

**EVOLUTION OF SUBJECTIVITY WITHIN YOUNG FEMINISTS OF
CONTEMPORARY PAKISTAN: (EXPRESSIONS OF FEMINISM IN
ONLINE SPACES)**



AQSA ZAHOR

**NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF PAKISTAN STUDIES
QUAID-I-AZAM UNIVERSITY, ISLAMABAD**

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BY

AQSA ZAHOOR

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF PAKISTAN STUDIES

QUAID-I-AZAM UNIVERSITY, ISLAMABAD

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is a presentation of my original work. Every attempt is taken to identify where other people's contributions are involved, with appropriate references to the literature and acknowledgment of collaborative research and discussions. There has been no previous publication or presentation for any part of this thesis for any other degree or certificate. Dr. Aasim Sajjad Akhtar of the National Institute of Pakistan Studies, Quaid-i-Azam University Islamabad has supervised the completion of this thesis.

Aqsa Zahoor

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ABSTRACT

This research aims at the nuanced issue of how feminism has evolved across generations in Pakistan and manifested through online platforms. It is primarily centered around the evolution of subjective ideas in young feminists in the process of becoming an advocate of women rights through digital platforms. The debate is around how different waves of feminism interact with the use of digital spaces for advocacy, challenging patriarchal norms, and pursuing social change. The proposed study draws its theoretical insights from larger debates on feminism, digitalization and politics of recognition in the age of social media. The study examines the changing nature of feminist expression employing qualitative data derived from in-depth interviews, highlighting the importance of historical context, traditional media, and physical protests in shaping feminist activism. The research is based on the transformative power of technology, particularly social media, in increasing feminist engagement and mobilization. It recognizes the power of digital platforms to amplify voices, increase visibility, and spark collective action, but it also recognizes the risk of polarized debates and challenges. This research explained that younger feminists are more likely to see digital spaces as powerful tools for advancing feminist ideals, and shaping their subjectivity towards feminism whereas, older feminists may have more nuanced perspectives that include a mix of online and offline strategies. Finally, the study contributes to a better understanding of the generational dynamics within the Pakistani feminist movement, revealing the multifaceted nature of advocacy across different waves and age groups.

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1. Introduction

The question of moral regulation and individual freedom is an intricate issue that has been in debate throughout the history. It can be implemented to address certain societal problems that are considered important for the well-being of individuals or community as a whole. The participation of individuals for moral regulation is dealt on societal grounds in general and specifically on the domestic sphere. But state sanctioned regulations can also limit the fight for freedom of individuals to participate fully in social and political life. This entire calculation of moral regulation created a lot of problems for gendered identities especially for women in Pakistan (Toor, 2014). They are regarded as a storehouse of cultural and traditional values of society which leads to a massive struggle by women against patriarchal and biased institutions. In this context, feminism is a movement which is working for the rights of women and the struggle against the patriarchal norms. Therefore it is a widely debated topic in the academic, social and political spheres of Pakistani society.

Having a global manifestation, feminism at its core, is defined as the broader belief summarized in the struggle for provision of social, political and economic equality for sexes particularly women (Burkett and Burnell 2021). While being primarily traced back as a Western ideology, feminism, however, is expressed internationally as a social movement that narrates that men and women have equal access to the rights and opportunities for survival. The organization of social partiality of feminist movement is run by both male and female feminists of all age groups worldwide including transgender community. Therefore, calling oneself to be a feminist drives in the grouping of those believing in gender equality.

The feminist movement has evolved over time, shaping societies and challenging gender-based inequalities through debates, writings, advocacy and activism throughout the globe. With its unique socio-cultural context, Pakistan has witnessed the emergence of various waves of feminism after it got freedom from the British colonizer. Each wave of feminism is marked by different goals and

characteristics owing to the features of time and space. According to Berger (2020) “modern information and communication technologies (ICT), particularly internet-based tools and applications, are progressively influencing daily life”. Understanding the generational gap to the waves of feminism in Pakistan is crucial to follow the evolving dynamics of gender activism and to look at how it manifests in the online space. The term “online space” refers to the virtual realm created by internet and intelligence tools, where individuals interact, engage and communicate in various activities.

Feminism has gained a different momentum in this era of digitalization. It has been encouraged by a lot of feminist movements around the globe like #Metoo and #NiUnaMenos. It has caused a diversified imaginary mechanism for social media agents to adopt feminism as a part of their online image. In this regard, it intruded a polarization between progressives and reactionary backlash against feminism. Therefore, some out of these poles devise feminism a marketing strategy for themselves. And the appropriation of feminism in the neoliberal global market leads towards challenging public opinion, social and electronic media, and the academics to think and re-think feminism, and to consider whether these changes have vacate it of political meaning (Banet, Wiser, and Gill (2012, 2018, 2016). The many feminisms and their becoming power are very real. However, the unfortunate union of the digital paradigm and neo-liberal capitalism was yet to untangle.

Defining feminist struggle constitutes the levels of advocacy; it has from late 19th to early 20th century in the west. These levels are termed as waves of feminism. The freedom of expression and advocacy grounds needs revolutionary transformations. Therefore the understanding of feminism, its presence and defense online has evolved. In the case of feminism in contemporary times, this digitalized space has primarily constituted the fourth wave of feminism as a succession of first, second and third wave. Turley and Fisher (2018) argued that for readers and scholars, this space provides a fourth way for feminist practice creating a feminist counter publics. The online space has introduced new

technological bases of struggle for women. It has introduced new activism throughout the globe which is an indicative of the continuing influence of the previous waves of feminism.

This thesis aims to investigate the generational divide between the four generations of feminism in Pakistan, specifically focusing on the manifestation of feminism through online platforms. As a result, the focus of this research is to shed light on how different generations of feminists engage with the fundamental domain to voice their concerns, advocate for gender rights, challenge patriarchal norms, and protest for change by exploring the interplay between gender, voice and online space. One is the debate over the Public vs. Private Spheres, in which the feminists exert activism for women rights within and outside the domestic sphere of her existence. Theoretically, this research is analyzing the expression of feminism in online spaces in Pakistan, with a focus on the generational divide of feminists in four waves of feminism. The framework is designed to analyze the social and political factors, the transformation of feminist struggles, the role of activism in public spaces in contrast to that of the online platforms, discursive dynamics and the power relations within and between generations of feminists in Pakistan.

The literature review covers in detail the debate around the specific themes of this research regarding the wave's transformation of women advocacy in Pakistan. The literature on feminism in Pakistan highlights the progression of the feminist movement from its inception to the present day. The first wave, inspired by the struggle for women's suffrage, emerged during the pre-independence era and focused on securing basic rights for women. The second wave, which gained momentum in the 1980s, concentrated on issues of patriarchy, sexuality, and reproductive rights. The third wave of feminism in Pakistan has witnessed a significant shift towards online activism which created a new space to mobilize women for social change. The media channels facilitated the amplification of voices of women in the marginalized communities. Furthermore, the literature on the fourth wave of feminism in Pakistan emphasizes inter-sectionalism and

inclusivity, addressing diverse experiences of women based on class, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation through online spaces. The literature around the global trends of feminism with online space recognition has highlighted the features of activism in the context of its effectiveness and gaps in addressing the issues it is dealing with.

Finally, it is investigated in this thesis whether feminism in contemporary Pakistan primarily operating with the digital world is dealing with some similar strands of feminism from the previous ones. Furthermore, it deals with how the difference lies in the activism of different time periods that has made the feminists to impose their narrative of what feminism look like in the post-#Metoo era. The #MeToo movement showcases feminists creating an online culture of support and healing through creative interventions. However, historical conditions and media culture differences cause narratives to be questioned, delaying the movement's goals (Rehman, 2019). This research is analyzing the main fault lines along with which feminism is highlighted through nuance, some of which are encouraging the progress of feminism, and some of them are undermining it.

2. Research Question

Feminist activism in Pakistan is operated differently in generations of its activism throughout the history of Pakistan. This research is intended towards the documentation of feminist's activism in online spaces through the following research questions.

What makes the online activism of contemporary feminists different or unique as compared to previous generations of feminism?

How has the evolution of feminism in Pakistan influenced the contemporary expression of feminist activism in online spaces?

What role digital platforms play in development and promoting the feminist ideas of young feminists?

3. Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of the study is to investigate widespread adoption of digital platforms that influenced the communication styles and activism approaches of contemporary young feminists and what impact does this have on the perceived gap between them and their older counterparts. In depth interviews is the tool used for research purpose. Other objectives of the study are:

1. To look into the evolution of feminist movements in Pakistan
2. To assess the role of digital platforms in fostering the intergenerational dialogue and collaboration within the feminist movement
3. To investigate the perspectives of both contemporary young feminists and their older counterparts regarding the influence of digital platforms on feminism

Research Hypothesis

The generational divide between different waves of feminism in Pakistan is reflected in the manifestation and engagement of feminists through online platforms, shaping their advocacy, challenges to patriarchal norms and strategies for social change. Pakistani young feminists view digital platforms as powerful tools for promoting feminist ideals and social change whereas, their older counterparts may hold varying perspectives on the impact of digital platforms on feminism.

4. Significance of the study

Exploring the generational divide within feminism in Pakistan and its manifestation through online space is helpful to get an understanding for feminist engagement, addressing gender rights, and protesting for change. Additionally, the debate around public and online space along with the dynamics of power relations is analyzed within the context of feminist practice. Furthermore, by analyzing the similarities and differences between contemporary feminist and of the previous waves, this study investigates how narratives of feminism have been shaped in the Post-#Metoo era.

On the whole, this study is significant because it offers valuable insights into the dynamics of feminism in Pakistan, the role of online platforms in the feminist activism, and the generational divide within the feminist movement. It provides a comprehensive analysis of the subject matter and contributes to the broader understanding of feminism in the digital age.

5. Limitations of the study

Every research has its own limitations likewise this study has certain limitations. Also, the researcher did not claim the fulfillment of the objectives of the study. The major limitations are; like the diverse nature of the topic, the researcher had scarcity of time and limited access to the respondents from where more than ten feminists were able to be interviewed. The data of this research is collected from feminists sitting in different parts of the country; still the researcher is not claiming that the study represents the entire community of organized feminist in Pakistan.

6. Literature Review

For this particular research, I have conducted an empirical review of the literature, in order to generate an understanding about the contemporary global trends of feminism. Additionally, I have reviewed literature on online activism in South Asia Furthermore; I also reviewed the literature on the evolution of feminism in Pakistan. This was done to look at wave's evolution of feminism in Pakistan. The modern day feminism in Pakistan that has shaped its advocacy by using online spaces as a medium of activism has not much discussed in the literature within Pakistan. Therefore, with the help of present literature within the context of Pakistani society in relation to the globe, the I tried to develop an understanding for this particular study.

Jouet (2018) examined the revival of feminism and the use of digital media by feminists in France. This article acknowledges the positive impact of digital feminism and also highlights the rise of cyber-sexism and questions the empowerment of feminism in the face of conservative forces. According to the

writer, feminist activism in France is characterized by a culture of competition and mutual appraisal among different collectives, similar to what is observed in the press community. Relevance to France, a study on the expression of feminism in online spaces in Spain has conducted by Tortajada and Willem (2020). According to them, “within the media landscape of Spain, many different strands of feminism are intertwined, all struggling to impose their narrative of what feminism look alike in post-#MeToo era”. These two studies were useful for this research in order to understand the differences in the opinions of feminists of Pakistan from different generations on the subject of digital feminism.

Baer (2016) examines the revival of feminist politics and activism through digital platforms and its impact on people to recognize and comprehend current feminist demonstrations. The article draws attention to the "undoing of feminism" in neoliberal nations, where discourses on independence, empowerment, and choice have made feminism seem natural. Recent demonstrations re-imagine feminism for the neoliberal era by emphasizing the connections between local body politics and trans-local and transnational articulation. The research draws attention to the precarious nature of digital feminisms, which reflects both the oppressive aspects of neo-liberalism and the possibility of new subjectivities and social formations.

In the article “*Why intergenerational feminist media studies*”, Winch, Littler and Keller (2016) explored the generation in feminist media studies, arguing that understanding generation through historical conditions is crucial for addressing intergenerational conflicts. It highlights the complexities of generation and its intersection with media discourse, emphasizing the need for feminist media studies that considers cultural and political specificity, geographies, and intersectionalities. According to the findings of the researchers, critically examining generation's role within media cultures is essential to challenge dominant narratives shaped by power and privilege.

On twitter, the arguments on the generational and digital divide in feminism are articulated by Reagan (2010). The writer has provided valuable insights to the generational divide within feminist movement and the challenges it poses. The

discussion revolves around the use of technology, particularly blogging and social media, and how it influences the perception of feminist engagement and political change. Older feminists worry that younger feminists are not involved in traditional grassroots campaigning and are more focused on online platforms. They question the efficacy and depth of digital activism and believe it lacks substance. Younger feminists argue that technology, particularly blogging, serves as a new form of consciousness-raising and a platform for collective sharing and mobilization. They emphasize the importance of creating inclusive spaces for diverse perspectives and address a wide range of issues. The generational divide within the feminist movement can be explored through dialogue, understanding, and cooperation between different generations. It also raises questions about centralized power, gate-keeping, and resource role in shaping the feminist agenda. The tensions and the disagreements between older and younger feminists regarding their approaches, priorities and modes of activism highlights the themes for the researcher to look for this particular study to design the argument, and analyze the data accordingly.

