Chapter 8

Towards a Cyberfeminist Framework for Addressing Gender-Based Violence in Social Media:
An Introduction

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ABSTRACT

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of gender-based violence in social media and explores strategies to combat this issue. Objectives include examining various types of violence, exploring offline impact, investigating COVID-19 effects on gender-based violence in India, and discussing intersectionality, embodiment, resistance, and community-based interventions. Intersectionality's crucial role in understanding violence is highlighted, emphasizing the need to validate survivors' experiences. It evaluates social media companies' involvement and stresses grassroots activism's significance in challenging oppression. The conclusion emphasizes the urgency for action, sustained research, and advocacy to establish safe and inclusive online environments. It recommends exploring innovative interventions, evaluating existing policies, and understanding evolving dynamics to achieve a violence-free digital future.

INTRODUCTION

Social media has become an integral part of modern society, revolutionizing communication, interaction, and information sharing (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Its widespread usage has opened up unprecedented avenues for individuals to connect, express their thoughts, and engage in public discussions. However, this digital realm has also facilitated the emergence of disturbing forms of gender-based violence, which have a disproportionate impact on women and marginalized communities.

Gender-based violence (GBV) stands as a highly pervasive infringement upon human rights, prevailing extensively across the globe. GBV is commonly defined as "any form of violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life" (United Nations 1993). In social media, GBV encompasses a range of harmful behaviors and actions directed at individuals based on their gender, perpetuated through digital platforms. Online gender-based violence (OGBV), such as, online harassment, doxxing, revenge porn, and cyberstalking are just a few examples of the pervasive and damaging violence that can occur in these digital spaces (Dunn, 2020) (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2022). What makes this form of violence particularly troubling is its potential to extend beyond the online realm, infiltrating the offline lives of its victims and causing long-lasting harm.

In response to the intricate challenges posed by gender-based violence in social media, cyberfeminism has emerged as a critical framework. Cyberfeminism combines feminist principles (Plant, 2020) with a critical examination of technology, aiming to illuminate power dynamics, societal inequalities, and the intersections of gender, race, sexuality, and other identities within digital spaces (Allen, 2022). By employing a cyberfeminist lens, a deeper understanding of the nature and implications of gender-based violence in social media can be gained, while also exploring strategies to effectively challenge and combat it.

This chapter explores the intersection of cyberfeminism and gender-based violence on social media, offering insights and solutions. It examines various types of violence and their impact, highlighting principles such as intersectionality, embodiment, and resistance. By integrating these principles, the chapter aims to promote accountability, empowerment, and equitable online communities. It addresses challenges, including social media company accountability, and proposes technological, educational, and community-based strategies. Overall, it contributes to the literature on cyberfeminism and gender-based violence, advocating for a comprehensive approach centered on accountability, empowerment, and resistance.

BACKGROUND STUDY

Cyberfeminism has emerged as a critical field of study that examines the relationship between women and the Internet, with a focus on investigating power dynamics, access to technology, and the potential perpetuation of gender inequities in digital spaces. While research on cyberfeminism originated in the late 1990s, there is ongoing exploration and investigation due to the evolving nature of digital threats. The following research studies contribute to the foundational understanding of cyberfeminism and provide insights into current trends and challenges in the field:

Cunningham and Crandall (2014) argued that nonprofit organizations, heavily reliant on social media, offered opportunities to apply cyberfeminist goals and explore the interplay of gender and technology. Schlesselman-Tarango (2014) incorporated feminist pedagogy and critical information literacy, emphasizing the empowerment of students through digital technologies to challenge dominant narratives and foster inclusion and diversity in information resources.

Mohanty and Samantaray (2017) explored the potential of cyberspace for female emancipation, highlighting women's utilization of digital platforms for personal empowerment and advocating for countering the predominant male influence in information and communication technology. They emphasized the

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