The Case of #HijaAko and What Digital Feminist Activism Means for the Filipina Identity

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ABSTRACT

Digital spaces, confronted with digital feminist activism, transform (and are transformed by) the Filipina identity. This is particularly the case for the resistance and reclaiming of being Filipina through #HijaAko. Its emergence is an embodiment of the long history of feminist resistance in the country, signaling its breakthrough into mainstream consciousness. By granting reality to the voices that emerged from #HijaAko, I am rendering visibility to Filipinas, as their narratives and truths transcend the limitations and hesitations of online consumer-capitalist discourses. These discourses often perceive their stories as de-politicized communicative exchanges, disregarding the necessary attention to context and content. I emphasize the necessity of this perspective to supplement the few local studies of digital spaces employing a feminist analysis. Through qualitative content analysis, tweets were categorized and analyzed from a feminist standpoint using Digital Feminist Activism (Keller et al., 2019) as a framework informed by digital anthropology (Brudvig, 2019). #HijaAko weaves thousands of voices of Filipinas in affective solidarity (Hemmings, 2012)—a mobilizing concept that incites movement for social change—while creating affective publics (Papacharissi, 2015) and connected communities of care. More than calling out against victim blaming and debunking rape misconceptions, the hashtag also reveals how social institutions themselves—supposedly safe spaces—become common places where perpetrators lurk, extending the critique of systems of injustice perpetuating unsafe spaces. Lastly, #HijaAko asserts inclusivity as it becomes a declaration (Hija Ako) for resistance and reclamation of what being a Filipina means, recognizing her historical suppression and invisibility while transcending such limitations. This paper hopes to contribute to and expand the documentation of contexts and discourses valuable in positioning identities, communities, and phenomena in the time of digitalization.

Introduction

It was more than two years ago when #HijaAko sparked a digital national campaign against rape culture. Kakie Pangilinan, a Filipina singer-songwriter, publicly criticized Ben Tulfo—a Filipino media personality known for his investigations on crime and corruption—on Twitter for his attempt at justifying Lucban Municipal Police Station's "anti-rape" tips that might have just perpetuated rape itself (Manuel, 2020). A now deleted Facebook post from a police station in Quezon Province includes a snide remark: "… *wag kayo magsuot ng pakaikli-ikling damit at pag naman nabastos ay magsusumbong din sa amin* (do not dress short for if you are harassed, you will resort to us anyway to file for complaints)." Ben Tulfo supported the statement with faulty rhetoric, urging sexy ladies to be careful with how they dress lest they "invite the beast."

Figure 1. *Inviting the Beast*

To this, Kakie Pangilinan responded with convincing points—dismantling patriarchy and rape myths and, interestingly enough, embracing Ben Tulfo's addressing her as "hija" by quoting the tweet itself:

Figure 2. *"Calling Me an Hija will not Belittle my Point"*

As the uproar against Ben Tulfo's justification grew, Kakie Pangilinan amplified the response by starting the hashtag #HijaAko, seeing that the symbolism of its reclamation resonated as a common experience. As the number of tweets increased, more embraced the meaning behind the hashtag and willingly identified with it, recognizing that it symbolized their fight for rights.

Figure 3. *#HijaAko*

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, #HijaAko generated approximately 27,000 tweets on Twitter extending to other social media platforms. Soon, #HijaAko became a national digital campaign against rape culture, with young women on the frontline of social media retelling their narratives—only this time without fear of victim blaming. Drawing from their individual experiences of injustice and misogyny, they reveal their narratives to later be collectively shared.

Figure 4. *From @anikalanc*

> *tw// sexual harassment*
>
> *I was groped and deceived by a person i trusted; a person i even liked.*
>
> *this is my story #HijaAko*

Alongside sharing their stories and finding solidarity, they break the silencezS often associated with the topic of rape and in their collective voice pose a critique of wider systems of injustice and misogyny perpetuated by victim blaming, cultural norms, and institutional failures in the lack of support and protection for victims of sexual harassment.

Figure 5. *From @anikalanc*

> *this movement takes such big strides in showing solidarity with women who have been abused and assaulted. I am so proud of you*
>
> *Speaking up is never easy, but i hope that #HijaAko allows more people to realize the importance of believing victims, and allowing them justice*

Through #HijaAko, we are told not only stories of injustice but of confusion, contradiction, and dissonance that might just be too familiar for most Filipinas. More often than not, survivors of sexual violence are blamed and stigmatized. Instead of receiving support and understanding, they are usually held accountable for the violence perpetrated against them. The blame manifests in interrogating their actions, clothing choices, or even previous relationships (Diniz et al, 2020). But when the dissonance finds a commonality with the experience of others, it fosters what is identified as affective solidarity (Hemmings, 2012), which challenges societal norms perpetuating gender-based violence through their collective voice. Moreover, this dissonance allows solidarity to become heightened when the intensity of such narratives are recognized, and as the emotions and vulnerability of these women are placed at the forefront. The “soft structures" of storytelling that are social media provide a distinctive mode of communication known as *mediality* which, when intertwined with affect—fueled by the driving force of emotions—create and sustain affective publics strengthened by intensity, sensation, and value (Papacharissi, 2015).

I pay particular attention to such sensitivities of affect and solidarity as I document narratives from #HijaAko. Furthermore, I explore #HijaAko's digital feminist activism to supplement the few local studies of digital spaces employing a feminist analysis. Through qualitative content analysis, I document the emergence of #HijaAko's movement guided by the following research questions:

- From a feminist standpoint, what key themes emerge from the narratives documented through the hashtag #HijaAko, and how do these contribute to our knowledge and understanding of women's experiences and challenges in the country?
- How does the #HijaAko movement contributes to shaping the complexities of the Filipina identity with its continued (digital) transformation and feminist consciousness?
- Why is it important to value and acknowledge the narratives of #HijaAko in digital spaces?

Drawing from frameworks of Digital Feminist Activism (Keller et al., 2019) and Brudvig's (2019) Feminist Digital Anthropology, I aim to cull out similar themes in the #HijaAko movement as well as situate its unique form of Philippine feminism in the time of digitalization. By analyzing the voices that emerged from the #HijaAko movement, I am also affirming the visibility and agency of Filipinas as their narratives push past hesitations and censorship of their "value" online as suggested by consumer-capitalist discourses (Dean, 2009; Tolentino, 2021). In the context of communicative capitalism—or capitalist integration of communicative technologies—the "value" of these (online) narratives is limited and critiqued to merely reinforce capitalist systems being basic elements of capitalist production in communicative exchanges. In this paper, I extend the meaning of such "value" through a feminist analysis of digital spaces. In doing so, I render visibility to narratives that represent the real experiences of Filipinas that cannot be dismissed. This further extends to the acknowledgment of the construction, representation, and negotiation of gender, sexuality, and online identities that enables a deeper understanding of the transformative potential of digital spaces in building empowerment, solidarity, and resistance for individuals and communities.

Patriarchy and the Culture of VAW in the Philippines

Patriarchy, as understood by bell hooks, is defined and recognized as a "political-social system" that privileges masculinity as inherently dominating, thus reinforcing unequal power dynamics that perpetuate male domination and control of groups deemed weaker or subordinate , particularly women and femininity (hooks, 2012). In the patriarchal perspective, femininity is stereotypically associated with assumed "weak " qualities such as submissiveness, passivity, and dependency that support oppressive relations of subordination and domination (Cudd, 2006). The association and devaluation of femininity as "weak" render it vulnerable to power imbalances that enable and justify violence against women manifesting in mistreatment, exploitation, and abuse of women.

In recent overviews of VAW (Violence Against Women) in the Philippines, COVID-19 pandemic is noted to have been a time of increased vulnerability for women as they were trapped in their homes, suggesting mobility restrictions for safety and shelter, as the period coincided with an escalation of VAW-related and help-seeking internet searches (Commission on Human Rights, 2021; United Nations Women, 2021). Arevalo et al. (2022) point to socio-political and cultural structures that serve as barriers to seeking support, pointing to the sustained culture of victim blaming as well as state neglect manifested in the ineffective management and response for VAW

victims.

In the Philippines, one in four Filipino women experience gender-based violence, and almost half (41%) do not seek help (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2017). Victim blaming is suggested to be one of the reasons behind the small number of women who seek help. When women are held responsible for the gender-specific crimes committed against them (such as rape and sexual assault), it is often linked to the social acceptance and normalization of sexual violence against women (Diniz et al., 2020). This leads to shifting the attention away from the perpetrator and, to some extent, validates the guilt expressed by the victim.

