantiation and evidence, masquerading as convenient weapons of female empowerment, are swiftly losing credibility and sympathy. #AliZafar #MeeshaShafi #Pakistan”* 20 April 2018, 9:03 a.m. Tweet.

The Feminist Theory is valid for liberal and socialist Pakistani feminists but does not take into consideration the Islamic and cultural feminists. Despite having a secular societal system, Western feminism can never be unconditionally applied to the culture, considering the importance given to Islamic values.

Feminism in Pakistan: who is it for?

While a few scholarly papers have investigated the influence of Western feminism on Pakistani feminism, the differences between the two, and the ever-growing tension between liberal and Islamic feminism (Imran & Wei, 2019; Jamal, 2005; Khushbakht et al., 2021; Saeed, n.d.), there is a huge gap in research about who all these movements represent. The foundation of these studies focus on the opposing views held by different sects of feminism such as liberal, radical, cultural, and social feminism. This study analysed activity on Twitter to figure out which individuals were advocating women's rights, which areas they focused on, and how the movements have assisted those women in Pakistan who need it the most.

Less than quarter of the tweets analysed in this research spoke in favour of under-represented women belonging to rural and lower class backgrounds. The concerns that were brought up during the #MeToo and Aurat March movements were the problems faced by elite-class and middle-class women. Many lower class individuals were not even present during the physical and online protests due to lack of access and restrictions caused by their domestic limitations. Khushbakht & Sultana (2020) made remarks regarding the demands of women participating in Aurat March. They state that Aurat March had the potential of being a ground-breaking moment for our society, but instead became a travesty for feminism itself. The feminists present in these protests agitated the lines of religious and cultural principles by demanding a Western lifestyle in an Islamic state without facing the consequences. There seemed to be an incessant need for those women to live like 'men' in order to achieve equality. Results of the current study also found that illogical and absurd solutions were masqueraded as "female empowerment" by some feminists on Twitter. Among feminists in Pakistan, particularly liberalists, there is a profound disconnect from reality faced by women in our communities other than only themselves. Their sense of priorities makes them look superficial and shallow as they ignore the pleas of women in need of representation.

Whether they were opinion leaders or members of the public, self-proclaimed feminists failed to win support from their communities. In fact, many Pakistani women (who were also self-proclaimed feminists) believed that Aurat March was a liberalist agenda formed by the elite-class in order to break the boundaries of Islam. According to Khushbakht & Sultana (2020), Western feminist ideologies do not translate across different lifestyles and religious beliefs. To a substantial degree, this statement is true because this is the most prominent reason there are rifts among Pakistani feminists. Islamic feminism demands rights given to women by Islam that are denied, manipulated and misinterpreted by the patriarchal systems of our country. Undoubtedly, Islamic feminists see liberal feminism as another stone in their path to true equality and freedom. Several users on Twitter posted their opinions regarding the feminist movements in Pakistan:

Kiani, Anjum (@AnjumKiani). *"Net Result: The current Marxist, Communists & Atheist organisers of the #AuratMarch have seriously damaged & maligned the movement for empowerment of women in Pakistan. Years of hard work wasted by the '35 Women' who were using it for their own petty agendas & self-promotion"*. 9 March 2020, 2:18 p.m. Tweet.

Ansari, Uzma (@UzmaAAnsari1). *"How can we empower women when women in positions of privilege are misusing their power! Unfortunately Pakistan is a place where privilege goes a long way but justice and egalitarianism doesn't!! #MeeshaUsingWomenCard #MeToo"* 13 July 2019, 12:18 p.m. Tweet.

Tooba (@Tooba_Sd). *"It's high time that the feminists reflect how their politics is so exclusionary & for the urban middle class woman! This exposes weaknesses of the neoliberal feminist discourse in Pakistan. There was more noise abt meesha shafi (which is great) than for women of khaisore. #metoo"* 29 January 2019, 9:56 a.m. Tweet.

Emerged dimensions of feminist conversations on Twitter

Feminist discussions on Pakistani Twitter have maintained a certain theme throughout the years. Majority of Twitter dialogues and conversations revolved around sexual harassment, sexual assault, rape, child sexual abuse, and female bodily autonomy. Numerous individuals posted Tweets containing these coding categories:

Sadiq, Eman (@EmanSaqid4). *"It's been a little over a month since the Aurat March and Pakistan has seen it all; legal cases extending from domestic abuse, to the rape of a 2 year old, to women being kept in chains, and finally the rape and murder of a patient in a govt hospital. #pakistan #AuratMarch #law"* 23 April 2019. Tweet.

Nazir, Asjad (@asjadnazir). *"If women & little girls who have been gang-raped, tortured, beaten & murdered can't get justice in India or Pakistan what hope is there for those who get sexually harassed in a male dominated judicial system? #MeToo #MeeshaShafi #JusticeforAsifa"* 21 April 2018, 5:02 p.m. Tweet.

