The 'New Father': Male Allies in Digital Feminism and the Reshaping of Patriarchal Behavior

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Abstract

This paper explores male allyship in digital feminism within the context of Pakistan's patriarchal society. Women's movement in Pakistan has increased by its scale, magnitude, diversity, and inclusivity. Not only women from different social classes, regions, religions, ethnicities, and sects but also men come together on a common platform to protest the multiple patriarchies that control, limit, and constrain women's self-expression and fundamental rights. Through interviews with 23 male and female activists in online women's movements, this study explores how digital feminism reshapes patriarchal norms by producing mutually responsible behaviours among men, facilitating bridging social capital, and possibly giving rise to the 'new father' a new breed of progressive men. In a patriarchal society, where the dominancy of the father is blindly followed, digital feminism is now altering the father's rule into male allies, producing a concept of new a father, which is challenging the patriarchal notions of masculinity and hegemony. The new father is a symbol of a new dominant figure, who is responsible and transforming the domestic patriarchy, to maintain equality at home and would bring change to the social structure at large.

Keywords

El "Nuevo Padre": Los Aliados masculinos en el Feminismo Digital y la Remodelación del Comportamiento Patriarcal

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Resumen

Este artículo explora la alianza masculina en el feminismo digital dentro del contexto de la sociedad patriarcal de Pakistán. El movimiento feminista en Pakistán ha aumentado por su escala, magnitud, diversidad e inclusividad. No sólo mujeres de diferentes clases sociales, regiones, religiones, etnias y sectas, sino también hombres se unen en una plataforma común para protestar contra los múltiples patriarcados que controlan, limitan y constriñen la autoexpresión y los derechos fundamentales de las mujeres. A través de entrevistas con 23 activistas masculinos y femeninos de movimientos de mujeres en línea, este estudio explora cómo el feminismo digital reconfigura las normas patriarcales produciendo comportamientos mutuamente responsables entre los hombres, facilitando un capital social puente y posiblemente dando lugar al "nuevo padre", una nueva raza de hombres progresistas. En una sociedad patriarcal, donde se sigue ciegamente el dominio del padre, el feminismo digital está alterando ahora el dominio del padre en aliados masculinos, produciendo un concepto de nuevo padre, que está desafiando las nociones patriarcales de masculinidad y hegemonía. El nuevo padre es el símbolo de una nueva figura dominante, responsable y transformadora del patriarcado doméstico, que mantendría la igualdad en el hogar y aportaría cambios a la estructura social en general.

Palabras clave

Worldwide the men's response towards the feminist movement varies; some supportive, some vehemently opposed, and others apathetic. Although feminist movements are traditionally driven by women for women, making efforts to involve more women, the inclusion of men in feminist movements is equally as important as that of women. Traditionally, men who support gender equality in principle, were viewed by feminist movements as mere bystanders whose involvement do not go beyond bearing witness. However, the need to engage with men on women's issues, and the increasing involvement of men in women's movements highlight the importance of male allyship, particularly when taking into consideration male privilege prevalent in many societal institutions (Almassi, 2022).

Male allyship in women's movement is particularly vital in patriarchal cultures that overly-privilege male privilege where male group membership (Frye, 1997; Almassi, 2022) pose invisible barriers to women trying to advance their agendas be it in national assemblies, organizational management, community leadership, and even (or especially) within the family sphere.

This paper explores male allyship within the context of digital feminism in one such patriarchal culture, namely Pakistan.

This paper begins with an introduction to the development of online feminist movements in Pakistan, and its engagement and inclusion of men. The paper then elucidates the theoretical notion of digital feminism, followed by a similar conceptual discussion of masculinity and male allyship. Next, the methodology section of the paper reports on the study's data collection through 23 in-depth interviews conducted with women and men representing NGOs working on women's issues. Findings from these interviews are then presented, wherein three main themes are elaborated upon: Mutual Responsible Behaviour; Online Bridging and the 'New Father' Male Ally. The analysis and discussion section draws upon these themes to discuss male allyship in the digital feminism movement and their reshaping of patriarchal norms in Pakistan.

Online\Digital Feminism in Pakistan

Male allies continue to grow in Western countries and cultures; however, the second aspect, including men in the feminist movement, is still not apparent in male-dominated societies. Male dominancy and patriarchy establish a powerful status for men, and masculine hegemony doesn't tolerate women's authority and position.

