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## **EXPLORING ONLINE FEMINIST COMMUNITIES AND THE MALE ALLYSHIP EXPERIENCE**

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**EXPLORING ONLINE FEMINIST COMMUNITIES AND THE MALE ALLYSHIP  
EXPERIENCE**

By

Josephine Saighoe

B.A., University of Cape Coast, 2014

MPhil., University of Ghana, 2018

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of  
the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

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Department of Communications

Communication Studies Program  
In the Graduate School  
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The members of the Committee appointed to examine the thesis of Josephine Saighoe find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

DocuSigned by:

*Leah Sewer*

Chairperson

DocuSigned by:

*Dr. Dominic Mantley*

DocuSigned by:

*Dr. Crystal Sheedy*

## ABSTRACT

There has been a growing involvement of men in the feminist cause. Nonetheless, their own experiences as self-identified feminist allies have received inadequate attention within the academic research. Just like female activists, men who identify as feminist activists also make use of such digital platforms to support the activism and make significant contributions to the feminist discourse. In view of this, this study explores the experiences of Ghanaian male feminist allies in addition to delving into their experiences as feminist activists in the digital world and how they navigate the challenges that come with aligning themselves with this cause. Through a qualitative investigation, the research has presented a range of themes and insights that provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics and complexities in the experiences of male feminist allies. The findings reveal that male feminist allies engage in feminist activism for varied reasons, as well as have peculiar ways of doing activism. In spite of their commitment to the feminist cause, male feminist allies encounter a number of challenges including backlash, skepticism and religious factors. These challenges emphasize the significance of creating a supportive and inclusive environment for male allies within feminist movements. They navigate these challenges by being indifferent, retaliating and building supportive networks.

Thesis Advisor:

DocuSigned by:  
*Leah Sewer*  
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Chairperson

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## **DEDICATION**

To my beautiful mother, Comfort. And to myself, for my self-belief, perseverance, and resilience in the face of adversity. I would like to deeply appreciate myself for the hard work, determination and commitment in achieving this academic milestone.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Whether it is radical, liberal, social, Marxist, or black, and whether it is practiced traditionally or digitally, feminism has come a long way (Ahmad, Muniroh & Mahmudah, 2021). A central theme of feminism and feminist theory and discourse is to make the politics of sex and gender focal to the understanding of oppression and discrimination. Historically, societies across the world have been largely patriarchal, or structured in a way that positions men in control of social discourse and action. Men have reaped huge benefits from this to the detriment of women (Brian, 2013). For instance, women have experienced various challenges and disadvantages in relation to access to employment opportunities and education as well as representation in leadership positions.

Given the historical precedent of patriarchal societies, one could wonder about the contributions that men could significantly make to feminist discourse given that the feminist discourse is historically centered on women. Men who are pro-feminists are expected to support women's rights and experiences as well as help in bringing awareness to women's issues. However, they are also aware of losing their masculine privileges (Kleyjnan, 2019). This is to say that there is apprehension among men to be considered non-masculine and effeminate when they support feminist activism. Some men are of the view that feminism contradicts everything that masculinity stands for, thus, endangers their position in a patriarchal society. Men who identify as feminists face the possibility of being slandered, humiliated and physically assaulted due to their support for feminism which discourages others from joining this social movement (Wiley et al., 2013). Despite the impediments, there are male allies who still stand firm in their support for feminism. As a dominant group, men "can be part of the struggle to eradicate gender-

based injustice” (Hasyim, 2014, p.3). It is crucial for men to partake in feminist agency because men have significant responsibility in helping to end gender-based oppression for women. It is difficult for some men to commit to the feminist cause because of their fear of losing their masculinity which manifests in power and privilege. Given the importance of men to feminist movements, it is important to begin with what the experiences of men who identify as feminists are and what it requires of men to identify and engage in feminist movements. Before we answer these questions, we need to consider the current landscape of feminism and feminist movement.

A new source of empowerment and transformation for feminist activism, digital media has contributed to a new wave of feminism, thus enlarging the zeal, visibility, connectivity, as well as the community of feminist activities (Jouet, 2018). Digital media spaces are key to defining the fourth wave of feminist practice and providing the opportunity to further conversations on the global front. In view of this, feminists use various social media platforms (e.g., Twitter and Facebook) and blogs to construct their identities, promote consciousness and raise awareness about a plethora of issues related to sexism, misogyny, patriarchy, gendered violence and inequality.

These platforms have provided the opportunity for feminists to extend the frontiers of their activism (Clark, 2016; Rentschler, 2014). Additionally, digital media is significant to connect and instill in young women feminist activism both in local and global contexts (Harris, 2010). This means that technology has birthed fresh directions of feminist activism and enabled feminists to develop their unique spaces to highlight their frustrations and concerns. The prominent assumption of feminist activism on social media bridges the gap of understanding between the new and older generation of feminists (Jackson, 2018). While there may be common experiences of women that help to fuel the drive of activism, there are unique experiences that

may be peculiar to the older generation of feminists and the newer generation due to the difference in time/period as well as evolution and development.

Just like female activists, men who identify as feminists also make use of such digital platforms to support the activism and make significant contributions to the feminist discourse. In view of this, several scholars study gender performance and engagement on such spaces with most of the existing literature highlighting the gender differences on digital spaces (Xie, 2022). Therefore, it is significant to develop studies on the user experience of and navigation by male feminists on social media platform as well as ascertain whether cultural and mass media projections and narratives of traditional gender roles are replicated on these digital spaces, and whether digital media facilitates the understanding of gender and feminist activism from a diverse and inclusive perspective.

As earlier mentioned, there has been a growing involvement of men in feminism and they have been identified as pro-feminist, male feminists, egalitarians and gender rights activists. However, their own experiences as self-identified feminists have not received adequate attention within the academic research. In addition, these male feminists' increasing digital engagement emits the experience of hostility leading to being labeled as "simps" (someone who displays extreme sympathy and attention toward another person who does not reciprocate the same feelings.), which consciously seeks to mute their voices online and visibility. In light of this, this study explores the central questions of why and how some men identify as feminists in addition to delving into their experiences as feminists in the digital world and exploring how they navigate negativity that comes with aligning themselves with this cause.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Waves of Feminism

According to Malinowska (2020), feminism is an umbrella term for a number of cultural phenomena that sit in relation to the oppressive and deteriorating condition of women under patriarchal cultural norms and standards. Representing varied schools of philosophical thoughts, moral beliefs and theories, it is unanimously geared towards assuaging the subjugation and discrimination of women in socio-economic and political spheres. It is a Western movement that evolved all over the world; throughout such evolution, the theories and methodologies of feminism were adopted globally and adapted to suit the nature of specific cultures and societies. As a representation for the institutional and grassroots activities for eliminating gender-based discrimination and inequalities, it has evolved in four waves. The first wave ushered a pioneering stage of feminist activism between the 1800s and the first decades of the 20th century. It was inspired by the political writing of authors such as Susan B. Anthony, John Stuart Mill and Mary Wollstonecraft. These theorists were significant for foregrounding how the lack of legal rights was instrumental in women's social exclusion, demotion and suffering. The first wave challenged the limitations placed on women by male-centered society. Additionally, it focused on the inequalities between men and women such as the legal barring women from owning properties, voting, as well as enjoying the rights of employment, equality in marriage and position of political power and authority (Schuster, 2013).

Second Wave Feminism mostly refers to the radical feminism of the women's liberation movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. According to Holmes (2000, p.1), second-wave feminists "challenged liberal democratic conceptions of the political." The difference between

the first and second waves of feminism is that the second wave focused on the barriers to gender equality by highlighting issues like reproductive rights, sexuality, women's roles and labor at home and the patriarchal society/community. Theorists such as Andrea Dworkin and Betty Friedan were instrumental in this wave as they foregrounded women's sexuality and reproduction and social ramifications of living in a patriarchal culture.

Additionally, according to Holmes (2000), inspired by the formidable and revolutionary aspects of the liberal feminism, the radical second-wave feminists used performatory tactics such as the underground or guerilla theater to highlight women's oppression. A significant work that was remarkable in this wave was Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1969), in which she maintained that women should have a right to their own bodies as well as a sexuality of their own; women's sexuality should be detached from the obligations and moral imperatives of marriage and motherhood. Nonetheless, radical feminists such as Adrienne Rich used writing and speeches to establish a relationship between heterosexuality and the oppression of women. This means that heterosexuality as a normative social institutional standard was developed to intensify the social power of men. This led to radical second-wave feminists building sisterhood and solidarity as part of their key characteristics.

The third wave of feminism is generally associated with feminist activism, movement and politics that began in the 1980s. Emerging out of the critique of the politics and ideals of the previous waves, the focus of the third wave was to critique and redefine the ideologies and politics about key concepts such as gender, womanhood, sexuality, beauty and femininity. In spite of benefiting from the legal rights and protections fought for and obtained by the previous waves of feminists, third-wave feminists critiqued several positions of the second wave. There was a shift in how gender was perceived, specifically, the notion that certain characteristics were

peculiar to the male gender and others to the female gender, leading to the concept of gender continuum. Gender continuum refers to the notion that gender is not binary (limitation to the specific genders, man/boy or woman/girl) but a continuous formation of a spectrum which consists of varied combinations and degrees of emotional, mental, biological and behavioral traits usually attributed to or possessed to members of the female or male sex.