Hernandez and Piepmeier analyzed two books: "Catching a Wave: Reclaiming Feminism for the 21st Century" and "Colonize this Young Women of Color on Today's Feminism" by Daisy Hernandez and Bushra Rehman". According to the review, "Catching a Wave" is a primer for new feminism readers, focusing on self-discovery, feminist identification, and collective political action. Whereas, "colonize this" critiques racism and exclusions in mainstream feminism, focused on the young women of color's experiences and perspectives. Both books offer a multifaceted understanding of third-wave feminism and its potential for inclusive and transformative movements. These books have provided the insights for the wave idea and the ideologues of its practical interpretations.

Banerjee and Kankaria (2023) had studied and investigated the role of online activism in addressing gender-based violence in South Asia with a focus on India. They discussed the online activism in local-global contexts along with challenges and limitations of online activism, such as the digital divide and unequal access to

the technology. According to this research, the concept of the “*Global Village*” and its relevance to online activism is allowing and managing people to connect across geographical boundaries through internet and also facilitating communication and mobilization. Overall, this research contributes to the understanding of the evolving nature of feminism activism in the digital age and its impacts on local and global trends.

The history of feminism in Pakistan is marked by the wave’s transformation after its independence from the *British Raj*. In her book “*Faith and Feminism in Pakistan: Religious agency or secular autonomy?*”, Afia Zia discussed the history of feminism with respect to its recognition as the first, second and third wave of feminism. According to her, the first wave of feminism in Pakistan is active owing to the status of women in a society that is formulated in the name of Islam. It was the time of Zia-Ul-Haq’s regime in 1980’s. It was the time when WAF was created by a group of women in 1981 to protect women from religious extremism and to let the women stand up for her rights. Likewise, the second wave of feminism is encouraged by the discourse on post-colonial studies in India and subaltern studies. Therefore, the questions of class, caste, gender and status were the key themes in which women were counted in to the category of gender owing to which the transformation in feminist movement was all about. The succession of events in the activism for women rights in the post 9/11 scholarship marked the third wave of feminism in Pakistan. It was the time, when the ideas of enlightenment, modernity, secularism, and uncovering “*Complex subjectivities of Islamists*” were in debate.

The book “*Revolutionary feminism: conversations on collective action and radical thought*” edited by Bhandar and Ziadah (2020) is comprised of “*conversations*” between the editors and ten scholar-activists who came out on the streets of London in collective grief and anger following the death of Sarah Everard in march 2021. It encompasses the details of those ten scholars about their personal, political and intellectual trajectories in which they speak about the contemporary feminism on revolutionary terms. Each of them speaks from a

variety of contexts including black feminism, Marxist feminism, communist movement, black internationalism, indigenous struggles, anti-racist organizing and queer activism. The book is classified into three segments. The first segment is all about the migration and empire, the second is on colonialism and capitalism and the third is all about eradication. Additionally, Siddiqui (2021) reviewed this book and according to her, the key themes of this book gathered the information from the voices and the editors extended the idea of what constitutes feminism. And the writings of the feminist who are not considered as a part of main stream feminism are gathered with these voices to generate a response that defines feminism as revolutionary voice of women.

Akhtar (2022) discusses in his book *–The struggle for hegemony: Fear, Desire and Revolutionary horizons)*” that how liberal democracy is facing a lot of crises and the neo-liberal mission is failing all over the world. In the Chapter *–Digital life-world*” while talking about feminism and women’s movements in Pakistan, the Author argued that less prosperous women and girls, often constrained by societal restrictions, have found empowerment through digital platforms, particularly in contexts where violence against women is prevalent. Through the *Aurat Azadi March*, which criticizes neoliberal capitalism, Pakistani feminism challenges patriarchal control over female bodies and sexuality. However, these movements primarily target digital audiences in the middle class, revealing limitations in reaching marginalized groups. Furthermore, he added that gains in digital resistance gains can be harnessed for societal transformation.

Talking about the public spaces for women and women advocacy platforms, Ansari (2018) wrote about *–Girls at Dhabbas*”. *“Girls at Dhabbas*”, a feminist collective in Pakistan, advocates for women's access to and participation in public spaces. Since 2015, the participant’s efforts have gained attention and sparked discussions on topics like cycling and street cricket. Through personal narratives, storytelling, and social media, the collective connects women and sheds light on the complexities of gender and inclusive public spaces in Pakistan's stratified cities. Although the initiative has organized demonstrations and dialogues, it

acknowledges its limitations and focuses on cultivating sensitivity, self-awareness, and sisterhood to address these complexities. *“Girls at Dhabas”* serves as a starting point for women's voices and a source of sustenance, representation, and belonging.

Rehman (2019) wrote on the importance of online spaces as critical modes of feminist self-expression in Pakistan. The text highlights the internet's role in democratizing and making feminist debates accessible. According to her, online spaces act as feminist archives, documenting historical struggles and shaping contemporary feminist activism. Additionally, the article discusses the evolution of feminist resistance in Pakistan, particularly during the Islamisation project of General Zia-ul-Haq. Digital media serves as an ongoing archive of community voices, highlighting the relevance of feminist demands in Pakistani society. The article also discusses the impact of digital spaces on historical feminist storytelling and the activism of younger feminists. Furthermore, the article emphasizes the need for bridging the gap between older and younger feminists, fostering community and trust across generations, and collaborating with other social and political movements. Overall, linking feminist archives across time and movements is crucial to ensure that feminist work remains inclusive of marginalized voices and continues to challenge oppressive structures.

7. 8. Research Methodology

This part of the Introduction is about the method of the research used to study and inquire about the subjectivity of young feminists and the generational divide of feminist community in Pakistan in online spaces which includes the research methods and methods in employment to the current study. It explained how research data as a whole was collected through primary and secondary sources. In addition, this section includes details of fieldwork plan as well as the details regarding information on the type of data analysis approach that was used to analyze the collected data.

8.1 Research Design

The study employs qualitative research method such as in-depth interviews and content analysis of online platforms to collect rich and nuanced data. These methods allow for a deep exploration of feminist's perspectives and experiences as participants of this study and contextual factors that influence their engagement with feminism in public and online spaces.

8.1.1 Sample

The primary data is collected through in-depth ten interviews in two rounds. The researcher made field notes and recorded interviews of renowned feminists of different generations of feminism in Pakistan with their consent. The researcher has interviewed two male and eight female renowned feminists who belongs to different generations of feminism in Pakistan. In addition, the researcher has also talked to young feminists who have been actively involved in private sphere using online space as a medium of communication and recorded their views as well.

In the first round, the I have interviewed feminists of older generations and academics to talk about the history of feminist struggle from the initial stages to the contemporary feminism in Pakistan. In the second round, the interviews were taken from young feminists who were first active in online spaces,, but later joined an organizational body (political and social) working for women rights.

8.1.2 Method

Since I was trying to inquire about the generation divide of feminists in Pakistan with reference to online activism carried out by contemporary feminists, qualitative research methods (structured interviews) were used to provide a space for open-ended questions to the interviewers noted down their responses regarding the potential of activism in online spaces v/s public spaces among different generations of feminists. The qualitative methods of research suited best for this particular study because I was interested in deep conversations about the evolution of feminist struggle with respect to the history of feminists struggle in Pakistan.

8.2 Data Collection

Along with primary sources, the data for this particular study is collected through secondary sources too. The opinion-based primary research data is collected through open-ended interview questions using primary sources. The secondary research data is collected using secondary sources such as books, articles, research articles and papers published in journals along with documents from websites available on feminism in Pakistan.

Among the most consulted books for this study on feminism and women empowerment in Pakistan are *Feminism and the Women's Movement in Pakistan: Actors, Debates, and Strategies* by Dr. Rubina Saigol, *Contradictions and Ambiguities of Feminism in Pakistan: Exploring the Fourth Wave* by Dr. Rubina Saigol and Nida Usman Chaudhary, *Faith and Feminism in Pakistan: Religious Agency or Secular Autonomy?* By Afia S. Zia, *Revolutionary Feminisms: Conversations on Collective Action and Radical Thought* by Brenna Bhandar and Rafeef Ziadah, *Rhetoric and Reform, Feminism among Indian Muslims: 1900-1940* by Ayesha Khan, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* by Saba Mahmood, *The Struggle for Hegemony in Pakistan: Fear, Desire and Revolutionary Horizons* by Dr. Aasim Sajjad Akhtar, *Women, Islam and the State* by Ayesha Jalal, and *The Women's Movement in Pakistan: Activism, Islam, and Democracy* by Ayesha Khan.

Apart from books, articles, research papers in journals and documents from websites were also consulted for collecting secondary data and organizing it to fulfill the objectives of the study. The researchers has also followed the hashtags on social media platforms dedicated to feminism in Pakistan as well as the interviews provided by the young feminists who are not actively involved in the organization body of feminist movement rather are active on social media and following the women rights campaigns and are active domestic sphere feminists.

8.3 Field work Plan

The field work for this study took one and a half month starting from mid of May to the end of June for interviewing two categories of feminists in particular. And during revise literature review for the study, I have talked with young people other than renowned feminists. The field work was organized as in person interviews as well as on digital media apps like Teams and Zoom for interviewing feminists who were residing at far off places and were not able to talk in person.

8.4 Qualitative Analysis

To analyze the collected research data, this study has picked thematic analysis method on the base of enquired information through interviews. The analysis is taken place in steps including familiarization of the data, coding data to generate themes. Afterwards the data is reviewed and defined which further leads to the presentation of information through themes to answer the research question of this particular study.

8.5 Ethical Concerns

The study adheres to ethical guidelines, ensuring participant's confidentiality, and informed consent. It also respects the potential emotional and psychological impacts that discussing feminist experiences in a conventional context like Pakistan might entail.

The research methodology for this research study follows feminist principles by centering feminist's experiences, embracing intersectionality, adopting an interpretive approach, and contextualizing findings within the broader social landscape. The next chapter will deal with the secondary data sources on the subject of post colonial feminism in Pakistan.

8. Organization of the study

This research consists of four parts.

The first part as discussed above is about the introduction to the topic giving a necessary background of what the study is all about. Furthermore, the objectives,

significance, limitations and organization of the study have also been discussed in the introduction of the topic. Additionally, this part of my thesis also discussed in detail about the relevant literature on the topic and research methodology. The literature review contains significant debates on feminism and the expression of feminism in online spaces throughout the globe. Research methodology discusses the design, sampling, techniques and methods employment of the research study. This section of the first part of my thesis explains how the research data was collected using primary and secondary sources for data collection. In this section, a detailed fieldwork plan is also included and explains which type of data analysis approach was used to analyze the data collected.

The second part of this thesis is based on chapter entitled “Theoretical framework”. This chapter gives theoretical insights, which includes the conceptualization and operationalization of certain concepts about the broader themes of the study. Moreover, the theoretical framework is constructed to give an understanding to the foundation of the study that will help in supporting and guiding the researcher for subsequent analysis of the research through relevant theoretical debates of feminist theorists in the literature

The third part of this thesis includes two chapters. One is the “*Post-colonial Feminism in Pakistan*” which is based on the recognition of feminism in Pakistan through history of movements, activism and theories on feminist discourse. The explanation is about the wave’s transformation of feminist struggle and the subjects of women rights according to the time and era of the generation. Furthermore, this chapter of my research makes an understanding about the cultural and institutional advocacy for women rights according to the mediums of different eras that were used to advocate for women rights and a call against patriarchy. Through historical thoughtfulness, I was able to generate an understanding about the online and digital space that is a medium of activism for women movements in contemporary Pakistan.

The second chapter of this section of my thesis is: “*Expression of Feminism in Online Spaces*”. This chapter includes the qualitative analysis of the data

collected through semi-structured open-ended interviews from organized feminists working with different organizational bodies as well as on multiple platforms in diversity. Additionally, it includes the narrative analysis of the interviews of the organized feminists who have shared their personal narratives, histories and perspectives regarding the subject matter under discussion. The data collected through interviews is analyzed thematically, by identifying recurring patterns, discourses and meanings within the narratives in this chapter.

The last part of this thesis is the *–Discussion–* and *–Conclusion–*. It is about the empirical findings as well as the analysis and contribution to the more significant debates on the literature of the expression of feminism in online spaces in Pakistan. By elaborating and analyzing the study findings as discussed in the second chapter of the third part, the discussion section will confirm or contradict an existing theory and explore the relevance and significance of this work. In conclusion, I have addressed the main research question by summarizing and reflecting on the research, and recommended the potentials of research on this topic.

CHAPTER ONE

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 Conceptualizing Cyber Feminism:

The definition of feminism has mutated over years as its understanding has evolved in terms of its defense and presence in online spaces (Williem and Tortajada, 2021). Feminism in online spaces involves applying feminist principles, ideologies, and activism to challenge gender equality, representation, and patriarchal norms in the digital realm. While understanding feminism in online spaces, cyber feminism is a fundamental concept to be defined. The two terms –Cyber” and –Feminism” coined together through the succession of events in recent times following history, ideology and evangelism. Therefore, –Cyberfeminism” is defined as a medium through which theorists, feminist artists, and activists attempt to attack patriarchal paradigms and view their media production in both criticizing their sexist structure and yet re-animating them for their own uses.

The digital paradigm is dealing with social media influencers including those who recognized them as young feminist’s influencers. According to Keller (2012), the aim of young influencers in online spaces is to give an expression about the understanding of feminism through blogs for their followers on any social media platforms and it is regarded as their participation in feminist movement. In addition, Warner (2002) illustrated that the blogs have share, liked and have comment sections where the followers can exchange their thoughts online and which can be recognized as emerging *‘counter-publics’*.

1.2 Voices of Marginalize Women

Feminist online spaces challenge post-feminism by incorporating diverse voices, addressing intersections of identities, and addressing discrimination, promoting a more inclusive and complex approach (Williem and Tortajada, 2021). In her book *‘All the Rebel Women: The rise of Fourth wave of Feminism’* Cochrane (2013) asserts that today’s feminist particularly the young feminists believe that social media and online spaces generates a space for the women on the margins to voice for their rights. The blogs culture and the proliferation of voices through *hashtags* and trends on social media platforms such as *YouTube, Twitter, Instagram* shows

that the expression of feminism in online space is multi-layered and is done differently in different times.

