

Social media's role in the online abuse against feminist advocates.

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August 2022

**Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirements of the
MSc Criminal Justice degree**



Statement of Originality

Dissertation submitted as a partial requirement for the award of MSc Criminal Justice

Title: Social media's role in the online abuse against feminist advocates.

Submitted by: Chloe Biddle

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Word count: 14,986

Abstract

Feminism, as a social movement is defined as a global, political movement for equality and the liberation of women. The phenomena of feminism can be dated back before the 19th century; however, this study places a focus on the first wave (1848-1920), second wave (1963-the 1980s), third wave (1990s - 2010s), and fourth-wave feminism (2012-present). Despite the key focus of each wave differing throughout these periods, the fundamental goal underpinning feminism is to advocate for women's rights socially, economically and politically. Contemporary feminism focuses on the issue of digital feminist activism and discusses how the digital world has provided a gateway for freedom of expression online. But consequently, also created a platform for abuse and violence, especially on social media platforms.

The overarching aim of this research study was to understand the forms of abuse experienced online by persons with public feminist accounts and the resulting harm. The objectives of this study were to firstly, critically explore the language and content used against those who have public feminist profiles, by studying social media posts and threads. Secondly, to critically analyse gendered differences between public feminist advocate posts and attitudes towards them. Lastly, to critically consider the intersecting harms and abuses experienced by persons belonging to several marginalised groups. The non-participant observation was undertaken to observe how online abuse is conveyed on Twitter. Eight public Twitter profiles were analysed using thematic analysis to determine five main themes. The five main themes identified were: support and solidarity, misogyny and sexism, challenging or denial of the victim, white feminism, and anti-male exclusionary behaviours. The main findings of this study revealed that white feminism and anti-male exclusionary attitudes were the most prominent types of abuse found on Twitter. This study contributes to existing knowledge as it highlights the key ways abuse is formulated online, which can aid the amendments of terms and conditions and safety policies, including the Online Safety Bill.

Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my utmost gratitude to the University of Portsmouth School of Criminology and Criminal Justice, who have supported me through my postgraduate master's degree. I would like to specifically thank my supervisor, Lisa Sugiura, for the constant support, advice and knowledge that was invaluable to me and the formulation of this dissertation. I will forever be grateful for your support this year.

A special thank you to Alex, for the continuous support, encouragement, and feedback. I am also grateful to my friends and family who have supported me and motivated me this year.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background Context

Feminism is the collation of diverse social theories, movements, and philosophies that are concerned with the social, political, and economic experiences of women (Moghadam, 2012). The social movement of feminism focuses on eradicating gender inequality and advocating women's rights (Denis, 2013). Feminism is highly varied in its ideological perspectives, arguing that it is the social construct of 'gender' that has stereotyped women to have a less significant role within society compared to men (Jan et al., n.d). The contrast and differences in ideologies, perspectives, and terminology have prevented a universally agreed definition of the term. What, who and how feminism has progressed through history is still persistent when exploring the term. Yet one definition of feminism simply cannot yield every aspect of this. The term 'feminism' will always be a conflicting, alien concept, whereby the definition depends on the individuals themselves; however, the subjective nature of the term makes it undefinable (Cott, 1989).

Over the past 30 years, feminist traditions have challenged sexual violence and brought attention to the subject of harassment and abuse (Chasteen, 2001). Sexual harassment is a well-known, prevalent social issue that is common offline and online, despite extensive research and investigations (Barak, 2005). However, technology plays an enormous part in the increase in online harassment and abuse directed at humans, as technology allows for online harassment to be conducted under lenient rules and regulations (Antunovic, 2019). Online abuse aimed at women in the public domain is a well-covered subject in the media, however, the rise in targeted abuse towards feminist advocates is continuously growing (Lewis et al., 2017; Smith, 2019). This dissertation focuses on the online harassment and abuse targeted towards feminist advocate accounts to determine whether there is a difference in harassment towards male or female advocates. Online abuse directed at feminist advocate accounts is prevalent on Twitter, due to the lack of stringent anti-bullying regulations and safety policies on the site (Antunovic, 2019; Everbach, 2018). There is an urgent need to understand online harassment, to shed light on how and why feminists are targeted (Everbach, 2018).

Rationale

There is a wealth of research into feminism, the various strands and types included in the phenomenon, and how gendered issues surrounding feminism and misogyny are portrayed (Toller et al., 2004; Wigginton & Lafrance, 2019). However, the focus of this

research is on social media's role in the abuse against feminist advocate Twitter accounts, and whether gender plays a role in the types of abuse experienced. Technology is constantly evolving, which prevents research from properly understanding the part technology plays in online harassment, as new concepts arise including cyberspace, social media platforms and gaming sites (Lewis et al., 2017). Online abuse aimed at 'celebrities' is normally well covered in the media, especially women engaged in feminist debates. For example, Caroline Criado-Perez and Labour MP Jess Phillips have experienced extensive online abuse and trolling as a response to their feminist stance (Hunt, 2019; Rawlinson, 2018). Despite these well-documented experiences, there are gaps in existing knowledge around why feminists receive the online abuse they do, and the difference between offline and online abuse, which will be discussed throughout this research (Lewis et al, 2017).

Online abuse of feminism is a significant topic due to the constant evolution of technology and social media platforms, which enables individuals to freely target others with extensive harassment and abuse (Amaral & Simões, 2021). A UK survey found that out of 484 respondents from women and non-binary individuals, 46% reported experiences of online abuse since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, which further rose by 50% for black and minority respondents (Glitch, 2020). Furthermore, Twitter was reported to be the prevalent social media platform for online abuse targeted toward women, often including misogyny, sexism, and sexualising the female body, highlighting the need for further research in this area of study (Rodrigues-Sanchez et al., 2020).

This research contributes to the body of existing literature and knowledge around online abuse targeted at feminist accounts while seeking to further identify the key platforms, language and discourses that are used to target these victims. Feminist scholars including Jo Smith, Emma Jane, and Debbie Ging have highlighted issues around misogyny and online gendered hate and are pivotal sources underpinning this research. The importance of this research area is to understand how language is used to target feminists and to determine whether gender plays a role in the abuse encountered by feminist accounts. Previous research suggests women and feminist advocates directly receive harassment and online abuse daily, which include threats, intimidation, and public embarrassment (Mendes et al, 2018; Tomkinson & Harper, 2015). A Twitter study found that 88% of regular users involved in feminist debates had experienced abuse on the platform, with rape threats found to be the most frequent response to women online (Amnesty, 2018; Cole, 2015). These findings signify the huge part Twitter plays in online harassment and abuse, which assisted in the development of this research's aims and objectives.

Public interest and timeliness are the justifications underpinning this research, as the findings and conclusions will add to the existing knowledge of targeted online harassment, abuse and online gendered hate. The 'everyday sexism project' highlights how feminists have utilised social media to promote social issues in modern society in an attempt to fight back against online abuse and violence (Melville et al., 2019). It encourages people to celebrate the advancement of women over the years, and speak out about their experiences of sexism. However, figures have found that only 22% of MPs and only 13% of FTSE 100 corporate board members are female, which highlights the imbalance in society today (The everyday sexism project, n.d). The hypothesis for this research determines that female feminist advocates will receive more intense online abuse compared to male feminist accounts.

Scoping

This research study investigates the different types of abuse public feminist advocate Twitter accounts receive. The extent to which the research area is explored within this study includes 8 Twitter accounts, both male and female, who publicly advocate for feminism. The scope of the study examines the forms of abuse experienced online by persons with public feminist accounts and the resulting harm, in order to determine whether gender and intersectionality are crucial factors in the forms of abuse experienced by these accounts. The specific parameters within this research focus on mainstream feminism. This study did not investigate the forms of abuse directed at accounts around transfeminism, to avoid becoming consumed by the gender-critical debates, which would have been a research project unto itself.

Theoretical framework

Feminism is the social phenomenon that fights for gender equality and the abolishment of patriarchy and sexism (Burack, 1995; Jackson, 1998). Although there are various strands and roots of feminism, this research takes an interpretive approach, with a focus on liberal feminism and recognises the dynamics of power, equality and the effects this has on feminism and marginalised individuals. The interpretive approach highlights the social construction of gender and feminism and produces qualitative research. This research focuses on the evolution of women and gender studies, as well as how feminist waves have evolved throughout the years and focused on multiple issues. The feminist theories explored and informing the analysis of the data are liberal, classical, and intersectional feminism. Techniques of neutralisation is a key theory underpinning this research, used to

understand the motivations of online abuse and violence (Sykes & Matza, 1957). Sex, gender, race and equality are the core concepts that have informed this research and the structures of each within society have been explored. A criminological feminist framework has underpinned this research, highlighting how technologically-facilitated crimes including online abuse, harassment and hate crimes are rooted in feminist theories.

Definitions

Throughout the literature review, the terms “online misogyny”, “gendered online abuse” and “violence against women” are used to refer to a range of phenomena occurring on social media platforms. The term misogyny refers to hatred and contempt towards women in multiple forms including; patriarchy, gender discrimination, sexual harassment, and violence against women (Srivastava et al., 2017). Misogyny has evolved over the years with advancements in technology, which has allowed digital misogyny to be conducted by anonymous users. Instead of women's empowerment, technology has created a gateway for the exploitation and harassment of women and feminist activists (Wallace, 2014). Within this research, online misogyny refers to the use of online abusive language and harassment targeted at women and girls through the means of the internet (Erikson et al., 2021). Gendered online abuse includes all forms of violence perpetrated through online communications and the internet toward a specific gender (EIGE, n.d). Violence against women is defined as a “form of discrimination against women including all acts of gender-based violence that result in or are likely to result in physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women” and these terms are used interchangeably throughout this study (UN Women, n.d). These terms indicate gender inequality both online and offline, and although gendered abuse can be targeted toward both females and males, for this research, gendered online abuse will refer to technology-facilitated violence and abuse towards women, girls, and non-binary individuals. The phenomenon of technology-facilitated violence includes cyberbullying, trolling, hate speech and hate-based harassment influenced by gender, race and sexuality. However, for this study, the term refers to abuse targeted at women and feminists (Henry & Powell, 2020).