A “limitation” that characterized the previous waves was universalism. Since the first two waves developed in the Western part of the world, feminist activism, movement, and politics were conceptualized and actualized based on the experiences of women from that part of the world. And as feminism evolved to other parts of the world, feminist tenets based on the experiences of White, middle-class, heterosexual women were applied. This became problematic because experiences of women in the West were different from those in other parts of the world, such as Asia and Africa. This phenomenon was an important reason for the development of the third wave – it acknowledged the diversity of women’s experiences and recognized that there is no universal definition of womanhood. Third wave theorists such Judith Butler and Gayatri Spivak challenged the idea of universal experience of womanhood and foregrounded the sexually and racially excluded.

Third wave feminism served as a conceptual gloss for theories such as the Black Feminist Theory. It is noteworthy that Black Feminist Theory shares a connection with African feminism. As a theory that emerged in the United States during the second wave of feminism, it highlights the unique challenges and experiences faced by Black women. It led to the development of important concepts such as intersectionality (the multiple interconnected forms of oppression based on factors such as class, race, sexuality and gender as experienced by Black women proposed by Crenshaw (1991)). Another concept developed in this wave that catered to Black

women was Womanism. Coined by Alice Walker in her 1981 short story collection, *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down*, it focuses on the concerns and conditions of Black women, especially discriminatory experiences that were not generally recognized within mainstream feminism. African feminism comprises a wider range of feminist perspectives that originates from the African continent. It recognizes the diverse experiences across different African cultures and regions. African feminist thought highlights the impact of colonialism on gender relations and addresses how tradition, culture and colonial legacies impact African women. Both Black feminist and African feminist thought incorporate ideological frameworks that challenge Western-centric feminist systems. They also share a commitment to create awareness for diversity within the experiences of Black women while acknowledging that factors such as ethnicity, nationality and socio-economic components lead to the formulation of varied perspectives.

African feminism highlights the varied brands of “equalist theories” that are focused on enhancing the experience and condition of the African woman living at the mercy of systemic patriarchal institutions (Amaefula, 2021; Dosekun, 2021). In view of this, efforts are made within this type of feminist activism to reverse such perceived injustice meted out to women, across various African cultures. It must be understood that the social constructions of feminine and masculine gender identities, roles and standards reinforce stereotypes against women. This demarcation of social roles does not truly represent the various dispositions of categories of gender leading to imbalanced roles for men and women.

As earlier indicated, the foundation of African feminism was formed from the intersection between gender and racial dynamics. To this, Atanga (2013) explains that in relation to her white counterpart, the Black woman (including African women) is regarded as the Other



Woman, who must strive to fight against sexism of the culture and racism. In view of this, African feminism provides a discernible difference between women who were colonized in the continent and those who were deemed as the colonizers. It is therefore significant to raise a global consciousness which regards the history, present and future of the African woman (Ebunoluwa, 2009).

Feminism in Africa may have evolved differently from feminism in other parts of the world due to the uniqueness of experiences faced by women in Africa (Atanga, 2013; Kabore, 2017). Nonetheless, it is possible for people to find the term “African Feminism” problematic due to the term suggesting Africa as a single entity and thus, the experience of women to be the same in every African country. Women face different experiences in different countries. This is to say that the problems faced by North African Maghreb countries such as Algeria, Libya, Tunisia and Morocco may be different from women in West African countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, Liberia and Senegal.

The Fourth Wave of feminism is characterized by diversity of purpose and the reliance on digital media (Day & Wray, 2020; Tazi & Oumlil, 2020). It led to the emergence of categories such as Cyber-feminism. Digital media provides a unique opportunity for feminists to engage in activism and create online communities. Through blogging, digital content creation (including audio-visual content), usage of hashtags etc., contemporary feminists have developed fresh insights that encapsulate the fourth wave of feminism. Digital media has opened new spaces for feminist activism and debate, as well as made such feminist activity invisible and accessible to a wider audience. Nonetheless, Day and Way (2020) believe that the use of digital media as a major feature of the fourth wave has led to a generational divide between feminists. Their findings showed that a number of young feminists could not identify with the traditional feminist

*modus operandi*, that is, waving placards and going on a march. Additionally, other feminists regarded the off-line activism as “real activism”. The call-out culture of the fourth wave also is problematic for some people because they believe that it is an easy way to dent the alleged abusers’ image without concrete evidence. The call-out feature is whereby sexist and misogynist behavior or individuals are exposed online (i.e #MeToo campaign). This may be considered as an empowering way for women who want to document and share their experiences to gain emotional support and solidarity from other women.

With a review of how feminism has evolved, it is important to note that the fourth wave of feminism is understandably understudied given its recency. Within the literature that does exist, studies examining fourth wave feminism that also include a gendered and racial lens remain underrepresented in the body of work on fourth wave feminism. With this in mind, the subsequent section highlights some literature on the intention of male feminists and the performance of their allyship to the feminist activism.

### **Male Feminists**

The chief goal of feminism is to fight the oppression of women including marginalization, violence and discrimination. With this in mind, it is important to note that scholars also argue for the idea that feminism was developed to provide vast visibility to gender equality, not to just women but also for men (Muniroh and Mahmudah, 2021; Precopio & Ramsey, 2017). This explains how toxic traditional patriarchal culture can be to both men and women. Therefore, taking men out of the conversation may sabotage the progress of producing equality as expected. It is important for men to be part of the feminist movement. As noted prior, men can be beneficial allies in feminist movements. However, men face unique challenges in this

identification. For example, Crowe (2011) explores how men relate to feminism as well as asks the important question of how men can lend their support to feminism without compromising its gynocentric characteristics. Crowe (2011) discusses key challenges men face in engaging in feminism and proceeds to recommend some practices and attitudes that they might adopt to promote the feminist cause. The main challenge is that male feminists are deeply criticized by other men who do not support the feminist cause. One interesting point that is brought up by the Crowe (2011) is the fact that the realm of masculine social discourse is a privileged world for varied groups of men, making the nature of exclusivity of feminine perspective associated with feminism a radical deviation from the social norm of masculinity. I believe that this is so because many societies and cultures weave standards and discourses around the whims and caprices of men so it is hard for them to comprehend the concept of feminism; also, they find it difficult to accept that this phenomenon is not about them. Additionally, traditional and mainstream discourses are crafted to accommodate and appreciate masculine perspectives. Thus, as feminist viewpoints do not focus on masculine opinions, it becomes foreign to them. Another problem is that due to the ambiguous nature of feminism, men are ambivalent about how they can contribute to the feminist discourse and the extent of how their views can count in the conversation. The crucial aspect that men can adopt to support the feminist discourse is provide a listening ear to women. They need to listen to understand and to just respond. While Crowe (2011) provides some great points that serve as a springboard for the study of how masculinity can relate to feminism, the conversation needs to be extended further how this phenomenon is reflected on digital media spaces.

Men may still be uncertain about identification with the feminist cause. As it was indicated earlier on, Crowe (2011) explains that this uncertainty may be as a result of the

feminist discourse solely focusing on women. Therefore, it feels out of place for them (men) to be left out of the discourse. Silver, Chadwick and Anders (2019) hypothesize that men who were uncertain about their feminist identity had beliefs that fell between their feminist and non-feminist peers, leading to a unique ideological perspective. They tested this hypothesis by comparing feminist, unsure, and non-feminist U.S. college and community men's masculinity stress and conformity, gender role values, and approaches to sexual relationships. The results indicate that unsure men's gender role values lay between feminist and non-feminist men, but sure men aligned with feminists for some aspects of masculinity and more like non-feminists for others; on some constructs, unsure, feminist, and non-feminist men had similarities.

Some feminists opine that male feminists are laid back in their approach and contribution towards feminist activism. Nonetheless, they believe that it is better than male feminists who attempt to resolve the problem of gender-based oppression and impose their will and opinions on the feminist movement. (Droogendyk et al. 2016). Wiley and Dunne (2019) corroborate this assertion in two studies conducted in the United States. Through a quantitative study, they concluded that men who considered themselves as feminists had the willingness to challenge gender-based discrimination through advocacy and protest, strengthening the argument that men as feminist allies play a crucial role in the feminist movement due to their privilege as the main perpetrators of maintaining and supporting patriarchy. Wiley and Dunne (2019)'s work is very significant because one is made aware of the fact that even though there may be men willing to align with feminists to challenge gender-based inequality, not all of such support is welcomed by some female feminists as some of them believe that male allies do not align for the right reasons but for ulterior motives. In a similar vein, through the lens of Sara Ahmed's queer phenomenology and concept of disorientation and reorientation and using qualitative interviews

with nine young feminist men in Sweden, Ekelund (2020) explored how men experience their identities as men and feminists, as well as their navigation within the feminist context. Contrary to previous research (Chadwick and Anders, 2019; Crowe, 2011), the findings of this study show that Swedish male feminists are confident in their position as both men and feminists. They consider feminism as a way of enhancing masculinity and not destroying it and this is portrayed in the (re)orientation of their own identities. This means “that feminist men can seek out a masculinity that is positioned in the background yet still experience themselves as subjects in the feminist struggle” (10).

