

**THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE FEMINIST DISCOURSE IN
KENYA**

BY

ESTHER KYALO

**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE AFRICAN WOMEN
STUDIES CENTRE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE AWARD OF
MASTERS OF WOMEN LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI.**

DECEMBER 2018

DECLARATION

This project is originally my work and has not been presented in any other academic institution without my authority or that of University of Nairobi.

Signature.....

Date

ESTHER KYALO

REG NO: M10/6583/2017

I confirm that the candidate did this project under my supervision.

Signature.....

Date

Name of Supervisor: Prof. Wanjiku Kabira

Signature...

Date ...

Name of Supervisor: Dr. Lanoi Maloiy

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my father Mr Kaloe, my mother Josephine K., Miss Fiona Achieng, Mr. D. Ndaba and my classmates - “African Women” and friends who were my inspiration and support system through it all. God bless them all.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I acknowledge the support and guidance of my supervisors Dr. Lanoi Maloiy and Professor Wanjiku Kabira for the time spent relentlessly and patiently supervising me for the success of this research project. God bless you in abundance.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION.....	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
ABSTRACT	viii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	9
1.1 Background to the Study	9
1.2 Statement of the Problem	10
1.3 Justification of the Study	11
1.4 Objectives of the Study	12
1.4.1 General Objective	12
1.4.2 Specific Objectives	12
1.5 Research Questions.....	12
1.6 Significance of the Study	13
1.6.1 To Academicians and Researchers	13
1.6.2 To Feminist Groups	13
1.6.3 To Underprivileged Groups in the Society	13
1.7 Scope and Limitation of the Study	14
1.8 Definition of Terms.....	14
1.8.1 Social Media.....	14
1.8.2 Feminism.....	14
1.8.3 Feminist.....	14
1.8.4 Networked Feminism.....	15
1.8.5 Slacktivism	15
CHAPTER TWO:LITERATURE REVIEW.....	16
2.1 Introduction	16
2.2 The History of Feminism	16
2.2.1 The First Wave	16
2.2.2 The Second Wave	17
2.2.3 The Third Wave.....	18
2.2.4 Post-Feminism.....	19
2.3 Feminist Movements and Social Media Today	20
2.3.1 Feminist Movements in Africa.....	23
2.3.2 Feminist Movements in Kenya.....	25
2.4 Theoretical Framework	26
2.4.1 Theoretical Influences of Cyberfeminism.....	26

CHAPTER THREE:RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	28
3.0 Introduction	28
3.1 Research Design	28
3.2 Data Collection Procedure.....	29
3.3 Data Analysis Methods	30
3.4 Ethical Considerations	31
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION & INTERPRETATION... 32	
4.1 Introduction	32
4.2 Perceptions of Feminism among Kenyans on Social Media.....	32
4.2.1 Feminism and Freedom of Choice.....	33
4.2.2 Feminism and Girl-Child Protection.....	35
4.2.3 Feminism and Reproductive Health	36
4.2.4 Antifeminism in Kenya	38
4.3 Types of Lenses used in the Online Coverage of Feminism in Kenya	40
4.3.1 Feminism and Westernization	40
4.3.2 Opportunistic Feminism.....	41
4.4 Influence of Social Media Depictions on the Perception of Feminism in Kenya	43
4.4.1 Feminism and Professional Leadership	43
4.4.2 Feminism and Women Rights	45
4.5 Effectiveness of Social Media in Fighting for Women Rights in the Society	47
4.5.1 Hashtag #DigitalGenderGap	47
4.5.2 Hashtag #EndFGM	48
4.5.3 Hashtag #DeadBeatKenya.....	50
4.5.4 Hashtag #1milliforJadudi	51
CHAPTER FIVE:SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	53
5.1 Introduction	53
5.2 Summary of the Findings	53
5.3 Conclusions	55
5.4 Recommendations.....	57
5.4.1 Recommendations from the Study.....	57
5.4.2 Recommendations for Further Studies	58
REFERENCES.....	59

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1: An Illustration of Feminism and Freedom of Choice	33
Figure 4.2: An Illustration of Feminists' Twitter Profile.....	35
Figure 4.3: An Illustration of Feminism and Reproductive Health in #Nerea Hashtag.....	37
Figure 4.4: An Illustration of Antifeminist Perceptions in Kenya.....	39
Figure 4.5: An Illustration of Feminist Depictions of Homosexuality	41
Figure 4.6: An Illustration of Opportunistic Feminism	42
Figure 4.7: An Illustration of Feminism and Professional Leadership in Kenyan Politics.....	44
Figure 4.8: An Illustration of Feminist Profile in Support of #WeAre52pc	45
Figure 4.9: An Illustration of Feminism and Human Rights	46
Figure 4.10: An Illustration of Feminism and Judicial Rights	47
Figure 4.11: An Illustration of Feminism in #EndFGM Campaigns	49
Figure 4.12: An Illustration of Feminism in #EndFGM Campaigns	49
Figure 4.13: An Illustration of Feminism in #DeadBeatKenya Campaigns	50
Figure 4.14: An Illustration of Feminism in #1milliforJadudi Campaign	52

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of social media in the feminist discourse in Kenya. The objectives of this study were to explore the perceptions of feminism among Kenyans on social media; to establish the types of lenses used in the online coverage of feminism concerns; to examine the influence that social media depictions have had on the perception of feminism in Kenya; and to analyse the effectiveness of social media in fighting for the rights of women in the society. The researcher analysed various Twitter pages, images, tweets, retweets, and hashtags related to feminism in order to look into the various opinions, assumptions and varied interpretations of feminist ideas and agenda. The researcher collected secondary data through an analysis of feminism-related articles, books as well as social media comments on Twitter, which was the focus. Cyberfeminism theory was important to the study because it assisted the researcher to investigate the methods in which Kenyans use social media, in this case Twitter, to nurture the prevailing concepts of the feminist movement in the country. Data analysis was done by identifying and categorising user profiles, while at the same time assessing the contents of their Twitter profiles. Some of the key information include finding out their profession, sex, speciality, picture, link to any institution as well where they reside. Next was engagement measurements through number of followers, following, number of tweets, retweets etc. One of the key findings of the study was that most Kenyans perceive feminism from the perspective of girl-child protection and freedom of choice, which plays a key role in promoting the feminist discourse in Kenya. The study also found out that social media users in Kenya depict feminism as opportunity for acknowledging the general aspects of feminism that benefit them, while disregarding disadvantageous aspects of feminism. Furthermore, Kenyan feminists use Twitter to express their activism through empowerment, capacity building, education, freedom of expression, and seeking help. The researcher recommends that through the positive coverage of the feminist movements in social media, users can instil a positive frame for their discourses, which might translate into the audience being more receptive to the feminist agenda and its attendant issues. Furthermore, since Kenyans on Twitter (KOT) are a very active social media group in Africa, feminist movements can use the audience to further their courses. Due to the negative opinions surrounding feminism in the modern-day world, women should use the powerful influence of social media to advocate for their rights and fight patriarchy. The national government should also monitor the feminist discourse in social media to minimise the dissemination of provocative interpretations of feminist agenda that constantly occur in cyberspaces. In order to understand the perception of social media campaigns to women empowerment, it is important for future researchers to use other types of exposures to these campaigns, such as specific Twitter profiles, photos, or slogans.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Since its beginning in the early 19th century, feminist movements have received a mixed coverage and representation in media. From broadcasting to print media, feminist critics have unceasingly noted that the media coverage of the feminism issues has always been largely minimal and often negative. However, the introduction of social media is a boost to many feminist organizations in the nation for they will spread their agenda freely without any interruption from people (Stamp, 1991).

Currently, largely in part because of the media heavy environment we live in, it has become impossible to disengage social movements from tactical social media use. Moreover, the government of Kenya does not deter anybody from employing social media in spreading their policies. That therefore, assists different feminists to mobilize each other and fight for their rights. The pervasive social media use in the modern society means that its channels such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter can influence our perceptions on the issues of gender, and more specifically feminism (Stamp, 1991).

According to Stamp, social media refers to internet use, which ensures an increased interactions among the internet users through the user generated content (Stamp, 1991). The content such as photos, videos, and text messages may differ but they are likely to convey a certain message in the society. Social media takes different forms, which includes social networking sites such as Facebook, content communities such as You Tube for self-uploaded videos and Flickr for photos and micro blogging avenues such as Twitter.

Therefore, the robust evolution of social media means that its importance and roles in social and political processes are transforming (Wilkins, 1999). Social media for instance is

instrumental in addressing social issues in the society such as the # MY dress my choice movement in the streets of Nairobi. The online engagement is one of the instances that demonstrates the way social media is playing a great role in feminist activities in the nation. A protest organized by a Facebook group known as Kilimani Mums saw the perpetrators of the crime being arrested and arraigned in court for the undressing and sexually assaulting a woman in a public transport vehicle.

In this case, social media is able to facilitate social transformations through promoting civic engagement, triggering public discussions, mobilization, stimulating civil societies, and promoting a sense of community among women who are the target of the attacks (Stamp, 1991). The project will be beneficial in furthering the comprehension on how social media represents feminism, who sets the agenda and the way the representations shape the civics' perception of feminism, given that social media has become a crucial part in our daily lives.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The feminist movement has seen tremendous growth from the 19th century when suffrage rights were among key issues being fought for access to education and the labour market, as well as inclusion and equal opportunities in leadership and governance. However, despite these tremendous achievements, the feminist movement has been marred by minimal to no media coverage, negative perceptions, criticisms as well as a lack of knowledge regarding feminism (Barakso & Schaffner, 2006). The perceptions about feminism and feminists in Kenya has been largely censored as well, which has led to both positive and negative comments about their influences in fighting for women rights, especially through social media. Furthermore, in Kenya, one of the most popular instances of using social media to agitate for a cause was during 2014's hashtag #MyDressMyChoice campaign that was formed in response to viral video of a girl being stripped in the street by a group of touts

attached to Embassava Sacco for what they termed indecent dressing. The touts called a woman a ‘Jezebel’ for tempting them with her attire. The use of social media, specifically Twitter and Facebook during social movements has ignited a discussion about the role of social media in organizing social movements.

