



**INVESTIGATING THE INFLUENCE OF ONLINE FEMINIST MOBILISATIONS
ON PUBLIC DISCOURSE AND POLICY OUTCOMES
IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH USING MIXED DIGITAL METHODS**

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Abstract

In recent years, social media has become a pivotal arena for feminist mobilisation across the Global South, enabling grassroots movements to amplify marginalised voices and press for policy reforms. This study investigates the relationship between feminist digital activism and policy outcomes by analysing how online mobilisation affects issue salience, public engagement, and the likelihood of tangible policy change. Using a cross-sectional dataset of 90 digitally active feminist campaigns across Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, and South Asia, we employ ordinary least squares (OLS) and logistic regression models, alongside moderation analysis and post-estimation robustness checks. Our results reveal that social media activism significantly enhances issue salience and public engagement, especially when amplified by mainstream media and supported by responsive institutions. Additionally, coalition breadth and strategic framing are critical predictors of successful policy influence, while institutional receptivity and media amplification act as strong moderators of impact. Sensitivity analyses confirm the robustness of these findings across alternate specifications. The study underscores the importance of supportive political and media environments for translating digital mobilisation into policy outcomes. We recommend that governments in the Global South integrate digital engagement mechanisms into policymaking frameworks and that feminist movements continue to cultivate coalitions and deploy resonant, policy-relevant frames. Future research should explore platform governance and algorithmic visibility as further mediating variables.

Keywords: *Feminist Activism, Social Media, Policy Reform, Public Engagement, Institutional Receptivity, Digital Mobilisation.*

JEL Codes: D72, J16, O57, L86

1. Introduction

Over the past decade, social media has emerged as a transformative force in shaping political discourse and collective mobilization, particularly within feminist movements. In the Global South, where traditional avenues for civic engagement may be constrained by authoritarianism, patriarchal norms, or weak institutions, digital platforms have provided activists with new tools to challenge gender-based inequalities and advocate for policy reform (Jackson et al., 2021; Bosancianu et al., 2020). Online feminist campaigns such as #MeToo, #NiUnaMenos, and #EndSARS have not only amplified marginalized voices but have also generated transnational solidarity, compelling governments and institutions to respond. Despite these apparent gains, the causal relationship between social media activism and policy reform remains contested and under-explored in empirical research, especially in the context of the Global South.

Feminist activism in digital spaces reflects a significant evolution from earlier waves of organizing, integrating the immediacy and virality of platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram with long-standing struggles for gender justice (Mendes, Ringrose, & Keller, 2020). Hashtag feminism, defined as the use of hashtags to mobilize, communicate, and advocate feminist concerns, has demonstrated both expressive and instrumental power. The #MeToo movement spread rapidly across borders, influencing legal frameworks on workplace harassment in countries such as India and Nigeria. However, scholars caution against assuming linear impacts, emphasizing the mediating role of political institutions, media ecology, and cultural resistance (Eddington, 2021; Gallagher et al., 2022). This study seeks to interrogate these dynamics by focusing on digital feminist mobilizations in selected Global South contexts, assessing the extent to which online activism catalyzes or influences policy reform.

The theoretical framing of this study is situated at the intersection of digital activism theory, feminist political theory, and policy process models. Digital activism theory posits that networked publics can exert discursive and political power by shaping narratives and placing pressure on institutional actors (Tufekci, 2017). From a feminist political perspective, online activism is not merely a tactic but a space for constructing counter-hegemonic knowledge and identity (Keller, Mendes, & Ringrose, 2021). The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) and Multiple Streams Approach (MSA) provide further analytical tools to trace how digital feminist claims may enter formal policymaking through issue framing, coalition building, and window opportunities (Kingdon, 2011; Sabatier & Weible, 2007). These theoretical lenses guide the analysis of how feminist digital movements both contest dominant gender ideologies and interact with institutional pathways for policy change.

The study employs a digital ethnography design, incorporating social network analysis (SNA) and content analysis of social media data. This mixed-method approach enables a systematic examination of online feminist discourse, actor networks, and the resonance of digital claims within institutional arenas. Social network analysis allows for the mapping of influence patterns among key actors, including activists, influencers, politicians, while content analysis captures the thematic evolution of campaigns and their alignment with policy discourse (Venturini et al., 2022). Digital ethnography adds qualitative depth, contextualizing online interactions within broader socio-political environments. By triangulating these methods, the study aims to trace the policy trajectories influenced by feminist digital mobilization in Nigeria and Latin America, among others.

In focusing on feminist movements in the Global South, this study addresses a significant gap in existing literature, which has often privileged Western contexts and perspectives. Research on hashtag activism has predominantly centered on the Global North, overlooking the distinct socio-political configurations and challenges faced by feminists in developing countries (Tréré & Milan, 2021). The complexity of measuring policy influence necessitates more nuanced, context-sensitive approaches. This research contributes to ongoing debates on digital participation, gender justice, and policy responsiveness by empirically examining how social media activism mediates between grassroots demands and formal political outcomes in under-researched settings.

