

**SOCIAL MEDIA AND YOUTH PERCEPTION OF FEMINISM IN KENYA:
THE CASE OF YOUTH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

ODHIAMBO BRENDA AKINYI

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DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATION

This project is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University.

Signature.....

Date:

Brenda Akinyi Odhiambo

K50/76150/2014

This project has been submitted for examination with my approval as University Supervisor.

Signature.....

Date:

Dr. Joy Mueni,

School of Journalism and Mass Communication

University of Nairobi

DEDICATION

To my loving parent and siblings. Thank you for your encouragement.

To the Almighty God, from whom I derive my strength.

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to investigate how far social networking services have gone in trying to shape the overall perception of the feminist movement among the youth at the University of Nairobi. The study sought to find out the following: the existing perceptions of feminism among Kenyan youth on social media; the frames that have been used in the online coverage of feminist issues in Kenya; and the effects these frames have on the perception of feminist movement among the youth in Kenya. For its theoretical framework, the study relied on the cultivation theory and the feminist theory. This study employed a qualitative research design, which allowed the researcher to interact with the respondents in regard to how they felt social media played a role in shaping the perceptions of the feminist movement in Kenya. Data collection methods used were focus group discussions, an online textual analysis and a key informant interview. The study was conducted at the University of Nairobi, which accepts a diverse number of diverse students from all over the country. The diversity in the members of the student body served as a generalized representation of the country. As such, the findings from the students alone would reflect diverse viewpoints even though the findings and conclusions would not be generalizable. After triangulation (focus groups, textual analysis and key informant interview) the findings and conclusions became generalizable. For the mixed focus group, a convenience method was used to sample the fourth year Broadcast Journalism Class at the School of Journalism. In order to recruit the respondents of the focus group from the class, a systematic sample of the students in the class was done, where every fifth student was invited to participate in the focus group. Respondents for the all-female and all male focus group discussions were chosen through convenience samples of a second year Political Science Class and a fourth year Journalism Class respectively. Only one key informant interview was conducted because two respondents declined to participate in the study, while the other two were unavailable for the interview. Because of this low number, the researcher conducted a textual analysis to achieve a higher level of validity and reliability of the findings. The textual analysis was conducted in order to examine what frames were used in the coverage of the feminist movement online. 36 articles drawn from popular Facebook sites with many followers were analyzed. Data from the focus groups was analyzed through assigning them to thematic areas drawn from the two main frames used in the coverage of feminist issues. For the textual analysis, coding was done by taking the key words, which in this case would be ‘feminism’ and ‘feminists’ and looking at how often these words were associated with negative descriptors, such as ‘radical’, ‘militant’, ‘crazy’ and ‘man-hating’. Data collected from the key informant interview would be analyzed in relation to the frames used in the focus group discussions. This would serve to either affirm or negate the findings from the focus group discussions. One of the key findings of the study was that despite the acceptance that feminism seemed to have gained in Kenyan society, there was still an abundance of negative sentiment online, which in turn could still have an impact on how the movement was viewed. Another interesting observation was the fact that there were more men willing to identify as feminists, but who still felt compelled to conform to societal ideals of masculinity, which more often than not resulted into sexist behaviour, hurting the potential gains that would have otherwise been made by having more feminists-male or female- actively involved in the movement. A major recommendation of the study was that for future feminist engagements, online action should be adequately supported by offline action.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

One of the most pertinent questions when one conducts a study to explore the relationship between the media and society is whether the media moulds or reflects social structures, and whether the media can be used to precipitate social change or whether it merely reinforces the status quo (Rosengren, 1981; Glasser, 1997). This study will seek to investigate how far social networking services have gone in trying to mould the overall perception of the feminist movement in Kenya through their representations of the movement.

1.1. Background of the Study

Since its beginnings in the early 19th Century, the feminist movement has always received mixed coverage and representation in the media. From broadcast to print media, feminist critics have continuously noted that media coverage of feminist issues has always been largely minimal and often negative (Darrah, 2011). Today, largely in part because of the media-heavy environment we live in, it has become virtually impossible to disengage social movements from tactical media use. The pervasive media use in contemporary society means that the media, more than ever, can influence our perceptions on the issues of gender, and more specifically, feminism.

Roate (2015) notes that the advent of the new media coupled with the fact that the media has always had a hand in the framing of popular notions about feminism has allowed the media to wield its power to shape perceptions at a significantly larger scale.

According to Komito and Bates (2009), social media refers to Internet applications, which ensure an enhanced interaction among Internet users through the user-generated content. Such content may differ and includes photos, videos and textual comments. Social media can take various forms, which include social networking sites like Facebook, content communities such as YouTube for self-uploaded videos and Flickr for photographs and micro-blogging sites such as Twitter.

The rapid evolution of social media means that its significance and roles in social and political processes is changing. Social media's role in social and political processes is widely recognized due to its potential in bringing new dynamics to the political scene, such as its ability to promote public mobilization and civic engagement.

In 2012, for instance, social media was at the centre of the Arab Spring, which was reliant on Twitter to push for a revolution that led to the ousting of several Arab heads of state, with the most notable example being Egypt's Hosni Mubarak. Locally, the power of social media to rally around a social cause was seen in the #MyDressMyChoice movement, which was started online as a response to a viral video of a woman being stripped naked in a Nairobi street. The online engagement culminated in a demonstration where women fought for their right to dress however they wanted. The activity surrounding the movement even resulted into some of the perpetrators of the crime being identified and subsequently arrested. In this case, social media was able to facilitate social change by promoting civic engagement, triggering public mobilization, stimulating civil society, promoting a sense of community among women who were the target of the attacks, and publicizing causes to gain support from the local and global communities (Khamis & Vaughn, 2011; Khamis, 2011; Eltanatawy & Wiest, 2011).

It has been proven time and time again that the media is able to set the agenda for their public, which in turn has an important influence on the thinking of their public (Griffin,2009). To this end, one can argue that social media is in a prime position to alter our perceptions about the feminist movement, due to the fact that it allows for widespread interaction and interconnectivity among the audience on issues that are pertinent to society. If the reaction towards the #MyDressMyChoice campaign is anything to go by, then it would suffice to say that social media is and will continue to be a powerful tool in shaping audience perceptions regarding social movements.

This research will be important in furthering the understanding how social media represents feminism, and how these representations shape the audience perception of feminism, given that social media has become an integral part of everyday life.

1.2 Statement of the problem

There is no doubt that the feminist movement has evolved since it began in the early 1920's. From women winning their right to vote to having access to education, it is no secret that the movement has made some significant strides.

Despite the progress, the feminist movement has been constantly plagued with negative media coverage, which means that less and less people support it (Barakso&Schaffner, 2006). Through agenda setting, the media can portray the media in any light it chooses (Griffin, 2009). In this theory, the media chooses stories to report to the audience, thus making the chosen stories more important than those that weren't chosen (Terkildsen & Schnell, 1997). This means that the success of a social movement can be determined by how the media chooses to frame a particular issue. The framing technique will therefore serve as a means to shape the perceptions that the audience holds towards a certain issue.

The growth of anti-feminist sentiment as noted by Hall&Rodriguez (2003) McRobbie (2004) is a result of the negative coverage and the misconceptions that have influenced negativity towards the feminist movement. Some of these misconceptions may be as a result of the media framing feminists as abnormal or irregular (Lind & Salo, 2002).

In Kenya, for instance, we are yet to realize equality between the genders. It is therefore important for us to understand how media representations of the feminist movement shape the perceptions of feminism among the audience.

1.3 Justification

This study is informed by the fact that feminism is a wide-reaching social movement, whose growth globally has led to an increasingly greater visibility of transnational women's struggles and movements (Mohanty, 2003: 508). This visibility of issues has been heightened by the increased dependence on social media by members of the society, who have been afforded an equal chance to participate and organize social movements, as exemplified by the Arab Spring, which was mainly driven through social networking services, namely Facebook and Twitter (Cottle, 2011:649).

The fact that we live in a post-feminist world where many believe that feminism is dead due to the perceived equality between men and women as noted by Hall & Rodriguez (2003), means that many people believe that feminism is unnecessary, which is an untrue sentiment, because the movement still has a long way to go.

This coupled with the media's scant and negative coverage of the feminist movement (Darrah, 2011) means that the feminist movement might be doomed unless something is done urgently. In light of this, this study will seek to add to the voice of scholars who have been paying attention to the roles of young feminists in political participatory culture (Harris, 2008). This study will contribute to the existing body of information pertaining to

the dissemination of feminist opinions and content on social media, which has not enjoyed the breadth of scholarship afforded to studies which investigate the link between the framing of feminist issues by print and broadcast media and the implications these frames have on the perceptions of feminism.

This research will pay specific attention to the role that social media plays in shaping society's perceptions of feminism, given that more and more people are gaining access to and are using social media, and whose impact on the shaping of perceptions on feminist issues is yet to be fully researched in depth.

1.4 Objectives

1. To establish the existing perceptions of feminism among Kenyan youth on social media.
2. To establish the kind of frames that have been used in the online coverage of feminist issues.
3. To examine the effects these frames have had on the perception of feminism in Kenya among the youth.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What are the existing perceptions of feminism among Kenyan youth on social media?
2. What are the frames that have been used in the online coverage of feminist issues in Kenya?
3. What effects do these frames have on the perception of feminist movement among the youth in Kenya?

1.6 Significance of the study

The ability of the media to set agendas for their audience means that they have an influence on their thought process, and thus can influence their perceptions on certain issues (Griffin, 2009). That said, it is important for us to study how the media, and in particular, social media can shape our perceptions of issues, in this case, of the feminist movement. This is because the feminist movement has made great strides in ensuring that women get equal treatment to men, as was the case when women fought for and got their right to vote. While this may be true, feminism still has a long way to go in order to achieve full equality. Hall & Rodriguez (2003) and McRobbie (2004) note that there is a common belief that feminism isn't important today because so many women are enrolled in higher education and have professional jobs. While this may be true, it is not indicative of the whole situation on the ground. Kenya, for instance, scored 0.608 on the Global Inequality Index, which places it 130 out of 148 countries (Danish Trade Union & Council for International Development Cooperation, 2014). This index means that gender inequality across reproductive health, empowerment and labour market participation in Kenya leads to the loss of potential achievement. The report by the Danish Trade Union & Council for International Development Cooperation (2014) also notes that lower education levels among women hinders them from bettering their livelihoods, because it means that they are unable to work for others and they also cannot become entrepreneurs.

Women also don't match up to the men in the Kenyan workforce. For instance, 76% of adult men (from 25 and above) are employed, which is a step up from the number of women in the workforce, which stands at 69%. In terms of education, women on average were also noted to have lesser education levels than the men. 20.5% of women in the country had never been to school at the time the report was being prepared, which was a stark contrast to the number of uneducated men that stood at 16.2%. The number of

women in tertiary education was also lower compared to that of men.2% of men completed their tertiary education, with only 1.2% of women managing to complete the feat.