In the case of the Philippines, violence against women is rooted in patriarchy that can be traced from the long history of colonialism. Under colonial rule, women were subjected to dominance and control of colonizers as influenced by patriarchal values. This is evident in the arrival of Spaniards in the Philippines, wherein the social status of the babaylan—who took the role as a cultural leader and traditional healer commonly associated with women or effeminate males (Salazar, 1994, as cited in Hega et al., 2017)—was perceived as a threat to the establishment of Christian beliefs. Thus, the demonization of their traditional spirituality and with it the weakening of their autonomy and leadership eventually led to the devaluation of women's (and femininity's) esteemed position in pre-colonial society (Hega et al., 2017). Sobritchea (2012) extends male dominance rooted in colonization as a form of fundamentalism; a need to control or regulate a woman's sexuality. Such control of sexuality entails restricting women to traditional gender roles and subjecting them to unequal gender relations. This is reflected in common Filipino sayings, such as, "Ang hindi makuha sa santong dasalan, makukuha sa santong paspasan," which means that if gentle persuasion is not enough for a woman to reciprocate a man's romantic or sexual intentions, then the use of violence or force is acceptable (Santos, 2006, as cited in Baloloy, 2013). This is not so far from traditional Filipino courtship practices, where the woman's consent is considered as "earned" by the man in the process, and therefore his entitlement, rather than the expressed desire of the woman.

A chapter in Amia Srinivasan's book entitled The Right to Sex (2021) details the nuances of rape as influenced by gendered sexual expectations. They draw from the "Yes Means Yes bill" —a legislative measure aimed at addressing sexual consent and preventing sexual violence—that emphasizes affirmative consent, which requires "affirmative, conscious, and voluntary" agreement to engage in sexual activity that should be ensured all throughout. This form of consent shifts the focus from the absence of a "no" to the presence of a clear and enthusiastic "yes" as the standard for sexual consent. Such sensitivity regarding consent ensures that sexual encounters are based on mutual respect, communication, and trust. Therefore, when consent is in any way dismissed and violated, this makes individuals vulnerable to sexual violence such as rape and sexual assault. Unfortunately, consent is often misunderstood and fails to be correctly interpreted due to factors such as gendered and societal attitudes, lack of awareness, and consent communication (Graves & Scott, 2017).

The persistence of rape myths, for one, contributes to misconceptions about consent. Rape myths are widely held false beliefs and attitudes that serve to justify and deny male sexual aggression towards women (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). They reflect perceptions of women shaped by patriarchal norms widely accepted by society, including the notion that women must change their actions, demeanor, or preferences in order to stop sexual assault. Patriarchal norms also manifest

in sexual aggression, wherein males cannot somehow control their "irrational sexual impulses," and that women must instead be "cautious of" and protect themselves against such (Nottinghamshire Sexual Violence Support Services, n.d).

According to Ryan (2011), rapists and sexual offenders are surrounded by beliefs that encourage sexual narcissism, victim blaming, and the denial of rape. Morever, rape scripts, defined more specifically as societal beliefs about what rape should look like (Hockett et al., 2015), revolve around culturally established patterns of behavior that imply sexual desire and behavior. These (stereo)typical assumptions of rape influence people's perceptions and expectations of what a rape should look like, possibly dismissing or invalidating experiences that do not align with these preconceived notions. Baloloy (2014) found that some Filipino male rapists saw female rape victims as "accessible" and therefore responsible for rape. When victim blaming becomes normalized and strengthened through rape scripts, it causes harmful consequences against the victim-survivors such as stigmatization, reinforcement of stereotypes, promotion of aggression, and worse—trivialization and denial of their experience. While each victim-survivor's experience is unique, trauma, shame, and fear of not being believed remain to be the known implications of the prevalence of rape myths that manifest unsafe spaces (Browne & Finkelhor, 1985). These conditions discourage individuals from disclosing their experiences.

COVID-19 and Unreported Narratives

One way we can notice unreported narratives is through the statistical "drops" in VAW reports during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly at its start. According to documented reports from the Philippine National Police, there was a 27.2% decrease in cases of VAW in the Philippines during 2022 (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2020). However, this decrease does not entirely suggest its direct decrease. Eala et al. (2022) pointed to quarantine lockdowns that confined victims of VAW to their homes with restricted mobility in seeking help.

A big data analysis on women at the time of COVID-19 reported that, in general, violence against women and girls rose with the lockdown measures, and with it internet searches related to physical, sexual, and psychological violence grew by 63% in the Philippines (United Nations Population Fund Asia and the Pacific, 2021). More than its implication of ineffective documentation and surveillance systems during the pandemic is the likelihood that there are numerous cases of VAW that have gone unreported and undocumented.

Khullar's (2021) analyses, as gathered by the IPCS (Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies), delve into the impact of COVID-19 on women. Data gathered show that there is a discrepancy between the steady increase of documented rape cases from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) and the overwhelming number of cases initially brought to the Philippine National Police (PNP). Conflicting data reveal there is a lapse in data collection accounting for unreported cases (Khullar, 2021).

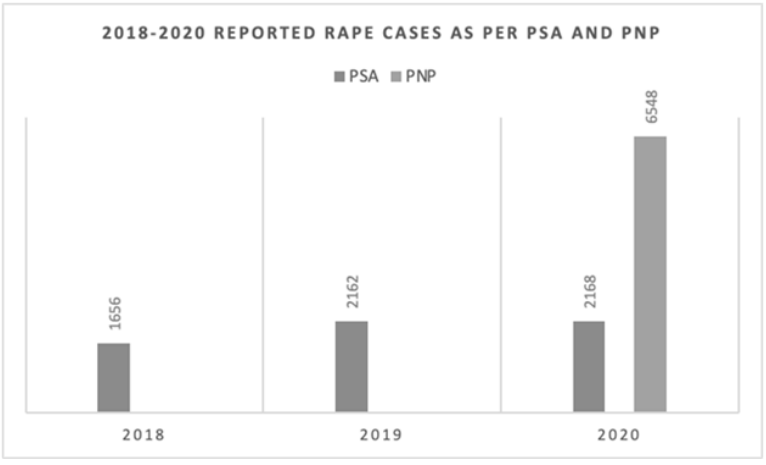


Figure 6. *2018-2020 Reported Rape Cases in the Philippines as Per PSA and PNP by Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (Khullar, 2021).*

As seen in Figure 6, there is seemingly a steady and slow increase in the documented rape cases by the PSA from 2018 to 2020 (from 1,656 to 2,168 reported rape cases) as compared to the astounding number of cases (6,548) reported to the PNP. Ambiguous and incoherent data makes it difficult to judge the prevalence of cases on sexual violence. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) states that a decrease in documented data on rape and sexual assault to authorities suggests that only a few cases were actually reported to criminal justice authorities, as evidenced in some countries that recorded decreases immediately after lockdown implementation but returned to pre-existing upward/increasing trends afterward. Thus, it "highlight(s) the need to ensure proper channels to remain open for women to report violence during lockdowns" (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2020, p. 4).

Unreported narratives indicate that the true extent of violence against women and girls during the pandemic is likely underestimated. The actual numbers can be far greater than what is shown in the data. This emphasizes how crucial it is to acknowledge the experiences of survivors who continue to be silenced, unheard, and unsupported.

At this stage of my inquiry, I started searching for spaces, expressions, and representations of these unreported narratives that appeared overlooked, merely labeled as a statistical "gap. " Indeed, I found digital spheres and social media platforms to be one of the many spaces that allowed these stories solace. At the same time, it was also at the peak of the pandemic that I observed the rise of #HijaAko in social media, bringing forth numerous untold stories of Filipinas reclaiming themselves and their experiences. I found this reminiscent of the #MeToo movement when women broke their silence against gender-based violence, as well as its capacity to situate intersectional contexts like #inclusivelockdown that allowed African women to share their concerns (Ali-Ali, 2020; Stone & Vogelstein, 2021). Inspired by #HijaAko's unique emergence and circumstance, I felt compelled to capture and document the essence of this movement at its pulse.

Feminist Activism

As discussed, it now becomes clear that the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have significantly affected women due to gendered factors, including an increase in gender-based

violence with limited access to support services. In recognizing these realities, feminist activism can play a vital role in raising awareness and calling urgent attention to address these pressing issues. By utilizing gender as an analytical lens, we can identify and understand ongoing disparities and, in response to such, advocate for social change, economic empowerment, inclusivity, as well as reproductive rights and bodily autonomy.

