Media Practices of Visibility: A Digital Ethnography of Feminist Mobilisation and Activism on the Nigerian Social Media

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Introduction

Social media have forged new relationships of power and voice for previously marginalized groups. In Nigeria, social media is creating spaces for feminist confraternity and social mobilization and empowering an emerging group of feminist activists that are transforming gender discourses through various forms of online engagement.

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Aisha Yesufu uses the #hashtag to extend the protest ground to the virtual space making feminist activism an ongoing struggle in a "safe space".

Tweet

lima Abdul

The ban of the use of mannequins by the Hisbah in kano shows the gender violence women face in northern Nigeria. The female body is to be kept out f view, blamed for the failures of a puritanical ideal. The agency of women is withdrawn and locked away in a patriarchal purdah.

Nigerian Tribune @nigeriantribune · 5d
Kano Hisbah bans use of mannequins for display of clothes by tailors, boutique owners dlvr.it/S2nGnr

Field work

A four-month exploration of Twitter and Instagram accounts of women activists involving reading through posts and conversations, downloading, sorting, coding and filing of data.

Preliminary findings

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Rahama Sadau employs selfie activism and body rebellion to assert the right of the Muslim woman to self-expression in a conservative society.

Project aims

To explore the forms of feminist mobilisation and activism in Nigeria through social media platforms and how the various forms of mobilising are shaped by different fields of social life and reflect gender mediated lived experiences.

Digital anthropology

'A method for enhancing understandings of meanings and the cultural experiences that enable and are enabled by the digital medium. It entails studying specific chatrooms, discussion groups, or observing virtual realities' (Kaur-Gill & Duta, 2017: 2).

Reflections

Social media generates rich ethnographic data for studying various domains of social life especially in the face of the covid-19 restrictions. However, there is limited opportunity for further probing of participants in the way obtainable in 'on-the-ground' ethnography. Deleted posts also undermine the continuity of thought and meaning making.
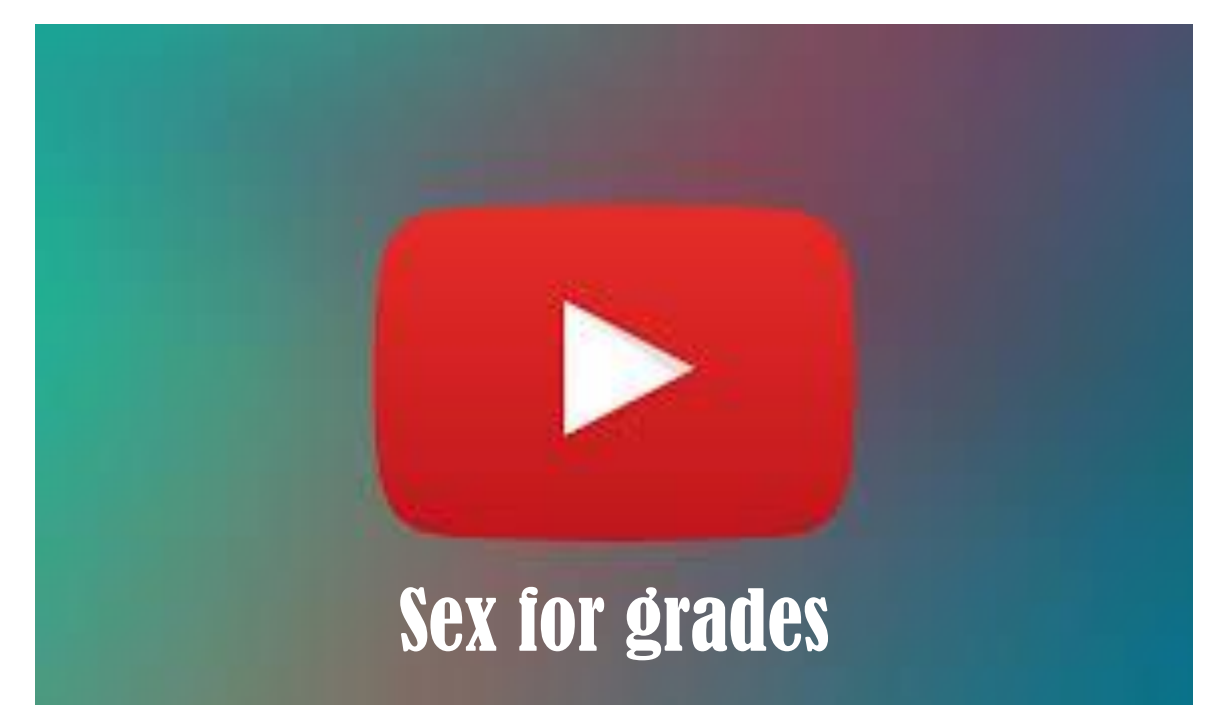
Kiki Mordi deploys video mediated evidence to fight the institutionalized structures of sexual harassment and violence against women in educational institutions.