For example, in Pakistan, an emerging economy and culturally patriarchal society, various women's organizations are working to improve women's status. Governments over the period provided constitutional and legal support; however, the cultural powers still dominated all spheres of life. Since 2015, an Islamabad-based NGO has used social media to mobilize women across Pakistan and made countless efforts to include men to bring desired outcomes. On every women's day (08 March), a rally is organized, and they experience strong criticism and opposition yearly. However, according to organizers, they have received a pretty positive

response from different male-oriented groups. Therefore, they hope to transform the prevailing masculine behaviour and include more men in advocating women's rights.

Thus, the current study aims to understand the scope of digital feminism in Pakistan and its contribution to making men male allies, safeguarding women's equality and ensuring their fundamental rights.

Online feminism has even enlisted men (Naz et al., 2022). Online feminism revitalized feminism in Pakistan, and male ally-ship in women's movement changed power dynamics in a patriarchal structure (Tarar et al., 2020). This paper contributes to the literature on male allies in women's movements. This study discusses digital feminism in Pakistan and the role of social media in male allies in a patriarchal sociocultural milieu.

Social movement scholars, Bennett & Segerberg (2012) theorized and explained that social media could transfer connective action to collected action. One example of connective action to collective action is the "Women's March" in Pakistan. In a short time, social media informed and involved masses, where the online connective action led to a collective action in the form of a massive march. As Generation-Z remains mainly online and is always on their phones, their offline and online lives are merged and social media is the only option for them to engage in activism. The feminists in Pakistan have assessed the potential of the new media (internet and social media and mobile technologies) for women's empowerment and integrated social media to spread "feminist movement" in Pakistan (Serez, 2017).

The emergence of the internet and social media made women activists visible to the general masses, and their agendas were communicated well to people. Social media facilitated women activists to present women's issues and demand solutions by involving the community at large. The online media also enabled women activists to counter lobby against them and tackle pressure groups. Above all, the involvement of young people in online activism has made a difference in women's movement and feminism in Pakistan. WAF utilized the internet and social media and mobilized young people to disseminate information in digital spaces. "*Girls at dhahba*" is one example of online feminism in Pakistan, which started with a single picture of girls at a *dhaba* (local tea spot), shared on multiple social networking sites, and reclaimed women's presence in public spaces. One picture on social media generated a big buzz and turned into an online movement. Feminists across Pakistan shared their pictures at male-dominated places and collectively raised their voices against patriarchy in Pakistan, which women face in their daily routine (Rehman, 2017).

Despite the growing threat of digital feminism to the established patriarchy, men from all walks of field also joined women activists and continued their struggle. Despite the fact that women were harassed online and You-Tube star, "Qandeel Baloch," was murdered, the magnitude of online activism flourished. An online cyber-harassment policy was formulated to secure women's online presence (Hassan, Unwin & Gardezi, 2018). Women's rhetoric was not tolerated in Pakistan; however, digital media re-invented feminism in Pakistan by involving men.

Theoretical Background

Technologies: Hedge over Culture

Women are key contributors to domestic and economic fronts; their empowerment and involvement is mandatory for national development (Lata & Jukariya, 2018). In feminist movements, traditional media (Television, Films and Newspapers) played a significant role; however, scholars have observed that the internet has more potential and power to wipe out stereotypical notions and construct a new and more vibrant definition of what it means to be a "girl" (Toffoletti, et al., 2018). Women can be depicted online in a "less stereotyped perspective" and show themselves "positively" as message producers and users (Oberst, et al., 2016). Papacharissi (2009) argued that the internet has bestowed upon women a "self-expression" with authority and autonomy. Likewise, a social debate related to gender oppression and discrimination emerged online (Bailey et al., 2013). Social media as a "global sharing" (Lata & Jukariya, 2018), channel advocates women's rights and enables them to participate in multiple tasks such as education, politics, and governance.