In the Philippines, we look to the history of women's social movements as a source of inspiration for feminist activism. The Filipina has always been in struggle for visibility despite suppression, control, and victimization (Hega et al., 2017) – as evident in the women's contributions in the realm of literature during the Philippine revolution against Spain, the struggle for women's suffrage in 1937, the resistance to oppressive rule under Marcos from 1972 to 1986, and the organization for working women's rights, among many (Aquino, 2010; Santiago, 2007). Despite political recognition, there is no doubt that the subordinate position of women in many aspects of life continues to prevail. Santiago (2010) claims that up to now the construction of the image of women remains a disturbing phenomenon: a sex symbol. But more resilient amidst this subordination is the Filipina's continuous struggle to transform its reputation while bearing the burden of its history. The social construction of the Filipina need not be static to submission. To Santiago (2010), there is enough reason in our history, our culture, and our life for feminist thought and movement; and it is this movement that is the basis for women's resistance to the concepts of suppression imposed by the conquerors that begets cycles of violence.

Furthermore, Hega et al. (2017) reflects on the persisting challenges in the implementation of laws and their direct improvement in the lives of women. It also emphasizes the necessity of amplifying advocacies like divorce and abortion that are more often than not are absent in debates among other social movements. As the women's movement in the Philippines continues to evolve, Hega et al. (2017) also acknowledges the significance of online campaigns as an effective tool to "spread" feminism, encouraging youth's solidarity and interaction with all women that could gather and provide more political impact.

The feminist movement in the Philippines has also built linkages with similar movements in different countries and regions, largely contributing to the global feminist struggle (Hega et al., 2017). In the context of broader historical developments of feminist activism, consciousness raising has created spaces for women to come together and share personal experiences, reflections, and self-transformation. Here, women gained the strength to challenge patriarchal forces at work and home (hooks, 2000). These consciousness-raising groups were later used by radical feminists who first politicized rape as a feminist issue—revealing the structural roots of its use to maintain men's dominance over women (Bevacqua, 2000, as cited in Rutherford, 2011)—not only as a result of sexism and misogyny but also colonialism, poverty, and imperialism. Early feminists quickly recognized that gender oppression extended beyond national boundaries and became aware of the need for global justice. They expanded consciousness-raising spaces to address these issues on a global scale. Despite facing challenges regarding representation, these networks of women's movements became a potent resource for leveraging globalization in transnational feminist activism (Ferree, 2006).

A notable theme in feminist activism is the act of reclaiming and taking back power and agency in response to VAW issues. One such recent social movement is the SlutWalk—a global movement that emerged from Toronto, Canada as a response to victim-blaming attitudes towards

survivors of sexual assault and violence against women. Women and allies gathered to demonstrate a challenge to rape culture, often dressing provocatively or in ways traditionally stigmatized as "revealing," and literally walked through public streets as a way to take back or reclaim streets (and bodies) as supposed safe space (Mendes, 2015). These themes are not far from what Roces (2012) observes as the "double narrative" of victimization that portrayed Filipinas as both victims and empowered agents. This transformation from "victim" to "activist" celebrated the rejection of passive victimization and the adoption of a collective identity aimed at advocating against VAW and victim blaming.

Feminist activism in the Philippines, as informed and one with the global feminist struggle, persists in contemporary social movements. I noticed parallel themes of reclaiming public spaces during the height of COVID-19 pandemic, as voices of young Filipinas emerged through the digital feminist activism of such movements as #HijaAko. This study focuses on documenting narratives and surfacing themes from the #HijaAko movement. In this paper, I specifically situate the "Hija" as an emerging complexity of the Filipina identity in the context of digital feminist activism.

#HijaAko and Digital Feminist Activism

With social media drawing our recognition of online campaigns in spreading feminism (Hega et al., 2017), this begs us to look closely at how feminist activism takes place within digital spaces (Keller et al., 2019). For instance, as social media becomes a site for storytelling and interactions that form "networked publics" that produce "feelings of community" (Papacharissi, 2014), it does not come as a surprise that social media platforms become capable of influencing social and political movements. Over the years, there has been a significant rise in hashtag feminisms characterized by digital feminist activism, referring to the use of hashtags on social media as means to promote feminist ideas, discussions, and activism (Keller et al., 2019). It was only in 2017 when the #MeToo movement caught our attention. Reported to have been used 19 million times on Twitter, the movement's hashtag provided women the space to share personal stories of sexual violence (Keller et al., 2019). Stone and Vogelstein (2021) detail how hashtags like #MeToo translated into other digital languages, sparking a global reckoning that has become a collective framework for movements across the globe. With hashtags like #ArewaMeToo and China's #MeToo starting from women across the world sharing their stories, their rallying cry expands the agenda beyond sexual harassment into a campaign against wider and entire systems of inequality. This is similar to the Philippines' #BabaeAko movement in 2018, named one out of many in Time magazine's "Most Influential People on the Internet," which arose as a response to Duterte's misogynistic remarks and became a physical social movement by protest (Rappler, 2018). Furthermore, Alingasa and Ofreneo (2020) describe the #BabaeAko movement as a form of discursive activism, both calling out against misogyny and as a call for solidarity/action.

Following the pandemic, the transition to digital spaces allowed the recognition of platforms that women can collectively share as a form of storytelling and resistance. In Africa, advocacy platform FEMNET launched a particular hashtag #inclusivelockdown to share their concerns (Ali-Ali, 2020). In describing the creation of feminist online spaces in the Philippines during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, Laguilles-Timog and Cruz (2021) propose its creation and maintenance as a response to gender issues and mobility restrictions, decreasing boundaries between offline and online spaces. They emphasize the transformative potential of feminism capable of shaping online spaces during and beyond crisis situations (such as the COVID-19 pandemic).

#HijaAko, in particular, rose as a response against rape culture and victim blaming at the height of the pandemic. It presents itself as a medium for which truths and experiences (regardless of timeframe) can be reported and shared through networked publics—simultaneously a space and a collection of people restructured by network technologies (Boyd, 2010, as cited in Papacharissi, 2015). Drawing from Paparacharissi's affective publics, defined as public formations of storytelling structures that are primarily affective (2015), I extend that #HijaAko creates a distinctive feminist online space that challenges traditional notions of physical space with its emergence unfolding online.

Furthermore I attempt to highlight narratives through the digital space #HijaAko has created. I argue that numbers do not capture the intensity of narratives, stories, and experiences of a body reclaiming itself from its own trauma. This strengthens the importance of women who speak up, and more so the spaces we give for these narratives to remain true and existing at a point in time.

While digital spaces and social media provide an avenue for consolidating women's experiences, they remain susceptible to deliberate provocation, invalidation, and even the question and reduction of their truth because of their "online" physicality (Clark-Parsons, 2018). To answer these contradictions would require us to delve into the nature of digitalization, and how such a platform becomes a productive tool for the rise of digital feminist activism in the Philippines.

Digital Media, Identities, and Power

Today's digital social environment transcends the physical boundaries of time and space, reintroducing itself as a form of identity spaces (Khademi-Vidra, 2014) creating new paths for social relations, lifestyles, socialization, communication processes, and identity construction. Khademi-Vidra (2014) asserts that in the late 20th century with new technological advancements, certain spaces have allowed for the performance and construction of identity both being "real" (those derived from real experiences) and "imagined" (as influenced by mass media, or manifested through online personas). This implies that digital spaces transcend limitations of physical space and boundaries, offering new possibilities of social relations, communication, and identity formation.

In confronting humanity with respect to diverse experiences, we turn to anthropology in making sense of the adoption of digital technologies. Digital anthropology, in particular, is defined as how the human and digital can be defined in relation to one another, taking into account new methodological approaches engaging in digital spaces through digital ethnography (Horst & Miller, 2012). It is determined that there is materiality to digital anthitherropology as evident in digital infrastructure and technology, digital content, and context. DeNicola (2012) explores the capabilities of digital anthropology in geographical placemaking, reconceptualizing culture through specialized ways, saying that "… it is no longer sufficient to talk of landscapes being mediated; what we must recognize are those instances where media have become 'landscaped'" (DeNicola, 2012, p. 93). Media technologies have become deeply embedded in our physical and cultural environments, and they actively shape our understanding and interaction with the world. We need to recognize that media itself has transformed and shaped the landscapes we encounter.