Just as feminist movements evolved to develop a more intersectional lens with the inclusion of black feminist thought, Dennie (2020) details W.E.B Du Bois’ thoughts about how Black male feminism evolved during the period of 1903 to 1920. Dennie’s (2020) study differs from Crowe’s (2011) in that the latter seeks to explain why men do not accept feminism and what can be done to change it while the former attempts to highlight how Black male feminism has grown over a period of time through the thought processes of the prominent African-American civil rights activist, W.E.B Du Bois. Nonetheless, it must be understood that Dennie (2020)’s intention is not to answer the question of whether Du Bois is a feminist, but rather show how his perspectives of race and gender have evolved from that period of time.

Just like most Black elites such as Booker T. Washington and Florence Price, Du Bois was of the view that the onus lay on the educated Blacks within the African American community to uplift the Black race, leading to the construction of the term, “Racial Uplift”. For Du Bois, he strongly believed that this racial upliftment can “only” be done by exceptional black men (Dennie, 2020: 3). This means that he perceived that race leadership and racial progress can only be determined by Black men. This leads to the universalization of African Americans as

predominantly male and “he is unable to analyze the nuanced lived experiences of black women and he cannot fully theorize how their oppression is distinct from that of black men” (p. 4). Du Bois’ thoughts and works reflect a masculinist framework for conquering racism. The shift in Du Bois views was realized in his essay, “The Damnation of Women” (1920) where he foregrounds racial and gender oppressions suffered by Black women. Dennie (2020) believes that this change in Du Bois’ mindset “resulted from the proliferation of black women’s activism and theorization at the turn of the century” (p. 12). Due to black women’s activism growing in leaps and bounds in the 1920s, black men such as Du Bois had no choice than to validate the experiences of black women.

Most of the previously mentioned studies reflect the Western perspective so this creates a lacuna for this study to be conducted in order to gain diverse perspectives. In this study, the African (specifically, Ghanaian) perspective will be considered: it will be expanded to explore the experiences of Ghanaian male feminist allies. The next section will provide literature on digital feminism.

### **Digital Feminism**

As a significant tool in the general comprehension of the world and shaping of identities, digital media has been instrumental in pushing the agenda of feminism. Social media platforms have proven to be defining in initiating a fourth wave of feminism (Kristofferson, White, & Pelosa, 2014). As already indicated, the platforms provided by digital spaces foster global engagement and discussion of sexism and misogyny. Couldry (2010) opines that feminists use digital spaces such as Facebook, X, Instagram, and weblogs to fight for huge societal changes. This perspective is shared by Fotopoulou (2014), who questions whether feminism has become a

“digital sisterhood” where feminist groups connect to build solidarity. She adds that digital media has led to a massive flow and dissemination of information in all global spheres, thus causing changes to the dynamics of traditional feminism. Similarly, Schuster (2013) argues that activism on digital media serves as a significant form of participation for young feminists. Just like what the previous writers have indicated, Scuster (2013) also agrees that due to its “flexibility, accessibility, affordability and ability to reach large groups of people” (p.1), young feminists use new media to build solidarity with each other in discussing socio-political discussions and organizing both real and virtual events to this effect. Nonetheless, this study makes an interesting contribution to the discussion as it brings to fore the fact that the usage of media by young feminists results in a generational divide among feminists. This is to say that due to the older crop of feminists using the traditional in-person form of activism, they are not able to connect properly with young feminists who rely more on new/digital media instead of in-person communication.

The prominent assumption of feminist activism on social media is that it bridges the gap of understanding between the new and older generation of feminists (Jackson, 2018). I believe that this is a true phenomenon because while there may be common experiences of women that help to fuel the drive of activism, there are unique experiences that may be peculiar to the older generation of feminists, and the newer generation due to the difference in time/period, as well as evolution and development. This means that just like the findings from the ongoing review, Harris (2020) also explains that technology has birthed fresh directions of feminist activism and enabled feminists to develop their unique spaces to highlight their frustrations and concerns. This view is also shared by Crossley’s (2015) which found Facebook and feminist blogs help feminist networks thrive as well as aid in the creation of online feminist communities and provide the

opportunities for online engagement with adversaries. Inasmuch as Baer (2016) and Crossley's (2015) studies highlight the impact of digital platforms such as blogs and Facebook have on feminist activism and how the establishment of online communities generally shape social movement, it is very important to evolve such conversations further. This is because the internet is ever growing, and more social movements are turning into online communities, making it important future research directions to be expanded to other platforms such as Tik Tok, LinkedIn, Reddit, Quora, Twitter Spaces and Clubhouse. Additionally, their studies are a reflection of Western online feminist social networks, thus, it is important to consider feminist activism and mobilization on African digital spaces.

One of the most prominent ways feminist movements have gained visibility in virtual spaces is through the use of hashtags, which is a word or phrase preceded by a hash sign, #. It is usually utilized on social media platforms to aid in the easy identification of digital content on a specific content. A lot of female online activists use hashtags to foment activism, highlight prejudice against the female, as well as provoke responses. Turley and Fisher (2018) consider this way of digital feminism as "Shouting Back". With digital activism and campaigns such as #Metoo, #SlutWalk, #Her, #Peaches, online platforms surely provide a climate for Feminists to build and establish solidarity and thrive (Baer, 2016). Before the increasing usage/popularity of digital media, a lot of women did not share their experiences of any form of abuse with the world; thus, digital media provides a platform for women to share such experiences (Rodino-Colocino, 2018). For instance, Tarana Burke's "Me Too" Movement started as a social movement which sought to empower women through empathy and shared stories of sexual abuse, sexual harassment and rape culture. The phrase "Me Too" was initially adopted on social media on Myspace in 2006 by the feminist activist and sexual assault survivor, (Tarana Burke).



The movement became popular when the hashtag #MeToo was used starting in 2017 to encourage women to speak up. Following the exposure of the many sexual abuse allegation against Hollywood film producer, Harvey Weinstein in 2017, the movement became extremely popular on social media as the hashtag #MeToo was used as a tactic to build solidarity and empathize with sexually assaulted women and empower them to demonstrate the strength to share their ordeals.

As the movement spurred on, the #MeToo tactic spread to other countries. Siyuan Yin and Yu Sun (2021) investigates the #MeToo movement in China. As a contribution to the promotion of understanding how digital media facilitate feminist activism, Yin and Yu Sun (2021) draws on textual analysis of public and media discourses about China's MeToo movement on digital media. Their findings indicate that the performance of the movement on digital media was attributed to the online formation of feminist activism and "pro-change counter-publics". Inasmuch as this study is not necessarily to further study the MeToo movement, just like the study's purpose, feminists of the MeToo movement experienced censorship and misogynistic backlash. This is why studying how feminists in Africa navigate such censorship and misogynistic backlash, as well as how they impact their activism online is significant.

In a similar vein, Datiri (2020) highlights the ways in which African women employ X as a platform to engage in activism against women's experiences of abuse, early and forced marriages, abduction, sexual assault and other forms of gender-based violence. Using critical discussion analysis (analysis of linguistic and rhetorical characteristics of the tweets) of three hashtag campaigns (#JusticeforNoura, #BringBackOurGirls and #JusticeForOchanya), Datiri (2020) investigates how twittering impacts African gender activism. With three themes emerging

from the study, *Solidarity in Feminist Sisterhood, Gender Equality and A Call for Justice*, they reveal social media's scope, in terms of new opportunities for aiding in promoting the goals of African feminism.

Both Williams (2015) and Datiri (2020) agree that Twitter hashtag activism provides a significant medium for feminists (especially those who identify as Black/African) to control the social construction of meanings and narratives concerning issues of importance to them. I believe that since the use of media platforms by Black feminists is highlighted in works such as Williams (2015) and Datiri (2020), it is important to be aware of how African feminists navigate resistance, to their message, as well as online harassment, trolling and misogynistic remarks, hence, the motive for this study. For example, employing the Social Identity and Deindividuation Effects (SIDE) approach, Majumdar, Tewatia, Jamkhedkar and Bhatia (2022) highlight how performance of gender is influenced by social identities. This means that gender communication on social media is contingent on existing offline norms. The authors also mention that a phenomenon that was consistent in their data was the fact that females on social media received backlash and experienced trolling that connotes female role stereotyping, degenerating equality, as well as calling them all sorts of unprintable names. Additionally, they told women to control their emotions or if they were on their periods, blaming their hormones for their "aggressive" online engagement. These females navigated such experience by being extremely aggressive and reactionary to such comments. Majumdar, Tewatia, Jamkhedkar and Bhatia (2022) corroborate Jones et al. (2019) claims of the prevalence of gender stereotypes on the digital space, specifically, Twitter. He found a lot of sexist comments and references to women having emotional brains, hence, the "impairment" of their logic and judgement, "their inclination toward hyperemotionality was correlated to the lack of logic" (p. 7). Jones et al. (2019) and Tewatia,

Jamkhedkar and Bhatia (2022) argue important points that resonate in the African digital space, as many feminists experience backlash, vitriol, and misogyny. Therefore, it is important to investigate how these African feminists navigate these online experiences, as well as how they are impacted, thus making the proposed study research worthy.

With the emergence of digital platforms as significant tools to the contemporary wave of feminism, the conversation can be extended further from what has already been done. It is important to study how male feminists engage in online feminism and build communities with other allies. This still leaves a gap for more comprehensive studies to be done to analyze their experiences and motivations of being male feminists and how their usage of digital spaces in their activism. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to understand what draws men into feminism, their activism and experiences on the digital media and how they navigate through hostility (from anti-feminists).