These numbers disprove Hall&Rodriguez' (2003) and McRobbie's (2004) observation of feminism being dead today, because it is clear that the movement still has a considerable distance to go if it wants to truly achieve full equality between men and women. It is for this reason that social media, must be used to promote a more positive perception of the feminist movement because if its representations of feminism continue to be negative, then it would be easy for the feminist movement to fall out of favour with the public.

1.7. Scope and Limitations of the study

This study will be conducted at the University of Nairobi. This is because the University accepts a diverse number of students from all over the country. The diversity in the members of the student body will serve as a generalized representation of the country. While only roughly 57.1% of the Kenyan population has access to the internet (Communications Authority of Kenya, 2014), the penetration rate in major towns is higher (Cheruiyot, 2010).This means that the potential respondents for the study at the University will have had a significantly higher level of engagement with social media, which is the main focus of the study.

1.8 Definition of terms

1.8.1. Social Media

In the recent years, there has been a big shift in human communication and interaction, which can be largely attributed to the numerous advances both in ICT and digital media. Hopper (2007) notes that ICT and digital media have brought about significant changes in contemporary communication.

Digital, or new media as it is often known, refers to a set of internet-based applications built on the technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that enable user-generated content to be created and exchanged (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010). Social media, which is a mainstay of digital media, can take various forms, which include social networking sites like Facebook, content communities such as YouTube for self-uploaded videos and Flickr for photographs and micro-blogging sites such as Twitter.

While in most cases, Social Media and Web 2.0 are used interchangeably, Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) note that it is important to distinguish these two terms. This study's definition of social media shall be the one advanced by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010).

1.8.2. Feminism

Hawkesworth (2006) defines feminism as the range of movements and ideologies whose main goal is the establishment and achievement of equal political, social, economic, personal, cultural and social rights for women. Bell hooks (2000) notes that a feminist advocates for and supports the rights and equality of women. Some of the rights the feminist movement has tirelessly campaigned for include the right to vote (suffrage), to work, to earn equal pay, to own property, to have equal rights in marriage, among others.

While the feminist movement is and has always been focused on championing women's rights, bell hooks (2000) has argued that men should also be part of the movement due to the harm that can be occasioned by the fulfillment of traditional gender roles.

In this study, feminism will be taken to mean a movement focused on ending sexism and sexist oppression. Feminism will also be defined as a movement concerned with ensuring the rights and equality of both women and men.

1.8.3. Feminist

Richards and Baumgardner (2000) define a feminist as “any politically and socially conscious woman or man who works for equality within or outside the movement, writes about feminism, or calls her-or himself a feminist in the name of furthering equality”. Lorber (2005) defines feminism as a social movement whose goal is to gain equality between women and men. Bell hooks on the other hand defines it as “a movement to end sexist oppression” (hooks, 1984).

1.8.4. Networked feminism

Networked feminism, according to Valenti (2014) refers to the use of digital spaces to engage social action both online and off-line. Some of the sites that have been employed by feminists to communicate their ideas include blogs, online forums, and Twitter hashtags (Risam, 2015). In addition, to facilitating both online and offline social mobilization, social media has also enabled content creation and dissemination outside the traditional media, whose operations are heavily reliant on gatekeepers.

1.8.5. Slacktivism

The term slacktivism comes from combining ‘slacker’ and ‘activism’. Slacktivism has been defined as “low-risk, low-cost activity via social media whose purpose is to raise awareness, produce change, or grant satisfaction to the person engaged in the activity (Rotman et.al, 2011). Activities that have been termed slacktivist include: liking posts to show support for an interest group on Facebook, signing online petitions or even forwarding letters or videos about an issue, and painting one’s profile green to support demographic election in Iraq. Slacktivist activities have been criticized for not having any real impact on social movements.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview

One of the important questions when one conducts a study to explore the relationship between the media and society is whether the media moulds or reflects social structures, and whether the media can be used to precipitate social change or whether it merely reinforces the status quo (Rosengren, 1981; Glasser, 1997). In light of this, the chapter will look at the theoretical framework central to this study as well as provide critical reviews and summaries of literature in the area of social media and social movements.

2.2 Feminism

2.2.1. The first wave

Bell Hooks (2000) views feminism as a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression. The feminist movement as we know it today has its origins in the 19th Century, where female activists channeled their efforts towards the promotion of equal property rights for women and the opposition to the ownership of married women and their children by their husbands. However, by the end of the nineteenth century, activism focused primarily on gaining political power, particularly women's right to vote. Other issues that were part of the main agenda of the fight for women's rights in the first wave included educational reforms, divorce laws, ownership of property by married women and child custody (Sanders, 2001; Xinari, 2010). This was later known as the first wave of feminism.

During this period, the ability of the media to influence the progression of social movements, whether positively or negatively began to show. Bisignani (2015) notes that since the beginning of the feminist movements, the female activists were negatively

portrayed in posters and other print media, in order to discredit their efforts and arguments. Popular depictions were of them as unattractive with large teeth and shrill voices, sometimes wielding an umbrella, which signified the ineffectuality of their views. They were also portrayed as being weak and unable to handle their domestic chores, which resulted in many anti-feminist posters advocating for the violent punishment of such women. Such sentiments are no different from those held today, where women who identify as feminists are often described as ardent man haters who are only out for attention.

2.2.2. The second wave

The second wave of feminism, which began in 1960, was triggered by the general discontent among women that was caused by patriarchal oppression (Roate, 2015). Emphasis was placed on the importance of learning about how patriarchy was a system of domination, its institutionalization and its subsequent perpetuation and maintenance (hooks, 2000). Patriarchy therefore became widely recognized as the institutionalized structure of the subordination of women to men, as opposed to the original definition of the term, which designated a patriarch as the head of a family (Thornham, 2001).

The sustained wave of feminist discussion eventually made its way down to academia, which resulted into the legitimization of Women's Studies as a field worthy of academic inquiry. While this was a positive move, it led to the exclusion of other parties from the feminist movement, resulting into a feminist movement that had a predominantly white, middle and upper-class bias (hooks, 2000). This bias resulted into the erasure of marginalized groups of women from the feminist movement, effectively negating any attempts at fostering sisterhood. (hooks, 2000). The media furthered this exclusion by framing the feminist movement as an issue that was interesting solely to women who were

either married to wealthy men, and thus were ‘bored housewives’ or lesbians who had worked for long years and were living on a pittance(hooks,2000).

The negative coverage of feminist issues by the media continued in the way they perpetuated the notion that all feminists were against men, and that their rejection of the existing beauty standards pointed to the fact that they were lesbians, something that was not entirely true. This negative coverage served to discredit the movement, although there was progress made in tackling the issues of marriage, workplace discrimination, sexual liberation, reproductive rights, beauty culture, and the agency over one’s body (Xinari, 2010).

2.2.3. The third wave

The third wave of feminism has also experienced its fair share of challenges, despite the great improvements that have been witnessed in the first and second waves of feminism. Some of these challenges include but are not limited to the objectification of women, a political sphere that is heavily male-centric and a persistent and an ever-increasing wage gap (Roate, 2015). This wave has also strived to address the problem of exclusion that hooks (2000) said was keeping the feminist movement from being entirely wholesome. Third wave feminism’s primary focus is on inclusion.

Drake and Heywood (1997) note that the inclusive nature of the third wave is a direct result of the feminist critiques by minority groups who did not feel well-represented by the previous feminist movements.

Like the previous movements, third wave feminism is still challenged by media messages that belittle feminism or try to stop feminist sentiment altogether. A unifying theme in these media messages that conflict with feminist activism is the repeated equation of feminism with a death certificate, which media critic Jennifer Pozner (2003) calls False

Feminist Death Syndrome. This notion of feminist death has been posited to be as the result of the definition of feminism. While defining the feminist movement as something that occurs in waves gives it context, it also has the downside of ignoring other social reforms that get less coverage in the media, in order to focus on political achievements. This, Reger (2014) notes, leads to an overall perception that the feminism is dying. She goes on to reiterate hooks' (2000) concern that referring to the feminist movement as a wave only excludes the efforts of the minorities in the movement, and instead pays too much attention on the achievements of well-to-do White women. The opposition to the wave metaphor lends another facet to the struggle to define contemporary feminism, thus creating some resistance to the adoption of the classification 'third wave feminism' (Roate, 2015).

2.2.4. Post feminism

Post feminism, while sharing an almost similar time of origin with the third wave, is still radically different from it. While the third wave still sees feminism as an important component of contemporary life, even going so far as to be inclusive of the minorities that were previously ignored, post feminism questions whether society is still in need of feminism, because at its very essence, it views traditional feminism as stale, prudish and outdated (Gamble, 2001; Xinari, 2010).

Post feminism has constantly come under constant fire for being a construct of the media which rejects the progress made by the previous movements. It is reliant on messages telling women that they can 'have it all, namely a career, motherhood, beauty, and a great sex life which actually only resituates them as slaves to pills, paint, potions, cosmetic surgery, fashion, and convenience foods (Gamble, 2001, p. 42). This is totally at odds with

the persistent notion of traditional feminism and feminists, who were considered as hairy, prudish, ugly, man-hating lesbians.

This postfeminist notion, which implies that we no longer need feminism, is synonymous with antifeminism, premised on the rejection of feminist identity and politics, with a strong acceptance of the pervasive misrepresentations of the feminist movement. Some of the hallmarks of antifeminism include the claim that women enjoy the attention they get from men based on the choices of dress they make, and as such, are not objectified by men because they choose to exercise agency over their own sexuality and thus become sexual subjects. On the other side of the spectrum, there are those who view crimes against women such as rape as something that one survives and is not a victim of, because victimhood implies weakness.

Most antifeminists view feminism as something that prevents them from carrying out their traditional gender roles, such as cooking and motherhood, which they desire to do. They also condemn feminism as being anti-man and harmful to their rights and issues. This blatant rejection of feminism does not benefit women, but instead breaks down the sisterhood among women that is central in the achievement of feminist goals, such as gender equality.