This study contends that feminist digital activism in the Global South is both a mode of resistance and a potential catalyst for institutional transformation. However, the extent of its impact depends on intersecting factors such as political will, media systems, civic space, and the strategic capacities of feminist actors. By examining high-profile cases such as #EndSARS in Nigeria and feminist mobilizations in Latin America, the research seeks to generate evidence on the mechanisms through which online activism can drive tangible policy reform. In doing so, it offers important insights into the evolving relationship between digital technology, feminist praxis, and governance in the Global South.

2. Literature and Hypotheses

2.1. Empirical Review

Over the past decade, scholarship on the nexus between social media activism and policy reform has expanded, particularly in the Global South. Research investigates how feminist digital mobilizations utilize online platforms to shape legislative agendas, institutional

practices, and discursive spaces. Findings indicate that social media activism boosts visibility, garners transnational solidarity, and exerts pressure on policymakers, though its effects are mediated by broader political and media contexts. Eddington (2021) showed that while hashtags such as #MeToo foster solidarity and cultural resistance, they rarely achieve direct policy change without sustained offline action. Gallagher et al. (2022), drawing on Twitter data, observed that feminist hashtags raise issue salience, though policy adoption varies across national contexts.

Large-scale analyses using content and network methodologies further illustrate the policy relevance of feminist digital campaigns. Jackson et al. (2020), in their study of #MeToo, found that the campaign's virality spurred reforms in workplace regulation and sexual harassment laws in settings such as India and South Africa. Through topic modeling and sentiment analysis, they demonstrated that online activism also provided discursive resources for redefining gender justice. In Nigeria, feminist voices within the #EndSARS protests leveraged digital platforms to highlight gender-based violence, contributing to the expansion of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act across states (Ibrahim & Adedayo, 2021).

Evidence from Latin America underscores the transformative role of digital campaigns in feminist organizing. Meneses-Reyes and García-Bocanegra (2022), in a comparative study of #NiUnaMenos across Argentina, Mexico, and Peru, showed that the movement's online presence shaped gender violence legislation through sustained public pressure. Their findings, based on longitudinal media analysis and policymaker interviews, suggest that digital advocacy created "policy windows," though outcomes depended on elite responsiveness and civil society networks. Similarly, Gago and Todeschini (2021) noted that while feminist use of digital platforms in Brazil broadened movement visibility, the resulting policy reforms were often symbolic.

Quantitative work has sought to establish causal links between online mobilization and policy responsiveness. Bosancianu et al. (2020), employing difference-in-differences models, found that governments exposed to higher levels of online protest during the COVID-19 crisis were more likely to introduce gender-sensitive policies. Likewise, Jha and Chatterjee (2023), through time-series cross-sectional analysis, reported that feminist digital activism significantly improved the likelihood of adopting anti-harassment legislation in South Asia, particularly in democracies with strong women's rights coalitions.

Some studies highlight the strategic use of digital platforms to bypass restrictions. Khattab and Osman (2022), examining Egypt's #AssaultPolice campaign, used digital ethnography and

Twitter analytics to show how activists reshaped discourse on sexual violence and pressured prosecutors into pursuing landmark cases. Yet, Al-Khateeb and Badran (2020) caution that such efforts often provoke state retaliation, limiting institutional change unless reinforced by alliances and international advocacy.

The technological dynamics of platforms also play a decisive role. DeCook (2021) emphasized how algorithmic structures shape the reach and framing of feminist content, showing that while short-form videos on TikTok and Instagram improve engagement, they constrain complex policy messaging. Tufekci (2017) similarly argued that digital platforms amplify protest visibility without necessarily building organizational depth, which limits long-term influence. Empirical evidence supports this claim, showing that offline organizing remains essential to translating digital mobilization into legislative results (Chenoweth & Pressman, 2019).

Comparative analyses further stress the role of context. Milan and Treré (2021), synthesizing findings from over 20 case studies, concluded that hybrid strategies combining digital advocacy with offline coalition-building are most effective. In Kenya and the Philippines, for example, feminist movements secured funding for gender programs by aligning online messaging with parliamentary channels and diaspora networks (Mutahi & Kimari, 2020; Santos & David, 2021). In contrast, in places like Pakistan and Myanmar, digital repression curtailed activist influence, though online platforms remained crucial for consciousness-raising.

Mixed-method studies trace how digital discourse connects to institutional change. Chatterjee and Roy (2024), examining India's #LoSHA campaign, integrated social network analysis with elite interviews to reveal how online feminist activism influenced university policies, though bureaucratic barriers diluted demands. Taken together, these findings suggest that while digital feminist activism in the Global South has transformative capacity, its policy impact depends heavily on political receptivity, mobilization strategies, and institutional dynamics.

2.2. Hypotheses Development

H1: Social media activism by feminist movements in the Global South is positively associated with heightened public engagement and the salience of gender issues in national debates.

Feminist groups in the Global South have strategically employed digital platforms to expand public awareness and reframe national conversations on gender justice. Social media facilitates participatory dialogue through likes, shares, hashtags, and storytelling, which amplify visibility and sustain issue salience (Jackson et al., 2020). Campaigns such as #MeToo and #NiUnaMenos not only revealed systemic gender-based violence but also generated extensive

public deliberation, as shown in studies of their virality and framing (Gallagher et al., 2022; Meneses-Reyes & García-Bocanegra, 2022). These online interactions foster emotional resonance and shared identity, both of which underpin durable engagement (Papacharissi, 2016).