Intersectionality refers to inequality in the forms of class, race, sexual orientation, and gender (Crenshaw, 1990). An intersectional approach appreciates the way that people's social identities can overlap and therefore compound experiences of discrimination in various forms (UN women, 2020). Intersectional feminism acknowledges the overlapping and concurrent experiences of oppression to understand inequality (Crenshaw, 1990). Throughout this research, intersectional feminism will refer to the various forms of

inequality and discrimination that often operate together, or overlap, experienced by different marginalised groups of individuals (UN Women, 2020). The purpose of intersectional feminism is to recognise how different people's identities may change the way they experience the world (IWDA, 2018).

Research aim

To understand the forms of abuse experienced online by persons with public feminist accounts and the resulting harms

Research objectives

1. Critically explore the language and content used against those who have public feminist profiles, by studying social media posts and threads.
2. To critically analyse gendered differences, between public feminist advocate posts and attitudes towards them.
3. To critically consider the intersecting harms and abuses experienced by persons belonging to several marginalised groups.

Research design

Gendered online abuse is a significant topic, which is constantly changing due to advancements in technology, that can take place both offline and online, affecting all genders and non-binary individuals (Amaral & Simões, 2021). This research contributes to the existing body of knowledge around abuse targeted at feminist advocates, with a specific focus on Twitter and how this social media platform is becoming a growing place for misogyny, online gendered hate, and anti-feminist speech (Delisle et al., 2019). This research involves the collection of tweets, threads, and images that are used by accounts on Twitter to harass or abuse public feminist Twitter accounts. A conclusive research design has been used to generate findings that can be practically used to gain insight into how Twitter is used as a platform for anti-feminist debates. A structured data collection form was utilised to select specific tweets and threads that included keywords, which were coded and analysed.

Ethical considerations

The ethical considerations vital for this research include the protection of participants and the researcher. To protect the participants used in this study, all names of users and

profiles not already in the public domain were not included in the collection and analysis of data. Alongside this, all examples of tweets used throughout this research were curated to eliminate the possibility of linking specific tweets with specific users (Steffen, 2016). All tweets collected for this research were from public profiles, which erased the need to gain consent (ICO, n.d). Due to the sensitivity of this topic, the protection of the researcher was a key ethical consideration. Before the research began, the researcher recognised where support and training were if needed, and if extra support was needed, meetings with the supervisor took place. The protection of participants was another key ethical consideration, which was anticipated and reduced by being vigilant when collecting data from Twitter accounts. Twitter is a public online platform, which makes it difficult to determine the age of users, as, despite Twitter's age policy, some users may still be below the age of 18. To mitigate the risk of including minors in this dataset, if users' profiles or comments suggested that the participant might be under the age of 18, they were omitted from the final dataset (Townsend & Wallace, 2016). Other health and safety risks anticipated included the use of sensitive language online, to which the researcher could be exposed.

Ethical approval was obtained by the SCCJ Ethics Committee on 02/03/2022.

Reference number 907.

Chapter outline

Chapter 2: Literature review

Chapter 2 will explain the history of feminism and how the four waves of feminism have evolved over the years. The literature review will then continue to explore online abuse and digital feminist activism, and how social media is used as a tool for online violence. The theory is then discussed, using Sykes and Matza's Techniques of Neutralisation theory 1957.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Chapter 3 is going to discuss the methodology that has been used throughout this research study, identifying the strengths and weaknesses, and concluding with why this methodology is considered the most appropriate. Following this, a step-by-step process of how the data was collected, sampled, and analysed is described, alongside the ethical considerations.

Chapter 4: Findings and discussion

Chapter 4 will discuss the findings found from analysing the dataset. The themes that have been devised from the thematic analysis will be discussed and explained. Alongside this, the literature identified in chapter 2 will also be related to the findings.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and recommendations

Chapter 5 will conclude the research by answering the objectives set out at the beginning of this study. Each objective will be answered and explained in terms of how they have answered the main research aim. After this, the main findings will be identified and recommendations for further research will be discussed.

Chapter 2: Literature review

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the history of feminism, identifying the various waves that have arisen over the years and the prominent movements associated with these waves. Alongside this, the core scholarly literature, studies and theories that underpin this research are going to be identified. Furthermore, the context around digital feminist activism and online abuse is going to be discussed, with a focus on the social media platform Twitter. Lastly, a summary of the chapter will be provided.

Feminism, as a social movement is defined as a global, political movement for equality and the liberation of women (Burack, 1995). Despite unity underpinning the movement, the individuals that classify themselves as feminists are unique (Mackay, 2015a, p. 3). Feminist theory is not a static phenomenon, as it has evolved and taken many directions, which has allowed different strands and theories to align themselves with the different schools of thought (Jackson, 1998). The term 'feminist' does not have a universally accepted definition, due to the differences in ideologies and values of individuals associated with the various waves (Kenway et al., 1998). Furthermore, the different strands, schools and waves of feminism add to the difficulty of defining feminism in one unified definition (Desmawati, 2020; Mackay, 2015a, p. 3). For example, liberal feminists' focus is on the equality between males and females, for both equal rights and equal opportunities (Graham, 1994). Radical feminists argue that society needs re-ordering to eliminate male supremacist societies (Rowland & Klein, 1990). Both types of feminism fight for the equality of women, however, the approach they take to achieve this is different. Marxist feminism, eco-feminism, revolutionary feminism, black feminism, transfeminism, and socialist feminism are other schools and strands of feminism that have arisen over the years, which all convey different focuses on gaining equality for women (LeGates, 2001; Mackay, 2015a, p. 3; Meagher, 2019).

The History of Feminism

The waves of Feminism

The fluid phenomenon of feminism has been ever-changing over the last 100 years and seeks to promote and empower the role of women within society (Jan et al., n.d). In recent years, the phenomenon challenges mainstream ideologies around social

and cultural norms regarding gender inequality and differences (Cochrane, 2013). Many challenges and difficulties in defining the history of feminism have been encountered due to the different experiences and perspectives of women throughout history (LeGates, 2001). It is difficult to determine whether feminism can encapsulate the history of all women's activism, or whether there are gaps within inclusivity (Taylor & Rupp, 1993). Intersectional feminism will be discussed in more detail within the contemporary feminism section of this literature review. Transfeminism is an important movement for feminism that is inclusive of both females and transsexual individuals. However, this research will not cover transfeminism, as this is outside the scope of the aims and objectives of this study.

This literature review will focus on feminism beginning in the 19th century and explore the waves of feminism that have evolved up to the present. However, there is an acknowledgement that feminism and women's movements before the 19th century were pivotal. For the basis of this research, key thinkers including Sappho, Christine de Pisan, and Jane Austen, will not be referred to.

First-wave feminism: 1848-1920

In the late nineteenth century efforts for women's equal rights emerged, and first-wave feminism became a clear, organised movement (LeGates, 2001; Rampton, 2008). Throughout the Western world, the focus of feminism was on women's positions in legal issues, the right to vote, and opportunities presented to women in politics and education (Cowman, 2010). The concept of feminism emerged from urban industrialism, liberalism, and socialist politics, with a focus on suffrage, and new movement ideologies and strategies with the possibility of radical social change (McGuirk, 2019; Rampton, 2008). Classical Marxist views were noticeable throughout the first wave, as they recognised the oppression and exploitation of women through capitalism to be around class compared to gender (Karim et al., 2019). These socialist feminists believed that women's equality and empowerment cannot be achieved through capitalist frameworks and structures that reluctantly treat women as a 'stand-alone group' (Di Stefano, 2014).

The Industrial Revolution was a pivotal moment, which saw feminists fighting for workplace equality when the revolution had designated the role of women to be within the home (Federici, 2018). Another key movement was the first woman's rights convention, which took place in 1848 in Seneca Falls, New York organised by Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton (Hewitt, 2010). This event fought for the social, religious, and civil

rights of women and was the event that ensured women gained the right to vote (Muir, n.d). In 1920, the 19th Amendment, which allowed women the right to vote, was an immense achievement for first-wave feminists (Horowitz & Igielnik, 2020). Key scholars within the first-wave feminist movement included; Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor, who rooted for women to become more involved in society, and for them to gain legal and political rights (LeGates, 2001). Alongside this, Sojourner Trust, Maria Stewart, and Frances E.W. Harper were major contributors to the suffrage movement (Parkman, 1878; Zackodnik, 2004). Despite the courageous work of women of colour, eventually, the work of Elizabeth Stanton and Susan Anthony become the forefront of first-wave feminist movements. Sadly, this work prioritised the concerns of middle-class, white women over others, which soon lost the cultural momentum needed for the wave to survive (Hewitt, 2010). A huge focus of first-wave socialist feminism was placed on the economic organisation of society and the class structures revealed through capitalism (Armstrong, 2020). After the 19th Amendment was passed, work continued for reproductive rights, and equality in education and employment for women, yet the movement began to fracture as it lost the unifying goal and focus needed for the momentum to continue. This gave way to new developments and the second wave, which began to rise in the 1960s (Cowman, 2010).

First-wave feminism was largely focused on gaining basic legal rights for women in the Western world, including employment, marriage and domestic abuse rights (Rampton, 2008). Misogyny is a term that has been used within society for years, with experiences visible throughout the first wave, such as male privilege and patriarchal discrimination (Srivastava et al., 2017). It is important to understand the history of feminism and the specific focuses of each wave, to understand where the online abuse of feminism is rooted from.