2.3. The feminist movement in Africa

Nnaemeka (2003) notes that for African women, feminism is an act that is evocative of the dynamism and shifts of a process, instead of the stability and reification of a construct, which can be taken to mean that feminism cannot have the same meaning for everyone, as it changes dependent on circumstance. For instance, a woman working in the city can consider feminism to be demanding equal pay as her male counterparts, while a woman in the village may conceive feminism as the right to have her daughters educated alongside

her sons. She also notes that the feminist movement is built by cultural imperatives and controlled by local and global needs that are always in flux. This would be taken to mean that the main qualities of the African feminist movement include the fact that it involves a constant state of self- and re-definition, a broad-based membership, resistance to the distortion and misrepresentation by Western feminism as well as the fact that it is heavily centered on negotiation. This negotiation in the context of African feminist movement is focused on the elements of custom and tradition and the emancipation of women. Another definition of nego-feminism given by Nnaemeka (2003) is that of 'no ego' feminism, which is reliant on the African principles of negotiation, mutual benefit, compromise and balance. Nnaemeka goes on to note that nego-feminism, and by extension, African feminism, is reliant on negotiations and compromise, and is cognizant of when and where patriarchal landmines exist. It also knows where, when and how to defuse these landmines.

African feminism is also notably resistant to elements of Western feminism that feminists don't feel speak to our experience as Africans. According to Oyewumi (2005), an example of an element from Western feminism that does not fit with the African one is the notion of gender. She notes that the understanding of the social construction of gender as a means of the universal oppression of women doesn't account for the variations in histories, world-views and social organization across the globe. She argues that women are not similarly socialized, and as such the importance given to gender as the primary unit of social analysis may not be applicable to all cultures and worldviews. This implies that gender is an unreliable indicator of delineating social positionality globally.

She gives an example of the Yoruba society in Nigeria, where the legitimacy of social relations is derived from social facts, not biology. Therefore, the nature of one's anatomy did not define one's social position" (2005, p.13).

Mohanty (1988) notes that the Western feminist movement tends to distort the representations of Third World women and feminists. These representations tended to depict women in the Third World countries as permanent victims of patriarchy, globalization, religion, economics, development, neo-colonialism and colonization. Mohanty also notes that these women tend to be described as a homogenous group that couldn't resist the challenges it faces, and in the event that they offer resistance against hardship, they cling onto the victim tag.

Mohanty (1988) goes on to note that non-Western women in the Western feminist narrative are often framed in a singular manner, with common descriptors including illiterate, traditional or even backward.

Mohanty's sentiments echo those of Oyewumi(2005) and Nnaemeka(2003) who feel that the position of African women in the global feminist movement has been largely steeped in distortions, which have taken the forms of African women being portrayed either as singular entities or being left out of the conversation altogether.

2.3.1. Feminism in Kenya

The feminist movement in Kenya can be traced back to the colonial period, where women would sing songs about their dislike of unfair labour laws while working (Hunt, 1989). At the height of the Mau Mau rebellion, many women were imprisoned while others participated in the movement by providing food, weapons and medicine to the fighters. Other women opted to join the struggle and thus simultaneously cared for their families while fighting.

After colonialism took root in Kenya, women were systemically excluded from participating in the societal systems that had been put in place. The colonial system was heavily reliant on Western Christianity to regulate the existing African cultural and social

life. This meant that the roles of women in society also changed drastically (Akin-Aina, 2011). Western Christianity also established the boundaries for what was socially and morally acceptable and right, something that granted the existing imperialist structures some power. In the same vein, economic life was controlled through taxation, law, and the creation of an economic and bureaucratic infrastructure.

As time went on, gender bias in society was perpetuated by means of Christianity, Western education, the adoption of Western marriage systems and alternative legal systems (Mikell, 1997). Mikell (1997) notes that the prescription of female subjugation, obedience and domesticity by Christianity led to a re-definition of what it meant to be an African wife, mother or daughter. The introduction of Western education placed the educational advancement of men over that of women, because men were expected to join the labour market. In a bid to be more inclusive to African culture, Mikell (1997) points out that colonial regimes allowed for the existence of both Christian and traditional marriage systems. Christian marriage allowed women to have rights over property, which was unheard of in traditional culture. While this could be considered a sign of progress, African women were still treated as legal inferiors, who had no merit in the eyes of the colonialists (Mikell, 1997).

These changes in the roles and the rights of women had an impact on gender relations in the sense that it undermined the power, freedoms and positions traditionally held by women while simultaneously limiting their access to new forms of status that were male-centric and patriarchal.

Wipper(1975) notes that it was the European women, colonialist's wives and missionaries who were at the forefront of the creation of the existing structures of social activism in use today. They created community groups, charities and services that catered to the needs of

children, women, families, the poor and the sick. One such group was Maendeleo Ya Wanawake, which when loosely translated, means Progress for Women.

Maendeleo Ya Wanawake is Kenya's oldest and largest women's organization which embodies the tensions and transformations present in African feminisms (Akin-Aina, 2011). The organization personifies African feminisms owing to the nature of its broad-based membership.

Akin-Aina (2011) notes that while the organization pursues feminist ideals, it is unwilling to ascribe to the feminist label. This is because in the Kenyan context, openly admitting that you're feminist is construed as Western, anti-religious and man-hating.

Today, the organization's activities are centered on women's health, specifically reproductive health, maternal health and infant mentality. It is also focused on issues of family planning, female genital cutting and forced genital cutting.

The women's movement in Kenya has grown immeasurably. Today, the Kenyan constitution, which is largely considered as feminist, provides a legal framework for gender equality and the empowerment of women. Article 27 (8) states that the State shall take legislative and other measures to implement the principle that not more than two-thirds of the members of elective or appointive bodies shall be of the same gender. Article 81 (b) provides that not more than two-thirds of the members of elective public bodies shall be of the same gender (Kenyan Constitution, 2010). While the male legislators feel that the affirmative action provides a soft landing for women in a field that is often considered too rough for them, the presence of women in the political sphere, however small the numbers, means that women's issues have an opportunity to be heard.

2.4. Feminism and new media

As Hopper (2007) notes, ICT and new media have radically changed the communication process. The term ICT is often used in reference to a diverse set of technologies used in the digital creation, access, storage, management, sharing, dissemination, and communication of information (Bardici, 2012). It includes computer hardware and software such as mobile phones, computers, Internet, telecommunication systems, and so on, as well as the related applications and services, such as social networking and online forums such as bulletin boards.

The rapid innovation in the field of communication and more specifically in the field of digital media has led to the emergence of participatory technologies, or Web 2.0 as they are more commonly known. Social media, which makes up the core of Web 2.0, is defined by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) as a set of internet-based applications build on the technological foundations of Web 2.0 that enable the creation and exchange of user-generated content. The emergence of social media has been enabled by widely accessible communication technologies, such as mobile and wireless technology, and other web-based applications. This has promoted participatory communication, where messages move from many-to-many. Web 2.0, and consequently, social media, is built upon the social Web, which Carlsson (2010) says involves a number of online platforms where the audience can actively participate, consolidate resources, and share their perspectives and experiences. Social media becomes participatory in the sense that it enables people to feel some degree of social connection with each other (Jenkins et al. 2005).

Social media also allows for the archiving, creation, changing, circulation and the sharing of content, which may take the form of blogs, websites, videos, texts, as well as pictures. All these are geared towards the greater end of promoting co-operation and action on

various matters because they catalyze and facilitate human interactions (Castells, 2007; Shirky, 2008).

Social media can take many forms. These include content communities like YouTube, social networking sites like Facebook and Instagram, blogs and micro-blogs such as Twitter. Social media, in addition to introducing new patterns of communication, has also led to the diversification of media content and has also allowed for the creation of new forms of expression. These features of social media have allowed the members of society to have platforms on which they can share their perspectives on various issues, which may bring about changes in the status quo, and consequently effect changes in society.

Social media also allows for the uninhibited participation of people in social protests due to social media's decentralized and loosely-hierarchical order that is heavily based on existing democratic structures (Daubs, 2014). The reliance of social media on the internet has meant that communication can no longer be limited by temporal or geographical constraints. In addition to this, Castells (2009) notes that the internet promotes and also provides a wide audience for the content generated from self-mass communication, which is produced to cater to the potential receiver's interests.

The ubiquitous nature of social media use means that the capabilities of social media can be used as a springboard to facilitate societal change. The ease and accessibility of social media technologies means that anyone, regardless of technical level or skill can use it and also add or edit content instantaneously. Social media's interconnectivity gives its users the power to connect with different people, thus effectively changing the nature of their personal and social networks (Kaplan & Blakely, 2009). The reliance of the audience on traditional media is steadily on the decline as most of the content is user generated, and the users can even go further and exercise control over the information they choose to share

on social media (Hinchcliffe, 2006; O'Reilly, 2005). Kaplan and Blakely (2009) note that the reason for this is because the audience, now more than ever, understands that it is fully empowered to produce their own content, meaning that anyone anywhere can become a generator of information at any time. To this end, Jenkins et al.(2005) note that we 'are moving towards a world in which everyone has a more active stake in the culture that is produced through not only the consumption of news, but also in its creation'. According to a report by the World Wide Web Foundation (2015), there are fewer women than men online. This translates into a situation where most of the content online is suited to a population that is largely urban and male. According to the report, male internet users in Kenya total at 57% while female users come in at 20%, putting them at a disadvantage while navigating the online world.

It can therefore be said that social media culture is about people's empowerment, civic participation, freedom to express oneself and collective action(s), features fundamental to bringing about revolutions and political transformations.

It should be noted that despite the conceptual differences in ICT and social media, they can still converge when they are deployed as instruments for social change, as was the case in the #MyDressMyChoice campaign, which started online in response to a viral video of a woman being stripped naked by a group of matatu touts in a Nairobi street. The online engagement culminated in a demonstration where women fought for their right to dress however they wanted. The activity surrounding the movement even resulted into some of the perpetrators of the crime being identified and subsequently arrested.

Roate (2015) notes that the advent of the new media and the fact that its usage in society is increasing means that the media can now wield its power to shape perceptions at a significantly larger scale.

According to Internet World Statistics (2012), Kenya has the seventh largest number of Facebook users in Africa, which makes it the top country in terms of Facebook users in East Africa. On the other hand, Twitter use is also growing. Portland (2014) notes that Nairobi has the highest number of Twitter users in East Africa, and the sixth highest number of users on the continent.

This has been seen in the online engagement carried out by Kenyans on Twitter, who employ the use of creative hashtags to express their opinions on a range of issues. One of the most popular ones was #SomeoneTellCNN, which was started as a response to a news item on CNN News that called Kenya a hotbed of terror during president Obama's visit. The large volume of tweets prompted the cable channel to issue an apology to the country and Kenyans at large. Macharia (2015) also notes that Kenya leads the pack in terms of technology adoption and social media use.

While social media use has increased in Africa as a whole, and more particularly in Kenya, it should be noted that access to these platforms is also limited. Only 26.5% of Africa's population has decent internet access (Internet World Statistics, 2014). A report by the World Wide Web Foundation(2015) notes that overall, it is the youth between the ages of 18-29 who engage the most online, with the report putting the number at just over 60%. Those aged between 30-39 tally in at slightly below half, while those over 40 are noted to use the internet even more minimally.