The dominance of culture over legislative reforms was challenged by the growing media and digital technologies. The digital media, internet, social networking sites, and blogs provided an opportunity to discuss and introduce the image of strong and empowered women, eschewed victimization, and defined feminine beauty as a subject, not as objects of a sexist patriarchy. The "web" redefined "girlie Feminism" [sic.] (Groeneveld, 2009), and notions of "cyber-girrls"[sic.] and "net-grrls" [sic.] emerged in the cyber-world (Kelly, et al., 2006). The third wave of feminism in the internet era spread across geographical boundaries. Contrary to feminists, "Grrl-feminism" [sic.] was adopted and advocated at global and multi-cultural levels. The use of technologies to present women's empowered image resulted in "digital feminism." The inclusion of technologies in feminist movement paved for collaborative efforts, and opened more interactive and communication options to disseminate messages at a mass level without geographical and cultural boundaries. The involvement of young women and men across the world has made feminism a "public discourse," where it is no longer limited to academics, feminists, and protests. Now feminism does not just address women's rights; the movement involves the suppressed segment of the world, and talks about equality regardless of gender, nationality, ethnicity, and religion.

Nicolla (2020), conducted a study and suggested including men in the feminist movement and applauded digital feminism in diminishing the gender barriers. Social media reduce traditional barriers to activism, such as time and financial resources, forcing us to consider social and emotional factors that may interfere with outward male support for feminism (Nicolla, 2020). Since the feminist movement successfully utilizes new media technologies to reach the maximum number of people, it is not gender specific. Men and women both respond to women's marginalized status and raise their voices together for equality and equity. However, research regarding patriarchal culture is not providing evidence of digital feminism's success and, above all use of new media technologies in narrowing down the century-old and traditionally rooted gender barriers between men and women.

While focusing on one aspect, i.e., digital feminism, social media contributed significantly to the feminist cause and allowed women to express themselves in a patriarchal culture (Mowat, et al., 2020). Furthermore, new media technologies are reducing gender segregation and bringing men and women together to achieve freedom and equality (Aksar, et al., 2020). Now the women's movement is not specifically targeting women to confront inequality, violence against women, sexual assault, and discriminatory behaviours against women (Cheng, et al., 2018). Digital media encouraged men to speak up for women's rights, and more male allies promoted gender equality and societal transformation (Hardacre & Subai, 2018; Thomas, et al., 2009). The research described men's impact on eradicating gender bias and promoting gender equality (Kabeer, 2016; Radke et al., 2018). Digital feminism increased male participation and erased conventional gender barriers.

Digital Feminism

JessicaValenti coined the term "fourth wave of feminism" in 2009, which is "online" (Schulte, 2011). This online or digital feminism involves Millennials, Generation-Z, and Digital natives who grew up with digital technologies, use new media unprecedentedly, and constituted a new political generation (Zimmerman, 2017). Digital media has revolutionized the fourth wave of feminism and incited actions for the social and cultural process, involving digital natives (young people, women, and men) who are susceptible to influence and trigger actions. Digital feminism is not targeted at patriarchy, discussing the inferior position of women, but rather, the message is sent to millions of people with the firm belief that there is no other option than democratic behaviour, i.e., equality for everyone. Digital feminism is focused on their fundamental identity as a human being, and women have the option to say "no" like men (Baer, 2016). The new media technologies provided an platform to narrate real-life stories and express their feelings. The potential of the internet as a platform for "self-expression" has made women capable of raising their voice and leading to "digital feminism" (Fotopoulou, 2014).

Typically, activists do not convene in a meeting room to discuss issues; instead, they use social media to hashtag the issues that affect them, with the goal of "raising awareness" (Jackson, 2018). The social media became the "power of the powerless." The oppressed groups of society banded together, collaborated, and spoke out about their predicament. They don't take to the streets, block roads, and, despite their bravado, they often fail to get the attention of the mainstream media and the general public. They send a short one-line tweet, post on Facebook, upload a photo, and reveal their dissatisfaction, as well as enlist the help of others, including male allies (Brimacombe, et al., 2018).

Male Allyship

Male engagement in women's movements and gender equality is not a new phenomenon. Concerted efforts to engage male allies are most prevalent in the fight to prevent violence against women, particularly domestic violence and sexual violence (Macomber, 2015).

While male allyship brings many benefits to women's empowerment, it comes with its own challenges and risks, whether at the personal level or at the structural level.