This section reviewed some literature on how feminism has evolved, and centered on some definitions and perspectives on African feminism. It also provided insights from various literature on male feminists and digital feminism. The research questions that direct the course of the study are highlighted in the next section.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODS**

### **Research Questions**

The study is guided by the following research questions:

- I. RQ1: What are the motivations of self-identified male feminist allies? What draws them into feminism?
- II. RQ2: What are the perspectives of male feminist allies on African feminism?
- III. RQ3: What is the impact of digital media on African feminist discourse?
- IV. RQ4: What are the approaches used by male feminist allies to engage in feminist activism?
- V. RQ5: What challenges do male feminist allies experience in their engagement in feminist activism?
- VI. RQ6: How do male feminist allies navigate through challenges associated with engaging in feminist activism on social media?

### **Participant Recruitment and Study Sample**

A purposive snowballing sampling technique was used to identify nine (9) men who identified as feminists to participate in this study. Eligible individuals for this study were at least 18 years, Ghanaian, and they self-identified as male-feminists who actively engaged in feminism on various social media platforms. These criteria ensured that the participants would be able to communicate their experience as male allies of feminism and were also actively engaged in feminist activism on social media. Each participant was informed of their rights as an interviewee. In respect to the inclusion criteria, nine (9) male Ghanaian feminists were identified

to partake in the research. Two participants lived in the United States and the rest at various locations in Ghana.

To acquire more participants for this study, the researcher interviewed the first male feminist, and he recommended other male feminists to be interviewed. Additionally, based on observation and experience, the researcher reached out to other men who identify as feminists. Recruitment continued in this way until all the interviews were completed. The primary sources of contact with potential participants were via e-mail, Facebook, X and the telephone.

Two of participants are students and the others' professions ranged from customer service executive, pharmacist, associate professor, lawyer, seminarian, engineer and a nurse. All of the participants use Facebook and X actively; five (5) of them are active on Instagram.

## **Interview**

The method for data collection utilized was qualitative interviews. The interview method is significant for in-depth understanding of the participants' standpoints and experiences as male feminists on digital media. Data collection began at the time of the interview after the participant gave their informed consent. The interviews were done via Zoom, except one which was done in-person. Although the researcher hoped to conduct all the interviews in a face-to-face format, this was not possible because almost all the participants were not residing in the United States of America. In view of this, eight (8) interviews were done via Zoom and the ninth was interviewed fact-to-face.

During the interview sessions done via Zoom, the recording was done automatically using a feature on the app. A hand-held digital recording device was used to audio-record the

in-person interview. The interviews were fully transcribed amounting to 57 pages. In addition, the duration of each interview ranged from 25 minutes to an hour. A semi-structured interview format was used as this enabled a flexibility of additional follow-up questions throughout the interview process (Alsaawi, 2014). Below are some of the questions asked during the interview:

1. What is feminism to you?
2. What motivated you to become feminist?
3. In what ways do you use social media to engage in feminist activism?
4. What kind of challenges do you experience in society as a male feminist?
5. How do you react to or navigate through those circumstances?

The researcher reminded each participant at the start of the interview that they were at liberty to not answer any of the questions and were able to withdraw from the interview at any point. The participants were not compensated.

To maintain the anonymity of the participants, each of them was assigned a pseudonym associated with their interview data and in the written analysis to further protect their privacy. The digital and physical study materials were also kept in locked locations. The digital participant data was kept in a password-protected file on the researcher's computer, together with the written data and audio recording.

### **Method of Analysis**

The method that followed the recording and transcription was the analysis. The data was coded by skimming and close reading to identify themes. The thematic approach used to analyze

the data was Braun and Clarke (2006). In addition, an inductive approach was used to code the data. The inductive approach is appropriate because it is a “bottom-up method” in which the themes identified strongly link to the data themselves and may bear “resemblance” to the specific interview questions. It is noteworthy that the researcher did not attempt to code the data in a way to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame.

Descriptive labels were created for parts and patterns that occurred repeatedly and were geared towards a specific idea or thought. The labels were merged into themes after analysis and synthesis. This process was done using Braun and Clarke (2006)’s six phases of thematic analysis.

### **Reflexivity and Bracketing**

The researcher did a reflexive analysis while conducting data analysis. Investigators are encouraged to gain awareness of their own biases, perspectives and beliefs in order to evaluate how they may impact discussion of data and interpretation. In addition, the researcher must clearly state her biases through the bracketing process (Creswell, 2013). The researcher identifies as a Black African, heterosexual woman. She is a Ghanaian who moved to the United States to pursue a Master’s degree in Communication. She also supports feminist views and has been involved in some form of digital feminism on Facebook and X, as well as corresponded with feminists on such platforms.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

### RQ1: MOTIVATIONS OF MALE FEMINIST ALLIES

Research question one asked: what are the motivations of self-identified male-feminist allies? What draws them into feminism? The themes that pertain to the question are ideology, developing awareness and leveraging privilege.

The goal of feminism is to achieve total liberation (in all aspects) of women. Therefore, it is only ideal that men share a significant part of the responsibility as they are usually the main perpetrators and institutionalized oppression and inequality experienced by women (Klocke, (2013). Nonetheless, it is often thought that while a lot of men have considered themselves as pro feminist/allies, others believe that they cannot be feminist allies in the strictest sense of the word in these contemporary times because they cannot do away with their power and privilege in relation to women (Kaufmann, 1999).

#### **Ideology**

Participants expressing the theme of ideology described their motivation as something that aligned with the ethical view of equality. The participants emphasized the importance of embracing feminism as men. Robert engages in feminist activism because he upholds the humanist ideology. His philosophical and ethical standpoint acknowledges the value and agency of human beings, collectively and individuality:

Oh, because of my humanism generally, I gravitate towards the feminist ideology... o, what drew me to feminism was actually studying the environment and then finding out what the gaps were then trying to see how best I can



approach and how best I can help bridge those gaps. So, it was my belief in humanism that led to feminism.

Foregrounding compassion and advocacy for social justice and equal human rights, this sentiment is similarly shared by Lamprey. In his responses, it is highlighted that feminism, like any other activism, demands political consciousness. Nonetheless, his main focus is on what he describes as Pan-African Feminism. This basically means that such activism is done within the African context:

My political orientation is towards equality, justice for all right, and specifically concerning people who are social groups that have historically been marginalized. And I'm also sort of ensuring that everybody who's been marginalized has access and opportunity and justice. So, Feminist ideas fall within my broader sort of political orientation. But not all feminist ideas. I am more into Pan-African Feminism. I draw ideas from and use the way I think about my work, and how I think about questions of social justice.

### **Developing Awareness**

Another reason why men become feminist allies is gaining education and awareness through the plight and experiences of women. Seeing their female family members, partners, children and friends experiencing or likely to experience misogyny and sexism instilled in them the awareness of such circumstances. Therefore, they engage in activism to educate other males about the need to support women to achieve equality on all frontiers. Eli reported that having seen the affects of the lack of feminine empowerment in rural areas where women are subjected to early marriage and inadequate opportunities for education gave him an indication of the bizarre experiences of women: “women lack the opportunities to succeed, especially in diverse

areas. They are experience things such as child marriage and unequal access to education which does not put them in the best circumstances”.

Moreover, Mark’s motivation to embrace feminism stems from the dynamics of his family. Although, he has older sisters who are grown and capable of emerging as leaders of his nuclear family in the absence of his parents, that leadership role is always passed onto him by virtue of the fact that he is a man:

Even though my sisters are way older than myself, my mum always say that I am the “man” of the house. In a conversation with one of my uncles, he mentioned how he wanted his male child to fully take control of the inheritance when he passes. During extended family meetings, people kept saying things like: “you are a woman, don’t speak when men are speaking!” I always say that it is not about gender. It is about the intellect and what a person can contribute to the discussion. Even on committees, men are usually presidents and women are secretaries. All these brought my attention to the issues of women.

The striking thing about Mark’s reason for engaging in feminism is his uncle’s decision to name his child as the sole manager of his properties. This reinforces the notion of the preference for male children over female children in a number of African cultures. This preference is rooted in a complex interplay of economic, socio-cultural and historical factors. Many societies are entrenched in patriarchal values where males are traditionally regarded as the primary providers and heirs for the family, so a son is considered as ideal for continuing the family lineage, name and property.

## **Leveraging Privilege**

An idea that was also consistent in the findings was the use of the position of male privilege to engage in activism. This involves recognizing and leveraging the advantages that come with being a male to advocate for women. By reflecting on and understanding their privileges and how it intersects with social oppressions such as class, race and sexuality, men can become more empathetic allies and make the effort to tear down systemic oppression. Kojo uses his privileged position to amplify the voices of women and educate others on their (women) experiences:

I believe it is unfair how we have treated women historically and me being male, I appreciate the position that I hold because I am the privileged one by society. One who can get away with a lot of things. I am the one who can speak to males and not face the same repercussions that a woman would face, or the same resistance that a woman would face. So, I use that leverage in my position to speak up on behalf of women and to help amplify the voices of women, to say the things that women want everybody to hear, but they get drowned in all the noise.