1.3 Current Themes in Feminist Media Studies

Examining the expression of feminism in online spaces globally, the themes that are prominent in literature are age, class and race and sexual identity. In the case of Pakistan, religion is also a major theme in the study of feminism and getting to know how about its expression in the online spaces. The diversity of expression in digital spaces regarding feminism revolves around these themes of feminism. The research argues of these themes with ‘age’ in particular as per the research question is addressing the argumentation on generation divide of feminists of different generations.

1.3.1 Age

Throughout the history of feminism, the question of age has been a matter of debate for the scholars, writers and activists. In the era of digitalization, age and feminism are linked to each other in online spaces and in the expression of feminism in public spaces. Winch, Littler, and Keller, (2016) argued that in present day, feminism is just like a ‘*cat fight*’ between women of different generations: old-fashioned feminist vs. modern media-savvy girls. The young feminists or the millennial often recognized as generation-z associates themselves with the third and fourth wave of feminism and their older counterparts are the ones who are from first and second wave of feminism. The conflict is among the generations but is often marked to the wave’s transformation of feminism owing to the type of advocacy it holds for women in respective wave. Although the differences in generations of feminism became overemphasized on ‘waves’, when in fact the difference is based on the forms of oppression (Henry, 2004). The difference also lies at the tools and medium for networking and activism used and adopted by millennial and old generation feminists. Schuster (2013) suggests from a research in New Zealand that the generation divide exists because of the way women of different times participates in feminism activism and activities: as the use of online spaces is only valuable for those who use it and active on

media platforms, whereas the rest remains alienated from the space of online medium of communication. Therefore, generation divide is relevant to be understood while studying and examining feminism of different waves.

In the context of Pakistan, the proposed research delves into the dynamic intersection of generational waves of feminism and their manifestation in online spaces. This intersection gives rise to intricate theoretical debates about the evolution of feminist activism, the transformative potential of digital platforms, and the interplay between generational perspectives.

The debate starts from the question of how the changing nature of feminism is reflected in various waves, each of which addresses different problems and objectives. The first and second waves, respectively, concentrated on patriarchy and suffrage. In the third wave, there was a shift toward online activism, using digital platforms to amplify voices from the margins. The emphasis of the fourth wave is on inclusivity and intersectionality. The key question is whether feminist advocacy on online platforms can remain constant or take on new forms. The question also points out at the feminist discourse and the struggle of all the feminists of different generations. Mohanty (1984) defined the category of women as *‘We Are All Sisters In Struggle’* which analyzed the assumption about the gender, class and culture of women on same an equal grounds on the bases of the struggle for their own rights: for instance in any given place feminism is defining the struggle of all women for all women. It examines how the internet has made it possible for women from various backgrounds to participate in discourse, question norms, and foster solidarity despite distance.

The transformative potential of digital platforms in influencing feminist discourse and mobilization is a crucial theoretical component. The study seeks to determine whether online spaces have helped democratize feminist activism by encouraging greater participation and amplifying the voices of historically marginalized groups. The theoretical debate around digitalization also points out towards the

recognition of influencers who have been using the online spaces for creating understanding and awareness about feminist discourse on one hand and: recognition in political spaces at broader level. Similar is the case with prominent political actors. The politics of recognition has evolved over time, with different theorists arguing for different understandings.

Taylor (1992) conceptualized modern identity, while (Honneth, 2003) suggests a moral theory of recognition achieved through political struggle and personhood. Nancy Fraser balances recognition with equality. The 2008 financial crisis fueled this debate, with liberals accusing populists of identity politics and universities sustaining a relativist ideology. Social media has transformed recognition, causing public actors to settle for varying reputations and feedback, while preparing against *'communicative capitalism'*. Additionally, The Impertinent cofounder Fatima Benomar, a Moroccan, believes that there is some competition among activists but that it is advantageous that the movement is decentralized because each woman can find the best group for herself. There aren't many open disputes between groups in online spaces.

The matter of concern on generation divide is also linked with the usage of the medium available for the time of activism for different generations of a society. Within the context of Pakistan, young feminists are doing on social media as per the demand of their times which is the time of digital technology. Whereas, their older-counter parts claimed to the usage of streets and roads to voice their concerns of feminist activism. This debate can also be linked with the west as young activists excel in network building, visual narratives, and unconventional action repertoires (Jouet, 2018). They create events and campaigns using digital media, resulting in per-formative activism. However, cyber-sexism has emerged due to digital feminism, raising concerns about feminist empowerment in Western societies.

The theoretical debate for this study is developed which is helpful for my research to investigate the digital age's impact on feminist interactions, young feminist's subjectivity, work, and disagreements. It is also useful in examining whether

online platforms used by feminists of different generations bridge or barrier generations. It also examines the online feminist movement's issues and struggles, examining whether narratives converge due to shared objectives or reveal conflicting opinions.

CHAPTER TWO

POST-COLONIAL FEMINISM IN PAKISTAN

Post-Colonial Feminism in Pakistan: Movements, Activism and Theories

2.1 Introduction

Feminist and women rights consciousness in Pakistan has shaped its structure of resistance according to the national and global reconstructions of power in the notions of world's economic and political systems like colonialism, dictatorship, and democracy (Saigol 2016). The women's struggle in general and feminism in particular has undergone significant transformation in Pakistan after its independence from the British colonial rule in 1947. In the annals of history, from early 20th century to the present day, women in Pakistan have fought for their rights by challenging the normative structure of society that was meant to subjugate women in all spheres of existence. Therefore, the notion of post-colonial feminism is encapsulated in the efforts of Pakistani women who challenged the social, institutional (includes family, education, politics, and economy), and cultural structures of colonial time period. Alongside resisting colonial narratives, Pakistani women also working on addressing the unique issues faced by Pakistani women in post-independence perspective.

This Chapter is about the post-colonial feminism in which I tried to trace it back on the notion of historical recognition of feminism in Pakistan on the basis of movements, activism and theories of feminism. Firstly, it is about the pre-partition notions of women participation in political movements for freedom from British colonizer in Indian Sub-Continent. It entails how women have participated in the public and political space of freedom fight while leaving the domestic sphere. It is a point which is useful for my research to translate through the feminists of older generations of post-partitioned Pakistan as an ideologue of activism on the streets with physical presence and energy. Secondly, it is about the ideas and themes on which post colonial feminist movement in Pakistan is focused. This focal point is described through waves of influence throughout the historical shifts of Pakistani society owing to the changes made in its institutional structures. Thirdly, I have tried to describe the debates on the discourse of movement feminism in Pakistan in its pre and post-partition genres. In the conclusion, I have tried to develop the

insights about my research study based on the current themes in feminist activism and its evolution through online space and digitalization.

2.2 Current status of women activists in Muslim world

Since feminism has begun, lack of going street protest does not mean activists have stopped. They planned to hold noisy protests and change society in different ways. The position and status of women is a hot topic in Muslim countries because to mobility. In South Asia, Africa, and the East, women's status is a hot topic. The 'woman question' is most discussed in Muslim-majority countries today. Discussion often centers on individual agency vs collective coherence. Countries like Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Turkey, Syria, Indonesia, Iran, and Pakistan have heated arguments about this topic. There is no unanimity in any of the Muslim countries or a massive Muslim globe. Gender discourse is one of the most divisive and controversial in Muslim majority countries. Women's issues are discussed in the media, academic conferences, mosques, parliament, and on the street every week. Muslim governments' internal conversation has much to offer the West, where Muslim women are typically debated with tunnel vision.

Numerical women activists practice Muslim and secular feminism worldwide. Most of them may not like being called feminists, yet their art depicts 'feminist consciousness' Most of their studies and publications have clearly taken positions on male domination, patriarchy, female subjugation, discrimination, and resistance to various anti-women behaviors and societal norms. Many Muslim women's activists worldwide don't use the term feminism because of its western roots. Even though they promote women's rights. Modern ideas and growth are changing the Muslim world. Most activists are European or American citizens of Muslim nations where they were born. Margot Badran (USA), Amina Wadud (USA), and others are western-born women's rights advocates.

Several prominent Muslim activists are included here. From Afghanistan, Jamila Afghani and Shukria Barakzai promote women's emancipation. The former is a women's rights activist and the latter a politician and journalist. She promotes

women's rights. AsmaBarlas, Farazana Bari, Farida Shaheed, Riffat Hassan, Mukhtaran Mai, AfiaShehrbanu Zia, and Malala Yousufzai are renowned Pakistani activists whose work has garnered international attention. They focus on women's education, rights, and empowerment. Some are politicians, researchers, journalists, and women's development advocates. (Finneman and Volz 2020)

Egyptian women activists who focus on women's issues include Leila Ahmed, Mona Eltahawy, a leading journalist and social activist who has written extensively on women's issues, Samira Ibrahim, AzzaKaram, and Nawal El Saadawi, known as the Arab Muslim world's Simone De Beauviour. Egyptian women's rights activists whose words and activity continue to influence others. Ziba Mir Hosseini, ShahlaHaeri, MahnazAfkhami, Zahra Eshraghi Khomeini, and ShirinEbadi are renowned Iranian women activists. They focus on women's rights, human rights, feminism, gender, and development. Some are legal anthropologists, scholars, politicians, and lawyers, but they participate in women's rights discussions. MusdahMulia (Indonesia), Fatima Mernissi (Morocco), HideyatSefkatliTuksal (Turkey), ZainabSalbi (Iraq), Lubna al Hussein (Sudan), and MohjaKahf (Syria) are some renowned Muslim women. Writing and other materials, these women activists struggle for women's rights and raise awareness. Secular or religious activists work for women's issues.

Women's rights activists today go beyond marches, rallies, and literature because, through social media, activists worldwide may now express their feelings and demands quickly and actively. While at home, social activists are sharing their message through social media. It helped them increase the number of activists and strengthen and influence their activism worldwide. Anyone who promotes bigotry or inhumanity is popular. Through these unfettered resources, many other social problems are also spreading rapidly in the name of liberty and freedom. Spreading rumors, bullying, inappropriate participation in others' lives, and interrupting youth sleep are additional benefits. Therefore, its favorable consequence is equally commendable. By disseminating trends and raising awareness, activists were able to suppress the state and its policies to address injustices.

Women, LGBT movements have grown in popularity in the 2010s due to anti-feminist comments in Turkey. “Me Too” was another 2017 global movement that highlighted concealed sexual harassment allegations against women. The second and third waves also rekindled feminist conflicts, but they concentrated on women opposing men's sexual assault. The #MeToo movement has sparked a national reckoning with workplace sexual assault and harassment in 2017. Human engagement, agreement, and unwillingness to join can destroy social structures and give them a life.

Due to foreign money and international projects, ‘project feminism’ has grown rapidly in Muslim nations. The combination of NGOs and government programs usually results in a new set of activities, with assistance from UNDP and EU projects. This topic divides modernists and traditionalists. When NGOs cooperate with international unions, the projects are for different gains. Women's rights are for women, not political or other advantages. Thus, these programs focus on issues and groups that meet funding agency requirements. These elements are limiting or advancing, making different causes and activists' efforts affective or less affective. (Higgins 2022)

2.3 Feminist History of Pakistan

2.3.1 Pre-Partition Notions of women Participation in Political Movements

The pre-partition era of Indian Sub-Continent marked a significant period of political upheaval for the nation as the women also participated in sought after liberation from British colonial rule. Throughout this time, women mobilization in public spaces remained within the ambit of religious political movements, such as *Khilafat Movement* and later the movement of liberation which has had provided a space for women to leave the domestic space of her existence and participate into the physical realm of society (Korson, Mumtaz and Shaheed 1989). Women like Fatima Jinnah and Begum Ra'ana Liaquat Ali Khan laid the foundations of feminist movement in Indian Sub-Continent through letting the women of those times to participate into the institution of politics. They access the women in the

domestic sphere and make them understand their worth for themselves and for the society at large.

2.3.2 History of Women Rights In Indian Sub-Continent

When the women's movement first began, colonialism in British India's history simultaneously reinforced tradition while introducing modernity. The effects of British colonial rule in India were shifted. On one hand, it promoted a secular culture while exposing Indians to alternative perspectives, political systems, and scientific knowledge. The colonial government, on the other hand, supported traditional cultures and religions, upholding religious law in private matters and secular law in public ones Saigol (2016). This dual strategy was clear in the fields of law. Indian law was anglicized by 1790, but individual religious laws that governed gender relations continued to exist. Despite modernization efforts, laws that subordinate women according to tradition and religion were not changed. Even women's inheritance rights recognized by religious law were hindered by British law. The 1937 Muslim Personal Law acknowledged Muslim women's inheritance rights, except for agricultural land due to an agreement between Punjab landowners and British authorities. This maintained and strengthened the public/private divide.

The emergence of organizations particularly for women, such as "*All India Women's Conference*" laid the foundation of the post-colonial feminist movement by emphasizing political participation of the women so that the women of that time can ask and fight for their basic rights of education and health. The Muslim women's movement emerged during the colonial period in India, where British education was imposed to cultivate a loyal class of Indians with British values. This led to a public/private division, with women safeguarding tradition while men engaged in commerce and politics. Educational reform movements mirrored this dichotomy, with leaders like *Sir Syed Ahmad Khan* who was supporting education for Muslim males but resisting Western values for women.