Agenda setting is therefore a key component when trying to determine what issues are more important than others and the media has this power. The media decides what stories and when to report these stories. This means that the framing of issues and determining who sets the agenda is critical if transformation is to occur (Terkildsen & Schnell, 1997). It is therefore important for research to assist with debunking certain stereotypes and misconceptions that feminists are aggressive, wayward, men haters or too westernized. This is because these perceptions have been shaped by portrayal of feminists as such overtime since the beginning of the feminist movement (Lind & Salo, 2002) and to critically examine what lenses have been used to cover feminist issues in Kenya and in particular through social media. As such this study seeks to fill this gap in the research area.

1.3 Justification of the Study

With the wide-ranging notion that the feminist movement has become a globally reaching drive, this study acknowledges that social media has a superior perceptibility of representing women’s struggles in the contemporary world (Bordo, 2004). In the past decade, social media has illuminated many issues by various social movements that have gathered huge support from likeminded people including the feminists. According to Swirsky & Angelone (2016), since the current generation lives in a post-feminist world, many people believe that feminism is non-existent because of the perceived equality between both genders.

With the untrue ideology that feminism is pointless, the efforts of the movement have been largely censored on various media, accompanied by insufficient or negative reportage of their

affairs. Bustelo (2016) state that the feminist movement is slowly dying, and therefore, its existing loyalists should do something to keep it alive. Therefore, this study contributed to the existing body of literature regarding the feminist opinions on social media in order to investigate the relationship between the framing of feminist issues and its effects on feminist perceptions. The researcher focused on the role of social media plays in shaping society's perceptions of feminism, as many people are currently have access to today.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1.4.1 General Objective

The general objective of this study was to investigate the role and framing of feminist issues and discourse on social media in Kenya.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

To establish the role and framing of feminist issues and discourse on social media in Kenya, the following specific objectives were used

- a) To explore the perceptions of feminism among Kenyans on social media.
- b) To establish the types of lenses used in the online coverage of feminism concerns.
- c) To examine the influence that social media depictions have had on the perception of feminism in Kenya.
- d) To analyse the effectiveness of social media in fighting for the rights of women in the society.

1.5 Research Questions

The study will seek information to answer the following questions

- a) What are the perceptions of feminism among Kenyans on social media?
- b) What types of lenses have been used in the online coverage of feminism matters?

- c) What is the influence of social media depictions on the perception of feminism in Kenya?
- d) To what extent is social media effective in fighting for the rights of women in the society?

1.6 Significance of the Study

1.6.1 To Academicians and Researchers

The project is relevant because it contributes to the existing body of knowledge concerning dissemination of feminists' opinions and content on social media in Kenya. Currently, this will ensure researchers enjoy the breadth of scholarship accorded to other forms of media, such as print and broadcast media and the implications of frames that have been used in covering feminist issues.

1.6.2 To Feminist Groups

This study was demonstrate how social media has promoted the works of feminist groups in the Kenya, especially in communication and addressing their problems like the #MyDressMyChoice campaign that gained popularity because people spread the pictures of the victim through social media. The research will become relevant for such campaigns, as it will reveal gap covered by social media in the operations of feminists in the nation from mainstream media. For instance, the project will also depict how social media eases the communication costs and timeframes of feminist group for it is cheap and widely accessed in the nation and without prejudice.

1.6.3 To Underprivileged Groups in the Society

The project will also help people understand the positive effects of technology especially in the fighting for the rights of various underprivileged groups in the society. The project is also beneficial since it will enable people to study how the media, especially social media can

shape the people's perceptions on issues, in this case, feminism. Women also through social media have been able to negotiate the public sphere by challenging cultural norms, values, beliefs and traditions.

1.7 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The research will pay specific attention to the role that social media plays in shaping society's perception of feminism and the impact social media has had in the advancement of the feminist discourse in Kenya. This is because more people are gaining access to and are using social media whose impact on shaping the perception of feminist issues is yet to be researched in depth. The study was conducted through analysis of secondary data and because the area of interest is new in Kenya, it was a challenge to access information as well as financial constraints because the budget for the study was minimal.

1.8 Definition of Terms

1.8.1 Social Media

This refers to forms of electronic communication that users create and share information through photos, videos, audio, personal messages, and important updates (Stelzner, 2014).

1.8.2 Feminism

Feminism refers to the wide-ranging ideologies and movements that have the key objective of establishing and achieving political, social, economic, cultural and social equality for women (Tobias, 2018).

1.8.3 Feminist

This refers to any politically and socially conscious individual (whether male or female) who works for equality for a like-minded movement, or strives towards spreading feminist equalities (Tobias, 2018).

1.8.4 Networked Feminism

Networked feminism described the use of digital spaces, socially social media with the aim of engaging online and offline social action (Fraser, 2015).

1.8.5 Slacktivism

Slacktivism refers to a low-cost and low-risk activities carried out through social media network with the intention of instilling change, raising awareness, and eventually satisfying the agenda of the participants (Gatwiri & McLaren, 2016).

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This section of the research discusses the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of the study. Additionally, it will focus on the critically examination of secondary sources of information including books, manuscripts, peer-reviewed journals and topical articles addressing feminism. The literature review helped to reveal the relationship between social media use and feminism, which is not a new occurrence as evidenced by existing studies by other scholars.

2.2 The History of Feminism

Feminism can be defined as a movement whose belief system seek to problematize gender inequalities and seeks to ensure equality and equity in all spheres of life (Vault, 1996). Feminists have been encompasses prioritizing, theorizing and critiquing issues through social circles including through the internet. Historically, feminism can be traced from the 19th century, and the following sub-sections provides details of the evolution of feminism:

2.2.1 The First Wave

The first wave of feminism officially commenced in 1848 at the Seneca Falls Convention where 300 people assembled to push for the cause of equality for women. The agenda during this period focussed on fighting for equal rights between men and women, including divorce laws, educational reforms, ownership of property by married women and child custody (Dicker & Piepmeier, 2016). Antagonists during the time used posters and other forms of print media to portray the female activists negatively with the intention of disrupting their efforts and opinions. According to Tobias (2018), the first wave of feminism popularly depicted feminists as ugly people with large dental formulas as well as jarring voices, which

suggested the inadequacy of their opinions. It also made them unappealing to the general public.

The debates during this period have been ongoing today concerning the intersectionality that comes to play concerning science, gender and technology (Dicker & Piepmeier, 2016). It is important to note that despite earlier depictions of women on the internet through pornography, cyber feminists are positive that the internet has power to transform the society towards a more egalitarian society. This is because the virtual world enables women to transcend certain barriers that hinder their progress such as their sex, ethnicity, race, class et cetera and allows them to enter the public sphere (Smitley, 2004).

2.2.2 The Second Wave

The second wave of feminist that began in 1960 was propagated by general discontent among women that was led by male-controlled oppression in the society (Whitehead & Tsikata, 2003). The emphasis therefore was placed on the importance of learning about how patriarchy was a system of domination, its institutionalization, and its following perpetuation and maintenance. Patriarchy therefore become widely known as the established structure of the subordination of women to men, opposed to their original definition of the term that designated a paterfamilias as the head of the family (Whitehead & Tsikata, 2003).

The sustained wave of feminism discussion eventually made its way down to academia that led to the legitimatization of women's studies as a field of academic inquiry (Gatwiri & McLaren, 2016). While this was an optimistic move, it led to the exclusion of other parties from the feminist movement leading to feminist movement that had a mainly white, middle, and upper class prejudice (Stamp, 1991). The inequity led to the side-lining of marginalized groups of women from the feminist movement, effectively opposing any efforts of adopting sisterhood. The media furthered this segregation by outlining feminism as an issue that was

interesting solely to women who were either married to prosperous men, and thus were bored housewives or lesbians who had worked for years and were living in pittance (Bustelo, 2016).

The negative coverage of feminist issues by the media continued in the way they perpetuated the notion that all feminists were against men, and their rejection of the prevailing beauty standards pointed the fact that they were lesbians, something that was entirely false (Fraser, 2015). The negative coverage served to discredit the movement although there was progress made in tackling the issues of marriage, workplace discrimination, sexual liberation, reproductive rights, beauty culture, and the agency over one's body (Stamp, 1991).

2.2.3 The Third Wave

The third wave feminism encountered different difficulties despite an improvement in addressing the women affairs in the nation (Stamp, 1991). Some of the challenges they faced included being stopped from participating in political matters, which is a clear infringement of their democratic rights in the society. The wave has also strived to address the problem of exclusion that keeps their movement from being entirely wholesome.

The major concern of the third wave feminism is the inclusion in various posts and parts in society. In Kenya especially, women pushed for the 2/3 gender rule to work in different avenues including in the parliamentary leadership to ensure female representation. Stamp notes that the inclusive nature of the third wave is a direct result of feminist critiques by the minority pacts that do not feel well represented by the preceding feminist movements (Stamp, 1991). Like the previous feminist organizations, the third wave feminism is still challenged by media messages that belittle feminism or try to counter feminist sentiments altogether.