Horst and Miller (2012) state that digital worlds are just as real and tangible as the physical world we live in, and their approach to studying them emphasizes considering all aspects together. Pink et al. (2016) extends ethnography by exploring the role of digital technology in challenging traditional concepts of units of analysis, suggesting that experiences, events, and localities can be

reshaped in encounters of digital worlds. More so, Coleman (2010) emphasizes the undeniable cultural matter of digital media in categories like "cultural politics, " "vernacular cultures, ", and the "prosaics" of digital media that feed into, reflect, and shape other kinds of practices. Despite digital media's limits, "… it would be a mistake to overlook how digital media have cultivated new modes of communication and selfhood" (Coleman, 2010, p. 490).

Indeed, as Geertz (1973) would assert, to divorce what happens from its context is to render it vacant. If anthropological interpretation is constructing a reading of what happens, then we ought to see digital happenstance in virtue of its own reality for it would allow its content to move and speak within its contexts. However, some scholars challenge social media initiatives' ability to step outside its virtual reality. Dean (2009) critiques neoliberal and networked democratic participation (communicative capitalism) as paradoxical such that it struggles against capitalist systems whilst reinforcing them in the same platform it contests (Dean, 2014). Dean (2009) defines communicative capitalism as a "materialization of ideals of inclusion and participation in communication technology that capture resistance and intensify global capitalism" (p. 2). Communicative exchanges are seen as basic elements of capitalist production rather than being fundamental to "democratic politics" (Dean, 2005). Social media, then, might not be enough for an egalitarian struggle. Similarly, Tolentino (2021) provides a discussion on intensification of feelings of "individualization" heightened by social media's symptoms of neoliberalism. Recalling communicative capitalism, social media platforms profit from users' engagement and personal data while creating illusions of personalization and connection. In Castillo's (2021) documentation of cyberqueer and alter accounts, archives following specific hashtags may perform as territorial markers of alter accounts to reconstitute familiar public spaces into possible locations of sexual encounters. The Twitter alter community is described as a subculture wherein users maintain separate accounts, distinct from the ones known to their friends and family, where they take on an anonymous alternate persona and freely share thoughts and behaviors without revealing their true identity (Iwayama et al., 2020). Castillo (2021), for example, mentions the hashtag #CRfun on Twitter, a particular archive of tweets followed by alter communities with images depicting possible locations of sexual activities, both past occurrences and potential future encounters. While the "alterverse" is known as a safe space for networked societies to resist heterosexist norms (Iwayama et al., 2020), Castillo (2021) notices how these spaces can be subjected to critical interrogation within the frame of communicative capitalism, wherein perceived liberatory 'technopractices' ought to lend to "…the illusion of sexual liberation for queer subjects while feeding them to the predations of capital" (p. 196).

Beyond Castillo's documentation, I emphasize more on how these spaces perform not only as illusions that "feed" capital but rather (and simply) as a performance of desire and identity. Gender expression performed online should have the agency to negotiate its own significance beyond the scope of "value" in consumer-capitalist discourses. By dominantly problematizing the "value" of communicative exchanges, we risk reducing some narratives to invisibility. A feminist analysis of digital spaces is needed to understand important contexts and discourses valuable in positioning women and other marginalized voices at the time of digitalization. By applying a feminist lens to the study of digital spaces, researchers can examine the ways in which gender, sexuality, and other intersecting identities are constructed, represented, and negotiated online. Most importantly, such performances open the possibility of digital placemaking capable of transcending physical localities.

Sapalo (2023) recognizes affect in digital spaces by looking at the intimacy of Filipino digital mourning practices at the height of the pandemic and COVID-19 deaths, linking emotions and practices of culture-specific mourners in the digital sphere. I describe #HijaAko with a similar emphasis on affect. I utilize Digital Feminist Activism (Keller et al., 2019) as a framework that adopts digital anthropology as they intersect with power and agency giving rise to new forms of social and political resistance (Brudvig, 2019). It is in this way that I approach narratives from #HijaAko as validated and real voices of women rather than negating them as empty exchanges.
The aforementioned challenges and criticisms on digital feminist activism—in lieu of both its "non-physical" nature and effectivity—remain arguably distant from the affective dimensions of its source. To inquire is to be aware of our own social positions that ought to allow us the possibilities of discourse, theory, and observation. This paper employs such reflexivity in the observation, acknowledgment, and validation of narratives and visibilities from digital spheres—particularly by revisiting theories of affect and sensation that are central to digital activist feminism.

Affective Solidarity, Networked Affect, and Embodied Interaction

Drawing from Keller et al.'s (2021) case studies on Digital Feminist Activism are concepts of affect that inform feminist theorizing—particularly affective solidarity (Hemmings, 2012) and public affect (Papacharissi, 2015). Take, for example, the digital feminist activism behind #BabaeAko, which takes a form of hashtag feminism (Sebring, 2019) that presents opportunities for visibility in its platform for participants to engage based on shared (primarily individual) experiences and resistance to oppression. The many participants in the hashtag feminism of #BabaeAko arose from affective dissonance (as a reaction to Duterte's sexist remarks) towards a shared affective solidarity in calling out against oppressive attributions and structural inequalities (Alingasa & Ofreneo, 2020; Baxter, 2021). Affective dissonance is marked by encounters between the (female) individual and genre that is rooted in an ontological-epistemological gap "between an embodied sense of self and the self we are expected to be in social terms" (Probyn, 1993, as cited in Hemmings, 2012, p. 149). When individuals with shared dissonance engage in collective conversations and connect with others facing similar experiences, it can foster affective solidarity. This solidarity, in turn, enables the formation of social movements that challenge de-politicized and individualistic self-help projects. Instead, they offer a broader critique of an unjust system and its failures (Hemmings, 2012; Lakämper, 2017). The desire to rectify the sense of injustice may be stimulated by affect as experienced and understood in relation to others. Hemmings (2012) builds solidarity based on collective dissonance rather than identity politics, going as far as critiquing limited and essentialized forms of empathy.

In its process, affective solidarity is motivated by affective publics. When public networked formations are mobilized and connected (or disconnected) through expressions of sentiment, they are powered by affective statements or stories that amplify visibility for viewpoints that were not as prevalent before (Papacharissi, 2015), such as bringing to light marginalized and underrepresented stories and voices. For Papacharissi (2015), digital technologies presuppose our networking platforms but it is our stories and expressions that connect us with each other. Social media, as "soft structures" of storytelling, are capable of meaning-making practices. Hashtag activism, for example, is arguably a non-empty signifier open to re-definition and re-appropriation that allow crowds to be rendered into networked publics (Papacharissi, 2015). While media alone do not create or dismantle revolutions, they do contribute to the unique ways in which these publics communicate and operate. This distinctive mode of communication, known as mediality, shapes

the nature of these publics, and is fueled by the driving force of emotions (Papacharissi, 2015). Mediality and affect are intertwined in sustaining and driving these emerging publics forward. Thus, it is important we pay attention to intensity, sensation, and value. The experience of sensation is important in digital feminism discourse, centering on the affective dimension of sensations embodied in digital technology that shape how users "experience" feminism (Keller et al., 2019). With stories that connect us with each other, affective solidarity can become recognized in terms of shared dissonances that foster solidarity.

Methodology

I employed qualitative content analysis to capture subjective experiences expressed through narratives, as opposed to quantitative content analysis, which focuses on generalizing quantified patterns (Wildemuth & Zhang, n.d). Since my aim was to document and observe the phenomenon of the hashtag #HijaAko as a form of Digital Feminist Activism and to situate it as a form of Philippine feminism, I combined both deductive and inductive approaches in analyzing data. Conceptual frameworks drawn from Digital Feminist Activism (Keller et al., 2019) that centered on affect and feminism served as a basis and guide for the gathering of tweets and coding. Moreover, since #HijaAko emerged as a hashtag for feminism specific to the context of the Philippines, being open to new perspectives, nuances, and themes allowed me to suggest context-specific themes.

I delineated observing narratives to those on Twitter, seeing that its site offers potential and effective methods of "e-mobilization" (Earl & Kimport, 2011, as cited in Penney & Dadas, 2014, p. 80) and is a platform that invites *affective attunements,* propagating affectively charged expressions (Papacharissi, 2015). Tweets were gathered using Twitter's advanced public search engine specifically using the hashtag #HijaAko. This was limited to tweets posted on June 14, 2020, up to August 30, 2020, as this period coincided with peak trending and engagement in social media. Utilizing the "Latest" feature in Twitter's Advanced Search Engine, I was able to scroll and gather tweets from the latest posted on August 30, 2020, up to the tweets from June 14, 2020. Overall, a total of 144 tweets were gathered. Since the majority of the tweets collected were stories, they usually came in the form of "Twitter threads" that followed one individual's story told through multiple tweets. Considering such, I was able to identify 68 narratives (stories from tweets and Twitter threads). Moreover, other tweets were also collected for the purpose of capturing the variety of engagement with the hashtag. This included multimodal forms of art and statements of organizations. Two tweets from organizations and three tweets supporting #HijaAko through art were included.