In terms of gender, the report notes that there are seven women online for every ten men among the youth, while in the 40-49 age bracket, there is one woman online to two men online. For most Africans, therefore, internet use is still a luxury.

While the numbers may be little, social media use is still gaining traction in African countries (Thompson, 2008), with the majority of users being the youth (Ephraim,

2013). In Kenya for example, the youth- those under thirty years of age- make up 77% of the population (UN –Habitat, 2014). That said, it should also be noted that most social media use tends to be concentrated in the urban areas (Wyche, Forte, & Yardi-Schoenebeck, 2013a).

It can therefore be said that in order for the feminist movement to continue flourishing in Kenya, activists must continually and consistently tap into digital media to further their agenda. The large audience and high rate of use that social media has will mean that their messages will always have a larger reach. The more people will be exposed to these feminist messages, the more people will begin to exhibit feminist tendencies that will be beneficial to the development of both genders in society.

2.5 Media and framing of feminist issues

Despite the fact that the feminist movement has been central to the creation of equality for women, it has always been adversely covered by the media (Darrah, 2011). This should not be the case, because in ensuring equal rights for women, men also benefit. Through sustained positive coverage of the feminist movement, the media will have provided a positive frame for the movement, which might translate into the audience being more receptive to the feminist agenda and its attendant issues.

A media frame, according to Griffin (2009) refers to “the central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration”. This means that the media can select the segments of the news that they feel have more importance, either due to public opinion or other external influences and draw the audience’s attention towards them. Bronstein (2005) notes that the media framing of an issue has an effect on the public’s perception of the message. Framing therefore creates meaning, which helps people make sense of certain

issues (Lind&Salo, 2002). They further note that negative media coverage of an issue can deter people from active involvement in a cause, regardless of whether they identify with what the cause stands for.

2.5.1 Personalization and trivialization frame

The personalization and trivialization is most often used to put down women who self-identify as feminists. Its main focus is on the feminists' appearance, with a pronounced emphasis on style over substance (Lind & Salo, 2002; Bronstein, 2005). This frame is problematic for many women because those who don't adhere to what is perceived as traditional femininity are ridiculed with epithets such as being 'too girly', while those who attempt to look attractive are accused as vain and trying to pander to sexist values (Lind & Salo, 2002; Bronstein, 2005). An example of this was Njoki Chege's (2016) article titled 'How to be a Twitter Feminist in Kenya'. In the article, she details the attributes one must have in order to qualify to be a twitter feminist. She notes that having natural hair, which she considers unkempt, is a marker for anyone belonging to the feminist movement. She also notes that for one to be considered a feminist, she must also openly declare that she hates men. Other attributes she lists for one to be considered a feminist include being attention seeking, and being unable to come up with original thoughts, in the sense that most feminists only tend to focus on the same topics, such as rape and domestic violence. Most of the commenters on the article were in agreement with the author. One male Twitter user noted that the article was spot on, saying:

"Njoki Chege's article today has the Twitter feminist's starter pack. On point."

Another reader agreed with her view, and had the following to say:

"Twitter-feminists 'are the mad women in this market. I advocate for the rights of women but I hate feminists. I like how you handle your observation because in most cases they are real..."

As exemplified by the reader comments above, we can see that this frame diverts attention away from the important issues that feminism is supposed to tackle, such as equality in education, to more trivial issues like the state of one's hair (Rhode, 1995). Rhode (1995) notes that this approach is detrimental to the feminist movement because the media decides whom to cover based on race, class, ethnicity and gender. If we fixate on these labels, it would mean that some voices may be excluded from the feminist movement if they are seen as incompatible with the acceptable variables of these markers.

According to Bronstein (2005), third wave feminists have been framed more favourably than second wave feminists. This is evidenced in the fact that most descriptions of them depict them as being more feminine and physically attractive. While attractiveness may be an important facet of third wave feminism, the media does not tell us that this acceptance of fashion and style evolved as a response to second wave feminism. This means that the people perceive third wave feminists as only being concerned with looking attractive, which is not true (Bronstein, 2005). Bronstein's comment highlights the fact that the audience is only interested in the attractiveness of women who self-identify as feminists, which negates the importance of the feminist movement in society.

2.5.2 Demonization frame

This refers to the techniques employed by the media to demonize feminists, either through the language used in association with feminism, or even in the choice of what feminist events to focus on (Darrah, 2011). Feminists have always been described with negative terms, such as lesbians, man-haters, bra-burners, hairy-legged, ugly and family-wrecking (Melby, 2009). Today, some of the words used to describe feminists include *feminazi*, which is derived from combining the words 'Feminist' and 'Nazi' to connote the supposed militancy and ruthlessness of the feminist movement and its participants. In Kenya, the

term 'Twitter Feminist' has become the most common descriptor of anyone who self-identifies as a feminist. Twitter feminists are considered to be loud and boisterous as well as attention-seeking (Chege, 2016).

One of the most common iterations of the demonization frame is that of linking the feminist movement to lesbianism (Rhodes, 1995). Because most feminists are already perceived to be man-hating (Chege, 2016), it becomes a foregone conclusion that they must also be lesbians. Rhodes (1995) notes that this has the effect of the media framing feminists as 'social deviants'.

By consistently focusing on the supposedly 'negative' nature of the feminist movement, the media is able to ingrain a negative perception of the movement into the audience's mind.

2.6. The role of social media in social movements

Social media, in addition to making communication easier, has also made civic participation easier for those who wish to engage in it. This is because it has made participation cheaper for anyone who wishes to engage in a movement (DellaCarpini, 2000; Enjolras, Steen-Johnsen & Wollebæk, 2012).

Globally, many movements that can credit their success to ICT and social media. The Egyptian revolution of 2011, which was inspired by the Tunisian revolution of 2010 that saw the ousting of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, was largely conducted on social media.

The use of social media in the Egyptian Revolution allowed for the quick exchange and dissemination of information among millions of people both inside and outside of Egypt.

For instance, as Egyptians were carefully watching events unfold in Tunisia while also planning their own movement, activists from both countries were exchanging information, ideas, and words of encouragement online (Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011).

Another important use of social media during the revolution was to draw attention when in danger, as well as to share important safety information. It also provided activists and the outside world with minute-by-minute updates (Eltantawy & Wiest, 2011). An example of this was when Mohamed Abdelfattah, an Egyptian video journalist, who on the evening of January 25, 2011, released a series of tweets in short succession during ongoing protests detailing the danger he and other protestors were in (Siddique, Haroon, & Gabbatt, 2011).

In Kenya, one of the most popular examples of using social media to agitate for a cause was during 2014's #MyDressMyChoice campaign that was formed in response to viral video of a lady being stripped in the street by a group of touts attached to the Embassava Sacco for what they said was indecent dressing. The touts called the woman a "Jezebel" for "tempting" them with her attire. She pleaded for mercy but they instead kicked in her private parts and ripped her clothes. (Okumu, 2014). The use of social media, Twitter and Facebook in particular, during social movements has sparked a discussion about the role of social media in organizing social movements. For instance, in 2011, during the Egyptian revolution, Facebook was said to have served an important function not only during but also before and after the revolution (Khamis & Vaughn, 2011).

In Kenya, the use of social media as a tool in a social movement was exemplified by the use of Ushahidi (loosely translated in English to mean Testimony) during the two months of post-election crisis in 2008 in Kenya.

The resulting violence after the announcement of Kibaki's win over Odinga left many questioning the basis of Kenyan democracy. In comparison to institutions like parliament

and the courts that have never enjoyed much public trust, the media has been always been viewed as a trusted democratic institution (Musungu, 2008). During the height of the violence, the government banned live media broadcasts, which in turn led to media houses employing self- censorship, which created a dearth of information among the public(Okolloh,2009). The reason behind the government's ban was that false or biased reporting would result in even more ethnic-based violence, and that it wanted the opportunity to review media reports before they went 'live'. It was at this point that Ushahidi came about.

In response to the governments ban on live coverage, Ushahidi's founder, Ory Okolloh asked the public to send her information via comments on her blog (<http://www.kenyanpundit.com/>) and emails regarding the incidents of violence that they were witnessing or hearing about throughout the country, and that were not being reported by the media(Okolloh,2009).

Overwhelmed by the volume of messages she was receiving, she set up a dedicated website where people could anonymously report about incidents of violence online or via mobile phone text messages (SMS), and on which the received information could be mapped so that people could visualize what was going on. Despite the risk of false reporting, she felt that having a means of sharing information reliant on local resources was better than none. She goes on to note that Ushahidi was intended to get information out, in the light of the government ban, which had left the public in an information vacuum. Without this information, the public would have been even more susceptible to propagandist information, which would have worsened the already volatile situation.

Enjolras, Steen-Johnson & Wollebæk (2012) note that there are many benefits to using social media to advance social movements. Tufekci (2014) says that social media is

beneficial to social movement because it can generate more attention to a cause owing to its ubiquity of use, it can be used to evade censorship, as well as simplifying the co-ordination and logistics for any movement. Social media also allows people to submit real-time reports on events, thus allowing people to co-ordinate their movements in case of any eventualities, such as confrontations with the police (Khamis& Vaughn, 2011; Olorunnisola& Martin, 2013; Tufekci, 2014).

Through various social media platforms, the users are able to reach people not only locally but also globally (Khamis& Vaughn, 2011). A section of scholars have argued that in politically unstable times, Facebook could serve as a relatively secure environment to exchange important information (Khamis& Vaughn, 2011; Moyo, 2011). Furthermore, when using several different social media parallel to each other, the communication network is extremely hard to break (Khamis& Vaughn, 2011, Williamson, 2011).

In spite of all its benefits in relation to its use in social movements, social media also has its own weaknesses. One of these problems is the fact that the use of different social media platforms can create confusion owing to the lack of a centralized leader for any given movement (Tufekci, 2014). This lack of leadership weakens the movement as everyone will interpret certain aspects of the protest differently, which may have a significant impact on what the particular social movement set out to achieve. It has also been said that movements on social media rarely lead into policy changes and are unsustainable (Tufekci, 2014). Some scholars have posited that social media can enable a social movement, and not necessarily lead to it (Khamis& Vaughn, 2011; Williamson, 2011). The ease of online participation as well as the ease of gathering information online, which is one of the major strengths of social media, has also been said to make the movements less influential (Tufekci, 2014). This is because of an effect Badr (2015) calls the “Tahrir bubble”, which refers to online exaggerations as well as the occasional disconnection of

bloggers from the real world which leads to a decrease in their credibility amongst the wider public. Zhang (2013) notes that the translation of online support into offline actions is still often difficult. Olorunnisola & Martin (2013) opine that online actions primarily exist in order to supplement the actions carried out by activists offline. Conversely, other scholars note that these offline actions may not result into better results than online activities, and as such, contrasting offline and online actions is fruitless at best (Tufekci, 2014). While social media may be used to empower people, it should not be seen as an easy solution to successful social movements and socioeconomic changes (Tufekci, 2014). However, they can still be instrumental when pursuing these changes (Bailard, 2012; Khamis & Vaughn, 2011).

