3rd World Conference on Gender Equality
12-14 June 2025 Vienna, Austria

Navigating Resistance: Challenges and controversies in advocating Nigerian feminist politics and ideas online

Chiadikaobi Ihuoma

Keele University, United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

Promoting feminist politics and ideology on digital media continues to be a daunting task in Nigeria, where firmly entrenched patriarchal norms, platform governance and affordances, and socio-cultural barriers frequently hinder feminist activism. This paper explores the nuances of online feminist advocacy based on in-depth interviews with Nigerian social media feminist influencers. The findings show several recurring themes that encapsulate the challenges and strategic adaptations of feminist influencers navigating the digital landscape of Nigeria. Among the challenges that intersect with platform governance and affordances are cultural and ideological tensions, which frame public opposition to feminist politics and ideas, hostility and online bullying from individuals and groups and the perception of feminist activists as privileged and condescending. In addition, the influencers expressed frustration about misunderstandings and dismissals. At the same time, the scope of social media activism raises concerns about the effective use of digital platforms to drive real-world change. Tone and communication challenges, coupled with persistent misperceptions that conflate feminism with women's empowerment, emerged as themes that point to feminist activism being contentious in Nigeria's online space. The interviewed influencers aware of these challenges and controversies adopt different content creation strategies amid fast-changing platform affordances. By analysing these experiences, this study contributes to the broader literature on the use of social media for digital activism. It underscores the need for nuanced approaches to digital feminism that consider local socio-political contexts, platform features and resistance mechanisms, offering insights for scholars and activists committed to feminist advocacy in restrictive environments.

Keywords: Digital feminism, feminist influencers, feminist politics, platform affordances, patriarchy