Since the feminist movement agenda occurs in waves to exemplify its agenda, the third wave of feminism generally used the media to spread the word about their political achievements at

the expense of a number of social reforms. As stated by Bustelo (2016), using waves to refer to the feminist movement disregards the exertions made by the minority groups that pursue the same agenda within the movement. He also stated that feminists mostly chose to focus on celebrating the achievements of wealthy White women in the political scene. Therefore, the rejection of the third wave of feminist begun with the above stated notion, which led to the coining of contemporary feminism through social media platforms. (Roate, 2015).

2.2.4 Post-Feminism

Even though many people would associate post feminism with the third wave of feminism, the two are of similar agendas and exude different themes. According to Dicker & Piepmeier (2016), on one hand, the third wave perceives feminism as a significant part of the modern-day society because it also included minorities in the fights for human rights. On the other hand, post feminism probes whether the movement is still significant in the contemporary society because it essentially perceives traditional feminism as having narrow-minded and old-fashioned principles.

With such an anti-feminist agenda, post feminism has continuously been debated in the past decade for supporting contemporary media, which rejects all the former movements as well as their advancements (Terkildsen & Schnell, 1997). Protagonists of the antifeminism agenda rely on messages that encourage women to be independent, build a professional a career, choose to be mothers, have a great sex life and be the epitome of beauty. However, such developments only push women to depend on fashion, pills, cosmetic surgery, and processed foods (Peters & Wolper, 2018).

This postfeminist belief, which point toward the fact that they feminisms unnecessary in the contemporary world, is the same as antifeminism because they both reject feminist identity as well as the politics associated with it. However, they consent to and support the persistent

falsifications of the feminist movement in the media. A popular symbol of antifeminism is the claim that women who carefully choose the dress they wear will attract men's attention, and avoid the objectification as sexual subjects (Whitehead & Tsikata, 2003).

2.3 Feminist Movements and Social Media Today

Wilkins elucidates how social media has played an instrumental role in addressing the grievances of different deprived groups in the society (Dicker & Piepmeier, 2016). The platform for instance can help individuals such as feminists to show some of the pictures or videos of the victims of violence or any other form of oppression in the society. Social media also helps the feminist groups to easily communicate to the relevant bodies the various injustices their members are undergoing in the society. The platform, for instance, helped to notify the government the domestic violence cases in different parts of the nation such as the Machakos man who assaulted his wife for the false accusation that she was promiscuous (Wilkins, 1999).

The avenue is important because it is widely spread throughout the nation and many individuals know about its existence. For that reason, it is easy to share any kind of discrimination or injustice incidents against women in the community at any time without any problem (Wilkins, 1999). One of the significant questions I will explore is whether social media platforms moulds or depicts social structures as well as whether the media can be employed to precipitate social transformation or whether it simply reinforces the status quo (Wilkins, 1999).

Therefore, the project will look at the theoretical framework central to this research together with providing important reviews and summaries of the literature in the areas of social media and social media movements in the society. Wilkins considers feminism as a movement that intends to dismantle sexism, sexist violations, and oppression (Wilkins, 1999). The

movement as we comprehend it currently dates back to 19th century, when female activists channelled their efforts towards the promotion of equal property rights for women and the opposition to the ownership of married women and their children by their husbands.

Wilkins defines feminism as the range of movement and ideologies whose chief objective is the establishment and attainment of equal, political, social, economic, personal, cultural, and social rights and equity of women in the society (Wilkins, 1999). He further notes that feminists advocate for and support the rights and equity of women in the community. Some of the rights the feminists tirelessly campaign for include the right to vote, work, equal pay, own properties, and equal rights in marriage, among others. Wilkins argues that men should also be part of the movement because of the harm that can be occasioned by the fulfilment of traditional gender roles in the society (Wilkins, 1999).

Therefore, feminism as a movement seeks to end sexism and sexist oppression in the Kenyan society. Feminists also defines their movement as being concerned with ensuring that the rights and equality of both male and female are well addressed in the society. Networked feminism is defined as the use of digital spaces to engage social action both online and offline. Some of the sites used by feminists to communicate their ideologies include blogs, online forums, and Twitter hash tags (Wilkins, 1999). Also, to enable both online and offline social mobilization, social media has triggered content creation and dissemination outside the traditional media, whose operation heavily rely on the gatekeepers.

Feminist movements employ slacktivism in their operation of mobilizing and raising awareness to people. Slacktivism is the low risk and low cost activity through social media whose major function is to raise awareness, produce change, or grant satisfaction to the person engaged in the activity (Wilkins, 1999). Activities that have been referred to as slacktivism include liking posts to indicate support for an interested pact on Facebook,

signing online petitions or even forwarding videos and letters about an issue, and painting one's profile green to back up the various activities of the feminist groups in the nation. However, slacktivism works have been criticized for not having any real effects on the social movements' agendas in the country.

In this epoch, the ability of the media to influence the progression of social movements, whether positively or negatively has begun to show. Wilkins notes that since the commencement of the feminist movements, the female activities were adversely mentioned in posters and other forms of print media to disapprove their efforts and arguments (Wilkins, 1999). For example, in the United States, the popular depictions of feminists were unattractive women with large teeth and shrill voices, sometimes wielding an umbrella, which suggested their inadequacy of views. They were also depicted as weak and incapable to handle their domestic works, which led to many anti-feminist posters advocating for their violent punishment. Nevertheless, those sentiments are dissimilar with those held presently where women who identify as feminists are always describes as ardent man-haters who are only out for attention (Whitehead & Tsikata, 2003).

The ubiquitous nature of social media use means that the competences of social media can be used as a springboard to facilitate social transformations in the society. The ease and accessibility of social media technologies means that anyone, nonetheless of technical level or skill can apply it and add or edit content promptly. Social media connectivity gives its users the ability to connect with various people, thus effectively transforming the nature of their individual and social networks. The dependence of the audience on the traditional media is progressively on the decline as most of the content is user generated, and the users can even go further and exercise control over the information they choose to share on social media (Gauntlett, 2008).

2.3.1 Feminist Movements in Africa

While social media application has augmented in Africa as a whole, and more especially in Kenya, it should be noted that access to the platforms is also limited. Only 25% of Africa's population has decent internet access (Gauntlett, 2008). Despite the fact that the feminist movement has been central to the creation of equity for women, it has always been adversely covered in the media. Through the positive coverage of the feminist movement, the media will have provided a positive frame for the organization, which might translate into the audience being more receptive to the feminist agenda and its attendant issues.

Conceptualizing and acceptance of the term feminism has been met with various reactions inception especially here in Africa since it is a term that has a "Western" meaning. This means that people perceive feminism as having originated or come from the white people and therefore un-African and Anti-male and this has led some women who actually engage in feminist works to deny or refuse to identify themselves as feminists. Examples include notable African women writers such as Zaynab Alkali and Ama Ata Aidoo (Nkealah, 2006).

Notably, Salami (2013) among other scholars argue that feminism actually existed in Africa before the onset of colonialism and therefore it is not "unAfrican". Women always found a way of advocating for their rights and fighting patriarchy through various institutions such as motherhood, sisterhood, autonomous institutions such as religion for example Queen mothers and prophetesses (Adeleye-Fayemi, 2000).

However, conflicts arose concerning identity and identifying oneself as a feminist, taking into consideration that it was and is still considered "Western". These identity conflicts brought about various concepts or terms that women felt they could identify with and was more inclusive and more African and appreciated the woman as projected or defined in the African setting taking into consideration culture, religion and politics. These concepts or terms would

be more relevant and acceptable in the African society and women's struggles (Alkali et al, 2013; Norwood, 2013).

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie who is considered a proud vocal feminist in her TED talk narrates how she was advised never to refer to herself or call herself a feminist while in her home country Nigeria because "feminists are women who are unhappy and cannot find husbands" (Adichie, 2013). This is a good example of how feminists are perceived in Nigeria, and by extension in Africa.

In an effort to counter these negative concepts of feminism, Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie came up with a concept known as STIWANISM in 1994. STIWA, in short meaning "Social Transformation Including Women in Africa". STIWANISM's main agenda is to ensure women's inclusion in the Social Transformation in the world, to ensure equal opportunities and partnership alongside men, both sexes working together (Alkali et al, 2013).

Womanism can be traced back to the 1980s, independently formulated by Ogunyemi, a Nigerian and Alice Walker, an African American as another concept used to define or explain the female experience in Africa. Women of colour from the African American community as well as Africa wanted to share their own experiences in their own voice. They both felt that African women had been side lined and their stories told by different voices that did not reflect their true identity and experiences (Arndt, 2000).

Motherism on the other hand counters the "Westernized feminist concept" whose belief that marriage and motherhood in itself is a form of oppression and dominion (Maloiy, 2016). It emphasises on the importance of motherhood and child bearing and nurturing as a valued and highly respected ideology. In Africa motherhood is respected and valued because it is believed to be a source of life and continuance of a generation (Dicker & Piepmeier (2016),). Women would use their power as women to advocate for women's rights and fighting

patriarchy while upholding fundamental feminine or womanly attributes that does not go against their responsibilities or challenge cultural beliefs and values (Alkali et al, 2013).

2.3.2 Feminist Movements in Kenya

In Kenya, the feminist activities date back to the colonial era when women sang songs about their aversion of partial labour laws while working. At the height of the Mau Mau revolution, many women were jailed while others participated in the movement through providing foods, weapons, and medicine to their fighters. After colonization, women were systematically eliminated from participating in the societal systems that has been implemented (Moghadam, 2005). The colonial administration heavily relied on the western Christianity to control the existing African cultural and social life. As time passes, gender bias in the society was perpetuated by means of Christianity, western education, the adoption of western marriages, and alternative legal systems.