Second-wave feminism: 1963-1980s

Second-wave feminism placed its focus on sexuality and reproductive rights, and was not solely political, unlike the first wave (Baxandall & Gordon, 2002, p. 414; Rampton, 2008). Prominent issues include the right for women to apply for mortgages and credit cards, raising awareness around domestic violence and marital rape, and introducing legislation for workplace sexual harassment (Evans, 1995, p. 14). Liberal feminists advocated for a society where women hold political equality with men and facilitate a diversity of lifestyles amongst women and within democratic frameworks (Evans, 1995; Jan et al., n.d). Alongside liberal feminists, radical feminists were also fighting to eradicate

male supremacy and recognise that race, class, and sexual orientation affect women's experiences within society (Duriesmith & Meger, 2020; Evans, 1995).

The civil rights movement was a pivotal event that sparked debates around race and sex discrimination, which ultimately spurred women to organise their movements, as they were excluded from mainstream events (Friedman, 2003). The women's rights movements in the 1960s-70s called for women's liberation and greater freedom for women in society (Boyle, 1996). Alongside this, were the 1968 protests of the Miss America pageant and the 1970s Reclaim the Night marches, which focused on misogyny, rape, male violence, and sex work, highlighting the discrimination and demeaning acts faced by women (Chan, 2004; Welch, 2015). The fight for equality was rewarded throughout the second wave of feminism, through the passing of the 1963 Equal Pay Act, alongside rights given to married and unmarried women on the use of birth control and reproductive freedom (Baxandall & Gordon, 2002; Hoggart, 2000). Prominent scholars included Simone de Beauvoir and Betty Friedan, who published *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963 (Horowitz, 1996). Furthermore, Mary Daly, Catherine MacKinnon, Gloria Steinem, Ellen Willis, and the group Cell16, were notorious figures (Shugart, 2001). Cell16 was a group that organised demonstrations against the Miss American Pageant which were hugely influential throughout the second wave (Crow, 2000).

Second-wave feminism has been heavily critiqued for its absence of the inclusion of African-American women and lesbians (Maxwell & Shields, 2018). It claimed to be inclusive of racism, as it rooted itself within the anti-capitalist and anti-racist civil rights movement, unlike the first wave (Dow, 2006; Gordon, 2013). However, black women found themselves alienated from the mainstream women's movement (Gordon, 2016). This was specifically highlighted in the fight for reproductive freedom. Both white and black women fought for this cause, however black women were also fighting for the abolishment of forced sterilisation for people of colour and disabilities, which was not a primary concern for mainstream movements (O'Sullivan, 2016). This radical movement of second-wave feminism began to lose momentum, when the image of a feminist took the form of men-hating, lonely women, allowing the third-wave to begin to build its foundations (Mann & Huffman, 2005).

An understanding of second-wave feminism is important when exploring the online abuse feminist accounts receive, because radical feminists were fighting for the eradication of male supremacy. However, this is still an evident trait portrayed by individuals online and on social media platforms (Cherniavsky, 2019).

Third-wave Feminism: 1990s - 2010s

The 1990s marks the introduction of contemporary feminism, which is split into third and fourth-wave feminism. Third-wave feminism was fuelled by post-colonial, postmodern thinking and was focused heavily on workplace sexual harassment, increasing the number of women in power and personal narratives (Heywood, 2018). Third-wave feminism was led by so-called 'Generation Xers', who were individuals born between the 1960s to 1970s (Henry, 2004). Third-wave feminism is conversely different to previous waves, as it predicated itself on the rejection of second-wave feminism, perceiving it as naive and obsolete (Shugart, 2001). Although third-wave feminists significantly benefitted from the successes of previous waves, contemporary feminism arose when new-wave feminists began to criticise previous waves for rigidly defining women via one voice, typically that of a white middle-class woman (Gillis & Munford, 2004; Lotz, 2003; Reger, 2012). This movement gained momentum in the 1990s and focuses on the modernist conception of gender differences between women and men, ignoring the differences within each gender (Jackson, 1998; Reger, 2017; Stache, 2018). The movement had positioned itself to dispute social issues including sexual harassment, and sexist oppression, and to give a voice to women who had been marginalised from society (Munro, 2013; Oren & Press, 2019). Postmodernist contemporary feminism represents the shift away from essentialist thinking toward a more explorative way of discovering the meanings of the social phenomena that is feminism (Williams, 2002, p. 61).

Key theorists rooted within third-wave feminism were Katie Roiphe, Naomi Wolf, Rebecca Walker, Kimberle Crenshaw, who coined the term intersectionality, and Judith Butler, who argued that gender and sex are separate (Crenshaw, 1990; Shugart, 2001; Tredway, 2018). Together, they became the foundations for fighting for trans rights and intersectional feminism (Hines, 2020; Tredway, 2018). Intersectionality is a core value of contemporary feminism that has transformed the way that we understand violence against women (Crenshaw, 1990; Phoenix & Pattynama, 2006). Kimberle Crenshaw defined the term as "a prism for seeing how various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other" (UN Women, 2020, para 2). An intersectional approach to feminism centres on the voices of those experiencing oppression and inequalities, and how these experiences can overlap, creating discrimination (Brewer & Dundes, 2018; UN women, 2020). Although this term is decades-old, the 1990s was a prominent year for intersectional feminism, advocating for an understanding that women's race, class,

ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation can overlap and impact the way these women experience discrimination (Crenshaw, 1990; Smith, 2013). Women of colour and non-binary individuals experience multiple oppressions, whereby gender oppressions may not be at the forefront of these experiences, as they would be for a white, middle-class woman. Highlighting the challenges and injustices faced by intersectional feminists, due to the disproportionate attention white women receive (Brewer & Dundes, 2018; Karim et al., 2019; LeGates, 2001).

The third wave primarily tried to bring communities together, which those previous feminist movements failed to recognise (Dean, 2009). They focused on the nature of exclusivity, the intersectionality of oppression, and bringing together those marginalised by minorities (Clark & Dodd, 2008). The Riot Grrrl was a key movement that spread messages about women's empowerment and began discussions on patriarchy and the image of female bodies (Nguyen, 2012). Alongside this, Rebecca Walker founded the Third Wave Foundation in 1997, previously known as the 1992 Third Wave Direct Action Corporation. This was dedicated to working towards gender, racial, economic, and social justice (Gillis & Munford, 2004). Embracing personal narratives that illustrate 'feminism', including intersectional and multi-perspective, underpinned the third-wave movements, as they sought to redefine and question the ideas around gender, sexuality, femininity, and womanhood (Snyder, 2008; Stache 2018). In recent years, the fourth wave has been anticipated and since 2012, the shift has begun to take place.

Fourth-wave feminism: 2012- present

The transition to fourth-wave feminism occurred in 2012, when the focus shifted to women's empowerment, adapting ideologies and awareness on sexual harassment, body shaming, rape culture, misogyny, and intersectionality, with a centralised thought around the role of social media and challenging 'post-feminism' (Anderson, 2021; Shiva & Kharazmi, 2019). The rise of the internet and the digital world played a huge role in fourth-wave feminism. On one hand, it has enabled the growth of social media sites and forums which promote inclusive feminism, where women can challenge mainstream views and ideologies (Chamberlain, 2016; Smith, 2019). However, it has also provided a gateway for online abuse, violence against women, and anti-feminist sentiments, including the 'manosphere' and incels (Lindsay, 2022; Puente, 2011). The internet gave women a voice to freely speak about sensitive topics and individual experiences within seconds, globally, digital internet activism is a key feature of the fourth wave (Chamberlain, 2016). Fourth-

wave feminism is centred around hashtags and 'call-out culture', which challenges the recognition and solidarity between women (Munro, 2013).

There have been many high-profile incidents both online and offline which have fuelled the fourth wave movement. In 2012, Laura Bates founded the Everyday Sexism Project on Twitter, to document examples of sexism and harassment around the world (Chamberlain, 2016). Then came the Gamergate campaign in 2014, where Zoe Quinn was at the forefront of online attacks and suffered extensive backlash and abuse (Illing, 2017). Following this came the Women's March in 2017, charged by Donald Trump's inflammatory remarks against women (Hartocollis & Alcindor, 2017). Lastly, the Me-Too campaign, originally orchestrated by Tarana Burke, raised awareness for women of colour and their experiences of sexual violence. However, was appropriated by Alyssa Milano into the use of the hashtag in 2017 (Gill & Rahman-Jones, 2020; Hillstrom, 2018). The appropriation of the term led to global recognition and a worldwide movement that was fuelled by the abuse inflicted by Harvey Weinstein (Gill & Rahman-Jones, 2020). These examples demonstrate how a single experience can gain momentum, which can be enhanced using technology (Chamberlain, 2016).

Violence against women and girls (VAWG), a term found both online and offline, is encountered by women globally (Ellsberg et al., 2015). The term involves, but is not limited to, experiences and threats of rape, domestic abuse, and sexual assault, and is estimated to affect 30% of women aged 15 or older (UN Women, 2022). Furthermore, 21% of women between 18-29 have reported being sexually harassed online (Duggan, 2017). Radical feminists define VAWG as "a consequence of male supremacy and a symptom of patriarchy to where women are seen as inferior to men" (Mackay, 2015b, p.11). Online spaces are notorious for misogyny and abuse against women, with technology playing a pivotal role in its evolution, which creates significant setbacks for feminism and the fight for gender equality (Ging & Siapera, 2018; Smith, 2019). Despite technology allowing revolutionised communications between multi-functional devices and freedom of expression to transcend borders and international boundaries, it has also created a gateway for abuse against women (Gillespie, 2001). Contemporary feminism is an iconic movement of feminism due to the shift in aspirations of feminists around the world (Shugart, 2001). The increased use of technology has been historical in the ability to facilitate online activism, yet also simultaneously facilitate online abuse.