At the structural level, male allies are vital in political and governance, policy making and decision making, given the worldwide gender imbalance generally found in national assemblies

and corporate boards. Ironically, however, while male allyship in women's movements is meant to empower women, male privilege can also end up co-opting women's empowerment – effectively challenging the leadership of women in the movement. (Macomber 2012; Macomber 2015). For example, in cases where male allies end up 'taking over', whether in substance through paternalistic 'assistance' or 'guidance' in what Wiley & Dunne (2019) call 'autonomy-oriented support', or symbolically as a poster child or face of the movement

At the other end of the spectrum, male allyship is sometimes hampered by political correctness (PC) against unconscious bias, where male allies' good intentions are overshadowed by what is perceived as their own sexism, albeit unintentionally or unknowingly, as well as "upmanship" competition among male allyship (Macomber 2015).
In daily life, women benefit from male allies within their immediate social sphere – the family, the workplace, the community. These personal male allies make immediate and tangible difference not only in promoting respect for women and gender equality in the home, workplace or community, but provide preventative buffer for harassment or violence against women. In their allyship with women in their families and communities, however, these men can also become targets of social ostracization, harassment or violence.

On the other hand, male privilege and patriarchal sensibilities bestows power upon these male allies. They have the power to unilaterally withdraw their allyship, or even exert their power and male authority over the very women they previously empowered, with no accountability (Atherton-Zeman, 2009; Macomber, 2015). Without legal, political and cultural structures that guarantee the rights and protection of women, there is nothing to prevent male allies from abusing their power.

This paper simultaneously draws upon the theoretical perspective of radical feminism and its aims to dismantle patriarchal structures that engender hegemonic masculinity, whilst engaging with an emerging notion of 'feminist allyship masculinity' (Almassi, 2015, Almassi 2022). This latter form of masculinity is "predicated on recognizing and responding to, rather than ignoring or accepting the privileges and expectations distinctive of men under patriarchy" (Almassi, 2015, p. 1).

However, feminist allyship can be difficult and dangerous for men living in patriarchal societies where feminist ideals and women's movements are constantly under attack by hegemonic (and complacent) masculine rhetoric, and where women (and visible male allies) routinely face the threat of toxic masculine aggression and violence. While in no way a panacea for gender equity, digital feminism practices and online spaces offer both women and their male allies the opportunity to amplify their voices.

Taken together, these notions of radical feminism, allyship masculinity, and digital feminism intersect to offer a new lens for making sense of male online allyship in women's movements. And it is through this lens that we explore male allyship within the context of online women's movements in Pakistan, where patriarchal societal norms battle progressive feminist ideals.

Method

This study employed semi-structured face to face interviews with male and female activists from three women's movement NGOs. The interview participants are selected based on their active use of social media to promote women's rights and gender equality, including organizing online and offline events for the Pakistan's annual Women's Day celebrations. Initially, 25 activists agreed to participate in the interviews, but due to clashing work commitments, two interviews did not materialize.A total of 23 activists (13 men and 10 women) were interviewed over the course of four months.

Before the interview, a consent form was sent and a brief introduction about the topic and relevant questions was provided to participants. A brief overview of questions was given, such as, that the questions would revolve around the interviewees' social media use for the women's movement, their organization's efforts to engage men in their programmes and projects, and a request to show/share their women's movement social media posts specifically involving or aimed at male audiences. Interviews were conducted at the activists' respective offices, lasting between 75 to 90 minutes and recorded using an audio device. The interview recordings were later transcribed and transcriptions were sent to the interview participants for checking to ensure accuracy.

The interview transcripts were read line by line. Each interview was read at least three times. Insightful and informative excerpts were highlighted, and additional bracketing was conducted on interview extracts related to social media use in feminism, the effects of digital feminism and men's engagement in digital feminism. Extracts with the same meanings and codes were grouped and then data were reviewed for recurring themes and categories. Furthermore, drawing upon notions of qualitative research trustworthiness (Stahl & King, 2020), a form of within-interview triangulation was performed checking for corroboration and relevancies between women and men interviewees' transcripts. While each interview transcript was unique, the perspectives of the 23 women and men corroborated one another and were also congruent with external discourses on men's engagement with women's movement in Pakistan.