The introduction of western education also placed the educational advancement of men over that of women since men were required to join the labour market. The transformation in the roles and the rights of women had an impact on gender relations in the sense that it damaged the power, freedoms, and positions traditionally occupied by women while simultaneously limiting their access to new kinds of status that were male centric and patriarchal. Maendeleo Ya Wanawake is Kenya's earliest and largest female organization, which symbolizes the tensions and changes apparent in African feminism through its leadership wrangles and co-option by the state in an effort to ensure the status quo remains (Moghadam, 2005).

The women's movement in Kenya has developed immeasurably to date. Currently, the Kenyan constitution, which is greatly considered as feminist, gives a legal framework for gender equity and empowerment of women. Article 27 (8) narrates that the state shall take all

legislative and other measures to implement the principle that not more than 2/3 of the members of elective or appointive bodies shall be of the same gender (Stamp, 1991). In addition, Article 81 (b) provides that not more than two thirds of the members of the elective public bodies shall be of the same gender (Kenyan Constitution 210). While the male legislators feel that is often considered too rough to them, the existence of women in the political sphere, however small means that women's issues have an opportunity to be heard. This can be greatly attributed to feminists who lobbied and safeguarded the interests of women during the Constitutional making process.

As we try to explore the perception of Feminism in Kenya through social media, it is prudent to look into African feminism and to try and understand what the stance has been with regards to feminism in the African continent. African feminism evolved from the third wave of feminism as a result of African women feeling that their experiences as women of colour who had different experiences such as colonialism had not been taken into consideration and how the intersectionality of religion, race, colonialism and culture affects women. Women's voices were unheard, their stories untold, only depicted as the oppressed or "Third World" woman (Mohanty, 1995).

2.4 Theoretical Framework

2.4.1 Theoretical Influences of Cyberfeminism

In 1994, Sadie Plant invented the word Cyberfeminism with the intention of describing feminist discourse while hypothesising, critiquing, and exploiting cyberspace through various media technologies. The interconnection between gender and technology, which began in the 1990s, brought forth the birth of Cyberfeminism, which simply exudes the intertwining of computer technology commonly, referred to as ICT and feminist appropriation of information. Of great importance is to look into the digital world in relation to gendered power relations. The term Cyberfeminism is coined from two words, "cyber" which is also

referred to as “cybernetics” which can be defined as “the science of control and communication in animals and machine systems” (Hayles,1999; pg. 93-94); and feminism, which refers to the advocacy of women's rights on the ground of the equality of the sexes (Maloiy, 2016).

ICT and new media have drastically transformed the communication process (Mikell, 1997). The rapid innovation in the communication field more especially in the areas of digital media has led to the emergence of participatory technologies or Web 2.0, as they are more commonly known. Social media that make up the core Web 2.0 is defined as a set of internet grounded application build on the technologies foundations of Web 2.0 that permits the creation and exchange of user generated content.

This framework was important to the study because it assisted the researcher to investigate the methods in which Kenyans use social media, in this case Twitter, to nurture the prevailing concepts of the feminist movement in the country. Even though feminist ideologies have largely been censored, hashtags in Twitter allows for the uninhibited participation of people in social protests because its decentralized and loosely hierarchical order is heavily based on existing democratic structures (Mikell, 1997). Additionally, the internet promotes and offers a wide audience for the content generated from self-mass communication that is created to cater for the potential receiver’s interests.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The chapter outlines the methodology that the researcher used to undertake the study. It provides details regarding the research design, target population, and sampling design as well as the data collection and analysis methods.

3.1 Research Design

This refers to a comprehensive blueprint and framework of the various methods that a researcher uses in order to carry out a scientific study successfully (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009). This qualitative research adopted a descriptive case study as the best design for detailing the propositions and enquiries regarding social media and feminism from the outset to today. The case study of Twitter helped to determine the extent to which social media has influenced feminist opinions through Twitter. Therefore, the researcher conducted this study by meticulously examining the data in relation to variables under study (Creswell, 1998).

As stated by Lewis (2015), a descriptive case study is important in scientific research because it describes the features of a population with respect to their “who, how, when, where, and what” characteristics. In addition, this technique enabled the researcher to know the exact groups of people who participate in various circumstances, including their opinions and historical background as well as the qualitative and quantitative information about the situation. The researcher carried out an exploratory research on Twitter to analyse the feminist-related tweets to gain their understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations whose meaning are reflected in the laws and policies adopted by various societies (Orlikowski & Baroudi 1991).

3.2 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher collected secondary data through an analysis of feminism-related articles, books as well as social media comments on Twitter, which was the focus. According to Leiwis (2015), secondary data analysis can be described as “the re-analysis of data for the purpose of answering research questions with better statistical techniques or answering new questions with new data” (p.3). It is beneficial for a researcher to re-examine secondary data as a method of research as insights on different perceptions and experiences can be interpreted differently thereby delivering new insights and knowledge to already existing knowledge by stimulating a broad understanding of the subject matter at hand.

This researcher only selected tweets from active Twitter users and hashtags promoting feminist opinions and defending the rights of women through social media. Loyal Twitter feminists and feminist hashtags that constantly promote feminist agenda on social media platforms were also carefully selected. The researcher randomly selected Twitter pages owned by renowned and self-proclaimed Kenyan feminists as well as various hashtags to narrow down to the role of social media in in the feminist discourse in Kenya.

The researcher analysed various Twitter profiles, images, tweets, retweets, and hashtags related to feminism in order to look into the various opinions, assumptions and varied interpretations of feminist ideas and agenda. The Twitter pages owned by renowned and self-proclaimed Kenyan feminists that were used include Wambui Waiganjo ([@wambuiwaithaka](#)), Scheaffer Okore ([@scheafferoo](#)), Nice Nailantei Leng’ete ([@NiceLengete](#)), Rachael Mwikali ([@rachaelmwiks](#)), FEMNET ([@FemnetProg](#)), and COVAW ([@covaw](#)). The hashtags used for this study also included #feminism #feminist #mydressmychoice, ##humanrights, #womenrights, #letsallbefeminists, and #EndFGM to narrow down to the role of social media in in the feminist discourse in Kenya.

3.3 Data Analysis Methods

Data analysis was thematic, whereby the researcher analysed the tweeted information in a way that the message could be easily and effectively communicated. Therefore, in this study, user profiles were identified and categorized, while at the same time assessing “WHO” the users are using the contents of their Twitter profiles. Some of the key information include finding out their profession, sex, speciality, picture, link to any institution as well where they reside. Next shall be engagement measurements through number of followers, following, number of tweets, retweets etc.

The exploratory Twitter search depended on keywords such as feminism in Kenya, women empowerment, girl-child and gender equality in Kenya without restricting the tweets to certain periods. The researcher screened the tweets to analyse only the relevant ones for the study as dictated by their content themes and discussions. The researcher developed eight themes from the tweets so long as they mentioned feminism, women empowerment, gender equality, and related topics for analysis. The eight key broad themes that have dominated the feminist discourse in Kenya through social media include Feminism and Freedom of Choice; Feminism and Westernization; Opportunistic Feminism; Feminism and Girl-Child Protection; Feminism and Reproductive Health; Feminism and Social Class, Feminism and Women Rights, and Feminism in Professional Leadership. Twitter reflects the opinions of a diverse group spanning from all ages, economic and religious background, which helped in discussing the societal feminist discourse. Investigating how the tweets are done whether it is original, a retweet, a mention, a link or a picture was also paramount. Further analysis included the specific topics that the users frequently discuss on social media as well as the way these topics play a role in the feminist discourse in Kenya.

Key features of Twitter include a short message, post, status or microblog from a Twitter user is known as a Tweet. It consists of approximately 140 characters containing updates about the user or information. A word preceded by “#” symbol for example #MyDressMyChoice is referred to as a Hashtag. Normally, this platform for user-defined topics helps the users to identify and give their input on the topic of discussion (Purohit et al, 2013). For an individual to respond to a tweet, they do so by clicking on the reply button provided therein. As for Retweets, this is where an individual forwards the tweet to other users or followers. A user is acknowledged through a symbolic “@” sign and this symbol ensures that the mention feature or forwarding of the tweet is possible. While retweeting, a user is able to comment as well.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

In scientific research, wide-ranging ethical considerations help to address the thoughtful falsification of facts in contradiction of the true nature of an investigation. In this study, it is important to address are the ethical considerations. Use of the qualitative secondary analysis of data has its own benefits because findings generated through this method contribute to the body of knowledge without intruding or prying into vulnerable groups or persons since the data that will be analysed is that which is in the public domain (Johnston, 2014).

Qualitative method through secondary analysis of data is more economical and less time consuming as opposed to going to the field to collect data, and overall, it contributes to knowledge by providing a different perspective on issues without any intrusion of vulnerable persons and or groups especially where samples are difficult to reach, this method can provide insights on sensitive issues. Through this data analysis, the researcher answered the questions to determine the extent to which feminist discourses are embedded in social media.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This section analyses, presents, and interprets data through analysis of articles, books as well as Twitter, which was the main secondary source for assessing feminist opinions in social media. The purpose of this study was to investigate the role and framing of feminist issues and discourse on social media in Kenya. The objectives of this study were to explore the perceptions of feminism among Kenyans on social media; to establish the types of lenses used in the online coverage of feminism concerns; to examine the influence that social media depictions have had on the perception of feminism in Kenya; and to analyse the effectiveness of social media in fighting for the rights of women in the society.