Digital Feminist Activism

Digital media has allowed a new strand of anti-feminism to digest and rival feminist campaigns and ideas (Ging, 2019). Digital feminist activism is a response to the ongoing problems technology has created mentioned above and is deployed by activists to raise awareness, call for action and create a reaction to feminist issues (Barker & Jurasz, 2019). Cyber harassment and online misogyny have become a common aspect of everyday experiences for women online (Jane, 2016). Women's participation in online debates and conversations has resulted in online trolling and abuse (Chamberlain, 2016). In recent years, there has been a growing body of literature revealing how men have increasingly used online media communications to abuse women (Chamberlain, 2016; Eckert, 2017; Jane, 2021). Digital feminist activism has allowed feminist advocates to communicate, organise, and network against contemporary sexism and misogyny, offering new tools to spread awareness and information (Clark, 2007; Mendes et al., 2019). The rise of digital feminist activism has been responsible for bringing attention to global issues, including online rape culture and the everyday abuse experienced by women both online and offline (Barker & Jurasz, 2019). Digital activism has taken place through a range of digital media, including online magazines and blogs, such as *Everyday Feminism*, to social media sites (Clark, 2007). Social media platforms have allowed women and minority groups to participate in political and societal issues. Whereas for many, if the internet did not exist, they would have not been able to freely speak out about these injustices (Jane, 2014). Online abuse against feminism questions the right to free speech online and equality when using online public technology (Barker & Jurasz, 2019). The emergence of online campaigns including #MeToo, *Everyday Sexism*, *Hollaback!* and #freethenip are crucial movements attempting to eradicate gender differences and sexism (Mendes et al., 2019).

The internet has played a huge role in feminism where, with constant advancements in technology and the development of new forums and social media platforms, activism and engagement with feminist ideologies online have become more popular (Mendes et al., 2019). Digital technologies have given a voice to individuals to share their ideologies and challenge mainstream views against feminism (Citron, 2009; Smith, 2019). However, gendered online abuse is found on all social media sites and since the beginning of 2022, 19% of women worldwide have received an unrequested comment on their appearance (Montebello, 2021; Statista Research Department, 2022). Although feminism is embraced and advocated by both males and females, this research examines whether gender plays

a part in the types of online abuse targeted at feminist accounts, or whether feminist abuse is non-selective (Antunovic, 2019).

Rape culture is a burgeoning issue that is being perpetrated through the media and pop culture. Rape culture refers to beliefs that encourage male sexual aggression and support violence against women and was first articulated in 1975 (Buchwald et al, 1993). The social media response to this seeks to interrupt cultural and societal support for sexual violence and VAWG. The term focuses on the culture that justifies these violent behaviours and encourages communicative and physical acts to take place (Rentschler, 2014). Misogynistic language, objectification of women's bodies, glamorisation of sexual violence, and disregarding women's rights and safety are all examples of how rape culture can be perceived within society (Rape Crisis, 2021). Although social media is used as a platform to utilise rape culture, it is also used to hold those accountable and spread awareness around the issue, highlighting the important work digital feminist activism does online (Antunovic, 2019; Rentschler, 2014).

Misogyny and sexism are two terms that are going to be referred to multiple times throughout this research and are common terms used within feminist movements. The equality and empowerment of women has become a worldwide conversation that is trying to dismantle the patriarchy (Ging & Siapera, 2018). Misogyny refers to the hatred, dislike, prejudice, and disregard of women, and can be found both online and offline (Manne, 2017). Online misogyny is going to be referred to throughout this research, which explores how there is a growing level of disproportionate gender-based online abuse experienced by women (Gilmore, 2010). A 2017 study conducted by Pew Research Centre found that 21% of women reported being sexually harassed online, which is more than double the percentage of men (Ging & Siapera, 2018). Misogyny does not always involve violence, however, it almost always involves some form of harm, whether this is indirect, by making women feel less safe, equal or inclusive compared to males. Or directly, involving physical or psychological harm, for example, verbal abuse, cyber-stalking or trolling (Gilmore, 2010; Manne, 2017).

Sexism is a form of oppression that includes the discrimination or devaluation based on an individual's sex or gender, which could take the form of restricted job or sporting opportunities, jokes about being inferior to males, or using sexist language as an insult or threat (Holland & Cortina, 2013). The word sexism was introduced into feminist movements during the second wave and has underpinned movements ever since (Plakoyiannaki et al., 2008). These two concepts exist and intertwine as society continues

to question these acts within patriarchal communities, and although the terms are defined differently, if misogyny is eliminated from society, then sexism will be tackled as well. There are many misconceptions about the difference between sexism and misogyny, Manne (2017, p. 20) differentiates sexism and misogyny by stating that “sexism is the ideology that supports patriarchal social relations, but misogyny enforces it when there’s a threat of that system going away.” This statement focuses on how misogynistic behaviour is about punishing women who do not act in ways that are the norms of a patriarchal society.

Online abuse on Twitter

Within the current landscape of feminism and online violence against women (OVAW), it is evident that not one specific social media platform is the root cause (Lewis et al., 2017). However, Twitter has been found to play a critical role in online abuse, with trolling and threats becoming an increasing matter of concern (Delisle et al., 2019; Home Affairs Select Committee, 2017). Twitter is one of the largest and most popular social media platforms with millions of users around the world (Amnesty, 2018). The public nature of Twitter and the ability to have open conversations with other users has left individuals vulnerable to unwanted interactions and messages (Hardaker & McGlashan, 2016). Evidence highlighting the issue was found in The Toxic Twitter study (2017), which found that women identified Twitter as a place where abuse and violence is widespread and where inadequate protections exist. Alongside this, 1.1 million abusive tweets were found to have been sent to women in 2017, an average of one every thirty seconds. Black women were found to be 84% more likely to receive an abusive or problematic tweet (Amnesty, 2018).

There have been both positive and negative aspects identified when using Twitter as a social media platform. On the one hand, Twitter is extremely easy to access and allows users to engage, network, and share discourses with others from anywhere in the world (Bogen et al., 2019). It is a forum for the activist movement, and in today’s climate, allows people to communicate with individuals they may never have met if it was not for online technology (Gruzd et al., 2011). However, it is also a platform where abuse and violence flourish with a lack of responsibility and accountability (Amnesty, 2018). Focusing on Twitter’s present limitations, a 2022 study surveying 1,018 social media users in the US found that Twitter was rated as the most toxic social media app, scoring 7.82 out of 10. It was also found that Twitter is the first-place troll to share diverse memes, cancellation trends and harmful comments (Norton, 2022). Despite this, it must be considered that

Twitter is not representative of all types of online abuse that occur on social media platforms (Mellon & Prosser, 2017). Furthermore, Twitter has been found to poorly investigate reports of violence and abuse (Konikoff, 2021). In 2017, CEO Jack Dorsey stated that “we see voices being silenced on Twitter every day. We’ve been working to counteract this for the past two years.... It wasn't enough” (Amnesty, 2018, para 9). However, although the vow for changes over the years has been acknowledged by the CEO, little has been done to fix it (Amnesty, 2018; Konikoff, 2021).

It is evident that despite extensive research into online abuse and misogyny, there are still gaps in research, laws, and the criminal justice system (Lewis et al., 2019). It is also interesting to explore why Twitter is a gateway for online violence and abuse against feminist advocates and why the issue of gendered online hate is so prominent on the platform. Alongside this, legislation and policy are slow to keep updated with online abuse, especially regarding social media platforms (Conbere, 2019). Although Twitter has been a popular platform since it was founded in 2006, the first prosecution for harassment on Twitter did not take place until 2015, whereby the perpetrator targeted female MPs with misogynistic slurs and tweets which read “you better watch your back, I'm going to rape your arse at 8 pm and put the video all over” (The Guardian, 2015, para 15). Alongside this, the draft Online Safety Bill 2021 is proposing the introduction of user safety measures for companies, however these obligations fail to acknowledge the role gender plays in online abuse and safety (Ramchurn et al., 2021).

Theory

Techniques of neutralisation were conceptualised by Matza and Sykes in 1957. This theory of delinquency builds on Sutherland’s Differential Association theory which states that individuals learn criminal behaviour through associations with cultural patterns (Kaptein & van Helvoort, 2019; Sutherland, 1992; Tittle et al., 1986). Delinquent behaviour is a learned social behaviour from interactions and reduces the social controls over the delinquent individual (Sykes & Matza, 1957). Neutralisations are defined as techniques that individuals use to rationalise their behaviour, and Matza and Sykes devised five techniques of neutralisation (Maruna & Copes, 2005). Firstly, denial of responsibility refers to when the individual acknowledges their behaviour violated social norms but rationalises it by not having a choice, for example, “it was not my fault” or “I had no choice” to justify their behaviour (Sykes & Matza, 1957). Next, they devised denial of injury, which occurs when the deviant behaviour is justified because no harm was caused to the victim, and their behaviour was harmless (Agnew & Peters, 1986). The third technique proposed was

the denial of the victim, which is used when the individual recognises their behaviour harmed another individual, however they claim they deserved it. This could be justified as a form of revenge or victim blaming (Sykes & Matza, 1957; Tittle et al., 1986).

Condemnation of the condemners refers to the individual placing blame on the individuals condemning the deviant behaviour, for example, corrupt police and judges (Willison et al., 2016). The last technique considered was appealing to higher loyalties, which is used when the individual must violate social norms to benefit themselves and their community to demonstrate loyalty to their subgroup (Sykes & Matza, 1957). The five techniques of neutralisation can be applied to different situations, including online abuse; however, it must be noted that there are inconsistent research findings as the techniques often overlap with each other (Maruna & Copes, 2005). This theory seeks to explain the paradox of why individuals violate social norms with little or no guilt, but it can also be used to understand the different types of abuse witnessed on social media platforms and how motivations and intentions to use social media as a platform for online abuse are rationalised (Kaptein & van Helvoort, 2019).