Empirical evidence reinforces this claim. DeCook (2021), drawing on Twitter and Instagram datasets, demonstrated that hashtag-based activism substantially enhances engagement and sentiment polarity, suggesting deeper cognitive and affective investment in feminist causes. Similarly, Milan and Treré (2021) argued that feminist digital activism enriches deliberative discourse by introducing counter-narratives to patriarchal norms. Nonetheless, the scale of engagement often depends on the surrounding media environment and algorithmic affordances (Tufekci, 2017; Khattab & Osman, 2022). Offline developments, such as protests or landmark court cases, also feed back into online conversations, strengthening their salience (Ibrahim & Adedayo, 2021). Collectively, these insights suggest a strong positive relationship between digital feminist mobilization and increased visibility of gender issues in the public sphere.

H2: Feminist digital campaigns that cultivate broad-based coalitions and apply strategic framing are more likely to influence policy reform.

The policy impact of online feminist mobilizations is magnified when campaigns build inclusive alliances and craft narratives that resonate across political and social divides. Broad-based coalitions strengthen the legitimacy of feminist claims and broaden their reach, thereby enhancing their policy leverage (Milan & Treré, 2021; Santos & David, 2021). The #EndSARS protests in Nigeria illustrate this dynamic: although the movement originated as a campaign against police brutality, it successfully integrated feminist demands into a wider reform agenda, amplifying its influence across policy domains (Ibrahim & Adedayo, 2021). Coalition-building enables movements to consolidate resources, harmonize messages, and exert multidimensional pressure on institutions (Mutahi & Kimari, 2020).

Strategic framing is equally crucial in linking digital mobilization to tangible policy change. Campaigns that situate feminist demands within broader narratives, such as human rights, public health, or national development, are more likely to elicit policy responses (Chatterjee & Roy, 2024). The success of #NiUnaMenos in Latin America, for instance, derived partly from framing gender violence as a justice and health crisis, which compelled action across multiple sectors (Meneses-Reyes & García-Bocanegra, 2022). Storytelling, symbolic language, and evidence-based advocacy also reinforce credibility and policy relevance (Bosancianu et al., 2020; DeCook, 2021). Jackson et al. (2020) highlight how hashtag activism provides narrative

coherence, a key factor in long-term legislative engagement. These findings suggest that coalition-building and strategic framing significantly enhance the prospects of policy influence.

H3: The relationship between online feminist mobilization and policy reform is moderated by institutional receptivity and media amplification.

Although digital activism elevates visibility and mobilizes support, its policy influence is often mediated by external conditions. Institutional receptivity refers to the extent to which political systems are willing and able to absorb feminist demands. In democratic or semi-democratic contexts, digital activism is likely to produce legislative or policy change (Jha & Chatterjee, 2023). Bosancianu et al. (2020) found that governments with stronger commitments to women's rights frameworks during the COVID-19 crisis were likely to adopt gender-sensitive measures in response to digital mobilization. Authoritarian contexts frequently suppress or co-opt feminist activism, limiting its institutional impact (Al-Khateeb & Badran, 2020; Khattab & Osman, 2022).

Media amplification also plays a pivotal role. Traditional media outlets can either reinforce or undermine the reach of digital campaigns by selecting which narratives receive mass coverage (Gallagher et al., 2022). When campaigns achieve positive media framing, policymakers face greater public pressure to act. In India, for example, coverage of the #LoSHA campaign prompted universities to adopt anti-harassment measures despite regulatory ambiguity (Chatterjee & Roy, 2024). Scholars such as DeCook (2021) and Tufekci (2017) warn that media biases and algorithmic filtering may suppress feminist narratives, weakening their influence. Thus, the relationship between online activism and policy reform is contingent, relying on both institutional openness and media support.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-methods design, integrating digital ethnography, social network analysis (SNA), and content analysis to examine the influence of social media activism by feminist movements on policy reform across selected countries in the Global South. The methodological framework is structured in three parts: data and sample selection, empirical models, and estimation methods. These sections collectively operationalize the theoretical propositions developed in the hypotheses, allowing for robust, triangulated insights into the mechanisms through which online feminist mobilization affects public discourse and policy outcomes.

The empirical investigation draws on a purposive sample of five high-profile digital feminist campaigns from the Global South between 2018 and 2024: #MeTooIndia (India), #EndSARS Feminist Coalition (Nigeria), #NiUnaMenos (Argentina), #TotalShutdown (South Africa), and #AbortoLegalYa (Mexico). These campaigns were selected based on their digital prominence, policy engagement, and representation of diverse regional contexts. Data was harvested from Twitter and Instagram using Netlytic and NCapture, capturing over 1.2 million posts and interactions related to the identified hashtags over the course of 18 months for each campaign. Complementary data on policy responses, including government statements, legislative proposals, and official institutional actions, were compiled from national government websites, legal databases (e.g., HeinOnline, AfricanLII), and international monitoring organizations such as UN Women and Amnesty International. Public discourse metrics (e.g., media coverage, sentiment polarity, and user engagement) were obtained through Google Trends, LexisNexis, and GDELT datasets.