By relating the information to opinions of various authors, the researcher identified eight key broad themes that have dominated the feminist discourse in Kenya through social media. These include Feminism and Freedom of Choice; Feminism and Westernization; Opportunistic Feminism; Feminism and Girl-Child Protection; Feminism and Reproductive Health; Feminism and Social Class, Feminism and Women Rights, and Feminism in Professional Leadership. These themes were used to find out answers to the research questions.

4.2 Perceptions of Feminism among Kenyans on Social Media

To address the perceptions of feminism among Kenyans on social media, the theme of feminism and freedom of choice was evident. Furthermore, anti-feminist ideas were also evident. As reiterated by Swirsky & Angelone (2016), formal education and the existence of personal role models in social media has increased exposure to feminism through self-

identification. Those who identify themselves as feminists seek liberation, equality and freedom of choice, which many Kenyans pursue and follow.

4.2.1 Feminism and Freedom of Choice

Freedom of choice when it comes to clothing is a major concern that feminists have pursued because of the many incidences that women have become victims of public stripping for supposedly wearing indecent outfits. In 2014, thousands of feminist activists marched along Nairobi Streets to condemn a group of men who stripped a woman naked in public due to “indecent dressing”. The self-proclaimed feminist Wambui Waiganjo ([@wambuiwaithaka](https://twitter.com/wambuiwaithaka)), formed the #MyDressMyChoice campaign in response to a viral video of a girl being stripped in the street by a group of touts attached to Embassava Sacco.

Figure 4.1: An Illustration of Feminism and Freedom of Choice



Source: Wambui Waiganjo Twitter Profile (2014)



Marie Claire SA
@marieclaire_sa



Every woman has the right to choose what she wears! Tweet your support for Kenyan women rallying for #MyDressMyChoice

♡ 10 11:44 AM - Nov 19, 2014

Source: Marie Claire SA Twitter Profile (2014)

The resulting Twitter hashtag (#MyDressMyChoice) gathered a lot of support for the female victim. The feminists carried posters, banners, and placards to express their freedom to choose what to wear, and to warn men to desist from assaulting women wearing miniskirt since it is decent clothing. In less than 24 hours, the hashtag had over 50,000 tweets and retweets (DW, 2014). The campaign agenda was to demonstrate freedom of choice because feminism gives people the freewill to choose what they want and who they want to become in the end. These internet-based feminists' movements urge national and transnational accountability toward the abolishing emerging frameworks that promote injustices related to sexual assault (Bernstein, 2017).

However, as the protest went on, another hashtag #NudityIsNotMyChoice started trending on Twitter supported by antifeminist who opposed the #MyDressMyChoice campaign. With a different opinion, they say that while women have the right to dress the way they desire, dress inappropriately is not welcomed. As stated by, the anti-group protested reciting, “wear clothes.” and “don't be naked”.



john ryan kiragu

@ryancah

Follow

Dress well and no one will ask you a question
#NudityIsNotMyChoice

8:30 AM - 18 Nov 2014

4.2.2 Feminism and Girl-Child Protection

Kenyans on social media also perceive feminism as girl-child protection and ensuring they have sound reproductive health. This concept mostly lies with protecting girls and women from outdated practices, such as Female Genital Mutilation, domestic violence, and physical harm by the male counterparts. FGM violates the rights of young girls and women, and feminist scholars and the media have scrutinized the practice closely in recent years (Abusharaf, 1995; Peters & Wolper, 2018). This is evident with women who have actively led feminist discourses on eradicating Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) hashtags, such as #EndFGM.

Figure 4.2: An Illustration of Feminists' Twitter Profile



Source: Nice Nailantei Leng'ete Twitter Profile (2018)

Nice Nailantei Leng'ete ([@NiceLengete](#)) is a renowned #EndFGM activist and feminist whose Twitter profile provides an explicit way of expressing her opinion about the same. As shown in Figure 4.2, the human rights activist was named one of the most influential people in the world by Time Magazine and works with Amref Health Africa to protect the girl-child from FGM and early marriages. Such a pervasive use of social media today has proven that channels such as Twitter play a significant role in influencing feminists' perceptions on girl-child protection. Therefore, feminism does not harass one group, or perceive others as less privileged, but it aims at ensuring that both girls and boys enjoy equal rights (Lind & Salo, 2002).

4.2.3 Feminism and Reproductive Health

The hashtag #Nerea, complemented with #TalkingNerea opened up an engaging debate about abortion, which promotes the theme of Feminism and Reproductive Health in women. Contemporary music rarely generates such a serious debate on National TV, but the hit song "Nerea" by Sauti Sol and Amos & Josh was extensively tweeted and retweeted on Twitter. The TV interview on KTN that kicked off the debate put the artistes on the spot about the moral of their song because it partly promoted abortion (Mzalendo, 2015).

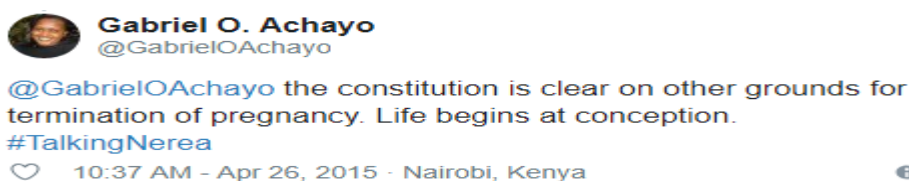
Figure 4.3: An Illustration of Feminism and Reproductive Health in #Nerea Hashtag



Source: KTN Kenya Twitter Profile (2015)



The song narrates the ordeal that Nerea’s boyfriend go through as he pleads with her to avoid aborting their child because he promises to take responsibility. According to the Constitution, “the life of a person begins at conception. Abortion is not permitted unless, in the opinion of a trained health professional, there is need for emergency treatment, or the life or health of the mother is in danger, or if permitted by any other written law”.



The message embedded and presented to the public in the song enraged some people saying that women have the capacity to make wise choices for their bodies in case of pregnancy. However, the artists portrayed that Nerea did not have a choice to decide, which also promoted the theme of Feminism and Freedom of Choice. To clear the air, Sauti Sol defended the hit song by tweeting that it reflects the current affairs in the society and they used the situation to relay the message as shown below.



4.2.4 Antifeminism in Kenya

The antifeminist movement in Kenya consist of individuals, groups and organisations that oppose all the feminist ideas and agenda, and they majorly support post feminism. In her blog, Mwiti (2018) states:

One thing these “feminists” need to understand is men have nothing to apologize for; it is a patriarchal society, live with it. Men are regarded as the first line of defence when it comes to a family the same applies in other spheres of the society. When it comes to facing intruders in a home or when there is a jar to be opened it is always men who are called to save the day. Women on the other hand are viewed as delicate, pretty little creatures that are supposed to be second fiddle in a patriarchal society, and are to be protected from harm by men. (Mwiti, 2018).

Such a message exemplifies an antifeminist notion that feminism today is unnecessary because since time immemorial, women have lived under the decrees of a patriarchal society. The following Tweet supports the antifeminist concept that arose with post feminism and eventually cyberfeminism that women who seek to become independent of men are afraid of losing their traditional marriage roles (Lind, et al, 2016).

Figure 4.4: An Illustration of Antifeminist Perceptions in Kenya



Source: Drebin Twitter Profile (2013)

The theme of feminism and westernization also comes up as regard the negative perceptions of feminism in Kenya. With many Hollywood movies being discussed on social media, Twitter has become a relevant platform for spreading antifeminist agenda using hashtags to air people opinions of movies or films. The below tweet exemplifies the opinion of an antifeminist regarding a popular Hollywood television series known as “House of Cards”.



The author of the tweet claimed that the film “has abruptly shifted into one of TV's most feminist offerings by channelling its cult status into an opportunity to tell rich, honest stories

about women's lives without having to kowtow to the tender sensibilities of the conservatives in the audience”.

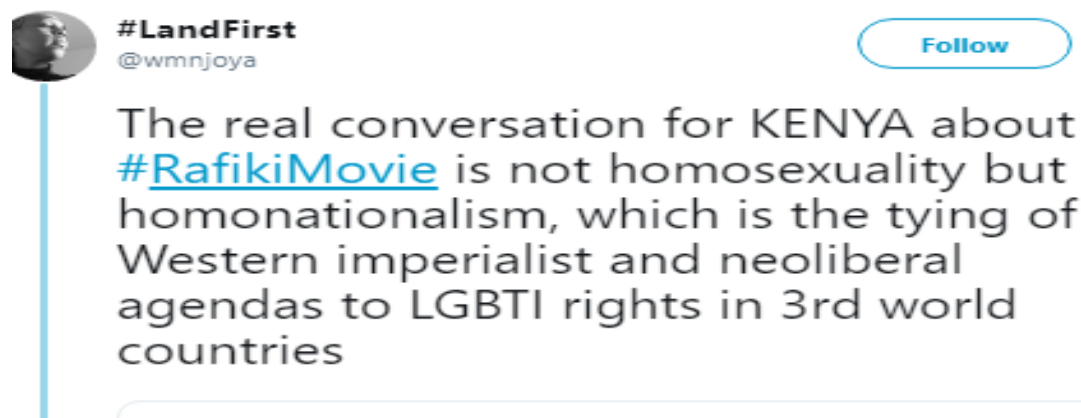
4.3 Types of Lenses used in the Online Coverage of Feminism in Kenya

4.3.1 Feminism and Westernization

Feminist discourse in Kenya can be argued from a standpoint of Marx (2015) in an article published in Kenya Talk website, which promoted the theme of feminism and westernization. The author argued that Kenyan feminism includes broad-minded principles of feminism as depicted in the West. The author claims that feminism does not necessarily mean an individual is modern, but speeds up the agenda to take over the natural order of the family unit.