Misogyny is a system that privileges men. The more men understand this, the greater the efforts will be in changing the system. This is why men like Kojo take advantage of such privilege to educate other males about the significance of feminism, as well as its misconceptions and the impact of misogyny on society.

## **Supporting Feminism without Labels**

Furthermore, an interesting finding among some of the participants was the refusal to be labeled as a feminist ally. While Omar actively engages in feminist activism, he does not adhere to “political” labels. Gardiner (2005) explains that such men hesitate due to social stigma or

negative perceptions (including backlash and judgment) that is associated with the term “feminist”. People (especially males), who oppose gender equality may severely criticize male feminist allies. For Omar, he prioritizes action and the liberty to tackle issues from diverse approaches over labels:

Recognizing the agency of women... I think labels are a bit problematic in the world we live in, in the sense that it boxes you into a specific set of dominant narratives and norms. And if you opt to identify as such, and in a world where you have gatekeepers of such labels, if you do not conform to what the gatekeepers require of you, it becomes a huge problem.

Ultimately, the decision to identify as a male ally or not is a personal one. For some, it is the action that counts and not the label. This means that they would rather be known for their active contributions than to be labeled and not move the needle.

## **RQ2: PERSPECTIVES ON AFRICAN FEMINISM**

Research question two asked: What are the perspectives of male feminist-allies on African Feminism? African Feminism is made up of diverse brands of equalist theories focused on enhancing the experience of the African woman. This is to say that they work to reverse systemic injustices and oppression instituted against women, across history, the length and breadth of the continent (Decker and Baderoon, 2018; Amaefula and Ekwueme, 2021). The rich diversity of African feminism lends itself to varied approaches and efforts. Just like other parts of the world, the social categorizations of gender in African societies have led to peculiar constructions of the masculine and feminine gender roles, reinforcing specific stereotypes, especially ones that contribute to the negative condition and experiences of women.

The participants shared varied perspectives about African Feminism and how it is performed in Ghana. The belief that African women have been historically marginalized was consistent in the data. Some of the respondents mentioned that women have been denied their full humanity and potential to the detriment of men and the society as a whole. In view of this, empowering women and putting them in the best of circumstances to succeed, as well as recognizing their agency will be beneficial for the growth and development of the society. For instance, Mark acknowledges the development of the African woman is still being impeded presently and this is one of the reasons for the emergence of African feminism:

African Feminism is about giving women a fair playing ground, in patriarchal societies like Ghana. There have been a lot of setbacks in the development of women. Contrary to what a lot of people think, maybe it's about empowering women to be more than men. I see it as rather elevating the playing ground to a fair piece where both men and women can have the right and confidence to be able to do what they want to do.

Mark's penultimate point about the misconception of African Feminism is significant because it is one of the major reasons for most African men's inability to embrace feminism. It is mostly believed that feminism is a movement that seeks to undermine the experiences of men, as well as a hate campaign against men. While this movement is focused on challenging toxic traditional masculinity and stereotypical gender roles that cause harmful effects on women, it does not invalidate the positive performance of masculinity.

Additionally, some of the participants gave their perspectives on African feminism by highlighting its peculiarity from Western feminism and added how problematic it is for some African feminists to deal with issues using the framework of Western feminism. The difference is a reflection of unique socio-political, historical and cultural contexts. Kojo states that:

The Western culture is kind of entirely different from African culture; religion plays a huge factor in shaping the minds of Africans when it comes to feminism. Culture and Religion is significant in the African context and this has impacted our way of thinking.

Senam corroborates Kojo's views about the impact of religion and traditional views on African societies and how it shapes people's views about feminism:

Religion is one of the tools that societies in Africa use to suppress women. I'm a Christian. There are churches where a woman cannot be a pastor. A woman cannot do this, she cannot do that. And you see religion is a major part of the lives of Africans. So once those narratives begin in church, they naturally extend into homes... Tradition suppresses women's freedoms. While practices like widowhood rights and genital mutilation have reduced, it is still prevalent in some societies.

Many religious beliefs and practices have historically reinforced traditional gender roles where men and women are assigned distinct familial, social and religious roles based on their biological differences. Therefore, it may conflict with feminist ideologies of gender equality and agency.

In addition, African feminism emphasizes intersectionality more than Western feminism. As earlier mentioned in the literature review, social identities such as race and gender (double marginalization) interconnect shape the experiences of oppression by Black women. The variation of experiences by different races of women led to the emergence of the third wave feminism as the first two waves failed to recognize and include diversity of experiences. Kojo describes it as:

Sometimes it actually needs a bit of work to understand the specificities around gender relations in Ghana, as well as Africa as a continent. Gender relations in Ghana are not the same as gender relations in the U.S. And I think sometimes we don't take our time to really study how that looks. For example, when you see patriarchy as a concept, what does that mean when you apply to a Ghanaian context and when you apply to an American context? The way race, class etc. operate here is different from how it is operated in Canada so sometimes, it is important to deal with the issue within its context.

The legacy of colonialism and imperialism which has had a significant effect on power dynamics, gender relations and socio-economic differences on the continent. As previously mentioned, before the advent of the Europeans, gender roles in a lot of African societies were complementary. It became hierarchical and largely patriarchal after the Europeans landed on African soil and mingled with various African cultures.

### **RQ3: IMPACT OF DIGITAL MEDIA ON AFRICAN FEMINIST DISCOURSE**

Research question three asked: What is the impact of digital media on African Feminist Discourse? The main feature of the fourth wave of feminism is digital media. Digital media is considered as an empowering tool for feminist activism and perceived as having significantly contributed to its revival (Jouet, 2018). As all forms of digital media (such as social media and weblogs) become popularized, feminists began to use it as a major space for activism because of its offering of new tools and tactics for the utilization of awareness creation, mobilization of activists and dissemination of information. It has promoted the widespread and enlargement of feminist communities online.

All the participants shared varied views on the impact of digital media on feminism. Most of them believe that feminist activism within the African setting has become mainstream because

of digital media since a lot of African feminists are using social media to rewrite narratives. This contributes to education on and promotion of women's issues and experiences. Lamptey mentions that social media (which is a component of digital media) has popularized African feminism by providing a platform for advocates, activists and other individuals to create awareness, connect, share information and mobilize. He elaborates that online platforms, such as Facebook, X, Instagram and TikTok have magnified the voices of feminists, giving them the opportunity to share their experiences and perspectives, as well as educate others, bringing attention to gender issues. This is an indication of global communication and collaboration among African feminists worldwide; one does not need to be in a specific African country to engage in African feminist activism, it can be done from any part of the world. This argument is shared by Amaefula and Ekwueme (2021). This global reach and communication strengthen feminist movements and fosters solidarity.

### **Democratization**

Some of the participants also explained that digital media has led to the democratization of conversation and activism by providing accessible, inclusive and interactive spaces for individuals to engage with feminist discourse. Senam believes that that digital media has also provided a level-playing field for women's voices to be heard, thereby, reducing male-dominated for conversations:

So, the biggest thing would be providing a platform for us to have these conversations, right? Before, it was offline. In the past, it was a male dominated conversation. And we have all gained accessibility to the discourse. Now, everybody has a voice. Men can make posts, and women can challenge them on



those posts. Women can make posts, and you know, receive support or get backlash. So, it's really giving everyone a voice.

Senam's response reinforces Turley and Fisher (2018)'s opinion that digital media platforms are largely inclusive and accessible, allowing equal participation in communication among all genders, therefore, amplifying the voices of women. This also helps women who may experience hindrances in expressing themselves fully during traditional interpersonal communication to overcome such barriers to communication and make their voices heard. Also, the anonymity feature can empower women and offer a safer space for them to express themselves and engage with others without fear of backlash. From Senam's response, there is an indication that digital media enables women to share their perspectives freely on controversial or sensitive topics, where they may face harassment or stigma offline.

## **Community**

In addition to popularizing the feminist discourse, digital media has facilitated the creation of online feminist communities and networks, where individuals can find solidarity, support and resources. These virtual communities provide safe spaces for mobilizing activism, organizing events, fostering connections and communicating ideas among Ghanaian and other African feminists across cultural and geographic boundaries. Robert says:

I think it's given more women the opportunity to be heard. And you know, I think before social media, a lot of you couldn't find your will. Even though you had these thoughts, you couldn't find your voice. You couldn't find people who thought like you, and so you would most likely feel alone. But what social media provided was an aggregation of you know not just people who think like you, but as well as help you gain the confidence to talk about such issues... And I think

it's one of the main catalysts for why we even have deeper conversations about feminism now.

Digital feminist activism has made conversations easier as it encourages interactive engagement. People are able to share, comment, like and repost content and contribute to the discourse. This promotes debate, dialogue and collaboration among feminist communities. Also, diverse voices within the feminist community, such as LGBTQ+ individuals and people with disabilities are able share their experiences and standpoints, enriching feminist discourse with intersectional insights. Nevertheless, the participants agree that notions of traditional gender relations are conceptualized on social media. A lot of feminists are subjected to harassment, online shaming, bullying, trolling and hateful speech for being outspoken about issues that affect women. This is aimed at silencing or intimidating female feminists, especially. This means that inasmuch as social media platforms are important tools for driving activism, it can also be breeding grounds for humiliating feminists.

#### **RQ4: APPROACHES TO ENGAGING IN FEMINIST ACTIVISM**

Research Question four asked: What are the approaches used by male feminist allies to engage in feminist activism?