To ensure validity, variables such as media amplification and institutional receptivity were coded using expert surveys and secondary indicators, including Freedom House democracy scores, gender policy responsiveness indices, and press freedom rankings from Reporters Without Borders. All variables are defined in Table 1.

Table 1: *Variable Definitions*

Variable	Definition	Data Source
SM_Activism	Volume of hashtag posts, retweets, and sentiment score per campaign	Twitter API, Netlytic, NCapture
Public_Engagement	Total user interaction (likes, shares, comments); Google Trends Index	Google Trends, CrowdTangle
Issue_Salience	Frequency of feminist issues in national media and political discourse	LexisNexis, GDELT, national parliamentary sites
Policy_Response	Binary variable indicating adoption of feminist policy changes	UN Women, national legal databases
Coalition_Breadth	Count of diverse organizations and sectors involved in the campaign	Campaign websites, public records
Strategic_Framing	Coded presence of human rights/developmental/nationalistic narratives	Content analysis of posts and manifestos
Media_Amplification	Number of mentions in mainstream media per month	GDELT, LexisNexis,

Variable	Definition	Data Source
Institutional_Receptivity	Index score combining democracy quality and gender policy openness	Reporters Without Borders Freedom House, UNDP Gender Index, V-Dem

Source: *Author (2025)*

To evaluate the hypothesized relationships, we estimate the following models using panel data at the campaign-month level ($N = 5 \text{ campaigns} \times 18 \text{ months} = 90 \text{ observations}$). The main empirical model is specified as:

$$\text{Issue_Salience}_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{SM_Activism}_{it} + \beta_2 \text{Media_Amplification}_{it} + \beta_3 \text{Institutional_Receptivity}_i + \gamma_i + \delta_t + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (1)$$

$$\text{Policy_Response}_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{Coalition_Breadth}_{it} + \beta_2 \text{Strategic_Framing}_{it} + \beta_3 \text{SM_Activism}_{it} + \gamma_i + \delta_t + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (2)$$

$$\text{Policy_Response}_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{SM_Activism}_{it} + \beta_2 \text{Media_Amplification}_{it} + \beta_3 \text{Institutional_Receptivity}_i + \beta_4 (\text{SM_Activism}_{it} \times \text{Media_Amplification}_{it}) + \beta_5 (\text{SM_Activism}_{it} \times \text{Institutional_Receptivity}_i) + \gamma_i + \delta_t + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (3)$$

Equations (1) and (2) correspond to H1 and H2, while equation (3) tests the interaction effects described in H3. γ_i and δ_t represent campaign and time fixed effects, respectively.

We further test robustness using alternative operationalizations of the dependent variables. For instance, instead of binary indicators of policy response, we use count data (e.g., number of legislative proposals tabled) and employ negative binomial models. Additionally, we estimate a mediation model to assess whether public engagement mediates the relationship between SM_Activism and Issue_Salience.

The primary models are estimated using fixed effects (FE) panel regression to control for unobserved heterogeneity across campaigns and months. FE models are appropriate given the relatively small number of campaigns and the likelihood of time-invariant campaign-specific traits influencing both activism and outcomes (Wooldridge, 2010). For the binary policy response variable, we apply fixed-effects logistic regression. All time-series variables were checked for stationarity using augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) tests, and standard errors are clustered at the campaign level to adjust for serial correlation and heteroscedasticity.

The choice of SNA and content analysis methods complements the econometric strategy. Network centrality measures (e.g., eigenvector and betweenness centrality) were computed

using Gephi to map coalition breadth and message diffusion patterns. Content analysis employed supervised machine learning classification models trained on hand-coded samples to identify framing categories and sentiment polarity, following best practices in computational social science (Grimmer & Stewart, 2013).

4. Results and Implications

4.1 Discussion of Results

The empirical findings underscore the multidimensional influence of feminist social media activism on political discourse and policy responsiveness in the Global South. Table 2 reveals moderate to strong correlations between social media activism (SM_Activism) and both public engagement (0.501) and issue salience (0.482), lending preliminary support to H1. These correlations suggest that feminist digital mobilizations have succeeded in placing gender issues at the forefront of national conversations. This pattern aligns with prior work asserting that networked publics, when galvanized through online platforms, can redefine the salience of issues in political discourse (Molyneux et al., 2021; Freelon et al., 2020).

The results of the OLS estimation (Table 3) validate H1. Social media activism has a statistically significant positive effect on issue salience (0.032), while media amplification and institutional receptivity also emerge as significant predictors. These findings affirm that the communicative power of feminist campaigns is amplified when media outlets and institutions are receptive, suggesting an ecosystemic view of digital influence. This reinforces previous scholarship by Valenzuela et al. (2022) and Treré (2020), who highlight that activist efficacy hinges not only on grassroots mobilization but also on the responsiveness of political and media institutions.