Debates over veiling emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, revealing nostalgia for past Muslim masculinity and linking veiling loss to male emasculation. However, Muslims displayed ambivalence regarding modernizing Muslim women. The "woman question" arose in 1886, with some advocating women's education but facing opposition. Initiatives like women's teacher training schools and curriculum development emerged, but Muslim education traditionally excluded women, undermining male control.

Educational reform gained traction in the early 20th century, with women's rights newspapers and schools emerging, despite male dominance. The movement led to increased female education by the 1920s, intertwined with preserving tradition while confronting colonial influence. Contrary to this, (Khan 2018) argued that the educational reforms for which women of sub-continent was subjected to advocate for, were justified on nationalist and religious grounds rather than a part of women rights. Between 1886 and 1917, a shift in women's roles and status occurred within Indian Muslim communities as a result of elite education. *Sir Muhammad Shafi*, a supporter of women's rights, was against veiling and in favor of inheritance. The *Anjuman-e-Khawateen-e-Islam*, founded in 1908, advocated for women's rights and provided assistance to destitute women.

Additionally, significant steps were taken with the All-India Muslim Ladies Conference in 1915 and the subsequent resolution against polygamy in 1917. *Begum Hasrat Mohani* led a delegation in 1917 to demand better education, health care, and equal voting rights for women. . As the institution of politics was handle by the majority of male politicians, and there was a little women space; and the utilization of women space was done to ensure the patriarchal hegemony. Through the institution of politics, reserved seats and voting rights were granted for strategic reasons, as women's votes were required to serve nationalist agendas (Saigol, 2016). These patriarchal struggles legitimized women's participation without violating home and family sanctity. Despite the support of the *Muslim League* and the *Indian National Congress*, colonial authorities denied women's voting rights in 1919.

2.3.3 Movements against Colonialism before Partition:

Women played an important role in the Pakistan Movement during the rise of anti-colonial nationalist movements in India. A women's section was formed within the Muslim League as their numbers grew. The Muslim League session in Lahore in 1940 was a watershed moment, with a large female attendance and subsequent processions for the Pakistan Movement. In 1942, Lady Maratab Ali commented that the time has come when the women in the domestic sphere came out and partici[ate in the politics (Quoted in *–One step back two steps forwards*)

Women protested the arrests of Muslim League leaders in 1940, defying traditional norms by participating in politics while wearing *burqas*. Their participation in street politics resulted in arrests and acts of defiance against colonial rule. Educated upper-class women actively participated in the nationalist struggle, founding the Muslim Girls Student Federation in 1941 and later helping to establish the Muslim League's women's sub-committee. Housewives' problems, food shortages, and women's inheritance were all addressed by the subcommittee. During the Bengal famine of 1943, Muslim League women organized relief efforts, increasing the acceptability of women's social and political activism.

Despite their contributions to the liberation movement, women's actions were frequently limited to traditional roles. Women's participation in relief efforts corresponded to their traditional care-giving roles, while veiling and segregation shielded them from male gazes (Mumtaz and Shaheed 1987). In 1946 elections, the Muslim League fielded two female candidates, and when the League was denied government formation, hundreds of women protested in Lahore. Due to increased activity, the colonial government banned the Muslim League National Guard. Pathan women from the North Western Frontier Province (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) marched unveiled for the first time in 1947, hoisting flags and forming radio stations to support the Civil Disobedience movement. Despite their significant contributions, women's rights struggles were frequently subsumed under the broader nationalist struggle. Male-dominated leadership frequently emphasized women's participation to boost numbers rather than empower them.

The nationalist movement provided a forum for women to question traditional gender roles, but it did not necessarily result in long-term empowerment, as post-independence challenges persist.

2.3.4 Pre-independence Feminist Writers

Writers throughout the British India wrote about women in more advanced and critical ways. Some famous feminist writers are:

1. *Kamini Roy* (1868-) was a feminist writer and a renowned educationist from Bengal in pre-partition times. She herself was one of the very earliest girls who have had received education. Her She got started when she was eight years old. Her initial collection of poems came out in 1889. It was commonly referred to as *Alo O Chhaya*. Her other notable works include *Mahasweta*, *Pundorik*, *Dwip O Dhup*, and others. She also wrote some amazing poems, including *Smritichihno*, *She Ki, Sukh*, *Era Jodi Jane*, and others.
2. *Ismat Chughtai* was a great critical Urdu feminist writer of the sub-continent. She was famous for her writings on girls having sex desire for the same sex which is commonly termed as *Gays* or *lesbians*. Her most inspirational writing was *Lihaaf* on which she was summoned against the court in 1944 for writing indecent and vulgar content on women.
3. *Saadat Hassan Manto* was a pre-independence Indian feminist critical writer who questioned societal norms, challenged stereotypes, and advocated for gender equality. His stories explored women's experiences, challenges, and aspirations while challenging patriarchy, emphasizing empathy, subverting stereotypes, depicting realities, highlighting gender injustice, giving voice to marginalized women, criticizing society, and humanizing women's experiences. Manto's work emphasized the importance of understanding women's stories beyond stereotypes, establishing his place in the literary landscape of his day. Rumi (2012) rightly observes that women characters in Manto's stories are repeatedly *–complex, and sometimes ambiguous metaphors of humanity*". His stories frequently focused on the lives of women who were marginalized, oppressed, or victimized as a result of patriarchal norms and expectations within the complex structures of society.

4. *Rashid Jahan* famously known as “*The Bad Girl of Urdu Literature*” was a famous feminist writer. Her writing was based on the bigger question of women bodies related to art, science and sexuality and was an iconoclastic writer who challenged oppressive societal structures. She was educated in Lucknow and New Delhi and was known for her transparent, ideologically oriented fiction. *Angare*, 1932, was a controversial anthology of ten short stories by young Muslim authors Rashid Jahan, SajjadZaheer, Ahmed Ali, and MahammuduJafar, paving the way for a new literary space() *Jahan* was a founding member of the Progressive Writers' Association and inspired *IsmatChughtai*, who later wrote about her bold and open-minded approach to writing.

Other feminist or women writers of the sub-continent are also mentioned in the writings and poetry available on the discourse on women. It includes names of Gaura Pant, KarishnaSobti, and Amrita Pritam.

2.4 Post-Partition struggles and Grassroots Activism

2.4.1 Feminist Activism in Early Pakistan

Saigol (2020) in her work *Feminism and the Women's Movement in Pakistan* argued that after its emergence as an independent state, Pakistan remained limited within the roots of bourgeoisie into the framework of feminist activism. Women leaders in Pakistan after independence, mostly from the ruling families, emphasized welfare and development campaigns. They concentrated on challenges like the rehabilitation of refugees, education, health, and creating sources of income for underprivileged women. These programs, which represented women as nurturing caregivers who supported less fortunate women, were acceptable within conservative patriarchal norms. Through legal reforms, advocates sought to uphold fundamental rights within families, but these changes did not challenge the patriarchal family structure's dominance over women's lives (Syed, 2019). As long as welfare and social issues were the main subjects the backlash was moderate.

2.4.2 Shift to Confrontational Activism in the 1980's

Each prior incarnation of feminism had a unique social, political, and historical setting, and the feminist challenges of each age emerged at specific times in local and global histories. The scars left by the bloody Partition were still fresh during the early years of Pakistan's establishment. Because this type of labor had social credibility within the traditional cultural environment, women activists concentrated on welfare issues including the rehabilitation of refugees.

In addition, Pakistan inherited several social problems from the pre-Partition era, including polygamy, purdah, child marriage, inheritance, divorce, and the right to education. Even within the confines of religion, many of the requests for social and legal reforms on these concerns were acceptable. Therefore, there was little concern that women would upset the status quo by demanding these improvements (Saigol 2016).

2.4.3 All Pakistan women's association

During the 1960s, there was a notable increase in the establishment of women's welfare and development organizations. However, it was the All Pakistan Women's Association (APWA) that emerged as the prominent representative of the women's movement in Pakistan during this period. The implementation of the Muslim Family Laws Ordinance, advocated by the All Pakistan Women's Association (APWA), demonstrated a limited intervention by the state inside the realm of personal affairs. This legislation imposed specific procedural constraints on the discretionary power of males to divorce, while also granting women certain entitlements pertaining to child custody and financial support. The frequent occurrence of minor modifications consistently sparked public debate, prompting religious leaders to vociferously advocate for the annulment of the regulation.

The method adopted by APWA was distinguished by two notable characteristics. Firstly, there was a strong emphasis on engaging in social welfare and development initiatives, namely in the areas of girls' education and income-generation activities. Secondly, APWA actively sought partnership with the state

in order to effectively pursue its objectives. The APWA refrained from adopting an explicitly political stance by abstaining from challenging the dictatorial regime. The aforementioned individual or entity did not cause any significant controversy or opposition from religious or political groups, and instead opted for a cautious approach. This was evident even in the face of Fatima Jinnah's solitary efforts to agitate against the dictatorial regime, despite her being a woman. The period of civilian administration under the Pakistan Peoples Party (1971-1977) witnessed the persistent engagement and joint efforts of women leaders in conjunction with the state in the pursuit of women's rights.(Khushbakht 2021)

2.4.4 Women action forum

The 1980s feminist movement and women's rights struggle, led by Women's Action Forum (WAF) in urban Sindh and *Sindhiani-Tehreek* in rural Sindh, were explicitly political. As both groups were created in the setting of a hyper-nationalist absolute dictatorship that relied on a particular religion for legitimacy, they continually questioned military control and religious interference in politics. WAF fought for a democratic, inclusive, plural, and secular state, while *Sindhiani-Tehreek* fought feudalism and patriarchy, restored democracy, and promoted federalism and province autonomy.

These movements break with the state-collaboration model. They opposed patriarchal dominance politically, religiously, and legally. Unlike the 1960s welfare and social uplift movements, 1980s women's battles were political movements based on democracy, basic rights, and sociopolitical change. These women movements couldn't afford to play it easy like their predecessors while confronting the authoritarian state. They held frequent street protests and demonstrations. They risked being assaulted, arrested, baton-charged, and threatened by the prevailing religious-military patriarchies.

The regime's fast adoption of discriminatory laws and anti-women actions forced WAF to reply quickly and repeatedly. The WAF focused on the public realm, where state machinery violently repressed everyone who opposed the regime. The

aggressive and intrusive rebuilding of the private sphere through tools like the *Hudood* Ordinances had to be challenged publicly through judicial actions, speeches, and street protests.

WAF had no time to reflect due to the dictatorship and its religious allies' rapid counterattack. Most of its founders were feminists and used a feminist lens to dismantle prevailing myths, but private life was restricted. WAF members recognized patriarchies write their rules on women's bodies. They also knew that patriarchies depend on the conventional family, which regulates the body and sexuality. They were continually fighting the state's religious interpretation of laws. WAF only opposed the overbearing state, but private conversations often covered body politics.

Internal factors contributed to hesitancy. WAF included numerous organizations and individuals with different views on religion, culture, and tradition. Diversity arose from the need for maximal people to fight a strong rule. Many WAF members were religious, conservative, and strongly rooted in traditional family structures, therefore they were reluctant to accept radical positions on the body, sexuality, and family. The WAF public agenda did not include discussions on the body, sexuality, and self-expression.

Ironically, although WAF members avoided public debates about the body and sexuality, the state and religious clergy focused on the woman's body—the need to conceal, cover, protect, and preserve it for its proper "owner." The state constantly mentioned sexuality (fornication, zina), the veil, and the four walls of the house to control the rebellious and possibly deadly female body capable of irredeemable transgression.(Saigol 2016)

2.5 Feminism 2.0

This is where new feminists differ from elder feminists and change the feminist landscape. New feminism retains many of the traditional critiques of the state, fundamentalism, and militarism and seeks equality and democracy, but it also reaffirms the personal and injects it into the political. *'My body, my will'*, it tells

patriarchy in despair. In sharp one-liners, the new young feminists reclaim their bodies, decry sexual harassment, seize public space, and attack the gender division of labor that underpins patriarchy. Their focus was mainly on the micro politics. This coincides with the third wave of feminism and was focused on the main subject of third wave.

The new feminism welcomes all classes, genders, faiths, ethnicities, and sects without prejudice. Young feminists are diverse, inclusive, and one. Leaders and followers are all leaders and followers. The communal non-hierarchical working style and unwillingness to accept money are comparable to WAF's and demonstrate continuity. However, the narrative about the body, sexuality, personal choices, and rights is new. Young ladies articulate what their grandmothers and moms could not.

They say what women have understood for millennia but couldn't utter. They broke patriarchal silences in the name of religion, tradition, and culture. They have broken down numerous false barriers, including the four moral walls that stifled them and their expression.

The criticism was fast, strong, and predicted. Women punched patriarchy where it hurt, causing masculine anxiety to rise. The self-proclaimed morality guardians, who previously avoided violence and inequity, have condemned the marching women in their television talk, newspaper columns, and foolish tweets. Feminists have faced child backlash before.

The marchers cannot be stopped by critics. Money hamper their path? The feminist movement's sustainability is questioned since young feminists don't accept corporate, government, or foreign support. However, the march's energy and passion will keep these activists moving into uncertain but thrilling futures.

March 8, 2019, International Women's Day, saw Aurat March get support, criticism, and everything in between. The public discourse that followed addressed critical questions regarding the marchers' issues and Pakistani women's position and status. (Taimur - Urdu 2020).

2.6 Waves of Influence

Feminism in Pakistan, like in many other parts of the world, has evolved through different waves, each characterized by distinct goals, strategies, and priorities. It's important to note that while the concept of feminist waves is widely recognized, the specific categorization of feminism in Pakistan might vary based on interpretation and historical context. Here is a general overview of the waves of feminism in Pakistan, along with references to global feminist waves:

2.6.1 First Wave of Feminism (Late 19th - Early 20th Century): The first wave of feminism in Pakistan, as in other parts of the world, focused on securing basic rights for women, such as the right to education and suffrage. Prominent Pakistani women, such as Begum Ra'ana Liaquat Ali Khan, played a role in advocating for women's rights during this period.