For example, Kenyans are almost in unison regarding the rejection of homosexuality or rather same-sex marriage, which is common in the Western world. This is depicted in the latest heated discussion on Twitter about the movie called “Rafiki” via the hashtag #rafikimovie, which the government lifted its ban for displaying homosexual images. Ezekiel Mutua, the Kenya Film and Classification Board (KFCB) boss, intensely warned NGOs to stop using gay content to market films in the country, as this was the main reason for the ban (Boss, 2018). The tweet below summarized Kenyans portrayal of homosexuality on Twitter with comments on the “Rafiki” film.

Figure 4.5: An Illustration of Feminist Depictions of Homosexuality



Source: WM Njoya Twitter Profile

Even as such practices from Western Cultures try to penetrate the African continent and its respective countries, Gatwiri, & McLaren (2016) argue that Western feminism cannot assimilate all African women in some practices. The authors claim that Africans who embrace Western feminisms bear the risk of being isolated from other feminisms, or being ignored by their women counterparts.

4.3.2 Opportunistic Feminism

An opportunist feminist refers to those who acknowledge the general aspects of feminism that benefit them, while disregarding disadvantageous aspects of feminism. In Kenya, women are presented as uncertain or ignorant of what they are fighting for, which promote the opportunistic feminism. They usually capitalize on discussing and practising the traditional gender roles only, while evading other controversial and unbeneficial aspects.

As depicted by an in-depth analysis of the hashtag #feminism by twitter users, the membership-based NGO, FEMNET (@FemnetProg), lauded the appointment of the Kenyan feminist Rachael Mwikali (@rachaelmwiks) as a board member of Amnesty Kenya in a catchy tweet (Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.6: An Illustration of Opportunistic Feminism



Source: FEMNET Twitter Profile (2014)

FEMNET has been in existence for the last three decades as a feminist organization fighting for women's rights and intensifying their development in Kenya and Africa. This tweeted image approves the prevailing societal notion that feminism ensures equality for women, and that men are inferior to women when it comes to grabbing feminist opportunities (Bustelo, 2016).

According to an article written by Nyanchwani (2017), feminists in Kenyan are composed of women who wait for opportunities to seize NGO funding. The theme of Feminism and Social Class also emerges as the author presents the five types of feminist women in Kenya. These include the pseudo-intellectual class who have read a few feminist books, women who date the "bad boys", women who suffered or witnessed domestic abuse, rent-seeking feminists, and those who feel feminism is a privilege.

4.4 Influence of Social Media Depictions on the Perception of Feminism in Kenya

One of the major findings about the feminist discourse in Kenya through a comprehensive analysis of the most recent articles as well as tweets shows that many Kenyans are opportunistic feminists who pick often random issues related to the discourse to express their opinions. Some of them touch on political leadership, reproductive health, domestic violence, equal pay etc. In her article entitled “Feminism in Kenya: A New Narrative”, Elise Axtell (2018; pg. 8) remarked on the struggles that Kenyan women still go through in this patriarchal society even after the passing of the new constitution in 2010.

“Since the passing of the revised constitution, women must comprise at least one third of Parliament. Abortion is now legal when a medical expert determines that the life of the mother is at stake. Funding for women’s healthcare has been greatly expanded. The women of Kenya acknowledge the devastating elements of their history: the violent aftershocks of colonialism. But they are not just survivors. They are creators, boldly writing a new narrative.”

4.4.1 Feminism and Professional Leadership

The social media has presented feminism as a way of promoting the politics of gender identity in Kenya, which represents the theme of feminism and professional leadership. Sanya & Lutomia (2016) highlights some of the colossal achievements and milestones that can be traced in Kenyan history.

Mary Okello became the first female banker to break the status quo, when she became a branch manager in 1977 before rising to chair the board of the Kenya Commercial Bank in 2003. Priscillah Abwao attended the Lancaster House Conference that paved the way for Kenya’s independence in 1963. Kenyan women’s involvement in the liberation struggle can be seen in the involvement of women in the Mau Mau rebellion and in the Giriama rebellion of 1913 led by a woman, Mekatilili wa Menza. Grace Onyango’s 1965 election as the nation’s first woman mayor in Kisumu and then as a Member of Parliament in 1969.

Even with these achievements, the perception of male dominance has infiltrated various societies and religions in Kenya today. This also includes the feminism movement, which has emerged with a strong political agenda to portray the failure of the patriarchal society to

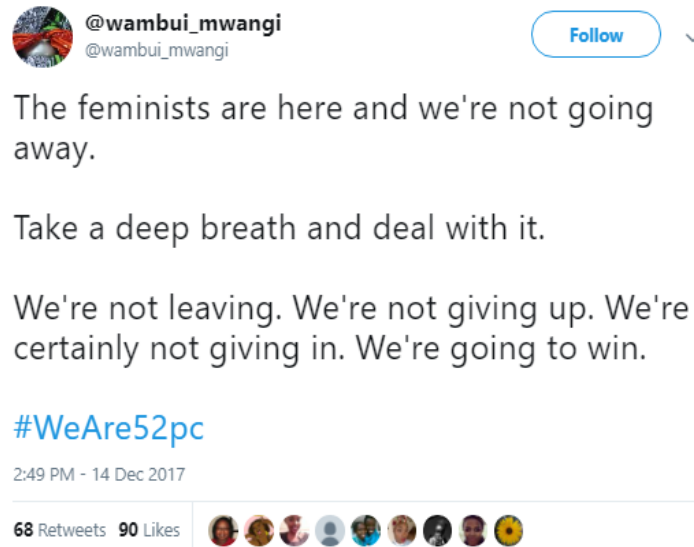
provide unbiased leadership opportunities in the political field. While advocating for women rights, it was evident that the feminist movement has been extensively aggressive and vocal in the implementation of the two-thirds gender rule for parliamentary seats.

The hashtag #weare52pc has been widely tweeted and retweeted on Twitter due to the heated debate regarding the two-thirds gender rule. The feminists support the argument that since women's are approximately 52% in population, they have a right to demand that the government implement the two-thirds gender rule as enshrined in Article 81 of the constitution of Kenya. The below tweet has 68 retweets and 20 likes.

Figure 4.7: An Illustration of Feminism and Professional Leadership in Kenyan Politics



Source: Otilia Anna MaDau Twitter Profile (2018)



Source: Wambui Mwangi Twitter Profile (2017)

Figure 4.8: An Illustration of Feminist Profile in Support of #WeAre52pc



Source: Marilyn Kamuru Twitter Profile (2018)

4.4.2 Feminism and Women Rights

The researcher assessed a number of recent tweets under the hashtags #humanrights, #womenrights, #letsallbefeminists, and #feminism. It was evident that active social media users take the random opportunities to promote feminists discourses through tweets that sensitize people about various agenda. In the below tweet, the image shows a well-composed

alphabetical message that pushes for three key themes of Feminism and Women Rights: gender-based violence, stereotypes and mutual respect.

Figure 4.9: An Illustration of Feminism and Human Rights



Source: Rebeccah Wambui Twitter Profile (2018)

Another effect of social media depictions on perception of feminism is that Kenyan feminists use Twitter to express their activism in a myriad of ways, such as empowerment, capacity building, education, expression, and seeking help. For instance, Twitter has helped women to educate other social media users about misleading myths surrounding women’s issues. As shown in the below retweet by Scheaffer Okore, the Afro-Politico-Feminist and 2018 Most Influential Young African, feminists also fight for the judicial rights of women who are oppressed by the government.

Figure 4.6 shows the retweet demanding for the release of Dr. Stella Nyanzi, a controversial political activist and Makerere University researcher who was arrested for allegedly posting

offensive cyber-related communication towards President Yoweri Museveni (Mbuthia, 2018). Evidently, feminists in Kenya have beefed their efforts to fight for women rights across the borders through social media without prejudice or impartiality.

Figure 4.10: An Illustration of Feminism and Judicial Rights



Source: Scheaffer Okore Twitter Profile (2018)

4.5 Effectiveness of Social Media in Fighting for Women Rights in the Society

This section delves into a number of social media campaigns that twitter users in Kenya have effectively used to promote feminist activism or cyberfeminism. The different campaigns were discussed according to the hashtag associated with a tweet, retweet, image, or video messages that were used to fight for women rights. Popular hashtags that were used in the previous section were not highlighted in this section. The researcher also assessed the challenges women face while engaging in online activism.

4.5.1 Hashtag #DigitalGenderGap

Women rights in Kenya has been in the limelight since independence, and with the rapid adoption of technology today, Kenyan women have started succeeding in digital media

industries, including filmmaking, digital art, in addition to other new media. In the article, “Feminism Unfinished: Towards Gender Justice and Women’s Rights in Kenya”, Sanya & Lutomia (2016) state that Kenyan women have actively used digital platforms to push for a number of feminist agenda through constant whistle-blowing and political activism. Consequently, women in the modern-day Kenya continue to achieve their rights due to the opportunities endowed to them through social media and other technological advancements.