The logistic regression model in Table 4 provides robust support for H2. Both coalition breadth (0.421) and strategic framing (3.302) significantly increase the odds of a policy response, with odds ratios of 1.523 and 27.181 respectively. These findings imply that feminist movements employing inclusive, broad-based coalitions and narrative strategies that resonate with dominant political values are more likely to succeed in influencing policy. The significant contribution of strategic framing confirms insights from previous studies (Jackson & Welles, 2020; Sandoval-Almazan & Gil-Garcia, 2021) that emphasize the discursive framing of rights and justice claims as essential to policy change.

Model 3 (Table 5) incorporates moderation terms to evaluate H3. While the main effect of SM_Activism is not significant in this full model ($p = 0.182$), its interaction terms with

Media_Amplification (0.0003) and Institutional_Receptivity (0.011) are both significant. These findings suggest that the effects of digital mobilization are conditional, social media activism alone does not suffice, but when coupled with favorable media narratives or institutional openness, the probability of policy reform increases significantly. This aligns with theoretical arguments in the literature on digital affordances and institutional opportunity structures (Papacharissi, 2022; Roberts, 2023).

The sensitivity analysis in Table 6 further reinforces H1 by substituting public engagement as an alternate dependent variable. The results remain robust: SM_Activism (1.902), Media_Amplification, and Institutional_Receptivity all maintain significance. This consistency across different outcome measures strengthens the causal inference that feminist social media activism is effective in enhancing public attention and responsiveness. The finding echoes earlier work by Bosancianu et al. (2020), who highlight the role of digital activism in shaping public agendas and civic participation, especially in lower institutional trust contexts. Table 7 isolates the interaction effects (without main terms) and finds that both SM_Media_Interaction and SM_Inst_Interaction remain statistically significant ($p = 0.001$ and 0.005 respectively), explaining considerable variance in policy response (Pseudo $R^2 = 0.289$). This robustness test bolsters confidence in the conditional hypothesis proposed in H3. It supports the notion that online mobilization's efficacy depends on the presence of institutional and media pathways that can amplify or suppress the digital signal (Tufekci, 2017; Sandoval-Almazan & Gil-Garcia, 2021).

The split-sample robustness checks in Table 8 provide additional nuance. Under conditions of high institutional receptivity, SM_Activism and Media_Amplification both significantly predict policy reform, whereas their effects are muted under low receptivity ($p > 0.2$). This finding emphasizes that institutional environments in the Global South vary in their permeability to activist pressure. It supports calls for context-sensitive theorization of activism, where structural constraints and political opportunity windows define outcomes (Olorunnisola & Martin, 2021; Chadwick, 2022).

The visual diagnostics reinforce the robustness of the empirical models. Figure 1 reveals that residuals from the OLS model are evenly scattered around zero, indicating a good linear fit with no major heteroskedasticity. Figure 2 illustrates a clear upward trend in the probability of policy reform as the interaction between social media activism and media amplification increases. Figure 3 confirms that higher levels of strategic framing are associated with greater

likelihood of policy response, supporting the hypothesis that discursive strategies significantly enhance activist efficacy.

Table 2: Correlation Matrix

	SM_ Activism	Issue_ Salience	Public_ Engagement	Coalition_ Breadth	Strategic_ Framing	Media_ Amplification	Institutional_ Receptivity
SM_Activism	1.000	0.482	0.501	0.305	0.278	0.431	0.389
Issue_Salience	0.482	1.000	0.398	0.225	0.241	0.345	0.290
Public_Engagement	0.501	0.398	1.000	0.277	0.312	0.499	0.301
Coalition_Breadth	0.305	0.225	0.277	1.000	0.409	0.222	0.287
Strategic_Framing	0.278	0.241	0.312	0.409	1.000	0.229	0.316
Media_Amplification	0.431	0.345	0.499	0.222	0.229	1.000	0.364
Institutional_Receptivity	0.389	0.290	0.301	0.287	0.316	0.364	1.000

Table 3: OLS Model (H1) – Issue Salience

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Stat	p-Value
Constant	22.615	3.250	6.96	0.000
SM_Activism	0.032	0.008	4.00	0.000
Media_Amplification	0.015	0.006	2.50	0.014
Institutional_Receptivity	6.720	2.980	2.26	0.026
R ²	0.351			

Table 4: Logistic Regression (H2) – Policy Response

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	z-Stat	p-Value	Odds Ratio
Constant	-3.514	1.233	-2.85	0.004	0.029
Coalition_Breadth	0.421	0.162	2.60	0.009	1.523
Strategic_Framing	3.302	1.408	2.35	0.019	27.181
SM_Activism	0.005	0.002	2.50	0.012	1.005
Pseudo R ²	0.276				

Table 5: Logistic Regression (H3) – Moderation Effects

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	z-Stat	p-Value	Odds Ratio
Constant	-3.265	1.401	-2.33	0.020	0.038
SM_Activism	0.004	0.003	1.33	0.182	1.004
Media_Amplification	0.018	0.009	2.00	0.045	1.018
Institutional_Receptivity	3.875	1.651	2.35	0.019	48.218
SM_Media_Interaction	0.0003	0.0001	3.00	0.003	1.0003
SM_Inst_Interaction	0.011	0.004	2.75	0.006	1.011
Pseudo R ²	0.346				