Summary of chapter

This chapter has explored the history of feminism since the first wave arose in 1848, discussing the key movements that were prominent in these waves, such as the 1848 first women's rights convention, the second wave Civil rights movement, and the #MeToo movement, which gained momentum within contemporary feminism. It has been identified that digital feminist activism is a growing movement that the internet has facilitated, allowing people globally to network and organise to advocate for feminism. Digital feminist activism is the response to gendered online hate and anti-feminist campaigns that have begun to manifest themselves in social media. Technology plays a vital role within society today, acting as both a facilitator of online activism and online abuse, which complicates legislation and policy. Policy and law need to hold perpetrators to account; however, they also need to encourage users to continue using the platform to spread awareness and highlight important societal issues (Bogen et al., 2019).

Literature indicates that Twitter is a widely used tool for feminist social movements and addressing social problems including rape culture and sexual harassment (Li et al., 2020). Digital activism is a growing phenomenon that allows users to describe their experiences, which encourages others to do the same. This research study involves a thematic analysis to understand the language and types of abuse that are directed at feminist advocate accounts and whether gender plays a role in the types of abuse received.

The next chapter discusses the methodology used for this study, reiterates the aims and objectives, and explains the data collection and analysis process. The ethical considerations and how these were overcome are also addressed.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

Gendered online abuse is a significant topic, which is constantly changing due to advancements in technology (Amaral & Simões, 2021). This chapter outlines the methodology, data collection and analysis techniques that were used throughout this research. The ethical considerations and ways to overcome these are also discussed. This research aims to understand the forms of abuse experienced online by persons with public feminist accounts and the resulting harms, with the objectives being: to critically explore the language and content used against those who have public feminist profiles, by studying social media posts and threads. To critically analyse gendered differences between public feminist advocate posts and attitudes towards them. Lastly, to critically consider the intersecting harms and abuses experienced by persons belonging to several marginalised groups. Therefore, it was essential to identify the most appropriate research design to address these.

Methodology

The methodology used throughout this research was a non-participant observation that gained qualitative results through an interpretative epistemological approach, which did not require the researcher to actively participate in the research process (Jamshed, 2014). Observations of eight public feminist Twitter accounts were made to examine the language, words and contexts used to understand the forms of abuse received by public feminist advocate accounts. A qualitative approach allowed for an in-depth, focused analysis to take place to explore whether gender plays a role in the abuse received by public feminist accounts (Bernstein & Lysniak, 2017; Hennick et al, 2020). This methodology was selected as the most appropriate and suitable for this research as it allowed for a deeper and more objective understanding of the phenomenon of online abuse received by feminist advocate accounts on Twitter and the behaviours that were occurring. A qualitative approach was more suitable to conduct than a quantitative approach, as the purpose of this research was not to measure the extent of the problem of online abuse but rather to investigate the types of abuse received. This resulted in a qualitative, interpretive approach being selected as the most appropriate, instead of a positivistic approach (Willig, 2008).

An alternative methodology that could have been deployed to yield similar results was a participant observation, whereby the researcher would have taken part and observed the

behaviours by freely interacting with the participants (Cooper et al., 2004). This methodology could have gained results due to the closeness of the group, the good rapport between the participants and the researcher, and a better understanding of the feelings and responses of the participants. However, the issues with this approach outweighed the benefits, including a lack of objectivity which could have led to impartiality and biases. Also, the involvement in the group and proximity of the observer could have affected the behaviours of the participants, meaning that they were not natural behaviours (Laurier, 2016). The main aim of this research was to understand the forms of abuse experienced online by persons with public feminist accounts and the resulting harm. This resulted in a non-participant observation becoming the most appropriate method to yield the desired results. The advantage of qualitative non-participant observations was that they allowed for a more objective and neutral view of the types of abuse taking place on Twitter, as the researcher stays impartial and detached from the group (Handley et al., 2019; Whyte, 1979). Qualitative research can also identify relationships and patterns within the data, which can contribute to or challenge existing knowledge (Damayanthi, 2019). The researcher was not actively involved in the study, which suggests that the tweets collected are a true representation of the behaviours and feelings of the participants, as they were collected in a real, natural environment (Bernstein & Lysniak, 2017; Cotton et al., 2010). However, this could also lead to subjectivity, whereby the researcher cannot gain clarity on the data that is being collected, which could affect the interpretation of the results (Berger, 2017; Laurier, 2016).

Data collection

The data for this research was collected by manually copying and pasting tweets, memes and images found in response to tweets that the public Twitter advocate had made. First, the eight public feminist accounts were identified, ensuring they were active on Twitter. Following this, the researcher examined posts and threads related to feminism or feminist movements and copied replies into a word document. After the profile pages of the accounts were explored, keywords were entered into the advanced search bar on Twitter to find more tweets that related to the account. Key words included: anti-feminism, feminist, feminist movements, and #feminism. The data was stored in a word document and organised under the eight profile accounts. All user names were eliminated from the data collection, only copying the tweet itself to ensure the protection of participants.

Sampling

A sample of eight public verified feminist advocate accounts was used in this research. These included: Jess Phillips, Laurie Penny, Caroline Criado Perez, Caitlin Moran, Emma Watson, Harry Styles, Jameela Jamil and Daniel Radcliffe. Both male and female advocate accounts were analysed to investigate objective two, whether gender plays a role in the types of abuse received by feminist advocate accounts. For the results gained from this research to be replicable and beneficial, the sample size needed to be sufficient (Marshall et al., 2013). 365 tweets were collected and analysed from Twitter.

Inclusion criteria:

English language, Twitter presence, in the public domain, over the age of 18, feminist advocate.

Exclusion criteria:

Non-English, no Twitter presence, not in the public domain, under the age of 18, not a feminist advocate.

To produce high-quality research, inclusion and exclusion criteria should be established (Patino & Ferreira, 2018). These inclusion and exclusion criteria were selected because they allowed for key features of the target population to be identified that allowed the researcher to meet the objectives. It was important to include geographical, demographic and defining characteristics to ensure that the participants selected in the sample were desirable. These criteria increased the likelihood of reliable and replicable results and minimised the chance of harm to the participants (Connelly, 2020).

Analysis of data

A thematic analysis was used to analyse the data collected from Twitter, as this data analysis method allowed for the identification of themes and patterns of meanings concerning the particular aims and objectives across this dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Damayanthi, 2019). Both data-derived and researcher-derived codes were initially used to label the dataset, which invoked conceptual and theoretical frameworks that are linked to the research question (Damayanthi, 2019). When coding the dataset, Semantic data-driven codes were more appropriate to use. This method allowed the researcher to collect complex, and sometimes contradictory relationships that took place in the real world (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Once the initial coding was completed, the researcher identified patterns and relationships within the dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Braun & Clarke,

2006). After identifying the repeated and important patterns, themes and sub-themes were determined. Five final themes were identified and used for this dataset, found in Table 1. All repeated tweets were deleted from the dataset alongside any tweets directly relating to transfeminism, and the user's name. Transfeminism is a huge issue, however, is not directly relevant to the research question and therefore was not included in the analysis. 365 tweets were initially coded into twelve sections, and then 10 sub-themes. Five final themes and 160 tweets were identified and used for the findings and discussion section of this research paper. Figure 1 displays the final five themes in dark grey, alongside the sub-themes identified.

Figure 1. Thematic analysis themes and sub-themes.

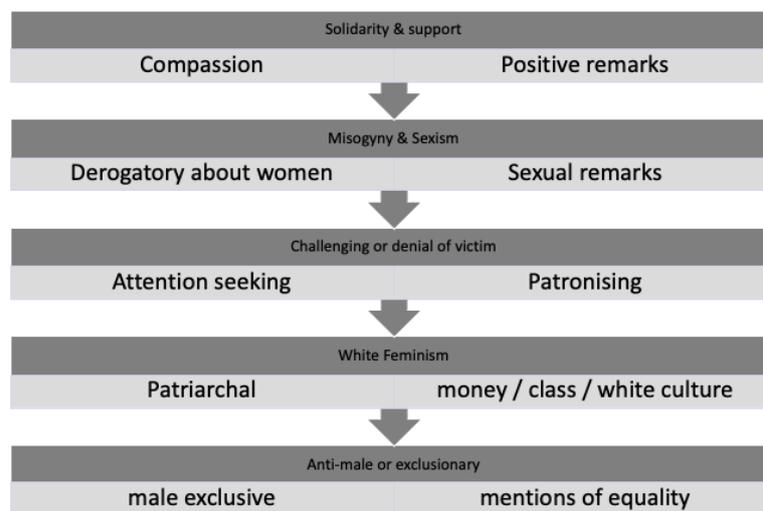


Table 1: Thematic Analysis themes.

Theme 1	Solidarity & support
Theme 2	Misogyny or sexism
Theme 3	Challenging or denial of victim
Theme 4	White feminism
Theme 5	Anti-Male or exclusionary

Ethics

It was crucial to consider all ethical implications associated with this research, as human participants were used (Cotton et al, 2010). The main ethical consideration was the

researcher's well-being, due to the sensitivity of the topic. This was mitigated by ensuring that preparedness was a key factor in the planning and execution of this research. Also, recognising where the support and training were if needed and meetings with the supervisor taking place if required. By selecting eight public feminist advocate accounts that were in the public domain, no informed consent was needed when collecting the data. However, to protect the participants in this study, all usernames were deleted. Furthermore, examples of tweets evidenced throughout this research have been curated to eliminate the possibility of linking tweets to specific individuals (Kosinski et al., 2015; Steffen, 2016). When using examples of the dataset in Chapter 4, to protect the participants, a reverse search was also used to prevent the ability to link the dataset to specific users. Tweets were collected from an online platform, which indicated difficulties in ascertaining the age of the users, as, despite Twitter's age policy, some users may still be underage (Castillo et al., 2011). To mitigate having minors in the dataset, if profiles or comments suggested that the participant may have been under 18, the data was removed from the final datasets (Townsend & Wallace, 2016).