The participants agreed that for men to identify as feminist allies, they need to take active roles in improving the experiences of women. However, the mode of participation varied between them. During the conversation, a difference was established and this was referred to as active and passive feminism. Active feminism is simply taking an active role in initiating and developing social change. Active male feminist allies are not afraid to put themselves out there to support feminism. Passive male feminist allies take a laid-back approach which includes

engaging in activities at home to make women's lives better, as well as entailed listening. This is done away from public scrutiny.

### **“Gentle” Advocacy**

Omar engages in a laid-back approach for the sake of his personal relationships. He is aware of the fact that his religion, Islam, is largely patriarchal and most of his friends and family do not support the feminist cause. Therefore, in order to maintain familial relationships and friendships, especially, within his religion, he takes the passive route. As earlier established in the motivations for embracing feminism, Omar had mentioned that even though he engages in feminist activism, he did not want to be labeled as a feminist ally because he prioritized action and liberty to challenge the status quo from any angle without judgment over labels:

Generally, I just tend to like, not share my opinions a lot. I take a laid-back approach in supporting the feminist cause. I think I have gotten to a point where I value personal friendships and relationships more so I take a laid-back approach.

The researcher would like to believe that this reason may be true, nonetheless, the true rationale behind Omar's standpoint may be found in the mode in which he engages in feminist activism, which is passive. His value for personal relationships and the desire for them to not conflict with his feminist activism may be a more plausible explanation for his “detest” for such political labels. This finding aligns with Dery (2020)'s argument that explains social stigma and criticism as significant reasons why some Ghanaian men do not subscribe to the feminist cause publicly.

## **Empathy**

The participants also mention that empathy is necessary for men to be able to engage in feminist activism. This helps them to understand the conditions of women. Robert articulated his awareness that the broken system put women in oppressive situations and agreed that men are significant social characters that can repair the broken system to enhance the experience of women and to do this, men need to look beyond their privilege and make the effort to understand the contributing factors to such oppression. With this in view, Robert engages in conversations along those lines with other men to educate and create awareness. Robert laments on how challenging this is due to the standpoint that patriarchal men see empathy in men as a sign of weakness. The reason being that patriarchal normative standards prioritize characteristics traditionally associated with masculinity such as apathy, assertiveness and dominance. To add, the socio-political power imbalances that focus on the interests and views of men over those of women prevents them from expressing empathy and vulnerability towards the plight of women. Empathy for women confront these power dynamics by acknowledging and centering women's needs, experiences and agency. In patriarchal cultures and societies, this shift in focus may be regarded as a threat to masculinity.

Kojo expresses empathy in his activism through what he terms as “daily little actions”. As a practicing nurse and an owner of a pharmacy, he ensures gender equality among his workers. Notions of traditional gender relations manifest at some workplaces. Recounting the researcher's own experiences, during a departmental meeting, one of the male managers mentioned he was thirsty and decided to go to his office to get a bottle of water. Before he could get up, the Human Resource Manager suggested he asked one of the ladies to get him water. Even in other work spaces, women are expected to cater to men during meetings and team-

bonding events. Kojo explains that he tries to educate his male workers when they make misogynistic comments or act in that respect. Robert and Kojo's approaches get men to rethink their own attitudes and behaviors through the process of learning and unlearning.

### **Radical Approach**

Some of the participants responded that they take the radical approach in partaking in feminist activism. Radical in this context means a more active and present approach to see a transformative social change, calling out and challenging systemic oppression and discrimination against women, as well as help amplify the voices of female feminists. Having established the impact of digital media on African feminist activism, one can see the essence of social media platforms in the cause. Kwesi shares that:

What I do is to write lengthy posts on Facebook highlighting things that affect women. I also hashtags to look out for online spaces where such conversations are taking place and partake in it. I make arguments about women's experiences and when people are having such conversations, I ensure to make my voice heard. I am a straight male and that comes with a lot of privilege.

Lamprey's approach aligns with that of Kwesi. This is what he had to say:

I argue with my friends about gender and sexism. I always engage in questions of injustice, online, you know. Right now, I'm currently doing some work with a group; we are coming up with a response to the anti LGBTQ bill passed by the government... I'm interested in bringing awareness to these issues, as well as making my position clear. I think one of the things we don't do enough is to clearly state where we stand on issues, especially regarding gender.

Senam elaborates on two approaches; the first one is to support feminist agenda driven by others by sharing, reposting and liking the content and the second one is to drive his feminist

agenda by composing narratives focused on creating awareness and educating others. He expresses:

I engage in commentary, and conversations that are initiated by other feminist individuals and groups... This gives mileage to their message and drives the conversation on to more people's feeds and timelines. It just increases awareness... Now the second way is to compose commentaries and think pieces about those things, myself.

The findings from Lamptey Kwesi and Senam is congruent with Datiri (2020)'s argument that social media empowers African feminists to engage in activism without being policed. This shows that activists possess the agency to control narratives and construct meanings away from the control of traditional media (Poster, 2009). However, other scholars have questioned whether digital media is an ideal platform (Jenkins 2006; Mason 2008; Shirky 2009) as it also reinforces existing traditional gender structures.

The participants recognize the oppressive condition of women, in comparison to men and take advantage of their male privilege to contribute to the feminist cause in diverse ways. Nevertheless, as complex as it is, each participant has a different approach to doing this. In spite of the differences, all the participants agree that men can make a great difference in the lives of women when they use their power and privilege to get them on the same playing field as men.

## **RQ5: CHALLENGES FACED BY MALE ALLIES**

Research question five asked: What challenges do male feminist allies experience in their engagement in feminist activism.

Crowe (2011) highlights some of the challenges male feminist allies face in their feminist activism. Some of these challenges range from skepticism and mistrust, backlash, emotional labor and others. The responses from the participants are consistent with some of the arguments raised by Crowe (2011)

### **Backlash, Name-calling, Hate Speech**

Male feminist allies experience a number of challenges in their activism; usually, these challenges stem from stereotypes, societal norms and within the feminist circle. The participants recounted their experience of backlash, vitriol, hate speech and name-calling. For example, Lamptey expresses that people call him “simp” for partaking in the feminist cause. A simp refers to a man who is perceived as overly submissive to women, often in a way that is considered as insincere or seeking approval. It also carries negative connotations that imply lack of self-respect or weakness and emasculation (Wiggins and Kuehn, 2019). Kojo states that:

They think that you are supporting women’s rights just to appear good to them. Sometimes, this can be true and it makes the work challenging and discouraging because they have been examples of men who pretend to be feminists in order to take advantage of those women. Other people believe that you cannot be a man a feminist as well.

The support for feminism is sometimes perceived as emasculation due to its challenge of traditional notions of gender relations. This perspective is especially toxic. The feminist cause is

regarded as a threat to the perceived inherent superiority of men. Therefore, a man who participates in challenging such structures is considered as a simp and one who is emasculated. As previously stated, this perception stems from deeply entrenched social normative standards and stereotypes about masculinity and femininity. According to Eli:

Well, I'd say, some men find male feminists weak. They find it emasculating. Sometimes when I tell my male friends that I am a feminist, they think it's a joke, but it is not a joke. Sometimes, they think I'm not being serious.

The findings corroborate Epstein (2015)'s views about societal perceptions and dynamics regarding masculinity and gender equality, in respect to emasculation. Epstein (2015) provides insights into male feminist allies' experiences of being perceived as emasculated and how this discourages others from accepting the cause.

### **Opposition from women**

Secondly, some of the participants expressed that they are faced with the challenge of opposition from women, which they considered as ironical because these are people they are advocating for:

Some of the women think you are not supporting women's rights. But you are just saying you support women so that you appear good to women. Sometimes, this can be true and it makes the work challenging and discouraging because they have been examples of men who actually are not feminists but pretend to be one in order to take advantage of those women.

The response from Kojo indicates that some women and feminist activists' reservations about the sincerity of male feminist allies' engagement in the activism may be justified due to previous experiences of men who come into the feminist space with opportunistic and alternative



motives. This makes it challenging for men who engage in feminist activism with sincere intention and are committed to the cause.

In addition, Lamptey corroborates Kojo's perspective. They both agree that some women question the genuineness of male feminist allies, wondering whether their support for the feminist cause is sincere or if they are just seeking attention or approval. He goes on to explain that the reason for this may be the negative experiences women have had with men claiming to be feminist allies, such as instances of sexual harassment, abusive behavior and performative allyship. This argument is consistent with Godfrey (2015)'s view about the perception of men's involvement in feminist activism. Although his focus is on workplace dynamics, it foregrounds the broader questions of gender and feminism, with respect to the complexities in how women respond to male allies, highlighting that the responses can be nuanced and usually depends on the context.

To the previous point, Senam adds that women may be resistant to change. Some women actually enjoy benefits and privileges that comes with the current gender set-up. A woman married to a rich traditional man who provides all her financial needs and does not need to work may find it difficult to embrace feminism. In addition, traditional cultural expectations and normative standards shape people's perception, ideologies and identity. This causes some women to internalize such system because they have been culturally conditioned to accept such gender norms. They consider it a threat to their identity. Senam expresses that "when Pepperdem started... and it actually led to the birth of rival movements such as Sugardem. They organized cooking festivals for men to come and eat." Pepperdem is a feminist movement based in Ghana that engages in activism mainly on social media. While their vigorous and forceful feminist campaigns made a lot of difference, it also led to "patriarchal women" coming together

to oppose feminist allies (both male and female). Resistance to change caused by ingrained beliefs about gender roles is a significant challenge of feminist advocacy in African patriarchal societies. One can also argue that the unsettling nature of change prevents one from reevaluating established societal norms because they “dread” the disruption and uncertainty that such changes may bring.