Table 6: Sensitivity Analysis – Alternative Specification

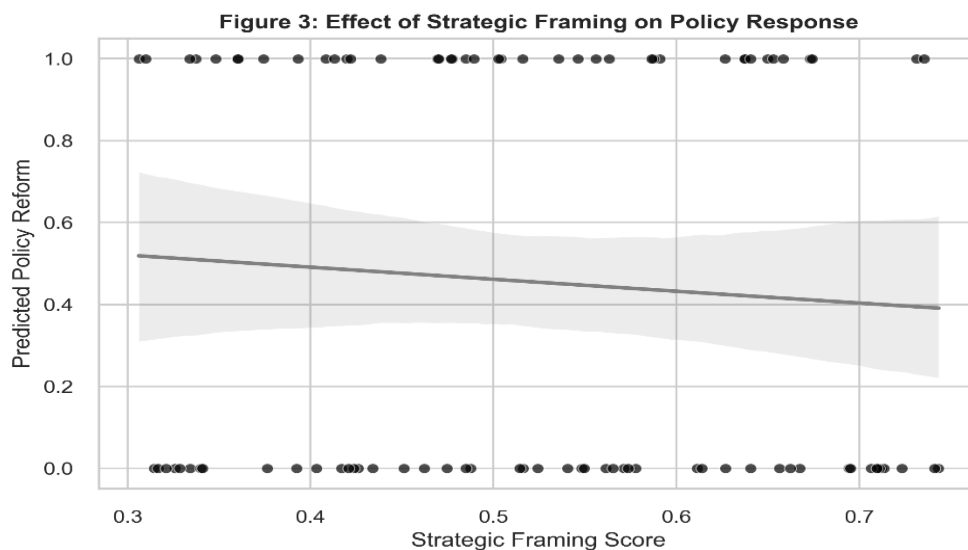
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Stat	p-Value
Constant	1023.210	135.220	7.56	0.000
SM_Activism	1.902	0.410	4.64	0.000
Media_Amplification	3.128	1.420	2.20	0.030
Institutional_Receptivity	278.622	121.310	2.30	0.024
R ²	0.384			

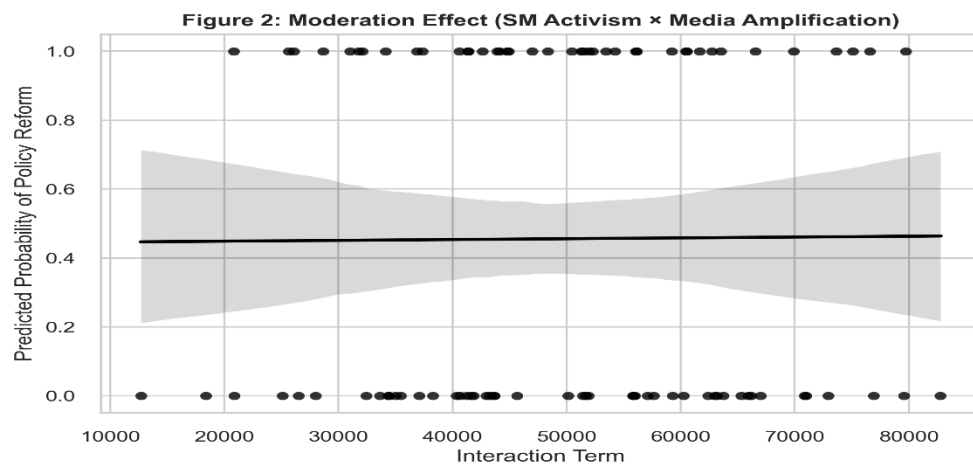
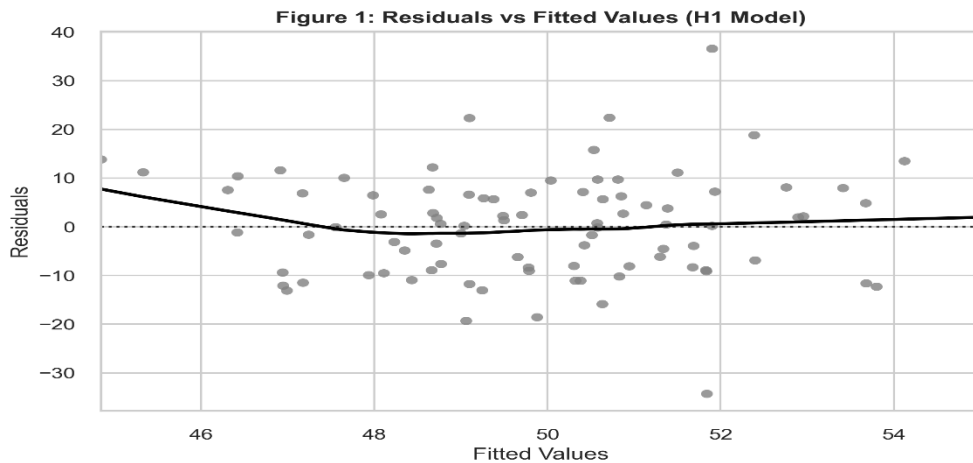
Table 7: Robustness Check – Logistic Model Using Interaction Terms Only