2.7 Theoretical framework

2.7.1 Cultivation Theory

The cultivation theory was developed by Gerbner and Gross (1976) to examine the media's effects on its consumers. According to Gerbner & Gross (1976), prolonged exposure to television would have an effect on the viewer's social reality. If for instance, a viewer was constantly exposed to violent content, he/she would begin to think that the world is a perpetually violent place.

Morgan & Shanahan (1996) note that the frequent viewing of television portrayals translates into viewers cultivating the information gleaned from the television and integrating it into their existing perceptions and judgements. Based on this argument, one might be able to conclude that the exposure to both positive and negative portrayals of feminism on social media may have a hand in how the feminist movement is viewed by the country at large.

Today, despite the rapid changes in the media and its consumption, namely the growth of social media, scholars still note that television still affects social reality (Reizer&Hetsroni, 2014). While television may still be one of the most common mediums of communication in the world, as well as in Kenya, the ever-increasing growth in the use of social media should not be discounted. To this end, Beullens, Roe, & Van den Bulck (2012) note that the cultivation effect of online media should also be studied due to their increasingly pervasive nature in society.

The emergence of social media has also led to changes in the consumption of the media. Since the internet, and by extension, social media, can provide television content through video on demand platforms for instance, digital media's cultivation ability should be discussed at length (Lau, 2015). This is due to the fact that there has not been much scholarship into the relationship between the theory and internet use (Lau, 2015).

In a study of media use and behavioral intention, Lau (2015), notes that there is a strong relationship between the use of online media and behavioral intentions. Simply put, this means that if one uses the internet intensively, it is likely that he or she would intend to act in a certain way, say by referring to online feminists as man- haters. This intent morphs over time to become behaviour, which in this case would be the constant name-calling of online feminists.

This theory is important to the study because not only will it help us to investigate the ways in which social media use has cultivated the existing notions of the feminist movement in Kenya.

2.7.2 Feminist theory

The ultimate goal of feminism is a social change of unequal relations between men and women and communication is a fundamental part of effecting this change. According to Rackow and Wackwitz (2004), feminist communication theory, which explores the intersection of feminism and communication, has three main themes. These themes are difference, which refers to the ways in which political, symbolic and other systems establish oppressive relationships between racial and ethnic groups, sexualities, economic classes and political orientations. The voice theme refers to women's access to communicational tools as well as the conditions and obstacles to women being heard and the systems through which women are being silenced. They finally conclude with the representational theme, which looks at the consequences of the misrepresentation of women in the media and their exclusion.

Sustained research into these themes has resulted into significant changes in how women are portrayed in the media, as well as their participation in it. This has translated into a vibrant media space where more and more women are shaping their perception in society through the content that they are creating, which promotes positive views of women.

According to MacKinnon (1989; as cited in Darrah, 2011), "feminist theory is critical of gender as a determinant of life chances, finding that it is women who differentially suffer from the distinction of sex". By looking at the representation of women in the media, for instance, we can say that the suppression of the coverage of feminist issues leads to a situation where these issues are not addressed, which means that these problems, such as poor education for girls might continue indefinitely.

Another key idea contained in feminist theory is the systemization of relations between genders, which views these relations “as a structural social relation between social beings” (MacKinnon, 1989). MacKinnon (1989) describes feminist theory as the process of analyzing a situation in order to face it for what it is, in order to change it. This idea central to this study, which seeks to understand how media have portrayed feminism and how these portrayals have shaped the perception of the feminist movement in Kenya. This will enable us to rethink the representation of feminism on social networking sites, a result of which may be a renewed interest in the feminist movement.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

This chapter will discuss the methodological positions that were used in this study. It included the research design, a description of the area of study, the target population, sampling design, data collection methods and instruments, procedures for data collection and the methods employed in data processing and analysis. This study relied on data that was collected through focus group discussions, an online textual analysis and a key informant interview.

3.2. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative methodology. Denzin & Lincoln (2005) define qualitative research as an interpretive practice which tries to “to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them”. A qualitative research design would allow the researcher to interact with the respondents in regard to how they felt social media played a role in shaping their perceptions of the feminist movement in Kenya.

The methods used to collect data were focus group discussions, an online textual analysis and a key informant interview. Having these three methods would allow the researcher to triangulate the findings and draw reliable conclusions.

3.3. Target population

The study was conducted in Nairobi. Specifically, the study was conducted at the University of Nairobi, because the University accepts a diverse number of students from all over the country. The diversity in the members of the student body served as a

generalized representation of the country, and as such, findings from the students alone reflect diverse viewpoints even though the findings and conclusions are not generalizable. However, after triangulation (focus groups, textual analysis and key informant interview) the findings and conclusions are generalizable.

The youth were chosen as the target population, because according to Östman (2012), it can be assumed that for them, the Internet is not a new phenomenon, but instead has existed most of their lives, meaning that their exposure to it has been frequent as well as sustained. Although only approximately 57.1% of the Kenyan population has access to stable internet (Communications Authority of Kenya, 2014), the penetration rate in major towns is higher (Cheruiyot, 2010). This meant that the respondents for the study at the University had a significantly higher level of engagement with social media, which is the main focus of the study.

The Kenya National Youth Policy (2006) defines the youth as anyone between the ages of 15-30. Because the study focused on undergraduate students at the University of Nairobi, the youth, who were the target population, were defined as being between the ages of 18-30. This is because the average age of an undergraduate student varies from 18 upwards.

3.4. Research Method

Data collection was done through focus group discussions, an online textual analysis and a key informant interview as discussed below.

3.4.1. Focus Group Discussions

The study conducted three focus groups: a mixed focus group and an all- female as well as an all-male focus group. For the mixed focus group, a convenience method was used to sample the 4th year Broadcast Journalism Class at the School of Journalism. In order to recruit the respondents of the focus group from the class, a systematic sample of the

students in the class was done, where every fifth student was invited to participate in the focus group. Because some of the respondents declined to participate when their turn arrived, this process was continued until the desired number of respondents was reached. Only one declined.

Respondents for the all-female and all male focus group discussions were chosen through convenience samples of a 2nd year Political Science Class and a 4th year Journalism Class respectively. This was because most of the respondents declined to participate in the study because of the research was about feminism, a topic the respondents might not have wanted to declare their position on.

3.4.2. Key Informant Interview

For this study, a key informant interview was conducted. Initially, five respondents had been selected to participate in the key informant interviews through purposive sampling. However, two of the respondents declined to participate in the interviews, while the other two were unavailable each time an appointment was made to conduct the interviews. Consequently, only one respondent was available to participate in the interview. Because of this low number, the researcher conducted a textual analysis to achieve a higher level of validity and reliability of the findings.

3.4.3. Online textual analysis

For this study, an online textual analysis was conducted in order to examine what frames were used in the coverage of the feminist movement online. The study chose Facebook sites which are popular and frequented by many followers as the sources for the articles. The study identified '*Feminism is Evil*' and '*Women Against Feminism*'. Because content on '*Women Against Feminism*' was largely pictorial, while content on '*Feminism is Evil*' had a more textual context, with nearly all of the content linking back to articles on

feminism, *Feminism is Evil*' was chosen as the source for the article analysis for the study. Furthermore, the choice to use '*Feminism is Evil*' was informed by the fact that the articles on the site were updated daily, and also because the page would allow one to look through all other articles that had been previously updated on the site.

Since posts are updated weekly, with a post a day for six days, the researcher chose to analyze all the articles posted for a period of six weeks. This yielded a total of 36 articles for analysis. All articles on the page that had pictures were chosen for analysis. This is because posts with pictures attracted more readers, meaning that if a particular frame was used in such a story, it had a likelihood of being seen many times over, and thus would probably influence how the youth viewed feminism.

3.5. Data analysis

3.5.1. Focus Group Discussions

The first step in the analysis of data collected from the focus group discussions was transcription. This was followed by assigning the data to various thematic areas, which fell under the two frames commonly used in the coverage of feminist issues, namely the demonization frame and the personalization and trivialization frame.

3.5.2. Online textual analysis

For the textual analysis, coding was done by taking the key words, which in this case would be 'feminism' and 'feminists' and looking at how often these words were associated with negative descriptors, such as 'radical', 'militant', 'crazy' and 'man-hating'. These descriptors were drawn from each of the frames used in the coverage of feminist issues, namely the demonization frame and the personalization and trivialization frame. A code sheet was used to identify the number of times each descriptor appeared in article in regard to the key words.

3.5.3. Key Informant Interview

The data collected from the key informant interview would be analyzed in relation to the frames used in the focus group discussions. This would serve to either affirm or negate the findings from the focus group discussions.

3.6. Triangulation

By employing the focus group discussions, online textual analysis and the key informant interview, the study was able to triangulate its findings by filling in the gaps that each of the data collection methods might have failed to cover. The use of three data collection methods therefore meant that the data collected had depth.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

In order to conform to research ethics, responses from the respondents were kept confidential, in order to preserve their rights and dignity. In addition to this, the study also respected the rights of the respondents to decline to participate in the key informant interviews and during the focus group discussions. Their right to freely express their ideas was also respected.

The purpose of the study was openly explained to the respondents without giving away any details of the study, in order to avoid respondent bias. Data collected from the respondents was solely used for research purposes and it has been kept confidential throughout the research process. After developing the proposal, I presented it to a panel of examiners and upon passing I was cleared for field work and issued with a Certificate of Fieldwork (see Appendix Three). On successful completion of fieldwork I presented my findings to a panel of examiners who made some recommendations on my work and after incorporating the suggested corrections I was issued with a Certificate of Corrections (see Appendix Four). As required by the university, I signed a Declaration of Originality Form

(see Appendix Five) and my work was tested for originality, which was successful hence I was awarded a Certificate of Plagiarism (see Appendix Six)

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Overview

This study sought to investigate how far social networking services have gone in trying to shape the overall perception of the feminist movement in Kenya through their representations of the movement. The study sought to find out the following: (i) the existing perceptions of feminism among Kenyan youth on social media; (ii) the frames that have been used in the online coverage of feminist issues in Kenya; and (iii) the effects these frames have on the perception of feminist movement among the youth in Kenya. This chapter's main aim will be the presentation and analysis of the data collected.

4.1. Respondent Profile

The main target of this study was a homogenous group, which means that the two key characteristics it was considering were age and gender. The main respondents for this study were undergraduate students from the ages of 18-30. In the study 54.5% of the respondents were female while 45.4% were male, translating into 12 female and 10 male respondents. This can be attributed to the higher rate of enrollment by female students in the sampled Departments at the University of Nairobi.