Tweets were gathered and pasted into Microsoft Word for initial coding. In vivo and emotion coding was used to manually code the gathered tweets. In vivo coding uses participants' own (verbatim) words and phrases to remain closely aligned with the direct voice of the participants, whereas emotion coding allowed me to label emotions recalled by the participants such as fear, anger, sadness, etc. (Saldaña, 2009). Initial coding was done by first taking note of codes and repeating words and even abstract tones and phrases (e.g., "Rape is rape, " "Not asking for it"). As codes were revisited, they were later organized by combining not just recurring words but dominant tones and patterns notable enough to surface distinct themes. Codes were constantly revisited as I was immersed in the data (as well as directly observing Twitter's #HijaAko exchanges) for a period of five months (April 2022 - September 2022). Codes categorized into themes were compared with those expected from the Digital Feminist Activism framework. Additionally, referring to external sources like news articles and relevant literature as included in the discussion helped situate the

context and reliability of the claims from the themes.

In consideration of the privacy and safety of the authors of narratives, usernames (as well as specific names and locations) were altered and tweet content was paraphrased to avoid de-identification with ethical considerations to its source. In addition, tweets gathered were limited to those only made voluntarily available by users that would publicly appear through Twitter's Search Engine.

I acknowledge that a feminist analysis is committed to understanding and amplifying women's experiences. While these can be a point of strength for my research, I recognize that this also affects how I approach and interpret the data. It should thus be noted that claims made are partial observations following the objectives of the paper, guided by my subjectivity. Nonetheless, I strive to maintain reflexivity through self-reflection and critical awareness as evident in how I detailed the process of my observations and arguments.

Findings

Through qualitative content analysis, four themes surfaced from the tweets including **(a) (Re) telling Truth and Sensation**, which focused on reclaiming personal stories of sexual harassment. These were told from a narration of vivid details with the intensity of emotions that shed light on the impact these experiences had on their lives. With these stories having contexts, the detail of their stories provided **(b) A Revelation of Unsafe Spaces**, which situated how Filipinas become vulnerable to harassers even in spaces that are rightfully expected to be safe. This was drawn from details of young students detailing how some friends and even teachers took advantage of their vulnerability, violating professional and ethical boundaries while subjecting them to harassment and abuse. Along with the influx of overwhelming stories coming to find their voice alongside others was the frustration that came with it. Filipinas are **(c) Sick of Victim Blaming**. Such explains the surfacing of tones of anger and frustration with its perpetuation. With their stories, they dismantled rape myths contribute to victim blaming—such as the victim's clothing, behavior, or actions that purportedly justify or invite sexual assault—by shifting the focus to the harasser's actions rather than on these being motivated by the victim's clothing or behavior. With the continued narratives being shared and enabled by #HijaAko, this further allowed discourses to raise awareness against sexual harassment and, with this collective voice, to critique systems of injustice that perpetuate unsafe spaces. Thus, **(d) #HijaAko Weaves Voices of Support and Solidarity** that does not just aim to become a platform for narratives, but also extends its invitation to all in calling for change, accountability, and inclusivity.

(Re)telling Truth and Sensation

Narratives and stories commonly took the form of a Twitter Thread, which includes multiple tweets following one linear account that would allow further detail and expansion. Majority of the tweets documented as narratives took this format, commonly beginning with statements reiterating ownership of their story ("This is my story ") and finally breaking their silence, pushing past their doubts and hesitations on being believed. Through #HijaAko, they retell their stories, both individually and collectively, in their own voice and truths. The majority of these narratives were their personal stories and experiences of sexual harassment. They were told in a manner of recall—reiterating details such as context, location, identification of harassers, and the sequence of

events that followed:

Figure 7. *@anikalanc*

tw// sexual harassment

i was groped and deceived by a person i trusted; a person i even liked.

this is my story. #HijaAko

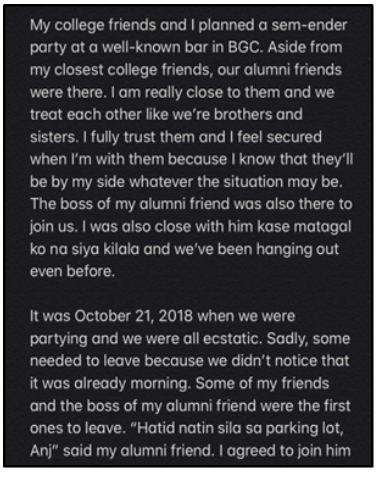
we were watching a movie in class, and the lights were off.

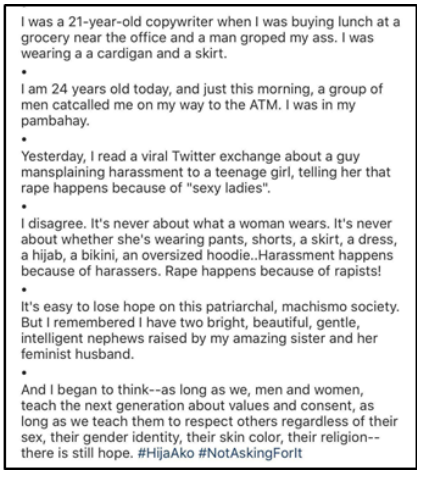
i was sitting on my chair and him on the floor. we were in direct sight of our teacher

it began with him slowly rubbing my shins. i kicked his hand away, and i generally ignored him

While some stories maximized the use of Twitter Threads, narratives were sometimes fit into photos that indicated similar contexts and details:

Figure 8. *From @ChriselAng and @NeriShei*





As details and accounts of their stories were shared, so was the unraveling of emotions that came with the memory of their experiences. Beyond contempt was the exhausting toll they had to go through in making sense of events. Feelings of "panic" and "heaviness" were commonly expressed, with those mentioning how it had left them "numb" and "frozen."

Figure 9. *From @MaxinneLiemur and @EliseCedal*

> *But he did not move and he forcefully entered me. I stared at the white ceiling silently crying while he was fucking me. #HijaAko*

> *I was 5 when my mother's friend would touch my butt and run his fingers through it, sliding his hand between my legs. I was 14, on a bus on my way home from school, when a stranger his hand on my leg and rubbed it. I was 21 when a stranger called out to me and said "patikim." #HijaAko*

How these accounts describe being violated through their own narrative of expectations, disappointment, and physical awareness initiates a sensory feeling of what it must have been like for them. The use of physical descriptions, emotions, and even contextualization told in first person and in real-time expressions ground us to their experiences firsthand.

Figure 10. *From @VenB*

> *Didn't have the courage to tweet about it again before, but I think more men should know how much their horrible actions affect us.*
>
> *I was sexually harassed by a friend, after me telling him about my relationship woes with my ex. It is a horrible weight I always carry. #HijaAko*

> *I still remember how disgusted I felt in his car, with him intentionally missing red lights to have more time with me.*
>
> *I remember freezing and getting anxiety attacks everytime I saw him on campus.*
>
> *We never forget.*

As seen in Figure 11, we can only imagine how heavy this described "weight" is that is always carried. This explains why these narratives resound as a release of suppressed feelings and experiences, with those expressing the extent of their experiences' impact on their lives.

Figure 11. *From @kamillefcx,*

> *isang taon at ilang buwan kong kinimkim tong ginawa mo sakin. sobrang laking impact non, sana alam mo yon. isa to sa mga bagay na nakapag-hold back sakin that time para di i-open up 'to in public (see pic). i won't drop your names girls, but thank u for being my support system.*

Alongside stories that were revealed even years past their encounter, I found a rather shocking aspect of narratives commonly coded with the phrase "I was (age)" that would recall how they had been victims of sexual harassment as minors. Others would detail their stories following a chronology of events of how they grew up consistently experiencing sexual harassment. This is consistent with codes such as phrases "I was just a kid," and accusing harassers as "pedophiles."

Figure 12. *From @PatArc and @LaArni*

> *side boobs ko like sinasangga niya. i just dont know what to do back then kasi nasasangga na and nung nakababa na yung nanghawak sakin everyone was just telling me na nahipuan ako. sinabi nila na dapat sinabi ko.*
>
> *i was 12 when that happened. (2/n)*

> *I was 16 when a known man of high and respected position in society harassed me that could have ended up worst if someone didn't came in.(thank God) You know what I'm wearing that time? A pair of oversized tshirt and pants. There's no excuse for rape. #HijaAko*

As we delve into such accounts, perhaps it becomes clear to us that sexual harassment can happen to anyone and, unfortunately, in places (and with people) that we least expect.