Findings

The participants shared their perceptions, uses, and real-life experiences of social media use in the feminist movement in Pakistan and digital feminism as a source to engage men. All participants agreed to the fact that use of digital media resulted in the popularity and acceptance of feminism in Pakistan, and generated a debate in society about women's rights and equality. Digital feminism is empowering to women, and the inclusion of males in the feminist movement strengthened it further. After the analysis of the interviews, three major themes emerged from the obtained information:

1. Mutually Responsible Behaviour
2. Online Bridging
3. New Father: Rosha Khayal Baap

Mutually Responsible Behaviour

Notwithstanding immense progress in women's empowerment over recent decades, worldwide much remains to be desired with regards men's attitudes regarding feminist movements and men's general treatment of women, especially in male-dominated societies. In Pakistan, men who advocated rights of women are derogatively labelled as uxorious henpecked husbands. As a preventive defense mechanism to avoid being viewed as emasculated, it is not uncommon for men to over-correct, following the patriarchal culture's promotion of aggression, control and dominance as a respected traits of "masculinity".

The narratives of the male participants in this study revealed that social media revised the definition of masculinity, and responsible behaviour towards women is an actual masculine attribute. The aggression and unfair use of authority based on gender is not justified. To assure women's rights is not anti-patriarchal behaviour; rather, it is responsible human behaviour. A male participant shared that earlier that their allyship received backlashes and criticism; however, gradually people started feeling their responsibility. He said,

> I faced a lot of questions, some questions were totally irrational, however I answered. The best point of this digital feminism is direct communication, where I guided a few boys and men that masculinity is not to beat girls or women. Masculinity is to protect and grant her freedom, accept her as the human with emotions as you (men) are

Another participant said that since now the feminist movement is more at a personal level, anyone from anywhere can participate and people can recognize them. She further described,

> I think this was the biggest challenge in Pakistani male-dominated culture to convince men, that it's your responsibility to ensure women's rights. Women are deprived of their rights just because of misinterpretation of masculinity. A real man never tortures a woman; a real man uses his power to keep a woman secure

She additionally shared that this was possible only due to digital media, and also male active participation in women movement. These male allies are symbolized as "new men" with right approach.

Another male participant told that culturally established gender positioning in our society is deep-rooted, however, the online feminist movement is at least bringing noticeable changes in the behaviour of men. May be few men are not coming to participate in rallies and protests, but at least sharing their positive attitude towards women through social media. Although this behavioural change is minimal, involving these responsible men and presenting them as an example has helped a lot to engage more men in the movement. Another participant shared that digital feminism replaced the explanation of patriarchy as masculine power to authority with responsibility, using power for equality. The participants shared that behavioural and social change can be observed; a lot of men talk about feminist movement and practice it as well. Now, the women or feminist movement is not by women and for women; men take equal responsibility and openly introduce themselves as male feminists.

Online Bridging

The impact of feminism on the social fabric is inevitable and has altered the relationship between members of the same society. The sociological concept of social capital, which refers to norms and collaborative relationships, was also reflected among the participants. Based on relationships, the term social capital is defined by Putnam (2001) as having two forms, bonding social capital and bridging social capital. The bonding social capital refers to close ties and communication with known people, whereas the bridging social capital relates to the expansion of contacts from known to unknown. The participants of the study discussed role of social media in feminist movements as a tool for bridging social, connecting male allies with women whose causes they support and with women's movement in general. One female participant said:

> My contacts list grew with time and now I have almost one thousand online contacts... I receive and send friend requests, and gender being a man or woman is out of the question now. We all are human beings. And to expand this message, I cannot only rely on women. When we talk about equality, we talk about the equal position of men and women in the society. Fortunately, the digital media successfully carried this message and without involving men, all the messages of women empowerment are useless.

In the participants' narratives, including digital media in the feminist movement is a "proxy" for its acceptance (Genner & Süss, 2017), where culturally it is not acknowledged (Addis & Joxhe, 2017). In this regard, digital feminism also provides a participatory space for male allies to bridge the culturally imposed gender-segregation preventing them from meaningfully contributing to women's movements.

The online platform contributed as a "public sphere" where feminists expressed their views and opinions openly (Miladi, 2016) and invited everyone to participate. The growing use of social media opened and generated free spaces to counter-hegemonic views and provided alternate options for discussion.