2.6.2 Second Wave of Feminism (1960s - 1980s): The second wave of feminism in Pakistan emerged in the 1960s and was influenced by global feminist movements. It focused on issues like reproductive rights, gender equality in the workplace, and challenging traditional gender roles. The Women's Action Forum (WAF), founded in 1981, played a significant role in advocating for women's rights and challenging discriminatory laws.

2.6.3 Third Wave of Feminism (1990s - Early 2000s): The third wave of feminism in Pakistan marked a shift towards more inclusive and diverse perspectives. It aimed to address the intersectionality of gender with other factors such as race, class, and sexuality. During this period, organizations like ShirkatGah and Aurat Foundation continued to work on women's empowerment and rights. (Rampton 2015)

2.6.4 Fourth Wave of Feminism (2000s - Present): The fourth wave of feminism is marked by the use of digital media and technology to advocate for gender equality and women's rights. Digitalization has transformed and changed every sphere of life from social to economic and political. It has challenged the already established cultural norms in many ways especially the gendered role and

access of females to communication and information. The advent of social media and digital platforms has revolutionized the feminist struggle, catalyzing a transformation in how issues of gender equality are understood, communicated, and mobilized. These technological tools have facilitated a global network of interconnected activists, allowing individuals from diverse backgrounds to engage, share experiences, and collectively raise their voices on a scale previously unimaginable.

Social media platforms have become virtual spaces where feminist discourse flourishes, enabling marginalized voices to challenge prevailing norms and demand change. The rapid dissemination of information and the power of viral campaigns have propelled feminist agendas into mainstream consciousness, shedding light on issues like gender-based violence, workplace discrimination, and body positivity. Furthermore, digital platforms have amplified intersectionality, highlighting the complex interplay of gender, race, class, and other identities, and fostering a more inclusive and dynamic feminist movement. As feminism evolves in this digital age, it harnesses the potential to reshape societal perceptions, challenge systemic inequalities, and forge a more equitable future.

2.7 Digital activism:

“There’s nothing that men fear more than the anger of any woman...”

*-Baroness Helena Kennedy, Women, Peace and Security Conference,
Binghamton University Keynote, 23/4/20*

Movements like #MeToo demonstrate the power of solidarity and collective digital action, but they also reveal that feminist activism is not a monolithic movement with a shared mission. The use of digital tools by activists has grown dramatically in the previous decade. From awareness, lobbying, and mass mobilization to action and reaction, activism has taken many forms. In

particular, women and girls of all ages have used the internet to promote and demand their rights. Covid-19 has seen the rise of digital activism in a unique era of worldwide virtual dependency and physical lockdowns and movement restrictions.

This online revolution is part of networked feminism, or cyber-feminism, which promotes and mobilizes women and girls worldwide using digital platforms. These activists are using the internet to capture feminist agendas' intersectionality, diversity, multi-laterality, and subtlety. For many, internet platforms are vital and developing spaces for activism and feminism. The digital generation of feminist human rights action is based on inclusivity, voice, empowerment, sisterhood, and engagement.

Digital activism empowers women and girls to connect, expand, and share their vision. Digital networks enable low-cost, fast, inclusive, and global campaigns. Feminists have led many digital initiatives with many triumphs. One of the most significant and pervasive digital initiatives of the previous decade was the #MeToo movement, established in 2006 by Bronx activist Tarana Burke to break her silence about sexual assault and create a platform for victims to get assistance. A decade later, in October 2017, the Harvey Weinstein claims campaign exploded. The campaign has spread to 85 nations from the North to the South and reshaped sexual harassment and assault discourses. The movement's legal and advocacy footprint has included all genders in the sexual harassment, assault, and consent debate. These activists are using the internet to capture feminist agendas' intersectionality, diversity, multi-laterality, and subtlety.

Digital activism galvanized change in the #MeToo movement, but its breadth and impact were varied everywhere. Critics say such advertisements hurt the battle for gender equality, rule of law, and eradicating gender-based violence. Some say that the movement lacks intersectionality, restricting the voice of youth and the global South and not completely understanding victim experiences. Such groups show the potential of solidarity and collective digital action, but they also show that female activism isn't a monolithic movement with a mission.

Digital activism has empowered many women worldwide and achieved great change, but it has also enabled global voyeurism and spectatorship, where digital citizens monitor, comment, and judge, inspiring prejudice, hatred, and violence. As internet activism has expanded, so has cyber-hatred, trolling, and bullying, which harm individuals and campaigns. Ferocious and widespread anti-feminist outbursts accompany feminist movements.

Digital activists must avoid a virtual vacuum that isolates them from activism. Wonderful grassroots activism is being done by bold people around the world whose stories are never told. Many marginalized and vulnerable individuals living in abject poverty and war lack digital access to highlight their condition and fight for their rights. In addition, 41% of the worldwide population lacks regular internet access, limiting the scope of digital activism efforts like #metoo. Not forgetting grassroots, physical activity in these areas is crucial to fighting for the rights of the most disadvantaged global citizens.

Such groups show the potential of solidarity and collective digital action, but they also show that female activism isn't a monolithic movement with a mission. Feminist digital activism shows the power of smart, driven, and passionate women who take on causes. However, more is needed to make this action sustainable and create a lifelong commitment to women and girls' rights. Digital campaigns must support grassroots causes, communities, and activism. Sustainable tactics that combine digital and non-digital platforms to promote women and girls' causes are powerful. Digital activism must capture activism's social physical fabric, which sustains it.

The twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action promotes gender equality in 2020. However, COVID-19 has worsened women's life in all ways. The women, peace, and security debate around COVID-19 emphasizes the need for collective effort to meet women and girls' diverse needs throughout the epidemic and beyond. UN Secretary-General AntónioGuterres said, "put women and girls at the centre of COVID-19 recovery efforts".

The female voice has never been more important in COVID-19 deliberations about women and girls. The pandemic has increased the relevance of internet channels for state accountability, visibility, connectivity, activism, solidarity, resistance, and action. Use such venues to ensure worldwide action and reaction to women and girls during and after this pandemic.(Higgins 2022)

2.8 Backlash on Aurat March:

It is through digital media that the different slogans raised by feminists which focused on micro-politics went so much viral that many people criticized and rejected these slogans on different digital spaces. Messages can be easily disseminated on social media but on the other hand reaction to these slogans is also very harsh and then you should face the trolling armies there. Like different banners with phrases like *MeraJism Meri Marzi*, *Happily Divorced*, *KhanaKhudGarmKaro*, *Bister Main GarmKarDoonGi*, and *Main Awara Main Bad Chalan*. In a tidal wave of online harassment and trolling, feminists and young Aurat March organizers received murder and rape threats and intense criticism from all sections in society, in print and electronic media. The offensive, filthy, and immoral slogans insulted Pakistani religious and cultural norms. However, feminists claimed that these posters revealed the frailty of patriarchal structures and paved the way for a new wave of feminism that finally addressed sexual assault, the division of labor, and oppression by family. They see the reaction as a sign of rising intolerance in a patriarchal society that oppresses women. These phrases were anchored in women's daily situations and focused on the specific to highlight the universal, criticizing systemic injustices in society.

Critics from the same angry society often voyeuristically critique women's rights, violence against women, sexual harassment, abuse, and public space. The term *MeraJism Meri Marzi* set off a morality discussion in the country because women's bodies are considered as sexual objects regardless of age, place, dress code, etc. Feminists used the slogan to celebrate women's agency and autonomy from unwelcome approaches. However, the opponents' perception of the slogan highlighted their sexuality biases and social tensions. (Yin and Sun 2021).This

design follows the Madonna-Whore complex: either the female body is sexualized and immoral or sanctified (like mothers). Reproductive health and rights are sexual for women, thus this encompasses them. The blurring of the binary drove remorse and humiliation to explode in wrath.

The unprecedented moral panic and violent reaction supports the claim that Aurat March has exposed deep-seated fears and major cracks in society, disclosing structural flaws to the public. Pakistani feminism has revived since the 1980s thanks to the Aurat March. Historians will remember the March as the successor of WAF protests. The March signifies a third wave of feminism focused on the body, sexuality, and private and structural sexism. Intersectionality, grassroots activism, and assertiveness that focuses on society and each person's position in the system rather than making particular demands via digital spaces from specific actors distinguish it from past eras.(Batool and Malik 2021).

Conclusion:

The feminist movement in Pakistan has traversed a dynamic and evolving path, mirroring global shifts while also addressing unique socio-political and cultural challenges specific to the nation. From the pre-partition era's early endeavors to challenge gender norms within the framework of nationalist movements to the confrontational activism of the 1980s that questioned both military rule and religious dominance, Pakistani women have persistently striven to dismantle patriarchal structures and secure their rights. The post-colonial feminist struggle has demonstrated resilience, adaptability, and a commitment to amplifying diverse voices, as exemplified by the emergence of the Women's Action Forum and the recent Feminism 2.0 movement.

Moreover, as the world entered the digital age, the feminist movement in Pakistan embraced the opportunities presented by social media and digital platforms. The fourth wave of feminism, characterized by its digital presence and engagement, has introduced a new dimension to the struggle for gender equality. Online spaces have become arenas for discourse, activism, and solidarity, enabling voices from

all walks of life to unite and advocate for change. This pivotal shift has been particularly influential in dismantling taboos surrounding issues such as body autonomy, sexuality, and personal choices.

Moving forward, the forthcoming data analysis chapter will provide a deeper exploration of the fourth wave and digital feminism in Pakistan. By delving into empirical evidence and qualitative data, we will gain a more comprehensive understanding of how online platforms have catalyzed social change, empowered marginalized voices, differentiate the feminists of different generations and the existing generation divide is affecting feminist movement itself. The chapter will offer insights into the impact of digitalization on feminist strategies, the dissemination of feminist discourse, and the creation of inclusive and diverse networks. By uncovering the nuances of this transformative era, we aim to contribute to a holistic comprehension of the ongoing evolution of feminism in Pakistan and its ongoing efforts to challenge patriarchal norms and secure equal rights for all.

CHAPTER 3

EXPRESSION OF FEMINISM IN ONLINE SPACES

This chapter is based on the analysis of the primary data collected through interviews on the subject of feminism in online spaces in Pakistan. The analysis of data is a process of transforming the data with the aim of discovering information, concluding the results and findings, with a general idea that can be mold into a specific set of ruled information which is called out as research. In the literature, there is an interpretation about generations of feminism in Pakistan that emphasizes the need for bridging the gap between older and younger feminists, fostering community and trust across generations, and collaborating with other social and political movements (Rehman 2019). This study examines the generation divide among feminists of different generations in Pakistan owing to the nature of activism going on in the online spaces.

Furthermore, the purpose of this study was to find out the perspective of both contemporary young feminists and their older counterparts regarding the influence of digital platforms on feminism. In addition, this research examined the organization of feminist activism in different generations on the bases of the platforms and tools used by them for promoting and voicing women rights.

In this chapter, I described the qualitative analysis of data gathered through open-ended interviews from feminists of different times and professions and also diverse in their approach towards feminism. It was done to learn about the expression of feminism in online spaces while taking an account of the experience of those feminist who have done their work without or a very little use of the digital technology.

By using the **Qualitative Thematic Methodology** under feminist research methods, I analyzed the data to get an in-depth view of what actually the data is saying. I am using the **“Expression of feminism in online spaces”** as comprehensive a comprehensive theme for the analysis of this particular study. The evolution of feminism, Contemporary feminism, Influence of digitalization, advocacy strategies, and personal contribution and reflections are the five **“Organizing Themes”** for the data analysis.

1. The sub-themes that emerged in the evolution of feminism are Definition, Engagement and Changes in Feminist Discourse over time.
2. The basic themes that emerged in Contemporary feminism are Impact of digitalization, unique aspects of digital feminism and the role of social media in building feminist militancy.
3. The themes under influence of digitalization are Transformation of communication and effects of digitalization on resistance.
4. Advocacy strategies deal with sub-themes like Feminist Lobbying, Visibility and connectivity, and gaps within digital feminism.
5. The basic themes that emerged out of personal contributions and reflections are observations, involvement and insights on opportunities in contemporary feminism.

Expression of Feminism in Online Spaces (Main Theme)

1. Evolution of Feminism

- Personal definition of feminism
- Historical knowledge on feminism

2. Contemporary Feminist Activism

- Critique
- Changes in Feminist Discourse

3. Influence of Digitalization

- Shaping Political Landscape
- Engagement and Mobilization

4. Strategies of advocacy

- Lobbying in Political Circles
- Field work
- Gaps in Digital Feminism

5. Personal Contributions and Reflections

- Observation on changes brought by digitalization
- Insights on Contemporary feminism
- Involvement and Contribution

3.1 Organizing Themes:

The five organizing themes for this study which are mentioned above are did emerge from the data because I have used a deductive approach in thematic analysis and proceed the data collection with some preconceived themes based on my theoretical framework and existing knowledge obtained through a literature review about feminism advocacy in online spaces within Pakistan.

3.1.1 Evolution of Feminism

Evolution of feminism entails into the dynamics of time and space that has shaped feminism. Typically the evolution defines the waves of feminism according to which all the waves were having different subjects they deal with. The first, second, third and fourth waves of feminism in Pakistan are also having differences in their dimension of advocacy. And the feminists of these waves also have different definitions of feminism according to their own perception.

3.1.1.1 Personal Definition of Feminism

All of my respondents are well recognized feminists and almost all of them are having knowledge about the history and current changes made to feminism. While defining feminism, all of them have mentioned some common attributes and features of feminism on which it is defined globally and in Pakistani context owing to the nature of Pakistan's social and institutional settings.