Revelation of Unsafe Spaces

This theme emerged through codes that revealed institutions and harassers that victims least expected to experience harassment from. These included words like "teacher/s, " and "friends" and phrases such as "I trusted .., " or "I thought I was safe. " Through Twitter threads, they detailed the memory of their teachers (oftentimes providing screenshots) presupposing comfort and later taking advances to sexually harass or abuse them:

Figure 13. *From @CardiaSonia*

My former teachers were pedophiles

- a thread
#HijaAko

Shit happened to me after the moving up ceremony but I found out na may kagaguhan na palang nagaganap even before that. He keeps on messaging my friend and it's fucking creepy and inappropriate.

Following these accounts were expressions of disappointment by students left unprotected and dismissed by academic institutions. The overwhelming number of such reports led to campaigns from academic and social organizations calling for their schools and universities to guarantee better protection of their students, as well as echoing the alarm raised by their schoolmates who reported having been sexually harassed within these "safe spaces."

Figure 14. *From @annahmC and @MilkteaLady2*

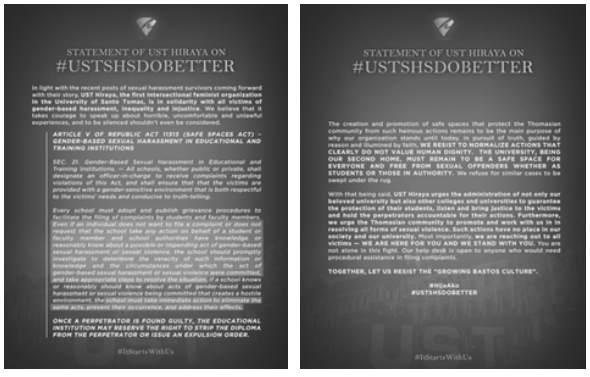
After jhs graduation, I, AS A MINOR, complained to the admin about a teacher for sexual harassment. Guess what they did? I got banned from entering school premises. L O L

#MCHSDOBETTER

MC cannot pride itself on having holistic education and being student-centered while protecting predators for the sake of reputation. We must do better. #HijaAko

As a response, school organizations released statements along with the hashtag #DoBetter while standing in solidarity with victims who voiced their experiences. Among the organizations that followed suit, UST Hiraya (2020) issued a statement, amplifying the Safe Spaces Act or the Bawal Bastos Law, stating that, should the complaints be made about acts of gender-based sexual harassment or sexual violence, the school must then (still) promptly investigate to "eliminate the same acts, prevent their occurrence, and address their effects" (Philippine Commission on Women, 2021).

Figure 15. *UST Hiraya's Statement #USTSHS-DOBETTER*



Moreover, unsafe spaces are not limited to academic institutions. Even in public places like public transport or in "broad daylight. " Commonly coded words that highlight these stories' dominance were those such as "jeepney," "commute," and "bus."

Figure 16. *From @CorneliaMRN and @Gkdrama*

> *i was 15 and was wearing my school uniform in daylight, some guy followed me and kept whistling. i was 18, was wearing a baggy shirt and pants and was inches away from a guy in a jeepney but he came close to me and touched my breasts with his arm. #EndVictimBlaming #HijaAko*

> *During a jeepney ride on the way to school, an old guy repeatedly groped my breasts. I froze. I can't even do anything but stare at other passengers riding that jeep asking for help.*
>
> *My friends just laughed at me, "ikaw? baka nagkamali lang yon"*
>
> *#HijaAko #StopVictimBlaming*

Sexual harassment was detailed to even permeate the spaces of friendship and trust. The victims' narratives recount instances where their "trusted friends" had taken advantage of their vulnerability. They describe this breach of trust from those closest to them to result in feelings of self-doubt, betrayal, and loss of faith in relationships.

Figure 17. *From @AshAshleyNics and @MaxinneLiemur*

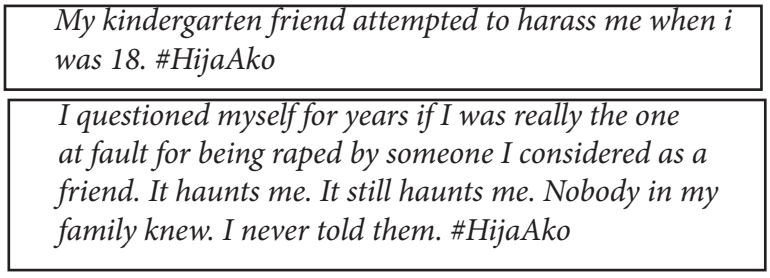
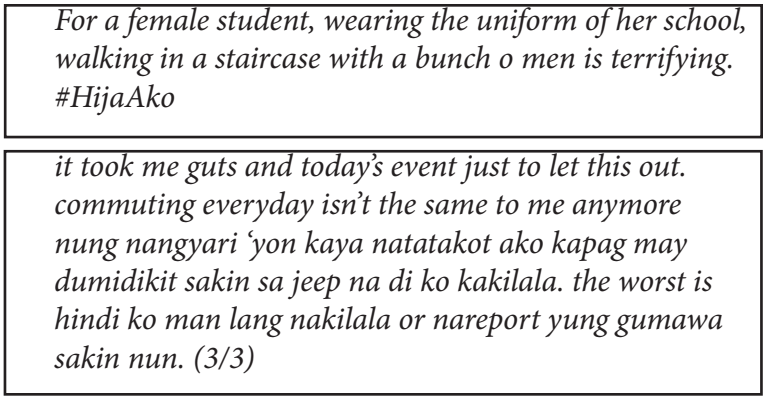


Figure 18. *From @GraceRicka and @PatArc*

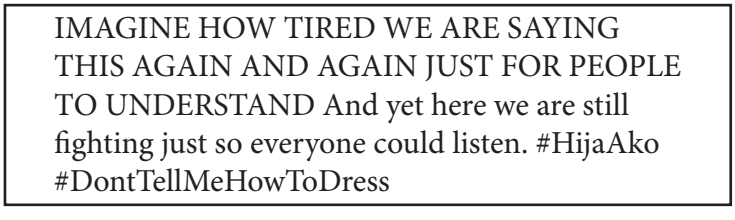


The impact of these violations and betrayals in supposedly safe spaces has left many girls and individuals in a state of fear and heightened vulnerability. Most detail how these events affected their routines, mentioning how afraid they were of walking the streets alone again, or how they "turn silent when faced with a similar situation," sometimes "suddenly crying and becoming numb."

c. Sick of Victim Blaming

As stories (re)emerge and are reclaimed alongside those of others, those who shared their narratives find strength in solidarity and with their shared experiences identify patterns of victim blaming. To break this cycle, they voice out their frustrations by dismantling rape myths such as the notion that clothing choices are responsible for these incidents.

Figure 19. *From @AshleeeeyMay*



To resist such, many of the sharers narrate what they were wearing, not as a means to justify the harassment they experienced, but to shift the focus from blaming victims to holding perpetrators accountable.

Figure 20 *From @Jarleem and @SpectacledOne*

[Thread]

Throughout the years, I've encountered a lot of situations where I was catcalled or sexually harassed NO MATTER WHAT I AM WEARING. But, there's still some kind of stigma going on whenever we try to speak up about it.

#HijaAko

i was thirteen when i was molested while commuting
i was wearing a baggy hoodie and pants
i did not ask for it to happen sexual assault has nothing to do with what you're wearing

in short: putangina mo pnp and ben tulfo
#HijaAko #artph

Because of Twitter's multimodal capacity, some have channeled their frustrations and experiences through art, using creative expressions like poetry, visual art, and animations to forward #HijaAko's advocacy and challenge social norms.

Figure 21. *From @juldanielle's art account*

what we wear will never scream yes for sexual violence.

not an invitation
not an indication
not a provocation

#hijaako #endvictimblaming

As seen in Figure 21, alongside this form of art was a statement from @Juldanielle that explains the phrase "still not asking for it" in visual art. From the image, we can see a woman revealing aspects of her body that are repeatedly labeled with this phrase. Others have chosen to put forward their bodies as both protest and empowerment as a means of reclaiming their bodies for their own expression and not as a subject for objectification.