Given Pakistan's patriarchal culture however, this bridging social capital is sometimes gender-anonymous. In patriarchal culture, women face restrictions on their mobility and remain limited to known contacts, and restricting their online 'friends' or contacts to other women. On the one hand, this effectively means that male allies' male gender may be unknown to their female contacts serving as a reminder of the gender inequality between men and women, to be tolerated for the greater good of women's movement (and safety of individual women). On the other hand, however, this gender-anonymity is a vital driver facilitating more open discussion and open support for women and women's movements.

In this situation, social media, regardless of gender, engage people in a common dialogue and political and civic activities. A male participant mentioned that discussion among virtual contacts can transform patriarchal notions of Pakistani society, as participants feel free to express their views, without fear of gender-based reprisals. In particular, anonymous male allies in the online world need not worry about being targeted by other men for their support of women, which is a very real hurdle to offline male allyship in a patriarchal society like Pakistan. Contrary to social and cultural settings, where the misconception of feminism exists and failed to achieve a mass-level impact, digital feminism is an alternative option of

communication and socializing to spread messages to common people and involve them in the movement. If cultural barriers restrict them within a limited circle, social media has broadened their networks and revolutionized their thinking approaches as inclusive and collaborative, as opined by a male interview participant:

> I feel that social media is a voice for the suppressed segment and digital technologies aware the people of the real cause of feminism.

New Father: "Roshan Khayal Baap"

Whether through direct engagement with feminist social media posts, or through word of mouth regarding online posts promoting feminist ideas, and publicizing women's movement events, digital feminism has made its impact on the offline spaces of the family home. Within urban and educated circles, there is a recent a rise of a new breed of progressive-minded men described as Rosha Khayal Baap, transliterally meaning "enlightened father". These are men who make conscious effort to maintain gender equality and nurture families free from gender-divides (Jeong, et al., 2018). We can think of them as a new breed of progressive fathers, or 'new father'.

Although the interviews initially discussed online women's movement and male allyship from a societal perspective, many participants also talked about their own personal experiences with male allies, in particular their fathers.

Study participants volunteered how their own fathers are changing the prevailing notion of patriarchy and modelling themselves as male allies, nurturing gender-equality in their homes and even supporting their daughters' activism. While sharing about digital feminism in Pakistan, the participants also discussed the new phenomena, where fathers are encouraging girls' education, employment, marriage, inheritance rights, and ensure that all their rights are upheld.

Additionally, the participants of the study (all of them activists in women's movement NGOs) observed that during the women's movement protests, fathers accompanied their daughters. Female participants gave example of their male colleagues and male activists, who bring their wives and daughters to rallies. Furthermore, male participants also shared that they take their families to rallies, and proudly shared the successes of their daughters, and also encouraged other men to respect women's rights.

A participant, who just a year ago joined a women's movement NGO, stressed the role of family, and shared how her father supported her in her education and career. Initially, her family did not allow her to get an education from abroad; however, her father not only supported her, but also convinced the rest of the family (mother) to let her go abroad for higher education. She said,

> I believe I am strong and empowered, I have no regrets, and the primary factor is my family, especially my father. . . My father encouraged me to join any social service organization, and help other women, who are not blessed like me.

A participant said, as it is said that behind every successful man, there is a woman, similarly, behind strong and empowered women is her father. She further elaborated:

> I always quote this and present myself as an example. But later I observed that a lot of empowered women have the same thoughts. They (women) pay tribute to their fathers and this incited fathers to understand women's rights. A participant told that she felt so happy to see fathers during the protests with their daughters, and they raised their voice along with their daughters.

In Pakistan, family dynamics are changing, and the media plays a leading role in it. As a participant added that in Pakistan, mothers prefer sons and also treat them better; however, it was her father that advocated for gender-equality in the family:

> My father maintained equal relationships among children, and also advised their mother to avoid any difference between daughter and son.

A family is a basic unit of social structure, and family relations or environment plays a vital role in future generations and social structure. A participant said,

> Females are misguided on social media in our society; it is due to family's lack of support and guidance. If I do not get support from my family, I will look for other alternate options... I share with my father and get the best advice.

A participant expressly referred to the role of the (new) father, who is a "right-minded" person and rightfully exercises his authority. She shared that her father was a theater artist and writer, and he inculcated confidence and expression. She said that she expressed and voice her opinion, no matter whether it was a social issue or political.