The in-depth examination of the definitions provides a nuanced perspective of feminists on feminism in Pakistan. Most of the respondent's point of view emphasizes the movement's fundamental goal: eradicating patriarchal norms as well as the systemic foundations of oppression, such as political economy, class hierarchies, capitalism, and state violence. The emphasis of feminists on an intersectional approach towards feminism points out the recognition that individual experiences are shaped by a variety of identities, fostering a better understanding of how various kinds of oppression intersect.

Furthermore, another point that the respondents made is that: recognizing women's struggles in both private and public spaces reinforces the notion that feminism extends beyond the domestic sphere. Furthermore, the definitions added that addressing the co-optation of feminism by capitalism and imperialism critically raises awareness of the potential for social movements to be manipulated for political and economic ends. The responses of academics points out that feminism's academic depth deals with both theoretical conceptualizations and practical action for change. Renowned feminist and left-wing politician Ismat Raza Shahjahan expressed her thoughts on how she defines feminism:

“In my perspective as a socialist feminist: feminism is the ideology to confiscate with Patriarchy and its material base like political economy, class system, capitalism, state violence and universal rule. The struggle of a woman against all the acts that makes her oppressed on the basis of gender, class, nation, subjugated religion, starting from its home to social spaces where she exists is feminism. In my opinion, feminism is so defined in liberalist perspective in the written discourse of feminism in Pakistan. And feminism in Pakistan was used for the growth of capitalism and fulfills imperial interests”. (Raza, Ismat, Interview June, 2023).

As an academic, Dr. Fatimah Ehsaan describes feminism as:

“The modern notions of feminism in contemporary Pakistan are now included in the question on the basis of “economy of attention”. As per my understanding, this means that the representation in the feminist movement in Pakistan on a bigger stage is in the hands of elite and middle class. This is because of the levels of access to the question of economics and political participation of the class entities of Pakistani society. Furthermore, the working class representation is somehow missing in feminist expression in Pakistan. If it is presented in any form, it is done through any other

authoritative class group of organization". (Dr. Ehsaan Fatima, Interview June, 2023)

As a young feminist Sadia Khatri, who claimed to be a feminist of third wave of feminism in Pakistan described feminism as

"I define feminism as intersectional movement of equality of not just gender but also class, ability, religion and the ways that you think affect gender". How identities influence gender". (Khatri, Sadia, Interview May, 2023)

As a doctor and a left-wing women right activist, Dr. Alia Haider sees feminism

"When we talk about the existence of women in terms of their rights, without mentioning class, caste, and ethnicity or any other boundary that limits the socialization of women, I consider it feminism". (Dr. Haider, Alia, Interview June, 2023)

Nida Mushtaq has given a relatively different definition of feminism. She explained it in the terms of self reflexivity and one's own awareness regarding the subject of being a woman, or a feminist. Her definition of feminism is as follows:

"Several things are there that how I define feminism. Feminism for me is how the system around you, is functioning in favor of women. And feminism for me is that how much aware we are and how we challenge existing protocols". (Mushtaq, Nida July, 2023)

Being social media active person and young feminists who have worked with organizational bodies of women rights, Zaighum Abbass and Faryal Rashid describes feminism on the socio-economic status it holds for women. According to them:

“Feminism is a movement for the social, political and economic rights of women at par with men”. (Abbass, Zaighum, Interview July, 2023)

“Feminism truly brings about equality, socialism, re-distribution of wealth and a fight of women against capitalism”. (Rashid, Faryal, Interview July, 2023)

My personal development through various feminist ideologies indicates openness to connecting with various theoretical frameworks. The notion of feminism as a path to personal freedom through self-reflection and identity exploration, adds a reflective dimension to the conversation. The definitions presented are consistent with broader feminist goals of gender equality and empowerment. This analysis provided a comprehensive understanding of feminism. Now that we have demonstrated the different defining features of feminism by our respondent feminists, the following basic theme, **–Historical Knowledge on Feminism–** will go further in detail.

3.1.1.2 Historical knowledge on Feminism

The historical knowledge on feminism is particularly related to the respondent’s knowledge on feminism through reading, writing, and based on practical work have done or doing for women rights. The research data showed that, the old generation feminists or those who have been serving for women rights for a long time have deep knowledge about the history of feminism in the context of Pakistan and overall features of feminism present in the literature available on feminism.

According to the conversation with six of my respondents, among which three were renowned feminists and three were young feminists, the knowledge about history is crucial for women rights activists to understand the struggle of women of all generations of women in Pakistan as per the response of old feminists. And the youngster is more concerned towards the contemporary issues based knowledge.

Nasreen Azhar talked about her knowledge about feminism in Pakistan as follows:

“My knowledge of feminism as a movement is entirely based on the practical work I have done for organizations like Women Action Forum creation and mobilization of the causes it was made for. The reason behind the creation of this forum was to protect gender rights against the state brutality. That was the time when Gen. Zia passed the laws for Punishments of whipping, amputation and stoning to death. Before there, was a tolerant society and was much better for the women of that generation.

Gen. Zia passed the codes of conduct for women where dress codes and other social mobility and representation of women were controlled and monitor by the state. Women were restricted to participate in music, press and were not allowed to be presented in the foreign sector. The Zia government passed a bill named “Hudood Ordinance” which was a serious threat to the existence of women under patriarchal controls in Pakistan”. (Azhar, Nasreen, Interview June, 2023)

Talking about *Hudood ordinance*, she told the entire story about how the organization she was working with dealt with the violence done against women within the category of *Hudood ordinance* as follows:

“In 1979 a women named Fehmida was charged under Hudood ordinance for marrying Allah Bux when her family filed a case for her abduction at the hands of Allah Bux. The couple was charged with fornication despite being married. Allah Bux was sentenced to death by stoning and Fehmida was awarded hundred stripes in public. There comes a reaction against this couple’s

punishment as we were also shocked. Our respected members of WAF called a meeting and invited members of APWAW, and our club members along with other women who opposed the punishment by stating that it is against the laws of humanity. In that meeting we proposed a demand charter of five points in which we wanted to express our views. We wanted to support Women University where there is no segregation.”

Ismat Raza Shahjahan also addressed the question on the knowledge based activism of a feminist in a very different context. She said:

“People who consider them feminists by any means get the vibes from everywhere. They have thoughts and knowledge about liberal, social and political notions of feminism. Most of the time they find themselves lost among all these notions of advocating for women rights. That was not the case with us when we were tending to involve ourselves for women rights advocacy.

We were actively involved in going through the literature on feminism as a global movement. Beside this, as per my belongings from a tribal agency of Pakistan, I continued adding my thoughts on the issues that women were dealing with in front of me and in the place I was residing. It is something that differentiates the activism of diverse regions when you see how globally feminism differentiates from the feminism you know and act for”. (Raza Shahjahan, Interview June, 2023)

On the other, a famous Pakistani feminist and writer, Afia S. Zia wrote many books on feminism and its notions and events history with respect to different subjects of feminism throughout the history of Pakistan. Therefore, the entire literature is available in digital platforms and in booklets form as well.

While talking with young feminists, who are actively involved in the online spaces as well as working with different human rights organizations, the responses shows that they do have some perks of knowledge about the history of feminism in Pakistan but entirely hat they remember are the features of feminism they consider Pakistani feminism have throughout the history.

Zaigham Abbass discussed the ideologies on which Pakistani contemporary feminism is based on:

“Feminism in Pakistan is influenced by liberal ideologues that aim at the individual liberty and cultural liberation of women. It is less concerned with the economic aspects of women emancipation and has therefore remained ineffective in addressing the class question of women.” (Abbass, Zaigham, Interview July, 2023)

Talking about her knowledge about feminism and the features she consider are prominent in her feminist advocacy, Nida Mushtaq argued upon her own experiences.

“I didn’t come to aware with feminism from some intellectual platform, I came aware with feminism from my own experiences as a girl, as a woman in Pakistan. I did not get into this in a way like yeah it must be true or it’s a cool thing to do, so let’s do it. It is very much about that what is happening in my everyday life, what am I noticing and experiencing, what is being difficult for me or my mother or my sisters or other women around me. It is more about connecting the dots of my everyday life. So, I am into feminism due to my own experience and not because of seeing others doing it. And thinking as a feminist was the time when I was in college.”(Mushtaq, Nida, June 2023)

As a young feminist and social media person, Faryal Rashid also inclined towards feminism in her college days just like Nida Mushtaq. She says:

“My inclination towards feminism was in my college days. Specifically, I have no previous knowledge of feminism. What I have read is through newspaper, articles and blogs on social media platforms.” (Rashid, Faryal, Interview July, 2023)

Dr. Alia Haider also discussed how she perceived the notion of feminism in terms of history of Pakistan while being a part of a minority community *Hazara* in Balochistan. She stated:

“Regardless of history of feminism, the question on the existence of women is constant throughout the history of Pakistan. I am a socialist feminist, and my struggle is based on the struggle of minority’s communities. It is something that highlights the struggle of minorities of state defines policies that are not in the favor of all the minorities in Pakistan. I perceived women a target through all the historical channels of societies. The question is on the existence of women which is being narrated in different times of history. During your own struggle you make your own history.”(Haider, Alia, Interview July, 2023)

Overall, these responses demonstrate a complex interplay between historical knowledge and contemporary activism. While older generation feminists emphasize the importance of understanding the history of women's struggles in order to advocate effectively, the younger generation's activism is often motivated by immediate experiences and digital resources. The ideological divide within the Pakistani feminist movement is also visible, with *Zaigham Abbass* emphasizing the dominance of liberal ideologies and the importance of addressing economic aspects for true emancipation. Through the data of the respondents, I analyzed the various perspectives and methods by which feminism is understood, practiced, and advanced in Pakistan across generations.

3.2.1 Contemporary Feminist Activism

Feminism in Pakistan since 2018 has marked major shifts which symbolizes its departure from previous articulations of feminist theory and practice (Saigol, 2020). It is marked by digital feminism as most of the activism by young feminists is being done in the online spaces using social media and digital platforms. When I ask my respondents about how they look at the contemporary feminist activism, the data revealed the basic themes of “critique on online spaces of activism” and the “changes in the feminist discourse”.

3.2.1.1 Critique

Eight of my respondents, talk about the evolution of feminism. Three of them argues in the context of online space is influenced by populism and there lies a gap in addressing the issue it is meant to deal with. Fatima Ehsaan viewed class as a major representative entity in today's feminism with its access and participation in the institution of politics and economy of Pakistani Society. She stated:

–The modern notions of feminism in contemporary Pakistan are now included in the question on the basis of “economy of attention”. As per my understanding, this means that the representation in the feminist movement in Pakistan on a bigger stage is in the hands of elite and middle class.

This is because of the levels of access to the question of economics and political participation of the class entities of Pakistani society. Furthermore, the working class representation is somehow missing in feminist expression in Pakistan. If it is presented in any form, it is done through any other authoritative class group of organization.” (Ehsaan, Fatima, Interview, July 2023).

Ismat Raza Shahjahan addresses the question while taking an account of the evolution of feminism a comparison between two entities of social and political settings. She stated that the struggle to fir into the political spaces to fight for someone's right have different interpretations for those having a continuous struggle throughout their participation into these matters and for those who joins these spaces through other platforms like social media. She has given a comprehensive analysis of what she thinks of present day feminism.

“It takes a lot of time and energy and those who come through political movements and have done any kind of political work while being a part of any political movements are clearer about the kinds of politics. They know socialism, liberalism, feminism, class struggle, national independence, themes of society in specific, the political spectrum, history and what kind of protests has been done before. Therefore, what I feel is those who have been a part of politics in their life have political understanding for sure. Some people come in this struggle through

social media after having an understanding about feminism through academia. They know about the manifestos of political parties about the grounds on which they operate”.

Further she added:

“Those who are the leftist scholars are the ones who can easily fit in to the political spaces without any immense struggle. And there is a notion of fame attached to the social media platforms from where people got famous in just one night. Therefore, it is difficult to work with those people who have already got fame through social media. Because there are a lot of people working in a party on invisible (passive) grounds therefore the party always looks at them with respect and dignity. But when they came by this attitude of fame, then the organization does not grant them the fame they have got from the social media.”
(Raza, Ismat Interview, June 2023)

Her critique is entirely on the feminists owing to the comparison between different generations and those who operate politically on different mediums.

Dr. Saad also agrees with the points highlighted by Ismat Raza as he argues that differences in feminist’s advocacy lies on the ways people think off feminism and how it is effective for the society. He added:

“What I feel as academic, youngsters who are participating in the feminist movements like Aurat March and other protests, they are mostly those who are from disciplines like gender studies, peace and conflict studies and other social sciences disciplines in academia. When I was a student, most of the protests were handled by renowned feminists on streets and was a proper management with their participation done through parties and platforms for which they were working.

He further added:

“In our time it was difficult to participate in these protests, but the nature of protest was effective. Today, it is easy to participate in feminist movement and activism through digital platforms. It is all about the nature of access”.

Zaighum Abbass gave an entirely different expression while arguing about the contemporary feminist activism in Pakistan. He said:

“Present day Feminist activism is generally centered on liberal principles that has eluded collective liberation and is more centered on individual liberation.”

Dr. Alia Haider argued on the contemporary feminism in Pakistan as:

“We cannot differentiate what is good feminism of what time. The feminist of first wave in Pakistan were not privileged enough to sensitize this issue on digital platforms. The problem of generations is that they do not understand the sensitivity of subject of feminism in different times. Even feminists of different generations do not come on vital grounds; they just fight on online spaces. This is because the young feminist lag ground activism, whereas their old counterparts have history of ground activism”.