Summary of chapter

This chapter presented the methodology of data collection and analysis used in this study. A non-participant observation and a thematic analysis were identified as the most appropriate methods to achieve the aims and objectives set out at the beginning of this chapter. The key ethical implications have been considered and overcome due to the publicly available information that has been collected. The next chapter is going to analyse the findings and discussions for each theme identified, and explain how these findings relate to the theoretical frameworks and literature review considered in chapter 2.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe, analyse and interpret the findings from the dataset. The findings will be explored to identify significant patterns and themes that address the aim and objectives of this study. Following this, the discussion section of this chapter will combine the results and findings of the dataset and explore how these link back to the literature review and theories identified in chapter 2.

Findings

Theme 1: Solidarity and support

The theme of solidarity and support refers to the feelings and actions of individuals on Twitter that showed compassion and support for the feminist advocate. This theme is important because it highlights that some individuals do not conform to social pressures and social approval, although conforming would allow them to fit in with the group (Laporte & van Nimwegen, 2010).

Through analysing the dataset, it is evident that both male profiles (Harry Styles and Daniel Radcliffe) received solidarity and support from their audience on Twitter when displaying feminist opinions. The dataset portrays that Harry Styles, whilst he did receive online abuse for being a feminist advocate, also received a substantial amount of support as well. For example;

“Harry Styles is the king of feminism” and “Thanks for using your platform...., you are the best” were tweets directed at Harry and his opinion on feminism.

Daniel Radcliffe also received supporting tweets including “I love you”, “Daniel appreciation post #Feminism” and multiple appreciation tweets, which although did not directly support feminism, still showed solidarity for him.

Alongside this, all-female profiles, except Jess Phillips, also received support and solidarity, however minimal compared to the male feminist accounts.

Emma Watson received tweets including “I cut my hair short,.... In awe of Emma Watson’s feminism”.

Laurie Penny received support including “when the shouting starts.... Means you have hit your target”, and “I fucking love your tweets!” which although positive, is supportive towards her as a person and not feminism as a whole.

These findings highlight that although the majority of comments and threads about feminism are negative, abusive and violent, there are still individuals who are not conforming to the common behaviour and are standing up and showing support. However, it is important to determine whether these accounts are showing support for the individual or showing support for feminism.

Furthermore, these findings show that gender does play a part in the types of support and abuse received by feminist advocate accounts. Through analysing the data, it can be seen that the male accounts received more support when voicing their opinions and attitudes towards feminism, with positive comments being found frequently in the comments, and threads associated with the profile account compared to the female accounts.

Theme 2: Misogyny or sexism

The theme of misogyny and sexism refers to attitudes of prejudice and hatred towards women, as well as stereotyping and discrimination against women based on their sex. This theme is important as it highlights that although the rise of online feminist activism has been a driving force in bringing attention to global issues concerning women and their experiences online, abuse is still prevalent in the form of misogynistic and derogatory forms and language (Barker & Jurasz, 2019).

Misogyny and sexism are common use of abuse portrayed towards feminist accounts, with all eight of the accounts experiencing varying types of misogynistic or sexist abuse.

For example, Jess Phillips received abusive tweets including “as long....let the ironing pile up”, “put ya knickers on and make a cup of tea”, and “will someone have a cup of tea waiting and a biscuit when I get home?”, and “Feminist....if only...passion for cooking”.

Alongside this, Laurie Penny received tweets like “women need to shut up....let sexually obsessed men invade their space”, and “Feminists: because not all women can be pretty”.

The tweets that were directed at the female feminist advocate accounts made references to the household chores and the appearance of women, common slurs used against women, which highlights the gendered discourse displayed online (Jane, 2014; Pamungkas et al., 2020). Although not socially acceptable, misogynistic and sexist remarks are common content found on Twitter and are the most common type of abuse received by feminist advocate accounts, both male and female.

Alongside this, Harry Styles received abusive tweets including “just what we need, more girly men” and “bring back masculinity”, which portrays the attitude that feminism is not considered a ‘masculine’ trait and that gender inequality and its position in society also affects males in specific situations (Srivastava, 2012).

The language used in these tweets also highlights that sexist stereotypes and prejudices are a common abuse directed at male feminist accounts. The role of men in fighting gender inequality is already a controversial issue, that will be discussed more in theme 5; however, it is evident in the data that when males embrace the feminist label, they are confronted with abuse and being weak, feminine and womanly.

Opposing this, it was interesting to find that the male feminist accounts received tweets that stereotypically objectified women as well; however, these were not directly tweeted at the female advocate account.

For example, Harry Styles received tweets including “I serve men, I cook and clean for men...” and “women always need the help of a man...”.

The context these tweets came from was in response to the feminist advocate profiles tweeting about their personal feminist opinions, and these tweets were found in threads replying to this. The language used was unusual because the context would indicate that these tweets came from individuals who identified as females themselves. This reinforces the patriarchal ideas and stereotypes that females' prime function in life is to serve males, which is problematic when understanding the phenomenon of feminism as feminism is entrenched around gaining equality for women.

Theme 3: Challenging or denial of the victim

Theme 3 describes the positions and beliefs around challenging or denying the advocate's accounts of being a victim of online abuse. Attitudes consisted of patronising and egotistic phrases and tweets that were demeaning and negative towards the

advocate account. This theme is important because tackling online abuse is an extensive and varied subject that is very well-researched, yet is still extremely common within society and takes place over a variety of different platforms (Kilvington & Price, 2017).

Examples of tweets included: “she’s not a real feminist”, “just surprised you would call yourself a feminist”, “she’s not an example of feminism” and “everyone’s least fave feminist”.

The language in these tweets was used to patronise and demean the feminist advocate, to challenge their opinions and stance around feminism. Using phrases like “she’s not a real feminist’ challenges the users and arises questions about what a real feminist even is. Feminism is such a fluid, evolving phenomenon, with continuous strands and stances that to describe what a ‘feminist’ is would be impossible. These tweets were found in response to feminist tweets that had been made by female advocate profiles, which included their personal opinions on feminism and how people should support it. Attitudes around being unrelatable, irritating, closed-minded and insufferable were found when examining tweets in response to advocate tweets about experiences of feminism.

For example, “for a smart girl, she’s very close-minded”, and “I find her vacuous and irritating, there’s not much going on in there”.

Figure 2 is an example of an image that was uploaded in response to Jess Phillips, with the context from the user depicting that they are being made to feel sick in response to Jess Phillips’s tweets about her attitudes around feminism. This image used controversially frames feminism as exclusive to certain individuals and implies that certain people cannot be feminist advocates or have any opinions around them if they do not fit with one’s personal opinions.

Figure 2. Image in response to a tweet made by Jess Phillips.



Alongside challenging feminist opinions, it was also found that individuals challenged and denied the feminist advocates of being a victim (Sykes & Matza, 1957) and prevented them from claiming they are the victims within society.

For example, Jess Phillips received tweets including; “It’s like female MPs saying any criticism of them is misogyny”, and “you seem to be desperate for approval”. Harry Styles received tweets in response to a tweet about his values and positive impact on spreading awareness of feminism that said “you are a sickening queerbaiter and vomit-inducing Mr breaking gender normal styles”.

Although the rise of feminist movements has continued to fight for gender equality, victim-blaming and attention-seeking behaviours are still visible issues that are used against feminist advocates and can damage the aims that feminism is trying to accomplish.

“It’s like female MPs saying any criticism of them is misogyny” is a prime example found that challenges and victims blame Jess Phillips, stating that any type of abuse directed towards her, she categorises as misogyny.

Misogyny is a critical issue that affects a high volume of users on Twitter, reinforcing the misogynistic language found in this dataset, which highlights the types of abuse that are targeted at feminist accounts and how individuals select specific words relating to needing approval and being inferior (Spraitz & Bowen, 2015).

Theme 4: White Feminism

Theme 4 relates to white feminism and how money, upbringing, class and patriarchy are used against feminist advocate accounts. This theme is important because it highlights how class, money, and people’s upbringings can be used against them and as forms of abuse. White culture and white feminism are also types of abuse found in this theme that is used to describe a feminism that places a focus on white females, failing to address any forms of oppression experienced by marginalised groups (Ortega, 2020).

White feminism and white culture were prolific themes that were found when analysing the data standard references to money, class, and patriarchy were used to humiliate and disregard the advocate account:

“Let's celebrate international white men's day”, “privileged and out of touch”, “insufferable example of bourgeois white feminism”, “modern feminism...basically white middle-class women acting like white middle-class men” and “white feminism sticks together”.

The derogatory label white feminism refers to expressions focusing on white women that fail to address the oppression faced by ethnic minorities; however, it was a common theme found in response to feminist advocate profiles' attitudes on feminism. The language used portrays a narrow view of womanhood and depicts that white feminist advocates all come from upper-class backgrounds and use money and privilege to benefit themselves and not feminism.

Alongside white feminism being a common trait found used against feminist advocate accounts, the data also presented an alternative response when analysing tweets directed at Jameela Jamil. Jameela Jamil is an English-born actress with an Indian father and Pakistani-British mother and although Jameela Jamil comes from an ethnic minority background, she also received abuse, branding her as a capitalist, anti-feminist and from extreme privileges.

Tweets collected included; “Epitome of bourgeois privileged neoliberal feminism”, “brown poster girl of white feminism”, and “white feminism, Brown skin: Jameela Jamil”.

The language used in these tweets portrays attitudes that although Jameela Jamil is from a minority ethnic group, she still does not fight for intersectional equality or be inclusive of minority women. From analysing the data, it is interesting that although an objective of this study was to investigate the intersecting harms and abuses experienced by persons belonging to marginalised groups, data indicates that even advocates promoting intersectionality still get online abuse and violence directed at them for overlooking intersectional harms.