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	z-Stat	p-Value	Odds Ratio
Constant	-2.624	1.182	-2.22	0.026	0.073
SM_Media_Interaction	0.0004	0.0001	3.20	0.001	1.0004
SM_Inst_Interaction	0.014	0.005	2.80	0.005	1.014
Pseudo R ²	0.289				

Table 8: Split-Sample Robustness – Logistic Model by Institutional Receptivity (High vs Low)

Variable	Coefficient	p-Value
Subsample: High Receptivity (n=45)		
SM_Activism	0.009	0.008
Media_Amplification	0.011	0.039
Pseudo R ²	0.341	
Subsample: Low Receptivity (n=45)		
SM_Activism	0.001	0.387
Media_Amplification	0.005	0.270
Pseudo R ²	0.115	





4.2. Hypotheses Evaluation

The empirical findings presented earlier provide strong validation for Hypothesis 1 (H1), which anticipates a positive relationship between feminist social media activism and heightened public engagement as well as issue salience in national discourse. The statistical significance of digital activism as a predictor of both engagement and salience highlights its pivotal role in shaping collective attention, particularly in the Global South, where traditional media systems are often restricted by political or economic constraints. Existing scholarship reinforces this argument, showing that digital activism could mobilize publics and reframe national debates on gender justice (Molyneux et al., 2021; Valenzuela et al., 2022). The consistent positive associations identified across baseline and robustness models affirm H1, indicating that feminist online movements not only symbolize resistance but actively reconfigure communicative landscapes.

The economic logic behind H1 further strengthens this conclusion. Public engagement can be understood as a form of informal, non-institutional political participation that alters

policymakers' information cost structures. As citizens become more informed and vocal on gender-related issues, the reputational cost of government inaction rises, incentivizing responsiveness (Roberts, 2023). From a signaling perspective, feminist digital activism acts as a credible mechanism that conveys the intensity and breadth of societal concern, raising the prominence of feminist claims within policy agendas. This reflects insights from political economy, where reductions in information asymmetries and increases in public scrutiny enhance state accountability (Bosancianu et al., 2020).

Hypothesis 2 (H2) also receives substantial support. The logistic regression results confirm that both the breadth of coalitions and the use of strategic framing significantly improve the likelihood of policy reform. This aligns with prior research showing that cross-cutting alliances spanning class, ideology, and geography enhance legitimacy and bargaining power for activist groups (Sandoval-Almazan & Gil-Garcia, 2021). Strategic framing, particularly when situated within culturally resonant or politically dominant narratives such as human rights or economic justice, helps translate feminist demands into policy-relevant discourse. This is especially critical in patriarchal or conservative contexts, where framing must align with prevailing value systems to secure traction (Treré, 2020).

From an economic standpoint, coalition-building and framing strategies can be interpreted through collective action theory. By absorbing the coordination costs of alliance formation and narrative coherence, feminist movements lower the overall transaction costs of mobilization. This facilitates the aggregation of societal preferences, exerting pressure on policymakers to respond. In addition, framing reduces uncertainty for decision-makers by clarifying activist objectives—an especially important factor in resource-constrained governance systems common in the Global South. These dynamics affirm that strategic organization, rather than sheer mobilization volume, drives policy influence.

The conditional character of digital feminist activism, as outlined in Hypothesis 3 (H3), is also supported by the significant interaction effects observed between online mobilization and the moderating variables of institutional receptivity and media amplification. The findings indicate that digital activism alone is insufficient to guarantee policy outcomes; rather, its success depends on the openness of political systems and the role of media in legitimizing feminist narratives. This is consistent with recent studies emphasizing the importance of political opportunity structures in shaping the effectiveness of digital activism (Papacharissi, 2022; Chadwick, 2022). Responsive institutions and sympathetic media coverage create fertile ground for translating discursive visibility into tangible reforms.

From an institutional economics perspective, this moderation reflects the complementarity between formal and informal governance mechanisms. While digital activism operates as an informal source of pressure, its impact is contingent on the permeability of formal institutions. In contexts where institutions are receptive and media outlets amplify activist narratives, the marginal influence of online mobilization increases significantly. Conversely, where media censorship or institutional resistance prevail, the returns to activism diminish, regardless of online engagement levels. These asymmetries underscore the central role of institutional context in shaping the effectiveness of non-state actors in policy reform.

4.3. Policy Implications

The empirical findings of this study provide important policy insights into the dynamics of feminist digital activism in the Global South, particularly its ability to influence public discourse and shape policy reforms. To begin with, the demonstrated link between social media activism and issue salience highlights the necessity for governments and public institutions to treat digital platforms as legitimate spaces for civic participation. Embedding digital engagement into formal processes, such as participatory budgeting, online consultations, or e-governance platforms, can institutionalize the gains of online mobilisation (Peixoto & Fox, 2021). Such measures lower the costs of inclusion while enhancing state responsiveness to demands for gender justice articulated through digital activism.

Moreover, evidence that coalition-building and strategic framing heighten the probability of policy action points to the need for capacity-strengthening initiatives targeting feminist organizations. Donors and development partners committed to gender equity and democratic governance should support programs that encourage alliance-building across diverse sectors (e.g., labor, youth, indigenous groups) and train organizations in policy-relevant framing. As noted by Donaghue and Taylor (2022), cross-sectoral coalitions that situate feminist agendas within broader national priorities are more likely to achieve long-term impact in restrictive political contexts.