Faryal Rashid agrees with Alia Haider by arguing in the context of shirking down of the space for women in present day feminism in comparison to the previous waves of feminism. She argues that:

“Actually the present day feminist activism is mostly done in the online spaces, which is resulted in the clamp down for present day feminism. The number of women on the streets and protest ground is shrinking, which is also a symptom of activism in the digital space. ”

Sadia Khatri critiques on today's feminism while comparing it with the feminist activism of 80's era in Pakistan. She argues:

“ . If we talk about feminist struggle in Pakistan when it becomes visible is I think probably starts in the 80’s. The feminism of the decade of 80’s was associated with anti-rational agenda, And it was done on the streets.

If we compare that time with today’s practice, walking on the streets and protesting on roads is not that much powerful and innovative as it was in the 80’s. It is because the time has changed, , The activism is on social media and there is advancement in every field of social life. Where power is challenged, everything is shattered because they have those resources to minimize protests.”

As a feminist of older generation of feminism in Pakistan, a Nareen Azhar point out the features on which the effectiveness of contemporary feminism is challenged is:

–In our times, we went to the streets for protests against gender violence without social media. Although social media mobilized Pakistani women but still there is a need for protests outside the world of social media.

Social media agents who do online activism demonstrate their key concerns which are insufficient. Young activists and feminists need to understand this fact that excessive usage of social media for women advocacy has made them slow and steady”.

In analyzing these criticisms, it is critical to recognize that the fourth wave of feminism has made significant progress in raising awareness about gender inequality, fostering dialogue, and creating momentum for change. These criticisms, however, highlight areas where the movement can expand and adapt to become more inclusive, impactful, and effective. Modern feminists can work to build a stronger, more equitable movement that resonates with a diverse range of women and addresses the complexities of our interconnected world by acknowledging and addressing these limitations.

While analyzing the data, I look at the perspectives and critiques of contemporary feminism in Pakistan based on interviews with a variety of Feminist participants. According to the data, the shift to digital spaces and online activism is a common thread in the fourth wave of feminism. Key themes include the impact and limitations of online activism, generational disparities in engagement, and evolving forms of political participation. The critiques of feminists addressed the potential superficiality in online activism, gaps in intersectional representation, and feminism's commodification. Older feminists emphasize the efficacy of historical protests, while the rise of online activism necessitates a re-evaluation of protest methods. The critique highlights the complexities of digital platforms, historical comparisons, intersectional representation, and shifts in accountability. It captures the tensions and possibilities of the evolving feminist movement as it navigates modernity, historical context, and substantive societal change.

3.2.1.2 Changes in Feminist Discourse

According to the responses, the data emphasized how important television and broadcasting are in shaping public perceptions and advocacy group preferences. According to Sadia Khatri, people with liberal tendencies tend to identify with media-portrayed groups, such as feminists. The recommendation among young feminists using social media to shift from individualism to collectivism highlights the potential for unified action. She argues:

“Television and its broadcasting is a single source from where people feel that we need to join any structural advocacy group whom they consider is working according to their understanding. They monitor people, their organization and consider them working on fine grounds. These people do have liberal tendencies to think and rethink about discourses of feminism. What I recommend young people who are feminists by nature and are actively involved in social media platforms, get out of individualism and look for collectivism”.
(Khatri, Sadia, Interview, May, 2023)

Two of my respondents highlighted the gap between feminist literature and public awareness, emphasizing the need for improved communication strategies. It is acknowledged that ideologies, particularly feminism, are dynamic, with references to historical progress and adaptability to changing circumstances. They said:

“There is a discourse of feminist material with articles and publications that are not read by most of the people about whom it is been written”. (Nasreen Azhar, Interview June, 2023).

Furthermore,

“Ideologies whether progressive or regressive are always subject to change. No discourse is static and as such they have to respond to the emerging phenomenon and circumstances of real world. Feminist discourse has gone through a lot of changes. Starting from Suffragettes, it has made a lot of progress in some area”.

Additionally, Abbass, Zahighum added:

The rise of new means of communication has also changed the feminist discourse as well. New vocabularies have emerged that grasp the issues with more clarity that have contributed to the better understanding of feminism in itself. (Abbass, Zaighum, Interview July, 2023)

Overall, the responses demonstrate the impact of media, the value of collaborative efforts, and the evolving nature of feminist discourse.

3.3.1 Influence Of Digitalization

Digitalization has influenced both the contemporary young feminists and their older-counterparts. When I asked my respondents about the influence of digitalization, the data revealed basic themes of “Shaping political landscape” and “Engagement and mobilization”

3.3.1.1 Shaping Political Landscape

Talking about the political landscape of Pakistan, Zaighum Abbass added:

“Online spaces have become very important and sometimes leading voice than electronic and print media in Pakistan. The online spaces have become an effective tool of raising voice and collective action”. (Abbass, Zaighum, Interview July, 2023).

Adding her response to the question addressing the changes made in the politics of Pakistan, Nasreen Azhar added:

“Woman has been excluded from politics of Pakistan. That scholarship which is hegemonic that doesn't acknowledge that these women should mobilize. Women were excluded from politics. Transgenders were kept out of politics. Now they are on roads. And then you see that women are present in other political grounds. So its not like that women has no engagement. Condition is that, what is the definition of feminism. From which perspective you are looking at it. You change your perspective; you will see women from Pakistan's population struggling in political things”

“In our times, we went to the streets for protests against gender violence without social media. Although social media mobilized Pakistani women but still there is a need for protests outside the world of social media. Shifting the politics and women rights activism from public spaces to the online spaces has changed the entire landscape of political struggle in the contemporary times.” (Azhar, Nasreen Interview, June, 2023).

From the above discussion, it is concluded that Pakistan's political landscape has shifted significantly, with online spaces now outperforming traditional media in terms of voicing opinions and encouraging collective action. This shift has resulted in increased political participation by previously marginalized groups such as women and transgender people. While social media has mobilized

women's rights activism, Nasreen Azhar emphasizes the importance of physical protests. This shift blurs the distinction between virtual and public activism, fundamentally altering Pakistan's political struggle.

3.3.1.2 Engagement and Mobilization

Through the responses, it is highlighted that the utilization of technology in contemporary feminist activism is increasing engagement and influencing opinions which is reflecting the changing landscape of feminist discourse in the digital age.

Abbass's response highlights digital activism's role in engaging with feminism through educational content, raising awareness, and fostering unity among feminists. However, the response shows that digital spaces can amplify opinions, leading to polarized debates. Digital activism has increased feminism's visibility in public discourse. He added:

“Digital activism generates digital engagement via creation of content that educates people on feminism. It has increases solidarities as well as polarization and made the issue more visible in public discourse”. (Abbass, aighum, Interview July, 2023).

Mushtaq, Nida's response provides insights into the historical evolution of feminist activism that has changed the political background of Feminism in Pakistan. She stated:

“Women started participating in politics and feminism. At that time, street work was very important because at that time there wasn't any other medium to spread your word. So, door to door campaigns, corner meetings, walks for rights was very important to spread the word of feminism. People were dedicated. Street power mattered a lot at that time. Even government used to listen to protests and take necessary actions in favor. But now a day's street struggle has been very limited and whatever of it is left, that doesn't get much attention. Because people

are habitual of media and they give their time to it, get influenced from it.” (Mushtaq, Nida, Interview July, 2023).

Faryal statement emphasizes the transformative role of technology and its impact on feminism. According to her:

“With the advent of technology, and the expression of feminism in online spaces, the engagement with the masses is increasing. The opinions are changing” (Rashid, Faryal, Interview July, 2023).

From the above discussion I concluded that, technology has a multifaceted impact on feminism and activism. Digital activism has been shown to educate and engage people while also exposing polarization challenges. It shows that from traditional street struggles to modern media influence, feminist activism in Pakistan has evolved.

3.4.1 Strategies of advocacy

Strategies of advocacy refers to the ways in which different sort of activism for women rights is done by adopting different mediums and tools of communication in different times. When I asked my respondents about their view regarding about how they perform in the field of activism as a feminist, the data revealed the basic themes –“Lobbying in political circles”, –“Field work” and –“Gaps in digital feminism”.

3.4.1.1 Lobbying in Political Circles

According to my respondents about the question I ask them about how they lobby in political circles, to get an idea about how different generations of feminism engage with people. The purpose was to connect to themes which made feminists of different generations ideologues of diverse mobilization.

“I lobby in political circles by reaching out to people who hold the same views about feminism. As a result, on collective basis, we are able to amplifying voices of each other”. (Abbass, Zaighum, Interview July, 2023)

“As an artist, I use to do street art and paintings with sometimes written material related to that. I get responses from others about my street paintings. In such scenario if I use the phrase that I am promoting feminism which may make some people offended, so by doing this we will place our work in background and we might get caught in an unnecessary augment, instead we can say that we are promoting Art, bringing art out of galleries to streets, making our city beautiful, or you can say a lot of things according to situation and then you can start the conversations with the society in which you can unopened the door to any of institution to make exchange the voice. As it is the matter of lobbying in political circles, then I must say that the existence of women itself is a matter of politics”. (Mushtaq, Nida, Interview July, 2023)

“Now thing you are addressing as field work, we call it organizing. So you’re this question what is the importance of field work and lobbying in feminist campaign. It’s clear that organizing, lobbying is part of our daily schedule which means one cannot do politics alone. Neither it can be done till a collective organized struggle of people isn’t formed, you cannot gain. You cannot give it a push. If you don’t do the organizing you cannot do it alone. Alone you can get a little fame on social media”. (Raza, Ismat, Interview June, 2023)

The data from the interviews with respondents reveals distinct strategies used by different generations of feminists in engaging with political circles. Abbass' approach is one of collective action, emphasizing the power of like-minded individuals banding together to amplify feminist voices in the political sphere. This approach appears to be based on a sense of solidarity and shared values, and it represents a type of ideological mobilization. Nida's viewpoint, on the other hand, exemplifies a more nuanced and strategic approach. Nida navigates potential backlash by framing the conversation in terms of promoting art and beautifying the city through the incorporation of feminist messages into art and street painting. This approach demonstrates an understanding of the importance of

tailoring messaging to different audiences, adapting feminist ideals to fit within larger societal narrative.

3.4.1.2 Field work

The data revealed that field work is done in Pakistan but is not enough. The online medium has reduced the physical mobility of feminists. While the older generation of feminists believe that mobility in public spaces is necessary to get in touch with the masses.

Nasreen Azhar gave a detailed analysis about the field work and its importance for today's feminism while relating it to the struggle of feminists of her time. She added:

“Field work and organizational work to achieve something is very important. What I feel is that we have done a lot of field work in our times, but now this online activism has reduced the organizational work. Young activists and feminists need to understand this fact that excessive usage of social media for women advocacy has made them slow and steady. This needs to be organized and managed. Arrange public meetings, see each other in person and discuss ideas.

“Include all those women who are actively involved in the social media and online spaces but hesitate to participate in public spheres of feminist struggle. At least young feminist can engage with independent women (no involvement with any organizational body) for discussions and making strategies instead of involving them in public spheres were renowned feminists scrolling in.” (Azhar, Nasreen, Interview June, 2023)

“Fieldwork is important because it brings more intersectional issues to the fore”. (Abbass, Zaighum, Interview July, 2023)

–Field work is very essential for any sort of political or social campaign. It creates engagement which is very important. Like I have observed in Aurat March, there is a field work of one month in which the feminists organize the “March” activities for the day it is going to happen. But, what I feel is field

work of just one month isn't enough. we as feminists need to continue this organizational work throughout the year to make it sure that the task we have assigned to ourselves is worth making a difference in society. ”

Haider, Alia and Dr. Fatima agreed with Rashid, Faryal on the importance of field work. They added:

“What I feel is that in contemporary feminism, field work is not done enough. There is a need of consistency in the field work for feminism in Pakistan. There isn't a regular connectivity of the feminists with the masses. If we want to enhance feminism in Pakistan beyond class, caste and religion, we need to connect with the masses on regular basis. ” (Haider, Ali, Interview July, 2023)

“For the rights of women, I considered that field work is of vital importance. The contemporary feminist movement like Aurat March that held on 8th march should be continued throughout the year. There is not a day and date fixed for women advocacy”. (Ehsaan, Fatima, Interview July, 2023)

The perspectives of Pakistani feminists on the importance of field work in feminism reveal generational differences through the responses of feminists. Older feminists emphasize the importance of tangible, in-person activism and organization, while criticizing the limitations of online advocacy. They advocate for face-to-face interaction and group brainstorming. While younger feminists recognize the value of digital spaces, they emphasize the importance of consistent and sustained field work throughout the year. Both generations value intersectionality and the importance of addressing a wide range of issues. This reflects an evolving approach to feminism in Pakistan, with an acknowledgement of the benefits of both online and offline engagement strategies in navigating contemporary challenges.

3.4.1.3 Gaps in Digital Feminism

According to the responses, the comparison of generations of feminism in Pakistan revealed gaps

“If we compare it to previous eras or generations, we find that in 80’s women were not active in politics on a larger scale, so there wasn’t much activity about feminism. Then we moved to 90’s. Ways of politics changed. Women started participating in politics and feminism. At that time, street work was very important because at that time there wasn’t any other medium to spread your word. So, door to door campaigns, corner meetings, walks for rights was very important to spread the word of feminism. People were dedicated. Street power mattered a lot at that time.