The 2009 National Census notes that the gender distribution in the country currently stands at 49.7% male and 50.3% female. This study sought to include an equal number of each gender, but was unable to realize this owing to the significantly higher number of female students in the sampled departments.

4.2. Age distribution

The study sought to establish the ages of the respondents. From the findings majority of the respondents were between 18-30 years old. These findings are consistent with statistics

on socialbakers.com which note that the main users of social media are individuals between the ages of 18-25 (socialbakers.com, 2013).

4.3. Existing perceptions of feminism among Kenyan youth on social media

The research intended to find out what existing perceptions of feminism were among Kenyan youth today on social media. This section seeks to discuss these findings.

4.3.1. Feminist self-identity

In response to the question of whether or not the respondents identified as feminists, seventeen of the respondents described themselves as feminists. This was inconsistent with Zucker's (2004), Aronson's (2003) as well as Williams and Wittig's (1997) findings that generated a varied range of responses to the question. They created a typology of responses with four categories "I am not a feminist, but...", "I'm a fence sitter", "I am a feminist", and "I am not a feminist" (Aronson, 2003).

Apart from the five respondents who identified as non-feminists, most of the respondents were comfortable identifying themselves as feminists. Others were more hesitant to label themselves as feminists. This can be probably attributed to the fact that the term 'feminist' and 'feminism' carry negative connotations in Kenyan society, as exemplified by Chege's (2016) article, which described feminists as the scum of society.

Another reason for the hesitance to identify outright as feminist could stem from the definition of feminism itself. According to ID1, a lecturer at a local University, feminism can mean different things to many people:

... Feminism exists on a wide continuum. Ideally, feminism is about equality of the sexes, but the persisting narrative of feminism is of bra-burning, man-hating women, which is not true...

Hooks (2000) agrees with this sentiment. She notes that people tended to associate the feminist movement with a ‘bunch of angry women who want to be men’. One of the non-feminist respondents noted that the reason that she was not a feminist was because of the apparent association that existed between feminism and man-hating. She noted that ‘...*feminists tend to hate on men for no apparent reason...*’

The feminist movement has been constantly plagued by the lack of a single definition of what feminism is. From Hooks’ (2000) observation about feminists being ‘a bunch of angry women who want to be men’ may be an indication of this problem. It is possible that the dominant narrative of representing feminists as ‘man hating’ has become an acceptable definition of the feminist movement.

Hooks (2000) further notes that feminism should primarily be thought of as being about women gaining equal rights. This view was shared across the board among all the respondents for this study. All the five non-feminists noted that they believed in the equality of the sexes, a view shared by ID1, who notes that the feminist movement is primarily centered around achieving equal rights for women in comparison to men, and not about hating or even disempowering men, which is often perceived as feminism’s aim.

One of the respondents, who did not identify as a feminist argued her position based on the nature vs. nurture debate, where she noted that the physical differences between men and women made it difficult for any kind of ‘real’ equality to be achieved, despite the fact that it was necessary to have equal rights between men and women.

She goes on to note that:

...we’ll never be equal because it is just, nature. Men can never have babies, and we can, which already sets us apart. Men are physically stronger than women, and no matter how we try, we cannot match them...

This opinion is in line with Lorber's (2005) definition of cultural feminists, who believe in the natural differences between men and women. They see these differences as biological and natural.

Inconsistencies have been periodically found in the self-identification of women as feminists. According to Quinn and Radtke (2006), there is always an implied lack of consistency between people's identities and their attitudes, beliefs, and actions when they embrace feminist values while rejecting feminism and a feminist identity. "This seemed to be the case for the five respondents who did not outrightly embrace the feminist label, but still expressed feminist beliefs, such as the belief in the equality of rights between the sexes.

4.3.2 Feminism and Gender Equality

As a follow-up to the question of whether the respondents identified as feminists, the researcher sought to find out the ideas the respondents held regarding their conception of feminism. Most of the respondents defined feminism as solely being about obtaining equal rights for women. Only three respondents emphasized the fact that feminism was concerned about equality between men and women. One of the respondents noted that:

... "I believe that being a feminist means that you believe in social, political and economic equality for men and women. It's about equality, not making sure that women are superior (than) men, because that is impossible."...

According to ID1, feminism's core ideal is ensuring that there is equality between men and women, a sentiment that is echoed by two other respondents who noted that feminism was supposed to ensure '*equality between men and women, and not just blaming men for everything*'.

Feminism therefore does not exist to oppress one group, or give one group undue privilege over the other. Its highest aim is ensuring that equal rights are enjoyed by all, regardless of gender.

4.3.3 Men as feminists

Most of the respondents believed that men could be feminists. One respondent said that he was a feminist because *'he believed in the equality of men and women'*. All the male respondents in the study readily identified as feminists, while the female respondents also registered their agreement that it was possible for men to identify as feminists. Hooks (1998) opines that male identification with the feminist movement is important in furthering feminist causes. This is because male involvement in the feminist movement makes it more universal and also more relevant. It is therefore important to encourage the participation of men in the feminist movement because excluding them from the conversation paints the movement as a female-centric task, making it sexist, and thus, contrary to feminism's aim of promoting equality.

During the course of the discussion, it was noted by three of the respondents that sometimes men who identified as feminists often came under fire by fellow men who considered them as not being 'masculine enough'. This is because feminism is primarily regarded as a women's movement. One respondent noted that:

'...men can also be feminist. But sometimes men who say they are feminist are told to stop adopting feminine behaviours'...

This points to a societal reality where men who are deemed as going contrary to the dominant male gender roles, or hegemonic masculinity, as it is called by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), are liable to having their masculinity, and by extension, their heterosexuality questioned by fellow men and the society at large.

One respondent said that he was a feminist because in his words, ‘he loved women, and therefore was a feminist’. While this may be a valid sentiment, it does not exclude one from the possibility of having sexist behaviour, as noted by Boguhn (2014). The readiness of men to identify as feminists signifies a step in the right direction, but with the attitude of ‘male feminists have feminine behaviour’ still persisting, it is likely that sexist behaviours might still continue in order to keep up a front that will deflect from male feminist self-identity.

4.3.4 Feminist stereotypes

According to ID1, a possible reason that negative stereotypes of feminists have continued to persist might be attributed to the media’s framing of feminist issues in a negative light. She also goes on to add that in a deeply religious society like the Kenyan one, feminism is often viewed as disruptive and against the will of God. She says:

‘...most people view feminism as an unchristian activity, and they often say that it is teaching women to disobey their husbands...many people feel that feminism is solely out to promote female superiority and promote male inferiority, which is not the goal of feminism...’

Dux and Simic (2008) note that feminism is so closely associated with the idea of ‘the man-hating, hairy-legged lesbian’, so much so that people want to get far away from the word as possible. It should be noted that feminism is a wide term that covers a lot of different views and can be defined in multiple ways, dependent on where one fell on the feminist spectrum.

According to the respondents, they did not feel that these negative feminist stereotypes existed today. According to one male respondent:

‘...a feminist could be anyone. I myself am a feminist. You are a feminist. Your mother can be a feminist. A feminist can be anyone...’

While most of the respondents felt that old stereotypes of feminists were no longer applicable today, one of the male respondents who identified as a feminist used an existing stereotype as what he felt defined feminists for him. He notes:

'...I'd say that they are angry. They are angry at anything that someone can speak about women...their words will tell you. There is no look, but if you listen to them, you can be able to tell who is a feminist. We have changed. A feminist can be anyone...'

Despite this respondent's acknowledgement that a feminist could be anyone, there is still a dissociation between his statement and the fact that his first indicator of who a feminist is was a stereotype of a feminist as an angry woman. This shows that there is still a lot of work that needs to be put in by both the media and feminist activists in order to ensure that these stereotypes are completely dispelled.

4.3.5 Relevance of feminism to society today

In addition to the 17 respondents who identified as feminists, all the five respondents who identified as non-feminists said that they still felt that feminist was relevant. One of them said:

'... I think that feminism is still relevant today. We still have girls who are not going to school, who are being married off early...in some places, we still have FGM, and that is not good, so we still need feminism...'

This sentiment is echoed by ID1, who notes that feminism is relevant in today's society, but with an additional observation:

'...feminism is very much relevant in our society today. Remember when feminism started, it was to champion for women's voting rights, and today, women can vote and do whatever they want. We must however, remember that boys need help too, and in any case, we cannot have a healthy discussion about gender without including boys...'

ID1's sentiments are in line with Khurram's (2012) definition of radical feminism, whose ultimate aim she says is to 'achieve total equality with men, not equality at the expense of men.'

Equality, for instance, can be in terms of educational access, which hinders women from bettering their livelihoods, because it means that they are unable to work for others and they also cannot become entrepreneurs, limiting their chances of economic empowerment.

In this instance, feminism remains relevant in today's society, not only for the benefit of women, who are yet to fully enjoy the same rights as men do in society, but also for the men and boys by extension, who have been over the years left out of the gender rights movement, owing to the perception that they as the oppressors have nothing to be discontent about.

4.3.6 Participation in feminist activism

Most, if not all feminist milestones have been achieved offline. Following the tremendous increase of internet globally, and especially among the youth, it has become critical to examine whether the internet is helping or hindering the progress of the feminist cause.

According to ID1:

'...social media has been beneficial in that it allows for the participation of many people at the same time globally in an issue that might have happened locally. Since it is equally popular among the youth, it means that the youth have a chance at participating in social movements. Despite its advantages, nothing can ever replace that human to human connection...'

Social media has been indeed advantageous to social movements. This is because it enables global participation in local events. In the cases of #MyDressMyChoice and #BringBackOurGirls, the global community was able to lend their voice in support of these movements that were aimed at protecting the rights of women to dress how they want and agitating for the release of the 200 girls that had been captured by Boko Haram

in Nigeria. As the key informant interview respondent notes, regardless of the benefits that online activism has, it is also still important that we have a measure of actual participation in offline protests. According to one respondent:

'...the internet has been good to social movements, but there is also the issue of slacktivism. You should not only push for feminist issues, you must also go out to the streets and protest. Putting up a picture on social media is not enough, one must live their cause. It is not enough to be a keyboard warrior...

This reinforces the fact that participation is a necessary facet of the feminist movement, without which, feminists are simply reduced to 'slacktivists'. This waters down the impact that social media can have in the movement. In order for feminist activism to have some sort of impact, it is necessary for online efforts to be complemented by concrete action, which the respondents agreed takes the form of a protest or demonstration.