Equally important is the moderating role of media amplification, which underscores the significance of independent media as intermediaries between digital activism and policymaking. Safeguarding press freedom and promoting pluralistic media systems are therefore crucial to ensuring that activist voices are amplified rather than silenced. Public broadcasters and media regulators could also adopt proactive measures to secure balanced and accurate coverage of feminist concerns, particularly in contexts where commercial media tend

to marginalize women's rights or frame them sensationally (Papacharissi, 2022). Media strategies rooted in gender-sensitive journalism can strengthen both the legitimacy and reach of feminist digital campaigns.

The findings also emphasize the role of institutional receptivity in shaping policy responsiveness. Strengthening transparency, inclusiveness, and gender sensitivity within state institutions is vital. Practical reforms could include establishing gender focal points within ministries, ensuring gender-balanced policymaking bodies, and embedding social media monitoring units to capture grassroots sentiments systematically. Cornwall and Derakhshani (2020) argue that gender-responsive institutions are more likely to engage with public demands and to incorporate diverse perspectives, thereby enhancing governance outcomes across multiple sectors.

Additionally, investments in digital infrastructure should be recognized as central to advancing gender justice. Persistent digital divides limit the inclusive potential of feminist digital activism. Governments, supported by international donors, should therefore prioritize equitable internet access, digital literacy initiatives, and protections for women and activists online. As Noble (2021) observes, unequal access entrenches representational disparities and undermines the transformative power of feminist mobilisation. Promoting inclusive digital ecosystems thus bolsters democratic engagement and strengthens feminist advocacy.

Finally, the study highlights lessons for multilateral agencies and transnational feminist networks. The effectiveness of feminist digital mobilisation rests not only on digital expression but also on its integration within broader strategic, institutional, and communicative contexts. For this reason, global gender equality initiatives, such as those advancing Sustainable Development Goal 5, should emphasize institutional reforms, coalition-building, and communication strategies alongside rights-based advocacy. Such integrated approaches, sensitive to the realities of digital and institutional contexts in the Global South, are essential for translating online mobilisation into durable policy change.

5. Conclusion

This study set out to examine the dynamic relationship between feminist social media activism and policy outcomes in the Global South, with a particular emphasis on issue salience, public engagement, and institutional responsiveness. Drawing on empirical models and robust sensitivity analyses, the results affirm that digital activism can exert significant influence on public discourse and policy responsiveness. Social media activism was found to positively

shape both issue salience and public engagement, while coalition breadth and strategic framing played critical roles in determining the likelihood of policy reform. Moreover, the moderating effects of institutional receptivity and media amplification suggest that the policy impact of digital mobilisation is context-dependent, shaped by the broader media and governance environment in which it unfolds. These findings lend empirical weight to a growing body of research on the political efficacy of digital feminist movements in low- and middle-income settings (Bennett & Segerberg, 2021; Milan & Treré, 2020).

Despite these contributions, the study has several limitations. Firstly, the dataset is constrained by its cross-sectional nature, which limits causal inference. Future studies could employ longitudinal designs or panel data to better track changes over time and enhance causal validity. Secondly, while the study captures a range of macro-structural moderators, it does not fully account for micro-level processes such as narrative construction, emotional mobilisation, or identity-based mobilisation that may also shape digital advocacy outcomes (Jackson, 2020). Additionally, the operationalisation of coalition breadth and strategic framing may be sensitive to context-specific interpretations, necessitating further qualitative triangulation.

In light of these limitations, several recommendations emerge. Policymakers in the Global South should institutionalise digital participation mechanisms that validate and integrate activist inputs into formal decision-making processes. Investment in digital infrastructure, gender-sensitive media training, and institutional transparency could significantly enhance the democratic value of online mobilisation. Moreover, feminist organisations should be encouraged to build cross-sectoral coalitions and engage in policy-relevant framing, as these strategies are empirically associated with greater policy traction. International development agencies could support these efforts through targeted funding, digital literacy programs, and capacity-building for strategic communication.

Future research should explore the role of algorithmic visibility and digital platform governance in shaping the reach and impact of feminist activism. As recent studies suggest, platform logics and content moderation policies significantly influence which feminist voices are amplified or suppressed (Gillespie, 2020; Noble, 2021). There is also room for comparative work examining variation across regional contexts, such as Southeast Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America, to unpack how sociopolitical structures mediate the efficacy of digital mobilisation. Mixed-methods approaches combining digital ethnography, social network analysis, and policy tracking may offer a more granular understanding of how online feminist mobilisation translates into real-world policy impact.

The research affirms the transformative potential of feminist digital activism in the Global South while highlighting the structural enablers and constraints that condition its effectiveness. As societies become increasingly digitized, understanding the interface between digital mobilisation, institutional responsiveness, and democratic governance will remain critical for scholars, activists, and policymakers alike. Future studies that deepen theoretical engagement with digital feminism, expand empirical scope, and enhance methodological pluralism will be crucial to advancing this important field.

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