Figure 22. *From @Zint*

A woman's choice of clothing is never a statement of consent. It also does not determine the amount of respect a woman should get. RAPE is RAPE. Clothes do not, and will never, justify sexual harassment. We're all in this, let's end rape culture! #HijaAko #StopVictimBlaming

As these narratives delve into the vivid details and impact of the victims' experiences, they often conclude with a call to action in support of others who continuously face similar struggles. Their stories become reinforced with deeper levels of resolve as they realize their experiences are not isolated from one another. Thus, they are able to collectively gather strength in solidarity in their resistance against injustice and misogyny.

Weaving Voices of Support and Solidarity

Alongside voices sharing their stories are those uplifting them. They describe these voices as "brave" and "strong,"—realizing the power there is in reclaiming their stories, in breaking the silence and thus ending the cycle of stigma surrounding sexual violence. Being able to read and be affected by the stories of others as well, gives them the strength and validation to find their own voice:

Figure 23. *From @Zint*

> *This #HijaAko made me brave. Brave enough to find my voice and spread awareness about this issue that we have been keeping in the dark for so long and even if 14 years has pased I find peace for knowing that everything that I felt -- and still feeling -- is valid.*
>
> *#HijaAko*

#HijaAko also fostered a caring and empathetic environment that allowed for the narratives to surface. These emerged from the assurance of others who affirmed that they were being listened to with non-judgment and belief, often saying "we hear you" and "i/we stand with you."

Figure 24. *From @steaphbears*

> *i hope that others can take what they can from my story. to all victims of sexual violence. i stand with you and i admire our strength. let us continue to speak up.*

Another important observation is that, while there is recognition of the strength and resilience among those who shared their stories, there remains strong validation for others who (for whatever reason) choose not to. Following these tweets, supportive words and phrases like "you are not alone' or "we support you' were exchanged nonetheless.

Figure 25. *From @nicksudio*

> *I will never force someone to speak forward, you can handle this is anyway you want to. Its up to you.*
>
> *You can fight back. You can win. Find people you trust who will believe you. Draw strength from them and yourself.*
>
> *You are strong.*
>
> *You will survive this.*
>
> *#HijaAko #MeToo*

Figure 26. *From @meiwaspa*

#HijaAko Been really conflicted about speaking up, since its only recent that i have come to terms with my own experience. It's been eleven years now, and I've only began to process my trauma, only began to tell select loved ones, only began getting mad, getting sad.

I think its really fucking brave that women are speaking up more during this controversy. I realize how it comes at the expense of our peace of mind, of our very being.

Lastly, with codes like "fight/laban," "rights," and "justice," the voices from #HijaAko clamor not only for their safety but for social change and the protection of their rights. With the recognition of underlying beliefs, attitudes, and systems that perpetuate harassment, they advocate dismantling such structures to create an inclusive environment for all.

Figure 27. *From @Seabear and @KaraTaggoa*

Ngayon na may edad na ako at namulat sa realidad, I knew that these were traumatic experiences because they kept repeating in my head. I just learned how to live with these since I don't really know how to deal with them properly. But ngayon, I decided to speak up and share my story to let other girls know that they are not alone. I'm here with y'all, it's okay if wala pa kayong lakas na labanan sila. Lalaban kami para sa inyo.

Babae ako, lalaban ako sa inhustisya at abuso! Speak up, stand up, demand justice for every women and people discriminated, violated, and exploited by this system! #HijaAko

Through the simplest yet powerful act of speaking up and listening to others, they recognize that they are contributing to a larger fight that never comes easy, but nonetheless are part of the collective effort towards hopeful change.

Discussion

From stories of sensation to the collective clamor against rape culture that breeds unsafe spaces, #HijaAko became a statement that sparked a movement for challenging such injustices. Yet more than the hashtag's accessibility and collective meaning would be its symbolism upon declaration. Those who entered the discourse bringing with them their stories, sentiments, or support, used the hashtag #HijaAko as a declaration that established their involvement in the movement. Returning to the hashtag's creation provides understanding of why the open declaration of being an *Hija* became striking for a majority of young Filipinas.

The word *hija* means "daughter," and oftentimes refers to someone younger. Ben Tulfo's response to Kakie Pangilinan (calling her an *hija*) conveys a rather patronizing and condescending tone as he lectures her with the ideal representation of females considering the unshakable desire of men to tame "their beast." In the Philippines, respect for elders is considered an important value, manifested in traditions and gestures such as *"pagmamano"* and in saying *"po/opo."* However, this value of respect can be abused by elders when taken to extremes, seeing how it can lead to neglect and dismissal of the valuable experiences of the young.

In the case of #HijaAko, Kakie Pangilinan refuses to accept that the many experiences of young Filipinas be dismissed as merely a matter of age and thereby diminish their significance. With the reclamation and declaration of being an *Hija*, she invites everyone to embrace the history of the Filipina's past oppressions and even wrap it around themselves in the glory of resistance. To declare one as an *Hija* through the hashtag takes the form of feminist activism, one that reinforces the Filipina's resistance and positionality then and now.

#HijaAko as Digital Feminist Activism

Themes emerged from the documented narratives resonated with Keller et al.'s (2019) key conceptual frameworks of Digital Feminist Activism such as affect (Papacharissi, 2015) and affective solidarity (Hemmings, 2012). #HijaAko enabled a space for stories to find solace and for individuals to find their voice guided by the support and encouragement of others. These evocative retellings rely on embodied experience and interaction, wherein meaningful interactions with physical bodies and technology can be influenced by storytelling (Giannakos & Lee-Cultura, 2020; Carless & Douglas, 2015). The details of these accounts emulate effectively charged expressions rekindled by memory and sensation that heighten the discourse of how one "experiences" feminism (Papacharissi, 2015).

The extent of the stories' heaviness is revealed to us when narratives imply firmer tones of realization. This is because the act of speaking up about events deemed traumatic is already difficult and overwhelming. When traumatic memories associated with an event are formed and remembered, it is more likely that we "re-experience" our traumas (TeBockHorst, 2014). Besides the slow judicial process (Brooks-Hay & Burnman, 2020), it was found that teens do not disclose their experiences of sexual assault for reasons of shame, as well as being associated with a high degree of stigma (Browne & Finkelhor, 1985). Other implications of underreporting and non-disclosure include the fear of not being believed, the fear of being blamed, and the fear that nothing will be done (Browne & Finkelhor, 1985; Alaggia, 2005). Thus, the act of speaking up is powerful for these women in the sense that they embrace and talk about their experiences with firmer versions of their truth.

With numerous narratives creating empathetic environments for others who have experienced the same, the sharers discover a shared dissonance that brings them together, engaging in conversation and later, taking a cohesive form of what Hemmings (2012) described as affective solidarity. In the context of #HijaAko, when one's story resonates with those of others, those involved are able to make sense of their experiences as perpetuated by wider unjust systems that enable victim blaming. Thus, their stories take flight from a retelling of their own stories to pose a collective clamor for justice for themselves and others. Seen in this light, #HijaAko bears the heaviness of these traumatic experiences and wraps it around the narrative of empowerment rather

than sustaining the stigma of being mere victims.

With #HijaAko being contextualized to the experiences of most Filipinas, this allowed themes to emerge from the narratives detailing their realities. Situated in the Philippine context, some attested to having experienced the fear of sexual harassment in the most unexpected places—academic institutions. Through Twitter threads, students detailed the memory of their teachers (oftentimes providing screenshots) presupposing comfort and later making sexual advances to these girls. In the Philippines, 17.1% of children are reported to have experienced sexual violence growing up, with 5.3% of these incidents being committed in schools (UNICEF, 2016). It was also only recently that students started to come forward with allegations of sexual harassment against their teachers, with some being shared by victims through social media platforms. Cleofas (2023) traces the narratives of young women who have experienced sexual abuse in Catholic schools in the Philippines, drawing from these to call for heightened measures for students' safety as a resistance to patriarchy. In September of 2022, a list of schools with sexual abuse allegations was released, among them being some of the top and most respected universities in the country (Mangaluz, 2022). This shows that there needs to be imminent, urgent, and continuous action in creating safe spaces not only through stronger legal implementation but also through intensified awareness campaigns to ensure safe and conducive learning environments for students. Also recurring in the narratives is public transportation being a common place where the sharers expressed to have experienced sexual harassment. A survey among 316 college students commuting in Manila revealed that 43% of them had been harassed in public transit; although 85% of those sexually victimized did not report the incident. The high prevalence of sexual harassment alongside the underreporting of incidents suggests significant institutional barriers to seeking help and reflects the inefficiency in addressing cases of sexual harassment.