This hashtag was effective in pushing for the digital rights of Kenyan girls and women due to increased concerns about online safety, access to digital technology as well as its affordability. According to a number of tweets, the hashtag highlighted the discrimination of Kenyan women when it comes to digital rights. As stated by Gatwiri & McLaren (2016), even though the cases of oppressing women have generally dwindled in the past few decades, women in remote regions still have to bear some oppressive practices. Furthermore, online activism or using social media to report such cases has been a challenge for women in geographically distant areas.

4.5.2 Hashtag #EndFGM

According to a recent survey, approximately 92.5% of circumcised Kenyan women reside in the Northeastern part of the country, which includes Mandera, Kilifi, Samburu and neighbouring areas where FGM is paramount for girls. In most cases, the parents assent to the practice as soon as old men and community warriors eye their daughters are for marriage, which usually ends up in sexual slavery (Amzat & Razum, 2014).

The hashtag #EndFGM focuses of feminist agenda of pushing for the total eradication of female genital mutilation not only in Kenya, but also in Africa. The researcher analysed top tweets and the Coalition on Violence against Women (COVAW) was one of the most active organizations on twitter supporting the eradication of FGM. This Kenyan-based NGO

advocates for women's human rights. Furthermore, the Maasai feminist and women activist Nice Nailantei Leng'ete ([@NiceLengete](#)) retweeted a video from Al-Jazeera English explaining her journey towards ending FGM in her village. Figure 4.7 and Figure 4.8 shows their latest catchy tweets.

Figure 4.11: An Illustration of Feminism in #EndFGM Campaigns



Source: COVAW Twitter Profile (2018)

Figure 4.12: An Illustration of Feminism in #EndFGM Campaigns



Source: Al Jazeera English Twitter Profile (2017)

The theme of feminism and social class helps to address the fact that poor women in the country are currently living with the agony of accepting practices that jeopardize their sexual and reproductive health, including FGM, rape, and child marriage. Gatwiri & McLaren (2016) state that women in Kenya lack the capacity to cast-off such chauvinistic cultural

practices that have continued to enslave their daughters due to fear of being marginalization in the community.

According to Wanzala (2018), to eradicate FGM, the youth have embarked on posting information on social media sites to raise awareness and pledge to eradicate FGM. The published posts have specific hashtags, such as #Ihavespoken and #EndFGM that they used to spread the word about the issue.

4.5.3 Hashtag #DeadBeatKenya

In 2014, the hashtag #DeadBeatKenya became a powerful and controversial social media tool for reporting and exposing men who abandoned their girlfriends or spouses after impregnating them. This hashtag promoted the theme of Feminism and Women Rights by putting “runaway” dads in check so that they could feel shamed and act responsible towards their children.

Figure 4.13: An Illustration of Feminism in #DeadBeatKenya Campaigns



Source: The Guardian Twitter Profile (2014)

As stated by Liss & Erchull (2012), humans nurture and develop strong biological bonds with their children compared to any other person. Therefore, the constant exchange of partners by women could stagnate the social and cognitive skills of a child. Therefore, such children grow up to live poor and disadvantaged because single mothers lack of capacity to empower them.

4.5.4 Hashtag #1milliforJadudi

Some women who actually engage in feminist works but never identify themselves as feminists (Barakso & Schaffner, 2006), as seen in the case of #1milliforJadudi campaign. The theme of feminism and professional leadership is evident with this hashtag campaign that Zawadi Nyong'o started via the Africa Cancer Foundation (ACF) to raised fund to treat Emmanuel Otieno (Jadudi), a brain tumour patient. In just two days, the hashtag had spread the word to many well-wishers who helped raise more than Sh7million. This campaign was successful because of the online activism displayed by Kenyan Twitter users.

Zawadi Nyong'o also partnered with a famous blogger known as Jackson Biko to launch the campaign in 2015. These social media enthusiasts managed to create a powerful thrill and compassion among Kenyans on Twitter (#KOT) by sharing the tweets with a number of news outlets. ACF decided to manage the raising of the money for Jadudi as well as the entire course of treatment until his full recovery as shown in the below tweet.

Figure 4.14: An Illustration of Feminism in #1milliforJadudi Campaign



Source: Africa Cancer Foundation Twitter Profile (2018)

According to Peters & Wolper (2018), feminists agenda are able to be achieved if they understand the intricacies of social media as well as crowd sourcing, which helped a great deal in this campaign. Zawadi Nyong’o managed to use one twitter hashtag to pull the masses and save the life of a cancer patient. She expressed that,

“Money is important, but it’s not a barrier,” says Zawadi, a volunteer at Africa Cancer Foundation. “There are always people who will show up to support a good cause. #1milliforjadudi was my proudest moment on social media. Over 12,000 people came together as one, some giving as little Sh10 - it was a true expression of our Kenyan spirit” (Daily Nation, 29.07.2016).

However, it is important to note that engaging social media comes with many challenges that can change the course of an agenda. For instance, a few months after the end of the #1milliforJadudi Campaign, one tweet generated allegations of misuse of the funds. Almost immediately, Zawadi “launched “Digital Ubuntu Africa”, an organisation aimed at nurturing positive digital culture, and transforming the culture of cyber violence, which violates women rights.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

In this section, a summary of the findings as well as the conclusion and recommendations of the study was presented. The discussion related the findings with other relevant past studies to assess the role of social media in the feminist discourse in Kenya.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of social media in the feminist discourse in Kenya. The objectives were to explore the perceptions of feminism among Kenyans on social media; to establish the types of lenses used in the online coverage of feminism concerns; to examine the influence that social media depictions have had on the perception of feminism in Kenya; and to analyse the effectiveness of social media in fighting for the rights of women in the society.

5.2 Summary of the Findings

The researcher summarized the findings with respect to each research objectives.

5.2.1 To establish the perceptions of feminism among Kenyans on social media.

This study found out that most Kenyans perceive feminism in the eye of girl-child protection and freedom of choice, which plays a key role in promoting the feminist discourse in Kenya. When it comes to the freedom of choice, the study discussed the popularity and effectiveness of the #MyDressMyChoice campaign, which was coined by the self-proclaimed feminist Wambui Waiganjo. The feminist expressed that feminism gives people the freewill to choose what they want and who they want to become in the end which is in alignment with first wave and specifically liberal feminism.

This study also highlighted the #EndFGM campaign on Twitter, which has generated a global buzz about girl-child protection and their reproductive health through feminist discourses.

Kenyans on Twitter perceive the eradication of FGM as a big step towards achieving their feminist goals. This study gave an example of a celebrated #EndFGM activist, Nice Nailantei Leng'ete ([@NiceLengete](#)), whose Twitter profile explicitly expresses her feminist disrespect for the practice. Such a pervasive use of social media presents it as a powerful tool that can change the perceptions of Kenyans on many feminist issues besides girl-child protection.

5.2.2 To establish the types of lenses used in the online coverage of feminism in Kenya.

The study found out that in Kenya, feminism matters have wide-ranging depictions and lenses as presented by social media users. For example, social media depictions of homosexuality shows that the online coverage of feminist discourse does not support the westernized practice. Even though Kenyan feminism comprises of broad-minded principles of feminism as depicted in the West, the movement does not necessarily mean an individual is modern, but speeds up the agenda to take over the natural order of the family unit.

The study also found out that social media users in Kenya depict feminism as opportunity for acknowledging the general aspects of feminism that benefit them, while disregarding disadvantageous aspects of feminism. In Kenya, women are presented as uncertain or ignorant of what they are fighting for, which promote the opportunistic feminism. Furthermore, the social media depiction of opportunistic feminism show that Kenyans on Twitter capitalize on discussing and practising the traditional gender roles only, while evading other controversial and unbeneficial aspects.

5.2.3 To examine the influence of social media depictions on the perception of feminism in Kenya.

This study found out that many Kenyans are opportunistic feminists who often pick random issues related to the discourse to express their opinions. Some of them touch on political leadership, reproductive health, domestic violence, equal pay etc. Furthermore, active social

media users seize unplanned opportunities to promote feminists discourses through tweets that sensitize people about various agenda.

The study also found that Kenyan feminists use Twitter to express their activism through empowerment, capacity building, education, freedom of expression, and seeking help. By using social media to educate people about misleading myths surrounding women's issues, feminists in Kenya have also extended their campaigns in other countries through social media to fight for women rights judiciously.

5.2.4 To analyse the effectiveness of social media in fighting for women rights in the society

This study analysed popular Twitter hashtags that have contributed effectively to fighting the rights of women in the country. It was found out that many social media campaigns in Kenya have effectively promoted feminist activism or cyberfeminism to fight for women rights. The study highlighted popular hashtags that were used to engage people in online activism, including #DigitalGenderGap, #EndFGM, #DeadBeatKenya, and #1milliforJadudi. The campaigns proved that social media is effective in allowing the uninhibited participation of people in social discourses because its decentralized and loosely hierarchical order is heavily based on existing democratic structures (Mikell, 1997).

5.3 Conclusions

From the findings of this study, it is evident that social media plays a significant role in furthering the feminist discourse in the country. The study concluded that cyberfeminism has increased in Kenyan because social media contrasts from conventional media in numerous perspectives, including quality, achieve, recurrence, ease of use, instantaneousness, cost and lastingness. With the ability retweeting of feminist ideas and mentioning of feminists on Twitter, the feminist discourse continues to fight for women rights in all angles.

The study concluded that there many social media users who pose as feminists do not fully conform to the principles of feminism due to contradictory identities or opportunistic feminism. According to Moghadam (2005), for one to identify himself or herself as a feminist in social media, he/she must stand by the media messages that promote their discourses, and combat those that belittle feminism. They should not capitalize on discussing and practising the traditional gender roles only, while evading other controversial and unbeneficial aspects.