Even government used to listen to protests and take necessary actions in favor. But now a day’s street struggle has been very limited and whatever of it is left, that doesn’t get much attention. Because people are habitual of media and they give their time to it, get influenced from it. Similarly, government on same media promises to agree on feminist demands and sometimes does nothing. This has created a gap in addressing the issues feminism is meant to deal with”. (Mushtaq, Nida, Interview July, 2023)

Abbass, Zaighum added in response to the question of gaps in today’s feminism. He said:

“Digital feminism is yet to address other intersectional issues such as class and race when it comes to issues of women”. (Abbass, Zaighum, Interview July, 2023)

The data highlights the evolution of feminist activism over time, from limited participation in the 1980s to increased political involvement and grassroots efforts in the 1990s. While street activism was dominant at the time, the rise of digital media has shifted the focus and government responsiveness. Despite its growing visibility, digital feminism faces challenges in addressing intersectional issues such as class and race. Furthermore, the evolution of strategies emphasizes the importance of long-term action and a balanced approach that bridges the gap between online activism and meaningful societal change.

3.5.1 Personal Contributions and Reflections

Personal contributions and reflections is the last theme of this entire analysis. When I asked my respondents about how they contributed in feminism according to their own time and how their struggle and contribution reflects them, observations, Insights and involvement were the three themes emerged out of the data.

3.5.1.1 Observation on changes brought by digitalization

According to my respondents,

“The way young people have grown and how they see feminism, look at you as you are doing thesis on feminism, from where your journey started, you are also looking at WAP and also on the previous things. And is your question about attention span of young people. That young people have short attention span and they want to do other, other and other things. This is true because the young generation and specifically whom we call millennium kids, who are born in social media age, have very short attention span. The thing attention given by nature is very sacred thing and young generation has lack of it. Because short attention given to something is not fruitful as compare to giving proper time to study, to analyze. Proper attention is very important thing. Social media has a major role in making attention span shorter in young generation.” (Ehsaan, Fatima, Interview July, 2023).

“Here people do not make connections to what is happening in their lives, they don't connect the dots. People are restricted to their surrounding such as media. Media dictates them and people accept it as it is. People simply don't think. If they are told that feminism is a bad thing and it will destroy their families, their culture”. (Mushtaq, Nida, Interview July, 2023)

In my analysis, both responses express concern about the impact of media, particularly social media, on the ability of the younger generation to engage deeply with complex topics and critically assess information. The respondent's responses emphasizes the importance of attention span and dedicated study, and

in comparison to the other response emphasizes the impact of media narratives on shaping people's perceptions and willingness to critically analyze information. These points of view indicate the need for thoughtful and nuanced approaches to engaging and educating young people about important societal issues such as feminism.

3.5.1.2 Insights on Contemporary feminism

According to the responses made by the feminists, following are their insights on contemporary feminism.

“On the basis of "economy of attention," modern notions of feminism in contemporary Pakistan are now included in the question. According to my understanding, this means that representation in Pakistan's feminist movement on a larger scale is in the hands of the elite and middle class. This is due to the class entities of Pakistani society's levels of access to economics and political participation. Furthermore, the working class is underrepresented in feminist expression in Pakistan. It is presented in any form by any other authoritative class group of organization”. (Ehsaan, Fatima, Interview July, 2023)

“In this era of digitalization, you cannot utilize “sarak” or the road as it was used by the previous generations for any kind of activism and protests. Because the state machinery is having all the resources of the digital world to monitor such sort of activities and whatever haunts it, will get in control by the law enforcing agencies and the state to stop it.

There is no choice available now. It is only Press Club where every sort of protest happens. It is a designated place for protests as like marriage halls which are utilized for marriage ceremonies. The chargedness of the protest that is a means for intervention is not obvious. Now I don't know how many protests are interventions now. A lot of protests are protocols and for writing and being published by media by articulating your demands and rights in demand. But the question is: Who listens to it? I don't think so the state is listening or the law making agencies are monitoring it. I know protest is also essential on community

level for visibility and it has a catharsis of protest when it is ongoing on the roads". (Khatri, Sadia, Interview June, 2023)

I analyzed from the responses that the difficulties that feminism and activism face in Pakistan are class disparities in representation and the shift in protest strategies as a result of digitalization. This theme is painting a complex picture of contemporary social change in the efforts of feminism as a movement.

3.5.1.3 Involvement and Contribution

My respondent Sadia Khatri represents the younger generation, which is influenced by global feminist ideas, empowered by education abroad, and emphasizes practical initiatives within Pakistan. She argues:

"I have done my under-graduation from America and there I learnt a lot about the ideas of feminism in my college and after returning back to Pakistan, I have started involving in organizing the ideas related to women spaces. But obviously they don't teach South Asian history over there. After coming back to Pakistan, I started learning about feminism. When we started Girls at Dhabbas", we created a group and through it we met other people. It is how I have started something practical for women space in Pakistan" (Khatri, Sadia, Interview June, 2023)

The older generation, as represented by Ismat Raza, emphasizes the historical significance of street protests as well as the shift in the landscape of activism as a result of digital platforms.

"In our times, we went to the streets for protests against gender violence without social media. Although social media mobilized Pakistani women but still there is a need for protests outside the world of social media. Shifting the politics and women rights activism from public spaces to the online spaces has change the entire landscape of political struggle in the contemporary times. We have done demonstrations against state brutality. We have done demonstrations and protests". (Raza, Ismat, Interview, June, 2023)

After analyzing the gap, examined the intersection of generational experiences and changing forms of activism. Overall, these perspectives highlight the Pakistani feminist movement's complex interplay of transnational influences, technological shifts, and localized activism.

Now, the empirical data for this study has been analyzed, while keeping the purpose of the study in mind in this chapter. The current research findings will be linked to the research aims and objectives in the following chapter, as well as whether or not the findings support my hypothesis.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

9. Discussion

While going through the relevant literature, the study under consideration provides a thorough examination of feminism advocacy in Pakistan within the online spaces. The findings reveal the changing nature of feminism in this context owing to the facts on which young feminists express themselves while taking an account of the expression of their older counterparts. One major debate is around the historical evolution of feminism in Pakistan, contextualizing the movement within various waves and emphasizing the goals of deconstructing patriarchal norms and systemic oppression. Respondents, all of whom identify as feminists, offer personal definitions of feminism, emphasizing intersectionality and recognizing women's struggles in both the private and public spheres. This historical context serves as the foundation for comprehending contemporary feminist advocacy in the country.

In addition, the critical argument of the study's objectives and its analysis revolve around exploratory nature of the impacts of digital platforms on feminism advocacy. This investigation includes the perspectives of both young and older feminists, tracing how the movement's organization has evolved across generations as a result of different platforms and tools. The qualitative data derived from interviews provides an in-depth look at how feminism is expressed online. It is worth noting that traditional media, particularly television and radio, shape public perceptions and subjectivity along with advocacy preferences, with implications for both feminist visibility and collective action. On social media, a recommendation for younger feminists to transition from individualism to collectivism echoes the potential for unified action.

Furthermore, the study's finds out the difficulties that feminism and activism face in Pakistan. These challenges include class disparities in representation as well as changes in protest strategies as a result of the rise of digitalization. This nuanced viewpoint recognizes the multifaceted nature of contemporary social change as well as the feminist movement's dynamic efforts. Based on these challenges, and with the review of relevant literature, I emphasize on the involvement and

contributions of Pakistani feminists, particularly the younger generation that they are influenced by global feminist ideas. Also, the movement's dynamism is highlighted by their emphasis on practical initiatives and the formation of women-focused groups.

The findings of the study reveal the transformation of Pakistan's political landscape, with online spaces surpassing traditional media as platforms for expression and collective action. This shift represents increased political participation by marginalized groups such as women and transgender people. While social media helps to mobilize women's rights activism, the study also emphasizes the importance of physical protests, blurring the lines between virtual and public activism as in the literature, Akhtar, (2022) points out that the marginalized groups can only be reached out through field work and negotiations in the private sphere to make it possible for the groups to advocate for their own rights in public spaces. Another focal point is the role of technology in contemporary feminist activism. According to the study, technology increases engagement and influences public opinion. Although digital spaces increase the visibility of feminism, they can also catalyze polarized debates. To contextualize these findings, the researcher conducts a thorough literature review, taking into account global trends in feminism, online activism, and generational dynamics.

The study's implications for feminist advocacy in Pakistan may provides a critical understanding on feminism in the contemporary Pakistan's literature on feminism. As the study provides a better understanding of how feminism operates in digital spaces, it opens up possibilities for strategic reflection on future initiatives. It is critical to consider how the study's findings might shape policy recommendations or inform more inclusive and effective activism strategies. This study contributes to a richer understanding of feminism's dynamic evolution in the digital age within Pakistan's unique sociopolitical context by combining theoretical frameworks, research findings, and practical applications.

10. Conclusion

To conclude, this research approved the proposition that the generational divide within various waves of feminism in Pakistan would be mirrored in feminist manifestation and engagement via online platform and this divide, according to the premise, would shape their approaches to advocacy, challenges to patriarchal norms, and strategies for driving social change. Furthermore, it was anticipated that younger Pakistani feminists would see digital platforms as powerful tools for advancing feminist ideals and effecting social transformation, whereas older feminists may have different perspectives on the impact of digital platforms on feminism.

A thorough examination of the research findings and subsequent conclusions reveals that the arguments presented largely support the research proposition. The study found that different generations of feminists use online platforms in different ways, reflecting broader shifts in feminist ideologies and strategies over time. According to the findings, contemporary young feminists in Pakistan see digital platforms as powerful tools for promoting feminist principles and initiating societal change, which is consistent with the predicted perspective. Besides, the study as a whole concludes over the emphasis that the continuity of core feminist principles while adapting to the digital age, indicating a generational transition within the manifestation and engagement of feminism. The study also recognizes the nuanced interplay between digital activism and offline strategies.

However, while the analysis does not explicitly mention older feminists' differing perspectives on digital platforms, it does emphasize the importance of physical protests and the need for negotiation in private spheres. This could imply that older feminists value online platforms but prioritize different aspects of feminist activism. In the end, while the research findings are consistent with the central tenets of the premise, it is important to note that the complexities of perspectives within each generation cannot be fully encapsulated within a binary acceptance or rejection of the hypothesis. The study adds to our understanding of the generational dynamics within Pakistani feminism and emphasizes the

multifaceted nature of feminist engagement across different waves and age groups.

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12. APPENDEX

Respondent circles

The researcher interviewed the following feminists.

1. Nasreen Azhar (Human rights and women rights activists based in Karachi and a prominent national figure in the history of Pakistan).
2. Afia.S Zia (Pakistani feminist researcher, writer and women rights activist based in Karachi, Pakistan).
3. Esmat Raza Shah Jahan (Socialist-feminist political leader from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa).
4. Dr.Fatimah Ehsan (Assistant Professor at Center of Excellence in Gender Studies, QAU).
5. Dr.Saad (Assistant Professor at Center of Excellence in Gender Studies, QAU).
6. Nida Mushtaq (feminist artist with speciality in street art capturing the lives of women in Pakitsan).
7. Zaighum Abbass (Social Media Participant), Sadia Khatri(Pakistani writer, photographer and feminist).
8. Dr. Alia Haider(Social feminist, health and climate activist from Hazara Community of Blochistan, Pakistan).
9. Faryal Rashid (Young socialist feminist based in Islamabad, Pakistan).
10. Hasina Barcha (Phd Scholar, teacher, and a political activist for women rights in Gilgit Baltistan)

Interviews from young people were also taken and recorded according to this particular study.

Interview Guide

Respondent Circles

1. Determined Feminists
 2. Individual Base (non-activists), Participants in campaigns of feminism
-

Respected Respondent

This research is conducted for Mphil program at National Institute of Pakistan Studies (Nips), Quaid-i-Azam University Islamabad. The researcher is intended to study the social and political factors of feminism within the generations of feminist activism in Pakistan. The purpose of interview is to understand the transformation of feminist struggle from the previous generations to the present day feminists, who represent feminist activism in online spaces. The interviews will be kept as a record for data analysis.

(Section-1) Demographic Profile

1. Name
2. Age
3. Gender
4. Occupation
5. Association to which wave of feminism
6. Affiliation to any organization or political body for women rights? / Social Media participant

(Section-2) Introductory questions for the research

1. How do you define feminism?
2. Have you read about feminism? If so, can you mention some features you remember about the history of Feminism in Pakistan.

3. How entities of society generally engage with feminist movements? Share your own experience if it's convenient for you to share.
4. How do different segments of Pakistani society generally respond to feminist movements?
5. What is the main criticism of contemporary feminism according to your understanding?
6. Is there change in the foundations of feminist discourse?
7. How you perceive present day feminist activism? Do you think it is the same as in the previous waves of feminism?
8. How do you recognize the fourth wave of feminism?

(Section-3) Digitalization and feminist advocacy

:-Mention your digital media platform on which you are active most of the time

1. How digitalization has transformed the means of communication of feminist's struggle?
2. How the digital struggle and feminist's activism is different/ unique from that of the previous ones? The feminist discourse itself has changed or only the ways of expressions?
3. In general, who do you think construct the masses of digital feminists and audience?
4. How do online spaces shape the political landscape in Pakistan?
5. How digital activism generate engagement?
6. Did digital media affected Feminist militancy in Pakistan?
7. Do you think Feminist militancy in Pakistan is the same as in the previous generations of feminists?
8. Do you think digitalization has impacted the feminist activism's visibility and connectivity?
9. Do you think digitalization help to built up new feminist communities? If so, Explain.
10. How you are contributing to feminism in online spaces?

11. In what ways do you think digital activism impacted on the audience of feminist material?
12. To what extent have digital technologies influenced the dynamics of resistance in Pakistan? (specific context to women rights)
13. How do activists lobby in political circles?
14. What is the importance of field work and lobbying in feminist campaigns?
15. Do you think Digital feminism has gaps in addressing the issues it is dealing with?