The revelation of unsafe spaces within these narratives was made not in the sense that these spaces should be avoided, or for individuals to take greater precautions that begs the necessity for "anti-rape" tips. The point is that sexual harassment happens when there is an abuse of power that presupposes consent based on prevailing rape myths. This further explains the frustration that is expressed alongside stories that dismantle victim blaming. When the narratives detail what the victims were wearing and how they were nonetheless "not asking for it," it drives home the point that clothes do not serve as an invitation for harassment no matter the skin revealed or concealed. Through #HijaAko, stories were exchanged among Filipinas as enabled in digital spheres with the advocacy of dismantling rape culture and amplifying marginalized voices. Drawn from the voices of Filipinas, the hashtag represents a form of digital feminist activism that reflects the unique challenges, contextual details, and social dynamics specific to the Philippines.

The space provided by #HijaAko for individuals to reclaim their stories and regain their power is reminiscent of the historical feminist activism of Filipinas in the country. Much like past movements of the Filipina's struggle for political participation and visibility, #HijaAko calls for the same justice: reclaiming our bodies by retelling our stories. In their own agency, they initially recall their stories—engaging in a powerful retelling from their own voice and memory—that allows them to reclaim their experiences (and with it their bodies), thereby rejecting passive victimization as they identify with the collective identity of #HijaAko. This transformation from victim to activist resonates with that of Roces' (2012) "double narrative" of Filipinas as both victims and empowered agents.

Narratives Beyond Valuation

The stories from #HijaAko detail vivid lived realities recalling how sexual harassment was experienced at its encounter. Thus, when it comes to counseling victims of sexual abuse, *believing the victim* is emphasized as fundamental to active listening (World Health Organization Geneva, 2003). This validation becomes critical to recovery, as emphasized by Dunn and Gilchrist (1993, as cited in World Health Organization, 2003). The act of speaking up alone should be met with sensitivity, recognizing the significant impact these experiences have had on the victims' lives.

I extend such sensitivity to the narratives in digital spaces, particularly those that have emerged from #HijaAko. Through the lens of digital feminist anthropology (Brudvig, 2019), these stories demand to be heard and seen as *real* voices recounting *real* incidents. By granting them validation, we acknowledge the truth of their experiences and affirm their right to be heard. This also means granting them visibility—another crucial aspect of feminist activism. Visibility provides a platform for these narratives to be recognized, shared, and amplified, raising awareness about the prevalence and impact of sexual harassment. Returning to my emphasis on the use of feminist analysis in digital spaces, when we see stories and voices that assert power and agency, we get to see them as a form of resistance that is crucial to be recognized and validated as such, as opposed to limiting and negating them as "empty exchanges" in broader debates of "value" and (capitalist) production (Dean, 2014). Seen in this light, the contextual basis and realities revealed through #HijaAko are regarded as real, while the movement's advocacy and call to dismantle rape culture become urgent.

Furthermore, the presence of #HijaAko and its resonance with Filipinas mark it as an identity space (Khamedi-Vidra, 2014) where identities are negotiated, constructed, and transformed within digital realms (Pink et al., 2016). The Filipina identity undergoes continuous renegotiation in the digital space facilitated by #HijaAko. Consequently, it possesses the capacity to both shape digital spaces, intersecting power and identity, and to be shaped by the opportunities for connection and solidarity offered by the digital world. This implies that #HijaAko not only influences digital spaces through social movements but is also influenced by the potential for connection and solidarity that the digital world provides.

Conclusion

With Philippine feminist activism being historically at the forefront of the struggle for political participation and visibility, I have sought to retrace such activism through the Hija constructed within the digital space of #HijaAko. This particular manifestation pushes back against rape myths that allow rape culture to threaten our supposed safe spaces. With #HijaAko transpiring at the height of the pandemic, it presented itself as an opportunity for unreported narratives and voices for stories to be heard and shared within the digital and networked spaces. The hashtag, therefore, bends conventional meaning/s of space confronted by the *new* physicality of digital realities through its own mediality (Papacharissi, 2015).

In this paper, I documented #HijaAko from a feminist standpoint which seeks to validate the voices and narratives of women through concepts of digital feminist activism (Keller et al., 2019) informing digital feminist anthropology (Brudvig, 2019). Through qualitative content analysis, I identified key themes that contextualize the digital feminist activism of #HijaAko within

the Philippines and as a form of Philippine feminism.

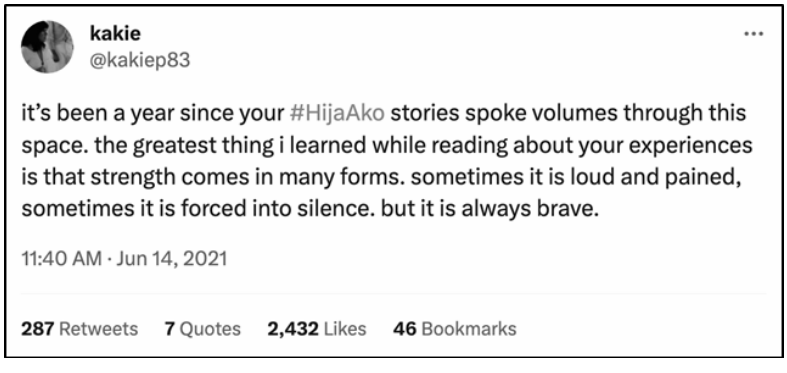
The digital space provided by #HijaAko became a site for the retelling and reclamation of stories. I observed the use of the hashtag as a platform for recounting narratives and sensation. Applying Papacharissi's (2015) affective publics, the details of these accounts emulate affectively charged expressions rekindled by memory and sensation that heighten the discourse of how one "experiences" feminism. More than calling out against victim blaming and debunking rape misconceptions, #HijaAko calls for the accountability of social institutions to *#DoBetter* at ensuring safe spaces for women. Applying Hemming's (2012) affective solidarity, #HijaAko arose from affective dissonance not just from Ben Tulfo's remark but also from the frustrations of what Filipinas have to go through simply due to being a woman in a patriarchal society. This dissonance was later revealed to be shared. Thus, women collectively started retelling their own experiences, calling out their frustrations, and rallying for safe spaces in shared affective solidarity.

I emphasize the sensitivity and validation accorded to narratives among those that emerged from #HijaAko. These stories rightfully deserve visibility that should not be at risk of being overshadowed or rendered invisible within broader and binary debates of (capitalist) value and worth (Dean, 2014). As we map the contextual nuances of the emergence of #HijaAko, it becomes evident that the movement was, and continues to be, driven by a collective desire to challenge and dismantle rape culture, while amplifying the voices and experiences of those affected.

Most important, given its semiotic basis, would be #HijaAko's role as a symbol of resistance embracing being Filipina. #HijaAko is a declaration. The Hija refuses to be weakened by its past oppressions. Instead, the Hija claims the false and condescending language initially made by Ben Tulfo (a symbol of patriarchy) and wraps it around themself in the glory and history of being Filipina. Observing similar "double narratives" that feminist activists in the Philippines reproduced as a resistance (Roces, 2012), #HijaAko reclaims bodies, stories, and spaces as it makes itself visible despite entrenched systems of injustice and invisibility.

A year after the #HijaAko campaign, Kakie Pangilinan tweeted once again on the morning of June 14, 2021:

Figure 28. *A Year Since #HijaAko.*



#HijaAko's resistance is an embodiment of the long history of feminist resistance in the country, signaling the breakthrough of such into mainstream consciousness. It positions itself as a form of digital feminist activism in the Philippines as it uses digital realities as a powerful tool of resistance and activism, a particular complexity of the universal experiences of different hashtag

feminisms throughout the globe.

Through #HijaAko, we are given intensities, truths, and reclamations not only individually but also as a collective resistance as Filipinas push back against rape culture and take up space—whether it be as a statistic, in embodied narratives, in the physicality of digital spaces, in breaking glass ceilings, everywhere else—and rightfully so. It is through such spaces that Filipinas courageously unveil themselves, liberating their identities and dismantling the history of suppression that once silenced their voices. This empowering movement emboldens them to embrace the fullness of their sexuality, reclaiming both their stories and their bodies as vessels of empowerment, liberation, and self-expression.

The influx of narratives at the emergence of #HijaAko reminds us of what goes on largely unnoticed. My documentation of the #HijaAko movement has sought to reveal valuable stories and experiences that are often overlooked as passively contained in digital spaces. I extend such a perspective to further inquiries in documenting digital communities and phenomena.

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