Theme 5: Anti-male or exclusionary

Theme 5 discusses attitudes around equality and how males are excluded from feminist societies. This theme is important because it highlights how males are sometimes mistreated when engaging in feminist debate, compared to the abuse being directed at females. Furthermore, this theme analyses how equality is used from a feminist perspective and whether or not feminism is inclusive of all genders (Snyder-Hall, 2010).

The data collected portrayed a common theme of anti-male or male exclusionary language and context, which highlights how men are excluded from feminist debates and encouraged to leave feminism for women and females:

“Feminism is for women and if you think men should be included you are not a feminist”, “you don’t seem to understand intersectional feminism, since when did it include males”, and “in what way does it need to include men?”.

The language used within these tweets portrays that feminism is only female-inclusive because it fights for equality for women. Although feminism has opened-up conversations and debates around gender equality, sexual harassment and assault, it has also encouraged men to act in solidarity with women. However, this was not found within the data analysis, the language found directed at males who participated in feminist debates highlighted that it was unacceptable for males to be involved in telling women how or what a feminist is.

For example, “women’s rights are human rights. As a man you have no business telling women what feminism is”, “men can’t be feminist”, “feminism is a movement for and from women”, and “oh FFS, who told you feminism was inclusive of men”.

Furthering this, abuse was not solely directed at male advocates accounts for having a perspective on feminism, which ultimately results in them being excluded from feminism. Female feminist advocates also received abuse for being misandrists and exclusive of males as well.

For example, “Misandrists, not feminists”, and “feminism, always make some time for misandry”.

The language found in these tweets contradicts the root causes underlying what feminism is fighting for; gender equality. The role of misandry in feminism is controversial, as opponents of feminism claim that feminism is misandristic and anti-male due to their opinions around how males and females should be treated within society.

On the other hand, there was also abuse directed at the lack of equality between men and women within the feminist phenomenon. The language used depicts that some users feel that men and women are and should be treated as equals; however, they do not take into

account the social and economic differences and injustices experienced by women. For example:

“Violence against anyone is already a serious crime”, “whining about equality while demanding special treatment for women is feminism in a nutshell”, “Violence against women is the same as violence against men”, and “you cannot demand to be treated equally and then demand special treatment as well”.

The language used in these tweets was found from both male and female users, which indicates that there are individuals within society who oppose feminism as they believe that males and females are already equal within society. However, this contradicts abuse that is directed at feminists for being exclusionary of males and believing that males cannot be feminists as they are male. It also shows that some individuals do not support feminism, and understand that women and males face different experiences through life, which is because of their gender.

Discussion

The five themes obtained from the analysis of the data collected have depicted multiple different perspectives on the types of abuse that feminist advocate accounts receive. The most prolific themes found to be used the most against both male and female accounts were theme 4: white feminism and theme 5: anti-male and exclusionary forms of online abuse. In themselves, these are two completely different forms of abuse that contextualise different meanings; however, they were found to be commonly used against the feminist advocate accounts. From the findings, it was established that white feminism (theme 4) was the most prolific theme because patriarchy, class and education level were common topics that were used against the advocate accounts in the form of abuse. Alongside this, the advocate accounts that were used are all in the public domain, usually indicating that they are wealthy and have a high social status. Theme 5 was also a prolific theme, which comes down to the exclusion of men within feminism because some individuals perceive feminism to be only concerned with the equality of females. However, interestingly male advocate accounts were both excluded from feminism for being male, and also abused for not being male enough when they were highlighting their opinions on feminism. These contradictory types of online abuse are interesting as they highlight how different individuals perceive and interpret feminism.

Theme 1: Solidarity and support

The findings from theme 1 mainly highlight how social norms and conformity are visible in online situations as well as offline. Research has identified the importance of sociocultural factors in social control (Esteban-Gonzalo et al., 2020). Gender roles and stereotypes have led to characteristics being stereotypically linked to women's behavioural and lifestyle habits, for example, domesticity, passivity, and modesty (Siegel & Calogero, 2019). When individuals have conformed to these characteristics, they are more likely to be associated with femininity, which generates distinct differences between males and females in society (Esteban-Gonzalo et al., 2020; Molyneaux et al., 2021). Alongside this, conformity often changes behaviours and perceptions in ways that are consistent with the group norms, which is increased on social media platforms as individuals want to feel they belong to the group they associate with (Colliander, 2019). However, the language identified in the data collected showed how although most individuals that were replying to comments and threads where abusive language had been used were conforming, there was evidence that individuals did also not conform to the social norms and instead rejected conformity and contradicted the language and attitudes portrayed by the majority.

These findings link to the literature discussed in chapter 2, which states how digital feminist activism has used online social media platforms to campaign and support feminism. This phenomenon will become a social norm in society, where females and males have equal opportunities. This new wave of activism is grounded by young generations who are willing to protest and speak out to acquire an acceptance of feminism (Molyneaux et al., 2021). As the waves of feminism have diversified and evolved, the feminist movement has been composed of a huge range of factors, which have brought to light the importance of oppressions women and minority groups face (Dicker & Piepmeier, 2016). The data explains how individuals are willing to reject violence and abuse, even when most of the group is displaying these behaviours, showing the change in attitudes to accept feminism.

Theme 2: Misogyny or sexism

Unlike theme 1, theme 2 was an expected outcome from the dataset. Misogyny can be found in various forms including social exclusion, sex discrimination and objectification, patriarchy, male privilege, androcentrism and belittling or violence against women (Pamungkas et al., 2020). The freedom of expression that social media platforms have allowed for has been revolutionary for communications and expressing opinions and feeling (Anzovino et al., 2018; Code, 2002). However, social media is a prolific platform

for abuse and violence, especially hate speech targeting women, which is becoming a more relevant issue as the years develop. Research has found that Twitter is a growing social media platform where hate speech is used (Hewitt et al., 2016).

The findings of this study can be related to the literature in chapter 2, as they highlight how the waves of feminism, although fighting for equality, still have a long way to go as misogyny and sexism are still persistent issues found in society today (Srivastava et al., 2017). First-wave feminism fought for equality and gained the 19th amendment, the right for women to vote (Horowitz & Igielnik, 2020). The second wave placed a focus on sexuality and reproductive rights and the civil rights movement, where again movements and protests focused on misogyny and discrimination against women (Chan, 2004; Welch, 2015). Following this, contemporary feminism also placed focus on workplace harassment and intersectionality, and how social media platforms are centred around misogyny (Anderson, 2021). For example, based on the recent Online Harassment report from Pew Research Centre, women are more likely to be targeted as the subject of online harassment because of gender than men (11% vs. 5%) (Duggan, 2017).

Manne (2017), also supports the findings of this research about how misogyny and sexism, although separate terms are used as a tool to silence certain feminists from having conversations about the dismantlement of patriarchy with society. This study supports findings on the percentages of women who have reported being sexually harassed online, which calls attention to the current, persistent issues with the society around sexism and misogyny towards women. The findings from this research study, alongside literature highlight the increase in online misogyny and sexism, whereby textual and visual cues are used to both abuse and insult women and feminist opinions (Moloney & Love, 2018). The data collected throughout this research has shown that misogyny and sexism still take place in many forms and highlight the jaded lines between freedom of speech and expression vs hate speech and online harassment, which is an area for future research.

Theme 3: Challenging or denial of the victim

The internet has allowed individuals and organisations to portray and convey their feelings and opinions online; however, it has also allowed a gateway for abuse to be used (Li & Cheng, 2013). The broad phenomena of online abuse and harassment have evolved into social media and are a common form of communication found on these platforms, especially Twitter (Conbere, 2019). Abuse is a specific type of behaviour that is found both online and offline and attempts have been made to explain it through multiple

theories, including techniques of neutralisation (Sykes & Matza, 1957). The language and context found in the dataset that highlighted challenging or blaming the victim were found to show how individuals challenged the opinions of feminist accounts to question their position within the movement. Although techniques of neutralisation were founded to explain delinquent behaviour, they can also be applied to online harassment and abuse. The neutralisation theory is used by individuals to allow them to persist and rationalise their delinquent behaviours, which can be seen from the data collected. Although individuals did not exercise all five techniques, it was found that denial of the victim was the most common technique. Denial of the victim is when an individual recognises their behaviour has harmed another, but they claim they deserved it, which was found in the data collected (Sykes & Matza, 1957). For example, “you asked for it” and “feminist = asking for the hate”, highlight how individuals use language to rationalise their behaviours.

The tweets analysed in the dataset can also be explained through victim blaming. Individuals use victim blaming to somewhat condone their behaviours, victimising individuals and shaming them for their behaviours if they are not aligned with their values (Stubbs-Richardson et al., 2018). Although studies have researched how digital feminist activism is advocating against rape culture both online and offline, there is limited data on how victim blaming is used against individuals for having feminist opinions. It is evident that users on Twitter use victim blaming as a way to suppress the acts of abuse they have committed, which was found to be particularly common against female feminist accounts, further supporting the theory that explains how victim blaming is used to shift the responsibility of acts of abusive behaviour (van der Bruggen & Grubb, 2014).

Theme 4: White Feminism

White feminism and capitalism were one of the most common themes discovered when analysing the dataset. The attitudes and opinions that were repeatedly found within this theme were around economic and social class within society and political differences. Capitalism directly affects feminism as it contradicts the core reason underpinning feminism, which is the fight for equality (Fraser, 2012; Oksala, 2020). Feminism advocates for equality, socially, economically and politically, and historically has been about eradicating and opposing inequality (Delmar, 2001). These values oppose capitalism, which thrived to increase inequality and can be detrimental to women and other marginalised groups (Oksala, 2020). It was interesting to find that although feminism has fought to eradicate specific issues regarding equality between both males and females and also marginalised groups, these types of abuse are commonly found on Twitter. Feminism has traditionally centred on white women's experiences and by erasing

intersectional women, feminism fails to hold white women accountable for the reproduction of white supremacy (Moon & Holling, 2020). White feminism is a prominent issue because it highlights gaps within the understanding of intersectionality and how marginalised groups' experiences differ from white individuals (Daniels, 2015). Race and racism persist online today in ways that are unique to the social media platform and the internet as a whole (Brock, 2006; Daniels, 2015). The implications of white feminism can be detrimental to the cause and this socially constructed boundary prevents equality from being established (Moon & Holling, 2020).