Shah, Bina (@BinaShah). *"I stand with @jamiazaad and all victims of sexual violence. It happens every day in Pakistan and around the world. Chances are you know someone who is being harassed, abused, or even subject to gender-based violence. And I'm not talking about the gender of the victim. #MeToo"* 12 November 2019, 11:06 a.m. Tweet.

These topics were considered taboo subjects in Pakistani society at one time. Before the #MeToo movement, few people felt comfortable discussing sexual violence in any capacity, let alone speak up against it. Khushbakht et al. (2021) stated that users of social media now believe that talking about taboo issues is the only way to reduce acts of sexual violence. It is a contribution from the public to help combat injustices against women. Their analysis of tweets also revealed that topics such as prostitution, abusive marital relationships, and going against Pakistani culture were key areas of debates.

In recent years, many cases of sexual abuse against children have come to light and caused outrage on social media platforms. Thousands of reports are made to the police in a span of six months only. Twitter feminists' advocacy for women's rights to justice also demanded justice for children and minors who suffer at the hands of abusers. A Twitter user (@SanaAzaz) spoke up against child abuse and the criminal justice system:

Azaz, Sana (@SanaAzaz). *"What do we do #AuratMarch for? #Rapist and #Criminals are free, living their life and victims are waiting for justice to be served. Next time make it more productive and raise your voice against #ChildAbusers #HangTheRapist #StopChildAbuse #Pakistan"* 19 July 2020. Tweet.

The continuous activity and demonstrations achieved the passing of a law that criminalises assault against children, child pornography and human trafficking. Moreover, another bill was passed in 2020 that claimed child abusers would be hanged publicly without possibilities of a compromise.

On the other hand, it is not as simple for women to receive justice in cases of sexual harassment. Examination of Twitter reflected that most conversations were largely based around female sexual assault incidents, the lawsuits they file against their alleged abuser and the defamation lawsuit they received after the fact. There were endless debates about baseless accusations, lack of evidence, late reporting of incidents, playing the "woman card", and seeking publicity. This sort of commotion took away from the real issues and instead threw the feminist community into a series of disputes and clashes.

Additionally, concerns such as women's rights to property, forced childbearing, financial rights, and forced religion conversions etc. never gained the awareness they warranted. The lower-class in Pakistan is plagued with these unaddressed problems that worsen every year. Women are forced to live in terrible conditions with no access to mobile phones, or the Internet. The fact remains that these women are unable to defend themselves, while majority of them are completely unaware of their basic rights. The Pakistani

feminist movement needs to redirect themselves towards the voiceless individuals and work for their justice, equality and freedom.

Perceptions about Feminism in Pakistan

Twitter is a forum where people are free to debate on whichever topic they like. Just like any other debate, the subject of feminism brings both optimistic and adverse reactions. Lopez et al. (2019) did a comparable analysis where Twitter users made obscure negative statements about feminism and to promote misogynistic ideology. They used feminist hashtags and terminology to push their hostility on the main feeds. My analysis showed that well-known terms such as “Aurat March” and #MeToo” were being inserted in tweets meant to spew hatred towards both movements. This resulted in both codes being associated largely with pessimistic points of view:

Dehwar, Malik (@KhurramDehwar). *“If #AuratMarch is about Aurat & gender issues then it has the support of every educated & sensible Pakistani, but if you want to halt construction of dams in Pakistan, spread ethnically divisive propaganda & legitimize terror groups, then don’t expect support for your facade.”* 9 March 2021, 11:59 a.m. Tweet.

(@iSamUnwise). *“A girls school is built by Pakistan Army on top of where HakeemUllah’s headquarter used to be. How come I don’t see any tweets by people so vocal during the #AuratMarch days. This is a win for women empowerment? I guess this just doesn’t fit the agenda of laal brigade & wokiyas.”* 28 June 2020. Tweet.

Abrar, Rubia (@rubiaabrar). *“It would be irresponsible/dishonest to suggest that #women in Pakistan have no problems. Some of them are: Education, Safety, Forced marriages, Domestic violence, Inheritance rights, Honour killings, Child sexual abuse. Let’s not minimise/mock the real issues. #AuratMarch”* 6 March 2020, 5:27 p.m. Tweet.

A streak of positive and enthusiastic tweets still maintained, understandably to counter all the negativity/misogyny feminist discussions had attracted. Many Twitter feminists encouraged others to keep raising their voices against their oppressors:

Yusuf, Humza (@Humzaay). *“Wholehearted support for the #AuratMarch tomorrow across Pakistan. May we live to see better days in our homeland where women are finally equal, respected and valued members of the civilised society we so desperately crave.”* 8 March 2020, 2:32 a.m. Tweet.