## **Religion**

Religion as a challenge was also mentioned by the participants. Some doctrines, practices and interpretations within certain religions reinforce patriarchal systems and gender-based inequalities and oppression. This means that just like any other social institutions, religion breathes life into patriarchy through organizational structures, roles and practices. For instance, some church denominations and Islamic sects in Ghana enforces gender-segregated roles and practices, as well as forbid women to take up leadership positions. Since the patriarchal nature of certain religious traditions conflicts with feminism, it becomes a key challenge for activists. Omar, who provides an insight to this, “I receive backlash because some people think that as a Muslim, I am not supposed to think like that or provide any forms of support to Feminism.” This argument is congruent with Dimpho (2021) as he examines how religion perpetuates gender inequalities in a religious African country like South Africa.

Mark also commented on the stigma and isolation male feminist allies may face from religious institutions that prioritize traditional gender roles and relations. Due to how patriarchy is deeply entrenched in religious institutions in Ghana, feminists are often viewed as deviants for challenging patriarchal norms and advocating for gender equality as these feminist ideals are regarded as incompatible with religious teachings and cultural traditions.

## **Perception of Quid Pro Quo (this for that)**

Another challenge of engaging in feminist activism as recounted by the participants was the perception of supporting feminism for sexual favors. Some section of the public believe that male feminist allies do activism and into feminist spaces to get closer to women to have initiate sexual relations. Kwesi had this to say:

This is like the nicest part of the conversation. Well, obviously, the first impression that a lot of men have about men who are activists for women is that we do it for sex or for sexual gratitude. Yeah, we are doing this so that women will like us and give us sex.

Senam also shares this sentiment:

The desire to be liked and accepted prohibit some men from coming all out to support feminist movement and agenda. People have the impression that men who support this cause were doing that to get closer to the women and get into their pants. Fortunately for me, I am not a single man so I am not perturbed.

Generally, the belief that male feminist allies do feminist advocacy for sexual favors is deeply rooted in stereotypes and misconceptions about the feminist cause, as well as gender and sexuality. This notion is a dangerous stereotype that undermines the sincere intention and validity of male allies in feminist movement. From the accounts of some of the participants, it is true that some individuals exploit feminist movement for ulterior motives, however, this should not negate the efforts of authentic African male feminist allies.

## **RQ6: STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING CHALLENGES IN ALLYSHIP**

Research question six asked: How do male feminist allies navigate through challenges associated with engaging in feminist activism on social media?

It has been established that male feminist allies experience certain challenges in their work of activism; they come in varied forms of backlash, hate speech and vitriol. This makes one wonder how they navigate through such challenges. The participants described three ways of addressing the challenges: retaliation, indifference and self-care (and support networks).

### **Retaliation**

Firstly, some of the participants expressed that their way of dealing with challenges associated with feminist activism was to respond to backlash and hate speech with retaliation. In such a context, retaliation refers to “fighting with their words”. According to Kwesi, he gets “down and dirty” when his views are met with hate speech and the times that he is civil is when the other party is respectful in their communication and sincerely engages him to argue intellectually. In his own words:

If you have a sensible argument, we can have that. If you have insults too, I will insult you. I am wonderful at that. We can trade it anyhow you want... I always explain to people that when you are oppressed, you are not expected to be polite when fighting for your freedom and your rights. You are not supposed to ask someone politely to take their foot off your neck. You are not expected to ask someone politely to stop strangling you, because by virtue of the fact that their foot is on your neck, they have already crossed the boundary of respect and stability. If you bargain with your oppressor, you are bargaining for more oppression. You don't have to bargain with your oppressor... I have been doing this for 6, 7 years and I am happy to do it. I match people's energy. If they

genuinely want to engage intellectually, I do that with them but if they decide to insult me, I match such energy.

From the excerpt above, one can see that Kwesi emphasizes assertiveness and urgency in his advocacy. Robert shares the same viewpoint as Kwesi:

We all have sharp tongues. So, for me, it is not really a problem, because I know how to string words together because I do poetry as well, so, I can fight with my words. People mostly start with insults when they do not have any solid argument... But they don't seem to get the weight behind it, because I'm trying to expose the fact that men's positions are ridiculous sometimes.

Nevertheless, Lamptey's approach contrasts with Robert and Kwesi. He believes that retaliating insults may not be a productive way for male feminist allies to navigate challenges with the terrain because it can escalate negativity, conflict which contrast with the coal goals of feminism, which include fostering equality, understanding and respect. He believes in displaying education and patience:

So, one of the things I've learned is that when you are close friends with somebody, right, you can disagree on particular issues. And then over time, they can sometimes come around to your perspective, maybe, like 50, 60, 70, right? They can start seeing the point and arguments you're making... So, I also understand how ideas get into people's heads and I understand the rule of teaching and education as it's a long continuous project because the messages that promote gender oppression have not ended, right?... I think most feminist online movement seem impatient because they don't want to do the hard work of that slow educational process... But I think once you start calling yourself a teacher and activist who is interested in education, you have a responsibility to engage people in a manner that is not condescending, right? So, I think for me, it's really having the patience and engaging right?

This indicates that engaging in constructive dialogue even when one is met with severe criticism and backlash can be more effective in challenging stereotypes, misconceptions about feminism, misogyny and sexism.

### **Indifference**

Some of the participants choose to respond to the challenges with indifference. They believe that this is a way to avoid being affected emotionally by negativity; this may help them never lose sight of the goal and to give their energy to the right things. In this context, indifference means that the participant does not care to engage with “naysayers”. Senam states that:

I do not care about what people think of me. Just having at the back of my mind a strong motivation for doing this and reminding myself why this was important. So, that is the way I navigated it.

Mark also adds that:

I don't care! I will let my voice be known and ignore the backlash. I have nieces and I am praying that God gives me daughters in my marriage. I want them to experience a system that is conducive for women to thrive. I am ready to do everything it takes for my voice to be heard in the conversation.

While this may be an “ideal” way for some of the participants to navigate these peculiar challenges, the researcher believes that this way may lead to missed opportunities for dialogue. Just like Lamptey, the researcher emphasizes patience and advocating with civil response. Responding with indifference may lead to missed prospects for constructive engagement and dialogue with critics and the potential for changing their hearts and minds.

## **Self-care and Support Networks**

Furthermore, prioritizing self-care and connecting with support networks helps some of the participants to navigate the challenges of allyship. They express that doing this helps them to engage in activism consistently without crashing and burning. Also, when they are in a good mental space, they are able to show up effectively as allies and not give up on the cause. Kojo explains this:

I fully believe that I am doing the right thing. It makes me glad that it is making the world a better place and I see the positive impacts that the advocacy is bringing. The challenges will hit you very hard: some people rain insults. Sometimes, I am attacked for standing up for women's rights. It is sometimes challenging to the extent that I have to take short breaks from activism and social media till I recompose myself and come back. I am always motivated by the fact that there is still work to be done and I cannot give up.

The emotional labor in feminist activism can be quite stressful; therefore, practicing self-care like taking short breaks from activism can go a significant way to promote emotional and mental wellbeing. In addition to this, Eli mentions having a support network of like-minded people helps him to process the negativity, as well as stay motivated and grounded in the cause.

## CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS

### Discussion

The purpose of the nine (9) interviews conducted was to explore the online feminist communities and the male ally experience in Ghana. The interviews provided insights into what drew the male allies into feminism, their activism and experiences on the digital media and how they navigate through the challenges that came with it.

From the literature review, it is understood that the practice of feminism in Africa differs from how it is performed in other parts of the world. It also explored how it is impacted by digital media. Additionally, the review provides an overview of the significance of men to the feminist cause. In the interviews, the researcher wanted to specifically explore the male allyship experience within the Ghanaian context. After conducting the interviews, six (6) major themes (including sub-themes) were found: Motivations for Embracing Feminism, Perspectives on African Feminist Activism, Impact of Digital Media on African Feminist Discourse, Approaches to Engaging in Feminist Activism, Challenges Faced by Male Allies and Strategies for Addressing Challenges in Allyship.

Some of the participants expressed that they were motivated to engage in feminism based on varying reasons such as their personal ideology, the development of awareness and acknowledgement of women's experience of systemic oppression and discrimination in different socio-economic, political and cultural contexts. Additionally, reflecting on and understanding their privileges and how it intersects with social oppressions such as race, gender, class and sexuality, male feminist allies leverage on their privilege as a source of motivation to advocate for women. These findings are consistent with some previous literature such as Crowe (2011).



However, Crowe (2011)'s arguments are situated in the Western context. This highlights the significance of this research as such conversations within the African context need to be extended further.