4.4 Frames used in the online coverage of feminist issues in Kenya

Our perceptions of reality are shaped by what we consume in the media. If a message is frequently repeated, it becomes more prominent in the minds of the audience. Therefore, if feminism continues being framed negatively by the media, the audience will also perceive the movement negatively.

4.4.1. Respondents' social media use

All the respondents in the study were social media users. Popular social networking sites mentioned by the respondents included Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest and WhatsApp. Only four of the respondents, however, classified WhatsApp as a social networking site. YouTube, despite its classification as a social networking site, was not acknowledged as one by any of the respondents. In addition to this, all but one of the respondents was a Facebook user.

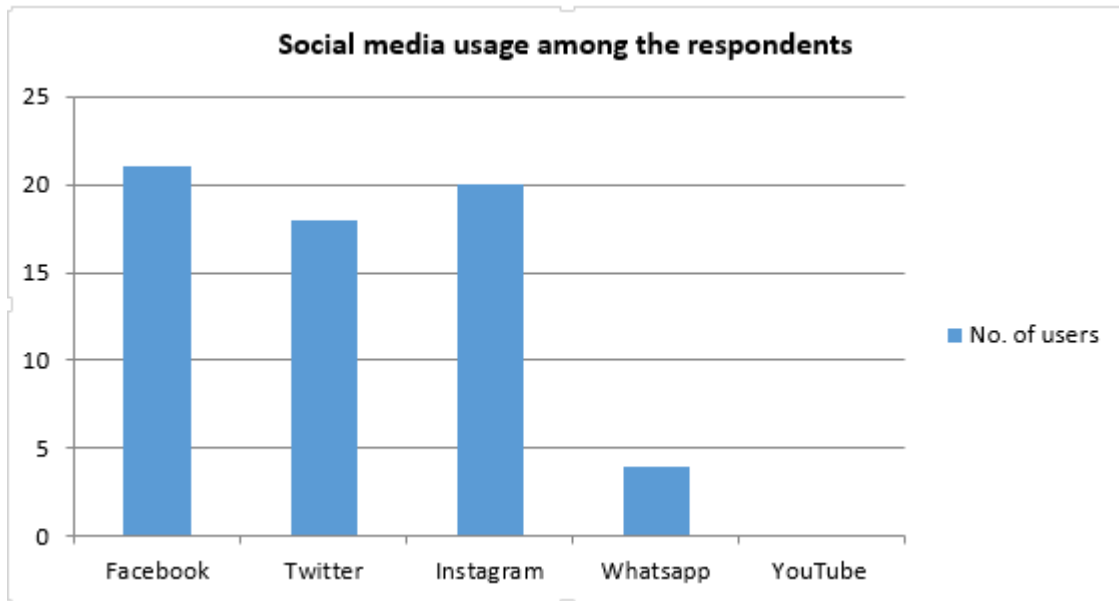


Figure 4.1: Social media usage among the respondents (Field Survey, 2016)

From the findings, Facebook and Instagram were the most popular social media platforms, with Twitter coming in third. This indicates that in the event that the youth would want to join the feminist conversation online, they would use these three mediums as their main platforms of engagement. While WhatsApp is considered part of social media, its usage numbers are still low. This can be attributed to the facts that while most phones can allow access to Facebook and twitter, most don't allow for access to WhatsApp. This limits the chances of it being used to participate in conversations about feminism.

4.4.2 Time spent on social media use

The respondents were asked amount of time they spent each day on social networking sites. The summary of the findings are tabulated below.

	0-1 hour	1-2 hours	2-3 hours	3-4 hours	4+ hours
Facebook	1	4	5	5	6
Twitter	9	1	1	1	6
Instagram	7	1	2	10	0
WhatsApp	0	0	0	0	4
YouTube	0	0	0	0	0

Table 4.1: Time spent on social media use (Field Survey, 2016)

According to the data collected from the respondents, Facebook was the most popular social media site. 6 out of the 21 Facebook users admitted to using the site for over 4 hours in a day. Only four respondents used WhatsApp for over four hours in a day, with one of them noting that they used it because '...it is more of a necessity, so I can use it for even nine hours a day...'. While the fact that WhatsApp users use the medium for over four hours a day means that the medium is a viable tool for engaging in feminist conversation, its low usage effectively negates this.

Facebook and Twitter can contribute significantly to furthering a feminist agenda on account of the number of hours they are used. As the second most popular medium, Instagram can also be an important platform upon which feminist conversation can take place, if we consider this fact alongside the number of hours it is used in a day.

4.4.3 What the respondents used social networking services for

Following the focus group discussion, it was established that the youth tended to use their social networking sites to catch up on what was currently trending. Before the study, it had been assumed that the youth would use social media as the main outlet through which they could learn about feminism and feminist issues. This was proven to be true, as most of the respondents acknowledged that they learnt about feminist causes through hashtags on social media, with the most popular being #MyDressMyChoice.

In lieu of participating in actual demonstrations, most respondents also used social media to participate in social causes. One of the respondents had this to say:

'...I shared a picture of #MyDressMyChoice on my Instagram...I felt that it was better than doing nothing...'

In order for social movements to be more effective, online and offline activities must complement each other. However, the respondent above also shows that sometimes it is better to have either online or offline feminist action, rather than no action at all.

It is important to note that none of the 17 respondents who identified as feminist reported to having any form of engagement with feminists on social media. None of the respondents also reported to knowing any feminists who had a sustained online presence. By engaging with feminists on social media, the respondents who identified as feminists would be able to model and reinforce their feminist behaviour, as per the process laid out in the Social Learning Theory by Albert Bandura (1977).

In line with the theory, some of the respondents noted that they learnt about feminism from their parents, friends and even from pop culture icons.

‘...I didn’t really learn about feminism from social media...for me, I learnt about social media from my mother, then I heard about it from my friends...’

These sentiments by the respondents can be taken to mean that the feminist movement in Kenya can gain more traction if there is more engagement between the audience and feminist personalities on social media. We must not however discount societal pressure, because the non- engagement can be as a result of wanting to avoid being labeled as a feminist, which has negative connotations in Kenyan society.

4.4.4 Framing of feminist issues in the media

Our understanding of issues is largely dependent on their framing in mass media. The perceptions of feminism among the youth which came up above can therefore be said to be as a result of how the movement has been framed in the media. This representation of feminism can represent the attitudes individuals have toward it, including whether they support it or not (Begley, 2014).

Through sustained positive coverage of the feminist movement, the media will have provided a positive frame for the movement, which might translate into the audience being more receptive to the feminist agenda and its attendant issues.

4.4.4.1. Personalization and trivialization frame

According to Bronstein (2005), media frames can be a powerful influence in the construction of public opinion and can have direct consequences for mobilization efforts. This means that if feminist activists are framed as deviants, potential recruits to the feminist movements may be hesitant to become a part of the movement. In addition to this, the use of negative frames may also give ammunition for forces seeking to discredit the movement.

The online textual analysis found that 21 stories utilized the personalization and trivialization frame. An article titled ‘How feminism is killing marriages in Kenya’ on the Kenya Bachelor blog attracted mixed responses from the respondents. The article says, in part:

4.4.4.2. Demonization frame

Bronstein (2005) notes that the demonization frame is less used for third wave feminists, which, going by the analysis of the articles on Feminism is Evil, is true, because out of the 36 stories that were analyzed, only 13 stories employed the use of the demonization frame.

One of the articles had the following to say

‘...There is a sharp increase in the number of marriages that are hitting the rocks every other day. A close look at what could be the reason why marriage institution has become vulnerable to failure is the increase in what I call ‘unjustified feminism’...

By describing feminism as unjustified, it can be said that the writer of the article can be perceived as having a dismissive attitude towards feminism. Because feminism works towards the achievement of equality, it could be argued that all its actions are justified.

Feminists covered in this frame tended to be largely described as ‘man-hating’ and ‘crazy’, reflecting the fact that feminism still has a long way to go before it gains full acceptance from society.

4.5. Effects of frames on the perception of feminist movement among the youth in Kenya

Following the focus group discussions, the key informant interview and the it emerged that there has been a steady increase in anti-feminist sentiment. According to one respondent:

‘...I am not a feminist because today, feminism is just about hating men for no good reason, you know, like saying things like all men are dogs...that’s not right...’

Out of the 22 respondents who participated in the study, only five identified as non-feminist. According to ID1, the reason why the youth would decline to identify as feminists is because of how the movement is framed by the media.

According to Van Wormer (2008), the media often gives priority to proponents of anti-feminist thought, while popular literature also echoes the existing sentiments about feminism. In doing so, Van Wormer (2008) notes that the media therefore sets the tone and shapes the perception of feminism amongst its audience.

Most coverage around feminism today is often heavily tied to the ‘detrimental’ effects that feminism has on men. According to an article on [www. tuko.co.ke](http://www.tuko.co.ke), the writer says that feminism only exists to shove down unwanted ideals down the throats of men, which is untrue. He further goes on to paint feminists as ‘irrational and overly emotional’, which implies that those who self-identify as feminist do not have the requisite mental capacity to articulate their needs.

Another article on Kenya Talk (www.kenyatalk.com), points out that Kenyan feminism has succumbed to the ‘progressive’ ideals of Western feminism. By putting the word progressive in quotes, it can be taken to mean that feminism is something that should be taken lightly. Further down, the author goes on to say:

‘...To be modern should not be equated with feminism. The whole feminism agenda is driven by the need to usurp the natural order of things, especially the natural structure of the family unit. In a few years to come, men will see themselves dragged to the courts because of ‘looking at women suggestively, thereby inflicting mental torture’...

This excerpt feeds into the dominant societal narrative that exists, in which feminism is not only a tool for ensuring equality for women, but also ensuring that women are ultimately superior to men. Khurram (2012) disproves this and notes that feminism is not about ensuring that women are more superior to men, but is instead concerned with ensuring total equality with men, but not at their expense.

Women are also continually viewed as unfit to take up leadership. Most of this nature tend to heavily allude to the 2/3 gender rule that requires 1/3 of all representation in the Kenyan Parliament to be made up of women, which has not gone down well with many. One of the respondents notes that *‘...women are just using that rule as a crutch. If they want to be elected, they should stand and be elected just like the men are...’*

While it is only fair to expect that women to run for office in the spirit of equality, the importance of the rule requiring that 1/3 of all Parliamentarians should be women cannot be discounted. This is because the rule allows for the participation of women in the political sphere, and as such , allows for the voice of women to be heard.