Moreover, the study concluded that Kenyan feminism takes account of broad-minded principles of feminism as depicted in the West. Conceptualizing and accepting the term feminism has been met with various reactions in Kenya because it is a term of a “Western” meaning. This means that people perceive feminism as having originated or come from the white people and therefore un-African. This corroborates some of the assertions by Maloiy, (2016) who also found the same perceptions regarding feminism. This has led some women who actually engage in feminist works to deny or refuse to identify themselves as feminists. Therefore, feminism does not necessarily mean an individual has embraced the modern-day the movement’s aspects, but it speeds up their agenda to take over the natural order of the family unit.

The social media users’ perception of feminism plays a significant role in the way the feminist discourse influences people online. The number of people who will be lured by the message depends on whether the social media user tweeted an image, video, retweet, hashtag or any other kind of update. According to Dicker & Piepmeier (2016), the framing of posts or messages in social media to promote feminist discourses produces differing attitudes towards the specific issue.

Given that Kenyan women have actively used digital platforms to push for a number of feminist agenda through constant whistle-blowing and political activism, they often fail to place any personal significance to the social movements (Sanya & Lutomia, 2016). Even though social media helps to promote the feminist discourse, online activists should use of positive frames of feminism to combat the negative ones that would slow down progress. With respect to cyberfeminism, to safeguard the voice and distinguishability for women's rights, feminists in Kenya continue to engage with social media to support creativity, activism, social connections, pleasure and change (Liss & Erchull, 2012).

5.4 Recommendations

With reference to the findings and conclusions of the study, the researcher provided the following recommendations.

5.4.1 Recommendations from the Study

The researcher recommends that through the positive coverage of the feminist movements in social media, users can instil a positive frame for their discourses, which might translate into the audience being more receptive to the feminist agenda and its attendant issues. Since KOT is one of the most active social media groups in Africa, feminist movements can use the audience to further their courses.

Another recommendation is that in the course of various feminist activities on social media, such as eradicating FGM and girl-child protection, the pertinent feminist groups must make sure that all interested offline parties are constantly engaged. According to Bordo (2004), having offline engagements complements the online engagements that help to intensify the campaigns.

Due to the negative opinions surrounding feminism in the modern-day world, women should use the powerful influence of social media to advocate for their rights and fight patriarchy. At the same time, they should uphold fundamental feminine or womanly attributes that does not go against their responsibilities or challenge cultural beliefs and values (Alkali et al, 2013).

The study also recommends that the national government should engage the relevant authorities to monitor the feminist discourse in social media with the intention of minimising the slander as well as dissemination of provocative interpretations of feminist agenda that constantly occur in cyberspaces.

5.4.2 Recommendations for Further Studies

With the evidence gathered to prove the strong relationship between social media and feminism, future researchers should focus on investigating specific women's issues. For example, researchers hold look into establishing the effectiveness of social media in combating FGM in the country.

Furthermore, in order to understand the perception of social media campaigns to women empowerment, it is important for future researchers to use other types of exposures to these campaigns, such as specific Twitter profiles, photos, or slogans. This would bring up new themes of feminism on social media to produce a flawless representation of the feminist agenda in the country and globally.

REFERENCES

- Abusharaf, R. M. (1995). Rethinking feminist discourses on female genital mutilation: the case of the Sudan. *Canadian Woman Studies*, 15(2).
- Amzat, J., & Razum, O. (2014). *Medical sociology in Africa*. Springer.
- Barakso, M., & Schaffner, B. F. (2006). Winning coverage: News media portrayals of the women's movement, 1969-2004. *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, 11(4), 22-44.
- Bordo, S. (2004). *Unbearable weight: Feminism, Western culture, and the body*. Univ of California Press.
- Boss, K. (2018). Ezekiel Mutua rants against homosexuality after high court lifted Rafiki movie ban. Retrieved from <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/ureport/story/2001296425/ezekiel-mutua-rants-against-homosexuality-after-high-court-lifted-rafiki-movie-ban>
- Three decades of state feminism and gender equality policies in multi-governed Spain. *Sex Roles*, 74(3-4), 107-120.
- Daily Nation (2016) Hashtags that are impacting lives. (2018). Retrieved from <https://www.nation.co.ke/lifestyle/mynetwork/Hashtags-that-are-impacting-lives/3141096-3320236-13964sdz/index.html>
- Dicker, R., & Piepmeier, A. (Eds.). (2016). *Catching a wave: Reclaiming feminism for the 21st century*. Northeastern University Press.
- DW (2014). #MyDressMyChoice: Kenyans hold rally to support woman beaten for wearing miniskirt. Retrieved from <https://www.dw.com/en/mydressmychoice-kenyans-hold-rally-to-support-woman-beaten-for-wearing-miniskirt/a-18069645>
- Elise Axtell, B. (2018). Feminism in Kenya: A New Narrative. Retrieved from https://www.feminist.com/resources/artspeech/inter/feminism_in_kenya.html
- Fraser, N. (2015). The fortunes of socialist feminism: Jo Little interviews Nancy Fraser. *Soundings*, 58, 21-33.

Friedersdorf, C. (2014). Feminism, Depravity, and Power in House of Cards. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/02/feminism-depravity-and-power-in-em-house-of-cards-em/283960/>

Gatwiri, G. J., & McLaren, H. J. (2016). Discovering my own African feminism: embarking on a journey to explore Kenyan women's oppression. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 17(4), 263-273.

Gauntlett, D. (2008). *Media, gender and identity: An introduction*. Routledge.

Lewis, S. (2015). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches. *Health promotion practice*, 16(4), 473-475.

Lind, A., Simon-Kumar, R., Amadiume, I., Ray, R., Pieterse, J. N., Collins, D., ... & Harcourt, W. (2016). *Feminist futures: Reimagining women, culture and development*. Zed Books Ltd..

Lind, R. A & Salo, C. (2002). The Framing of feminists and feminism in the news and public affairs programs in the U.S electronic media. *Journal of Communication*, 52(1), 211228.

Maloiy, L. (2016). The impact of crucible events on the development of female political leaders in Kenya.

Mbuthia, W. (2018). Why controversial Ugandan activist Stella Nyanzi was arrested. Retrieved from <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/evewoman/article/2001301631/why-controversial-ugandan-activist-stella-nyanzi-was-arrested>

Liss, M., & Erchull, M. J. (2012). Feminism and attachment parenting: Attitudes, stereotypes, and misperceptions. *Sex Roles*, 67(3-4), 131-142.

Macharia, K. (2014). Unhoming Kenyan Women. *Gukira: With(out) Predicates*. Retrieved from <https://gukira.wordpress.com/2014/10/03/unhoming-kenyan-women/>.

Moghadam, V. M. (2005). *Globalizing women: Transnational feminist networks*. JHU Press

Mikell, G. (Ed.). (1997). *African feminism: The politics of survival in sub-Saharan Africa*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Mwiti, M. (2018). Kenyan “Feminists” Make Me Sick! – A Guest Post | MRSMWITI. Retrieved from <https://mrsmwiti.com/?p=5110>

Nyanchwani, S. (2017). Kenyan feminists are broke women eyeing NGO cash. Retrieved from <https://www.sde.co.ke/thenairobi/article/2000227183/kenyan-feminists-are-broke-women-eyeing-ngo-cash>

Peters, J. S., & Wolper, A. (Eds.). (2018). *Women's rights, human rights: International feminist perspectives*. Routledge.

Ray, R., & Korteweg, A. C. (1999). Women's movements in the third world: Identity, mobilization, and autonomy. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 25(1), 47-71.

Roberts, A. (2015). The Political Economy of “Transnational Business Feminism”
PROBLEMATIZING THE CORPORATE-LED GENDER EQUALITY
AGENDA. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 17(2), 209-231.

Sanya, B. N., & Lutomia, A. N. (2016). Feminism Unfinished: Towards Gender Justice and Women's Rights in Kenya. In *Kenya after 50* (pp. 227-252). Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

Stamp, P. (1991). Burying Otieno: The politics of gender and ethnicity in Kenya. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 16(4), 808-845.

Steelman, Z. R., Hammer, B. I., & Limayem, M. (2014). Data collection in the digital age: Innovative alternatives to student samples. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 23(2), 212-219.

Stelzner, M. (2014). 2014 social media marketing industry report. *Social media examiner*, 1-52.

Swirsky, J. M., & Angelone, D. J. (2016). Equality, empowerment, and choice: what does feminism mean to contemporary women? *Journal of Gender Studies*, 25(4), 445-460.

Terkildsen, N., & Schnell, F. (1997). How media frames more public opinion: An analysis of the women's movement. *Political Research Quarterly*, 50(4), 879-900.

Tobias, S. (2018). *Faces of feminism: An activist's reflections on the women's movement*. Routledge.

Top 5 Relevant and Prominent Hashtags that Ruled Kenyan Twitter in 2017. (2018). Retrieved from <https://sokodirectory.com/2018/02/top-5-relevant-prominent-hashtags-ruled-kenyan-twitter-2017/>

Wanzala, J. (2018). Africa's youth kick-start a million conversations to end FGM. Retrieved from <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2001289419/africa-s-youth-kick-start-a-million-conversations-to-end-fgm>

Whitehead, A., & Tsikata, D. (2003). Policy discourses on women's land rights in Sub-Saharan Africa: The implications of the re-turn to the Customary. *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 3(1- 2), 67-112.

Wilkins, K. G. (1999). Development discourse on gender and communication in strategies for social change. *Journal of Communication*, 49(1), 46-68.