Toric-Azad, Zeina (@zeinatoricazad). *“Feminists in Pakistan are brilliant and steadfast. This lie that they can’t “define” feminism is touted by antifeminists who can’t actually debate the issues at hand. #SorryNotSorry #MeToo #WomensRights #AuratMarch”* 31 July 2020, 9:04 p.m. Tweet.

Malik, Sabah (@sabahbanomalik). *“Women’s autonomy brings Pakistan to hysterics, last year marchers were attacked by bricks, but everyday women fight for better, and every day our numbers grow. Women of Pakistan deserve to live free and one day they will. #AuratAzadiMarch #AuratMarch #MeraJismMeriMarzi”* 8 March 2021. Tweet.

Women took up a large part of pro-feminists in Pakistan. They continually supported other women, believed their stories and offered help to those in need. Many female lawyers also offered their services to sexual assault victims in order to provide them with justice. Undeniably, there is a constructive prospect to feminism in Pakistan and it continues to grow each year.

Lopez et al. (2019) found that the hashtag “#feminism” was being used in several different manners; to defend the beliefs of the cause, to enlighten the public about feminist ideals, and to terrorize feminist dialogues. Anti-feminists on Pakistani Twitter weaponized Islam to discredit feminist arguments. Aurat

March protestors (largely comprised of liberal feminists) whose primary goal was equality between men and women, were charged with blasphemy and related activities. Indignation among women skyrocketed and feminist discussion increasingly diverged (Kirkwood et al., 2018). Liberal feminism has been described as anti-Islam both by patriarchal structures and Islamic feminists. This not only causes a divide among women in Pakistan but also prevents feminism from flourishing in our country. From this perspective, the Collective Identity Theory is only partially in play among Pakistani society because of the dissent between various feminism ideologies and beliefs. It can be said that the theory applies itself among different sects of feminism but not on all Pakistani feminists as a whole.

Conclusion

This research aimed to examine how Twitter has assisted women in the propagation of feminism among Pakistani communities. Content analysis method is used to answer the research questions. Twitter is a widely used social media tool to run social or political movements effectively. Current study focused on identifying role of twitter in spreading feminism among Pakistani community. #MeToo and #AuratMarch broke the barrier of taboo subjects and introduced a new age for open and honest debates. This study concluded that unpleasant topics such as sexual violence and harassment were being intertwined more frequently into conversations online. Not only was there a strong acknowledgment of female struggles among both men and women, but also various suggestions on how to aid the victims. After the whole discussion the researcher has concluded that feminism in Pakistan is not portraying all the female community rather just presenting the elite class and their concerns. However, it also raises the question of whether the concentration on these matters was far greater than other severe problems women face regardless of their economic and social circumstances. An entire class of women went unrepresented throughout the duration of these movements which brings its agendas into question in the eyes of the public and social researchers.

The idea of feminism is not same in Pakistan, as Pakistan is an Islamic state so people here have different perception about feminism. There are people who support this idea and people who are in opposition of feminism under the cover of religion and culture, while the idea of women rights is entirely different in Islam. The clash between liberals and Islamists is apparent, but it also impacts perceptions of other members of society and continues to create hostility towards feminism. But researcher is not intended to discuss the Islamic perspective of women empowerment here. Yet there is a need in our country for a deeper knowledge of what feminism truly is, how Islam has provided women their rights, and how liberalism is another form of westernizing our communities.

All in all, this research has contributed to the understanding of feminist perspectives and debates about its recognition in Pakistan through digital media particularly twitter. A key takeaway is how Western ideas and practices cannot be fully converted into societies with rich culture and religious lifestyles. In fact, Pakistan is creating its own philosophies regarding feminism and evolving among people each year.

Limitations

This study has two limitations:

- 1) The sample size of the tweets was limited to 400. Analysing a larger sample of tweets could have provided a greater understanding of Pakistani feminism and their factions.
- 2) This area of study did not have an abundant amount of prior research. There were few scholarly papers examining feminism in Pakistan. However, because the literature was limited, this study provides new, and potentially useful, insight into the dissemination of feminism through Twitter in Pakistan.
- 3) This research has not focused on the Islamic perception of feminism and women empowerment.

Recommendations

Following are some recommendations for future work in this field:

- There are opportunities for extensive research on the mobilization of social movements in Pakistan. The agendas of these movements can also be explored in the context of cultural and religious settings.
- The intricacies of Pakistani feminist sects need to be examined in depth in order to shed more light on this subject in the future. Moreover, the role of print and electronic media's coverage of feminist issues needs to be investigated thoroughly.
- There is a need to assess the laws, current policies and governmental procedures aimed at aiding or hindering the emancipation of women living and working in Pakistan.

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Conflict of Interest

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