Although the participants are hopeful and mutually making efforts to reshape patriarchal cultural behaviour, however, they also expressed their concerns that this development is limited among progressive circles in Pakistan.

Analysis & Discussion

A great deal of the findings of the interviews suggested and explained the impacts of digital feminism. However, the voices of the participants predicted a rise of the new family system and the role of fathers (men), which is expected to safeguard and promote women's rights. The idea of hegemonic masculinity and fatherhood is being revised and referred "caring masculinity" and theorized as a radical cultural shift (Hunter, et al., 2017). The cultural and ideological construction of "manhood" (Petroski & Edley, 2006) and maintaining patriarchy (rule of father) are continuously negotiated and reconstructed. The cultural, political, and economic context of society formulates the concept of "father" (Duckworth & Buzzanell, 2009), where a man manages work-family balance and perform his responsibilities in family and society. However, the internet and social media transformed the conception of fatherhood and masculinity, and the idea of a normative father is moving towards "good" father (Andreasson & Johansson, 2016).

The family network is a central sub-element of patriarchal culture. Notwithstanding cultural norms and social structures, there is considerable variance in internal family dynamics and each

family's values. In some families, patriarchal notions of male-control over women prevail. While in other families, sons are raised to be chivalrous and to take very seriously their responsibility to look after the wellbeing of female members of the family. Moreover, in yet other families within the same patriarchal society, strong women serve as the family matriarch and main decision-maker in all matters from family finances, their daughters' future husbands, and even dictating the movements and actions of their husbands and sons. The changing dynamic of family structure is also transforming cultural notions, such as in South Asian culture, where men who support the women's rights are rare and often labeled as "Western agents." They are also blamed for disrupting social and religious norms. However, with time, these notions have become obsolete; in particular, the current wave of "digital feminism" has reinvented women's movement in Pakistan and the world at large. Previously, feminism was considered as a women-owned and women-led movement. Nevertheless, the new media technologies, specifically social media, have made it inclusive and collective, facilitating male allies' participation in feminist movements.

The involvement and engagement of men in the Women's March and efforts strengthened gender equality in the country and has brought a societal change in Pakistan, transforming men's behaviour towards women. A change is growing in the family dynamics of Pakistan and the vital role of the father, who is playing his part in maintaining gender equality at home. The new and transformed concept of a "new father" would ensure gender balance in all fields of life. The patriarchy as a system ensures the supremacy of the father; here, the new father is using his authority to ensure equality. The new media is successfully cultivating responsible behaviour among men. Men are now equally interested in the women's movement offline and online, notably internet activism in Pakistan, and are more diversified and actively engaging men and women.

Male Allies in Feminist Movement in Pakistan

Notwithstanding the cultural pressures of a patriarchal society, women activists make use of and benefit from online technologies, imparting their messages and involving women from all segments and areas of Pakistan – informing, educating, reaching out to, and galvanizing other digitally-connected women in Pakistan. In particular, they invite young women and men from colleges and universities, creating influential pressure groups, whose members are educated and technologically-savvy. Online activism or digital feminism has been initiated in Pakistan and encountering patriarchal forces, aiming to improve women's lives and status.

The limited voices among the participants against the hegemonic masculinity and inclusion of men as responsible surmise that gradually, the curved gender relations in Pakistan are addressed. The participants' main discussion revolved around the new concept of "fatherhood", which is suggesting a radical transformation of men in patriarchal culture.

As is the case around the world, the inclusion of men in addressing women's rights and eliminating gender barriers is being discussed widely, and initially the concept of "male allies" was explored in organizational research to reduce workforce gender disparities (Sabat, et al., 2013). In continuity, social psychologists have carried out studies to observe the difference of perception and attitude towards male ally-ship, and concluded that male allies play an

important role in reducing gender-bias attitudes and lead to positive outcomes. Consequently, it was debated to include men in gender and inequality research to bring about sustainable change and achieve gender equality and justice. It is also important to work with men across communities, including those who are currently nonviolent and non-abusive (Casey, et al., 2018).