The language analysis in the dataset highlights that it is not only class and social status that can affect the experiences of a woman. Ethnicity and race also play a huge part in women's experiences. Scholars and researchers have identified that white feminism is rooted in colonialism and capitalism (Daniels, 2015). Alongside this, historical evidence also portrays that women's experiences and opportunities are restricted for intersectional groups and contemporary feminists fail to recognise the role race plays in white feminism (Phipps, 2020; Ware, 1992). The findings from this research support other research that highlights how the digital era has created a gateway for white supremacy, further supported by the "Ladies Only" discussion board. This group identify as both feminists and white supremacists and see no contradiction in their beliefs (Daniels, 2015). The focus on white women can be traced back to the first-wave and second-wave feminism, where ideologies were focused on specific issues until white women had accomplished their freedom, then women of colour were overlooked and unprioritised. The importance of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1990) is a pivotal research aspect that needs to be explored further for society to fully understand the importance, and consequences, of white feminism.

Theme 5: Anti-male or exclusionary

Lastly, theme 5 focused on the ideas and opinions of anti-male feminism and exclusionary. Key feminist debates focus on the experiences of women within society, and although do not exclude males from these movements, primarily are concerned with the attitudes and opinions of females. Feminism is the fight for equality, which contradicts the man-hating label some individuals acquire when males speak out about aligning with feminist ideologies (Hooks, 2020; Jan et al., n.d). The data collected from this research highlights how personal behaviours, relationships and gender antagonism were key issues directed toward males who conveyed their feminist opinions on Twitter. The fixation on men and how they cannot be feminists highlights the narrow-minded attitudes some individuals can take when anyone but a woman has a feminist opinion and often

brings some hostility and critiques of feminism (Snyder-Hall, 2010). The language found in this theme highlights that individuals on social media are accepting of individuals for having an opinion; however, they also identify that males cannot have a say in the way that females act in society. This was a surprising theme, as feminism is the fight for gender equality within a society and the third and fourth waves were especially inclusive of men. Feminist theories are not about male-bashing and trying to exclude men from society, but about ending sexism and oppression (Hooks, 2020).

Furthermore, the idea that some individuals think that all crimes against everyone should be treated the same, was another theme. This is interesting because although theoretically all crimes should be treated the same, in contemporary society, this is not necessarily the case, especially when online abuse is present as this is not as well researched by policies and laws, compared to murder or burglary (Gelsthorpe, 2003; Snyder-Hall, 2010). Biases and perspectives on feminism portray that women and men are already treated the same and that crimes against women should be treated the same as crimes against men, which ultimately undermines the work of feminism since it started before the 19th century (Mhindu, 2014). It is worth noting, that most males do agree that feminism concerns the experiences of women and females, and understand that women are a minority group that experiences oppressions that males will never have to endure because of their gender. However, gender stereotypes and challenging patriarchy are still prominent societal issues that will continue to divide males and females (Gelsthorpe, 2003; Hooks, 2020).

Summary of chapter

This chapter has identified the key themes and findings when analysing the dataset. Five themes were identified and explained, which were: solidarity and support, misogyny and sexism, challenging or denial of the victim, white feminism and anti-male and exclusionary feminism. After the themes were explained, the discussion section of this chapter linked the themes identified by the researcher to the literature and theory that was explained in chapter 2. The next chapter is going to conclude the main findings of this research and answer the three objectives that were set out at the beginning of this study. Also, recommendations for future research are going to be discussed.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and recommendations

The purpose of this chapter is to conclude the main arguments underpinning this research. The aim and objectives will be revisited to demonstrate how they have been achieved through the study. The chapter will also consider the limitations and recommendations for further research, which will suggest specific strategies and areas of research that can further address the issues identified in this research.

Research aim

To understand the forms of abuse experienced online by persons with public feminist accounts and the resulting harms

Objective 1:

To critically explore the language and content used against those who have public feminist profiles, by studying social media posts and threads.

Objective one was achieved through this research by conducting a thematic analysis to identify five key themes that categorise the types of abuse received by public feminist advocate accounts on Twitter. The language and content that was collected in the dataset were critically analysed to determine the types of abuse that can be found online. These included solidarity and support, misogyny and sexism, challenging or denial of the victim, white feminism and anti-male exclusionary feminism. These themes highlighted that abuse targeted towards feminist accounts takes place in different ways, and differences between male and female advocates.

Objective 2:

To critically analyse gendered differences between public feminist advocate posts and attitudes towards them.

Objective two was achieved through thematic analysis, which discovered that males and females receive different types of abuse on Twitter. Male feminist advocates' accounts received the abuse that was anti-male and exclusionary (theme 5), claiming that males cannot be feminists as feminism is concerned with the equality of females in society. Despite this, male feminists also received the most support and solidarity (theme 1) compared to female feminists, which although contradicts the theme of anti-male exclusionary feminism, is interesting because they also received abuse for overlooking the different experiences of women and men have within society. On the other hand, females did not receive much support and solidarity (theme 1). The abuse female feminist

accounts received the most was themes around white feminism (theme 4) and misogyny and sexism (theme 2). Although this was not an unexpected outcome, it was surprising to discover that female public feminist accounts received abuse targeted at their social and economic status within society, even if their opinions and attitudes conveyed in tweets did not mention any of these aspects at all. The thematic analysis's outcome showed gendered differences in the types of abuse received by public feminist advocate accounts.

Objective 3:

To critically consider the intersecting harms and abuses experienced by persons belonging to several marginalised groups

Objective three was achieved through the critical analysis of data collected and the development of themes that identified the differences marginalised groups of individuals face when it comes to online abuse. The findings of this research highlighted that persons belonging to several intersecting marginalised groups, for example, Jameela Jamil, were found to be the victim of a different kind of abuse compared to white women and males. It was found that Jameela Jamil was subject to abuse that was directed at her ethnic background, and although an English-born actress, the abuse directed at her involved her racial background and how the opinions that she portrays on Twitter make her a symbol of 'white feminism' (theme 4). These findings highlight the ethnic and racial differences individuals belonging to a marginalised group incur compared to white individuals, which emphasises the role intersectionality plays in the types of abuse received by feminist accounts.

Main findings

The main findings of this research consist of; how online abuse targeted at public feminist advocate accounts is a prominent issue that is growing on social media, especially Twitter. The findings revealed that white feminism and anti-male feminist attitudes were key themes that are visible when analysing the abuse received by feminist accounts on Twitter and can be linked back to first and second-wave feminism, and digital feminist activism. The contributions this work has made to existing knowledge are by identifying the key types of abuses that are used to abuse feminists, which will allow frameworks to be devised to protect individuals online. This research has gathered evidence on the language and context used on Twitter, which can be used to assist in the development of safety policies and strategies when using online social media platforms

Limitations

Although this research has produced valuable findings on the subject area and existing knowledge, there were still certain limitations that arose. Firstly, the use of Twitter data as the only source of data restricted the ability to generalise the data to other social media platforms. Alongside this, conformity needs to be considered when explaining the findings and analysis. As Twitter is a public domain, individuals can freely tweet their opinions, feelings and perspectives, and interact with various individuals and groups globally. This could lead individuals to conform in specific situations, which could mean the results found on Twitter are not reflective of individuals' real behaviours, or behaviours that happen offline. Following this, tweets and threads that were collected from the data were collected anonymously and without any interaction with the participants, although this allowed all tweets to be collected in a natural setting, this also could mean that the interpretation of the tweets was misunderstood. It is difficult to understand emotion, sarcasm or feelings when reading information that is online as there is no background context given, this also creates an area for future research.

Recommendations for future research

Recommendation 1

One recommendation for future research could be to investigate the difference between freedom of expression and speech vs hate speech and online harassment. There is a blurred line between freedom and speech and online abuse and exploring when to draw this line, and how different individuals from various social backgrounds and marginalised groups perceive this, could bring awareness to the use of language for abuse. This awareness could be used for educational purposes, in the workplace, schools and organisations to educate individuals about the effects online abuse has on specific groups of people, and develop more awareness and understanding of feminism. Furthermore, exploring this issue could give light to limitations and weaknesses in terms and conditions, and health and safety measures already used by social media platforms.

Recommendation 2

Another recommendation for future research would be to solely focus on intersectional feminism, as this is a vital part of society and needs to be explored deeply. This research would allow for a predominant way of conceptualising the relation between systems of oppression which construct our multiple identities and our social locations in hierarchies of power and privilege. By having an intersectional approach to this research, the focus

would be precisely placed on the different types of abuse received by various ethnic backgrounds, which would add to existing knowledge on how differences between marginalised groups yield different kinds of responses to abuse experienced.

Recommendation 3

Another recommendation for future research that would add to the existing literature is to explore the laws and policies surrounding the Online Safety Bill and to gain access to social media platforms from victims of suicide from online abuse. This issue is a growing problem that has recently been in the news, and amendments to the Bill are currently going through scrutiny. This area of research would explore how willing social media platforms are in sharing their information, and how privacy issues restrict this from being an easy process. This research area has been fuelled by the case of Mia Panin, a 14-year-old girl who committed suicide after she received a tremendous amount of online abuse and harassment. Her father is currently trying to access her social media sites to determine whether this was the reason for his daughter's death. The area of privacy and social media is still under-researched due to the rapid expansion of platforms and sites continuously, which leaves gaps in data and research.

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