It may be worthwhile to note that out of all twenty two respondents, only five identified as non-feminist, while the rest identified as feminist. This can be taken to mean that the

negative coverage that feminism and feminist causes get might be more of a direct result of wanting to conform to societal norms, rather than outright media influence. Mackie (1996) notes that norms are persistent in society because of people's inclination to conform if they know others will also conform. This means that if people believe that feminism is a negative ideal, non-feminists are also likely to believe this notion, based on their need to fit in. But since a large majority of the respondents out rightly identified as feminists, it can be said that feminism no longer carries the social opprobrium that it did before. This corroborates Arias (2016) point that social approval is only accrued by an individual if a sufficient number of people express their attitudes and behave in a similar way.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Overview

The purpose of this research was to explore the role of social media in shaping the perception of feminism among the youth in Kenya. This chapter outlines the summary, conclusions and the recommendations of the study.

Using focus groups, a key informant interview, and a textual analysis, the study attempted to find out the following: (i) the existing perceptions of feminism among Kenyan youth on social media; (ii) the frames that have been used in the online coverage of feminist issues in Kenya; and (iii) the effects these frames have on the perception of feminist movement among the youth in Kenya.

5.2. Summary of the Findings

Existing perceptions of the feminist movement among youth at the University of Nairobi:

The study found that the youth were more willing to identify as feminists. However, the respondents who identified as non-feminists also stated they believed that there should be equality between men and women. This showed that there were still inconsistencies in feminist self-identification, where the respondents embraced feminist values while rejecting feminism and a feminist identity.

The study also found that while most of the youth considered feminists as concerned with the achievement of equality for women only, there were also those who felt that feminism was also concerned with the achievement of equality between men and women. This showed that there was an increasing awareness of the fact that fruitful conversations around the subject of gender cannot happen without the participation of men.

Another interesting finding from this study was the fact that more and more men were comfortable to self- identify as feminists, despite the fact that male feminist self- identity was seen as being contrary to society's ideas of what masculinity should and should not be. This was a clear indication of a societal reality where men, who are deemed as going contrary to the dominant male gender roles, or hegemonic masculinity, as it is called by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), are liable to having their masculinity, and by extension, their heterosexuality questioned by fellow men and the society at large. The readiness of men to identify as feminists signifies a step in the right direction, but with the attitude of 'male feminists have feminine behaviour' still persisting, it is likely that sexist behaviours might still continue in order to keep up a front that will deflect from male feminist self-identity.

On the subject of feminist stereotypes, the study found that the youth were increasingly discarding the old views of the feminist movement, which often portrayed feminists inaccurately. However, this must not be taken to mean that these stereotypes are yet to completely disappear, because one respondent still defined feminists as angry. This shows that there is still work to be put in by both the media and feminists activities to ensure that these stereotypes are completely dispelled.

According to Hall and Rodriguez (2003), we live in a postfeminist world where people believe that feminism is outdated due to the perceived equality between men and women. This study proved that feminism was still relevant in Kenyan society. Respondents were able to observe that feminism would never become entirely irrelevant in society on account of the fact that it would take a while to undo the injustices committed against women.

The study also found that while online action is a significant force in galvanizing social action, offline participation is also as important, as this study found. In participation, more people are able to form and maintain an identity around an issue (Melucci, 1996 in Klandermans & de Weerd, 2006). In collectively identifying as feminists online and participating in protests offline, the creation of a group of people with a shared feminist identity who will be ready to not only act individually but also collectively to reduce gender inequalities.

Frames used in the coverage of feminist issues in Kenya. The study found that feminist issues, by and large, were still framed negatively. The most popular frame under which feminist stories were written was the personalization and trivialization frame. Out of the 36 articles analyzed in the textual analysis, 21 articles had been written in this frame. Articles relying on this frame often focused on the personal attributes of the feminists, such as the nature of their hair, or how they dressed. The demonization frame was also significantly used, with 13 articles bearing the qualities of the frame, where feminists were mostly described in negative terms, like militant. The anti-feminist and victimization frames were least popular. The relatively abundant use of these frames means that while the movement is slowly gaining acceptance from Kenyan society, there is still a long way to go before it gains full acceptance in Kenyan society.

Effects of the frames on the perception of feminism among the youth. The study found that feminists and feminism issues were still being framed negatively by the media. This negative framing of feminist issues could therefore have been a factor in the reason why five respondents were reluctant to identify as feminists. However, because a large number of respondents readily identified as feminists, it would be possible to conclude that the social opprobrium that feminism once attracted in Kenyan society is slowly fading.

5.3. Conclusions

From its findings, the study concluded that there are identity contradictions in the promotion of feminism. The study found that while the youth are willing to identify as feminists, those who did not self-identify as feminist could still be considered as feminists. This study defined a feminist as “any politically and socially conscious woman or man who works for equality within or outside the movement, writes about feminism, or calls her-or himself a feminist in the name of furthering equality”(Richards and Baumgardner,2000). Out of the 22 respondents who participated in the study, five did not identify as feminists. However, they still believed in the equality of men and women. In light of Richards and Baumgardner’s (2000) definition above, the fact that they believed in the furthering of equality would make them feminist, regardless of the fact that they did not identify as feminists.

Another conclusion that the study drew was that while more men are readily identifying as feminists, there was likely to be a contradiction between their feminist identities and their behaviour. This is because of the concept of hegemonic masculinity. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) define this concept as the ‘most accepted way of being a man’. So, while a man would be comfortable identifying as feminist, he will also have to contend with his perception altering in the eyes of his peers. One of the respondents noted that men who openly identified as feminist were often told to stop ‘practicing feminine behaviours’. Because feminism is seen as a primarily women-centric activity, it is likely that a male feminist would perpetuate sexist behaviour in order to fit in with his peers, thus continuing the cycle of sexism in society, which feminism hopes to ultimately bring to an end.

The perception of feminism is still influenced by how the media frames the movement. Framing, more often than not, is capable of producing differing attitudes towards an issue,

depending on what frame is used. Given the fact that people more often than not don't place any personal significance to social movements, Kahneman and Tversky (1984) note that framing can alter the perceptions of people towards a certain movement. If, for instance, feminist activists are framed as deviants, or as hostile, then people may be hesitant to join the movement. In this study, the personalization and trivialization frame was the most commonly used in the coverage of feminist issues, followed by the demonization frame. The prominent use of these two frames means that the majority of feminist coverage is negative, and therefore, might put people off from joining the movement.

5.4. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study has some recommendations to make, as outlined below.

5.4.1. Areas of future studies and research

The researcher makes recommendations for a few study areas on gender, media and feminism. This is based on the premise that this area of study is relatively young in Kenya and Africa and therefore provides opportunity for growth and focus among researchers and academia.

Since the study showed that an increasing number of men were willing to identify as feminist, a study can be carried out on the same topic with only male respondents in order to see whether men are becoming more open to the idea of feminism, and what this means for the pursuit of equality in society.

Since the study only looked at the role of social media in shaping the perceptions of feminism among Kenyan youth, another study can be done, this time looking at how the coverage of feminism in print and broadcast media can have an effect on how youth view feminism.

Because social media has opened up interactions between people significantly, it might be interesting to study how feminists frame themselves on social media, and whether or not this has an effect on how our increasingly digital society views feminism.

5.4.2. Recommendations from the study

- i. In the event that there will be any feminist engagements, the relevant feminist groups must ensure that they have offline engagements with the participants as a complement to the online engagements they may have.
- ii. Owing to the negative sentiments that feminism stirs in contemporary society, the relevant authorities might look into monitoring social media with an aim to reduce the defamation and the spread of inflammatory remarks often made against feminists in online spaces.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE: INTERVIEW QUESTION GUIDE

-Do you think that social media has the capacity to change the feminist movement in Kenya?

-is there significant involvement from the youth in the feminist movement in Kenya?

-To what extent do you think social media can be used to bring about societal change, especially in the feminist movement?

-What do you think people assume are the most salient characteristics of feminists?

-How do you think social media has been able to change the feminist movement in Kenya?

APPENDIX TWO: CODE SHEET

Week One

Days	Occurrence of 'feminism / feminist'	Occurrence of negative descriptors						
		Man-hating	Crazy	Lesbians	Hostile	Negative	Ugly	Angry
Day 1								
Day 2								
Day 3								
Day 4								
Day 5								
Day 6								
Total								

Week Two

Days	Occurrence of 'feminism/ feminist'	Occurrence of negative descriptors						
		Man-hating	Crazy	Lesbians	Hostile	Negative	Ugly	Angry
Day 1								
Day 2								
Day 3								
Day 4								
Day 5								
Day 6								
Total								

Week Three

Days	Occurrence of 'feminism / feminist'	Occurrence of negative descriptors						
		Man-hating	Crazy	Lesbians	Hostile	Negative	Ugly	Angry
Day 1								
Day 2								
Day 3								

Day 4								
Day 5								
Day 6								
Total								

Week Four

Days	Occurrence of 'feminism/ feminist'	Occurrence of negative descriptors						
		Man-hating	Crazy	Lesbians	Hostile	Negative	Ugly	Angry
Day 1								
Day 2								
Day 3								
Day 4								
Day 5								
Day 6								
Total								

Week Five

Days	Occurrence of 'feminism/ feminist'	Occurrence of negative descriptors						
		Man-hating	Crazy	Lesbians	Hostile	Negative	Ugly	Angry
Day 1								
Day 2								
Day 3								
Day 4								
Day 5								
Day 6								
Total								

Week Six

Days	Occurrence of 'feminism/ feminist'	Occurrence of negative descriptors						
		Man-hating	Crazy	Lesbians	Hostile	Negative	Ugly	Angry
Day 1								
Day 2								
Day 3								
Day 4								
Day 5								
Day 6								
Total								

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Title: The Role of Social Networking Services in Shaping
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SUPERVISOR

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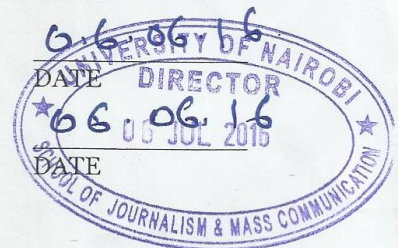
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APPENDIX FOUR: CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTIONS



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Name: Odhiambo Brenda Atinyi

Title: Social media and Youth Perception of Feminism

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Dr. Joy Nueni
SUPERVISOR

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APPENDIX FIVE: DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY FORM

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Declaration of Originality Form

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Title of the work Social Media and Youth Perception of Feminism in Kenya:
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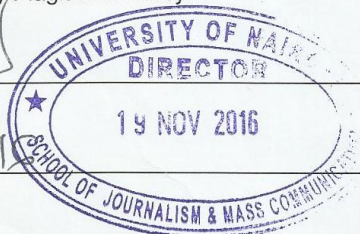
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APPENDIX SIX: PLAGIARISM TEST RESULTS

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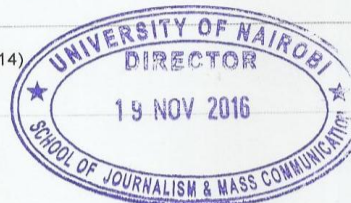
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