Gradually, the emphasis and concern of men's inclusion in addressing women's issues has grown considerably, and studies on men's involvement in anti-violence work and ally-ship suggest better conducive environment for women (Peacock and Barker 2014). As far as the current research is concerned, the interviews suggest changing family dynamics, and the concept of "responsible father" to empower their daughters (women) would lead to positive results in future. It is pertinent to mention that the participants of the study are educated, working, and from the upper middle class, which carry norms of upper class and average middle class; therefore, the narrative of the participants suggest trickle down effects of progressive and activist voices in a patriarchal context. The emerging concept of the "new father" refers to male allies at family level, which is the basic unit of Asian culture, explains man's engagement in maintaining gender equality and nurturing a gender-divide free family (Jeong, Siyal, Fink, McCoy & Yousafzai, 2018). Initially, fathers who support their daughter's education (indirectly favouring women's rights) are rare and often labeled as "Western agents." They are also blamed for disrupting social and religious norms.

Although men hold a powerful and authoritative position in society where gender disparities are prevalent, their voices are generally absent in women's movement (Sherf et al., 2017). Traditionally, men are not supporter of women's freedom and empowerment. Yet, the leading changes caused by cross-cultural communication and digital technologies, changing social and political climate, have brought a noticeable change in men's attitude towards women' movement and gender equality. Men are becoming allies with women in organizational structures to increase the number of female employees and reduce harassment at the workplace. Consequently, their perception towards women's position in social structure is being transformed (He, et al., 2018). Since men are the largest and most influential group, their involvement and promotion of gender-parity initiatives are imperative (Duriesmith, 2017; Prime & Moss-Racusin, 2009).

Similarly, the women's movement in Pakistan has increased by its scale, magnitude, diversity, and inclusivity. Not only women from different social classes, regions, religions, ethnicities, and sects but also men come together on a common platform to protest the multiple patriarchies that control, limit, and constrain women's self-expression and fundamental rights. Men and boys in tow, carry supportive placards, and reflect unity with women, highlighting Pakistan's polarised and divisive social landscape. Despite the fact that men's involvement in the women's movement has put them in a contradictory situation (Holmgren & Hearn, 2009), men's participation in gender awareness activities has increased throughout time. As a result,, men have challenged men's privileged position in society. The involvement of men in the feminist movement strengthens the social change to eliminate gender discrimination. The new supportive family system and change in men's behaviour regarding women's rights would address and challenge the current face of patriarchy, which justified women's suppression and violence.

In particular, the current wave of "digital feminism" reinvented women's movement in Pakistan and on a large scale includes men along with women from diverse backgrounds, reshaping the obsolete notion of man and masculinity. The new media characteristic "connectedness" eliminated barriers between males and females in Pakistan, and young and educated men are joining women's movement and believe in gender equality. However, there are two major issues; one is the majority of men who are against women's movement, and second is the religious groups which discourage women's emancipation and call it "un-Islamic". Resultantly, the women's movement has become a battle between the two groups, and the same hatred and ideology is adopted in online conversation. The religious references are used online to silence women who choose to speak up, threat to intimidate women and anti-feminist sentiments are shared. In online hatred, not only women are victimized, but also men who support women, and are also stigmatized as "bugger babies, Western-funded, and non-Muslim propagandists". In this situation, men from influential positions, like politics, showbiz celebrities, and social workers resist and refuse these comments and advocate women. Apart from these influential personalities, men from minorities, who have faced and experienced inequality and victimization, also support women in their fight against inequalities. Now, this support is not limited to online spheres of digital activism, but is also gradually moving to offline environments by participating in women's marches and protests. The "women's march" includes men equally, and is strengthening male allies in women's movement. However, the findings suggest further future research to examine men's position in women's movement, particularly in the patriarchal social structure, and explore how these men experience in-group conflict (conflict among men).

Conclusion

The digital media has the potential to empower women and revise and revive feminist activism (Jouet, 2018), included men in women's movement (Flood, 2011), widened the scope of gender equality (Hosterman, et al., 2018). The need to involve male allies refers to equal responsibility for creating an atmosphere that respects both genders' dignity and freedom. Male ally-ship is integral for mutual gender conversation. The current research in patriarchal society found the power of social media in male inclusion in women's movement. The research was an academic contribution to develop an understanding of male ally-ship in feminism according to culture and revealed that family and fathers are key factor toward addressing and eliminating gender disparities. The culturally powerful role of fathers as male allies needs to be explored further in similar cultural settings.

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