The research also sought to explore the participants' perspectives on African Feminism and how it is performed, especially, within Ghanaian digital media. It has already been established earlier that feminism in Africa evolved differently from feminism in other parts of the world due to the uniqueness of experiences of African women (Atanga, 2013). This opinion was shared by the participants: they agreed that the experiences of African women differ from women from other parts of the world. Therefore, issues must be dealt with based on the context instead of universally applying Western feminist ideas. Some of them added that compared to some Western countries, a lot of African societies are yet to fully embrace feminism due to misconception such as Feminism being a foreign ideology not suitable for the African context.

With respect to the impact of Digital Media on African Feminist Discourse, the participants' opinions reflected two sub-themes: democratization and community. Digital media democratizes communication for women. In addition to making African feminist discourse mainstream, it provided accessible, inclusive and interactive spaces for individuals to engage in conversations about the cause. This led to a level-playing field for women's voices to be heard, thereby, reducing male-dominated conversations (Turley and Fisher, 2018). Digital media also facilitated the development of online feminist communities and networks where feminists found solidarity, support and resources. These virtual communities are also a safe space for activists to promote visibility, connectivity and community (Rentschler, 2014; Clark, 2016; Jouet, 2018). Moreover, regarding the approaches used in engaging feminism, the responses varied from

engaging actively/radically in feminism, using a laid-back approach to advocate for women and leveraging on empathy to do feminist activism.

Male feminist allies also experience challenges. From the responses, it is realized that most of these challenges emanate from the fact that they are perceived as a deviation from masculinity. Most societies consider feminism as a contradiction from traditional normative standards. In such standards, men are often privileged and put on the top of the hierarchical social structure. With women advocating for equality, this means a disruption of the hierarchy; men liken this to a disruption of masculinity. This means that it is ironic for some men to support gender equality. In view of this, a lot of male feminists experience harassment, backlash and name-calling from their fellow men, as well as some women. Opposition from women exists because of the previous experience of men posing as feminist allies and going into the spaces of women to advocate for them, with ulterior motives. This leads to mistrust and skepticism about male feminists' true intentions. In the same vein, male feminist allies are challenged with the perception of doing advocacy in exchange for sexual favors. Religion was also mentioned as a major problem faced by these men. The practices, doctrines and interpretations within certain religions reinforces patriarchy and systemic oppression, making them incompatible with feminist advocacy. With most of these men oriented within these religious institutions, they face stigma and isolation due to their support and activism.

The findings of the study also address the strategies used by the male feminist allies to navigate the challenges mentioned in the previous paragraph. Three ways were found: retaliation, indifference and self-care. It was found that some of these participants dealt with these challenges by responding to backlash and hate speech by retaliating with insults and expressed assertiveness. Others too chose to respond with indifference. This means that they chose to

ignore the negative perception and hate speech as this would help them to maintain their focus on feminist advocacy. In addition, prioritizing self-care and building connections with support networks helped some of them to navigate these challenges. Feminist activism can be emotionally and mentally taxing, therefore, some of these men used self-care and connection with other feminists to maintain their sanity and ensure their consistency and commitment to the feminist advocacy.

### **Theoretical Implications**

Researching on the experiences of Ghanaian men engaged in feminist activism has theoretical implications for promoting the various strands of feminist theory (such as intersectionality) and redefining masculinity. The main strength of this study lies in the foregrounding of the experiences of male allies of feminism, which is an area of feminist literature that is under-explored (Holmgren and Hearn, 2009).

Also, researching the experiences of Ghanaian feminist male allies significantly contributes to the development of intersectional feminist theory. Intersectionality has become an important mode of conceptualizing the relation that lies between systems of oppression and discrimination which create multiple identities and social locations in hierarchies of power and privilege (Carastathis, 2014). Several feminist literatures have expressed that women's lives are impacted by multiple, intersecting systems of discrimination and oppression (such as race, class, gender and sexuality). This mirrors intersectionality as an important theoretical standpoint in feminist theory. In this regard, exploring the experiences of Ghanaian men who actively engage in feminism enabled the research to provide significant insights into how such intersecting

identities influence their viewpoints and challenges, as well as their contributions to the feminist activism and movement.

In addition, this study has implications for the redefinition of the masculinity theory. The foundation for contemporary studies of masculinity can be traced to the field of feminist scholarship, from the 1970s, where the critical exploration of gender dynamics made masculinity a significant object for study and critique (Wedgwood, 2009; Appleby, 2014). Empirical analysis of masculinity focuses on multiple identities, reflecting hierarchy and hegemony not only between women and men, but also among different groups of men. In view of this, aspects of this study shed light on how male feminist allies grapple with the notions and weight of their masculinity, in juxtaposition to their engagement in feminist activism. The research indicates that a lot of men regard feminism as a disrupter of masculinity and may see male feminist allies as deviants from masculinity, therefore, it explores how these men negotiate these contrasting standpoints.

### **Practical Implications**

This research has practical implications that can inform engagement, policies, interventions and programs focused on advancing gender equality. The findings of the study are a contribution to broader discussions about global feminism and the significance of centering marginalized perspectives and voices within feminist theory and activism. By intensifying the voices of African male feminist allies, the complexity and diversity of feminist movement are foregrounded, promoting a more equitable and inclusive activism. Firstly, while women were the main subject of focus in the development and evolution of the feminist movement, men also stand to benefit from gender equality. The study has done well to highlight that a recognition of

privilege and a commitment to creating an atmosphere of fairness for women goes a long way to help in the development of society. Engaging meaningfully with men is not only critical to gender equity and equality but can improve social and gender norms that promote inequality, patriarchy and systemic oppression. This study adds to the foundational understanding of the conceptual underpinning of Ghanaian male feminist engagement.

Insights from this research can inform gender-based standpoints and programs by various institutions that seek to address perspectives and experiences of male feminist allies. These institutions can model their strategies based on the findings of the study to engage other Ghanaian men as advocates and allies for women's rights. Also, the research findings can have implications for community engagement and dialogue on the role of men in feminist activism and their significance in challenging patriarchal normative standards. Intergenerational dialogue can be held through forums, workshops and awareness campaigns. For governmental institutions and gender-based nongovernmental organizations looking to make big changes by developing policy advocacy efforts focused on addressing systemic hindrance to gender equality, the findings of the study will be of significant help, especially, using male feminist allies as advocates for policy reforms to promote social justice and equality beyond local frontiers.

Another practical implication of the study is that it informs the development of supportive spaces and networks for African men who engage in feminist activism. The study highlighted some of the challenges Ghanaian male feminist allies experience, in terms of hate speech, vitriol, harassment etc. from their fellow men and other women; it also shows how they navigate such challenges. This would provide insights and opportunities for learning and collaboration, as well as mutual support, thus, promoting the building of solidarity, sharing

experiences and advocating for gender parity within immediate communities, workplaces and various institutions.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of Ghanaian male feminist allies: their work as feminist activists and how they navigate the challenges that come with it. While this research provided significant insights as this area of feminist research lacks adequate literature, it is not an exhaustive study. Firstly, the sample size provides a limitation: only nine (9) men were interviewed. This may limit the generalizability of the findings because the perspectives and experiences of the participants may not fully represent the diversity of Ghanaian men engaged in feminist activism, specifically in terms of geographic location, socioeconomic status, age, as well as cultural background.

Additionally, the findings of the study reflect specific aspects of Ghanaian male allies' experiences with feminism such as motivations for engagement, challenges, experiences, allyship, intersectionality and activism strategies. Nonetheless, the participants may recount perspectives and experiences that may be specific to a time period and context. The evolution of socio-political and cultural dynamics in relation to feminism and gender equality may impact the applicability and relevance of the findings to varied contexts and historical periods. In the same vein, the participants may have the tendency to engage in a social desirability bias. This is to say that it is highly possible that participants gave answers that would put them in a good light, concealing their true experiences or opinions. The researcher sees the possibility of this in the responses given in their motivation for engaging in activism, as well as their activism strategies. This could result in underreporting of negative perspectives and the overrepresentations of

socially accepted responses. The impact of this phenomenon on the research is that the insights of the findings may not reflect the realistic dynamics and complexities of male feminist activism.

Moreover, since the sample is limited to Ghanaian men who are actively engaged in feminist activism, it overlooks the experiences of those who are resistant to feminism, or even less engaged. This could result in a limited understanding of the full range of experiences and attitudes among Ghanaian men.

### **Future Directions**

There is great potential for further exploration in this area of research. Addressing the limitations suggested in the previous aspect of the study may include a consideration of expanding the sample size, diversity, triangulating data sources, as well as critically evaluating the implications of the study's findings within broader cultural, social and historical contexts. The size of the sample can be increased to improve the generalizability of findings and reflect the varied perspectives and opinions of the diversity of Ghanaian men. Also, since this study focused on Ghanaian men, the study could be expanded to include men from other African countries. The researcher is certain that this would provide a more comprehensive insight and understanding of the range of perspectives and experiences of African men who are engaged in feminism. In addition, one of the limitations of this study was the lack of side-by-side comparative exploration of Ghanaian men engaged in feminist activism and those who are resistant to feminism. This creates an opportunity for such study to be conducted as it could provide deeper insights to understanding the full range of experiences and perspectives among Ghanaian men.

Another direction for future research is to do a longitudinal study to evaluate how Ghanaian men's engagement in feminism (in one way or the other) has evolved over time and

across varied life stages. The longitudinal research can foreground the factors that shape men's behaviors, attitudes and activism with respect to feminism, and the impact of feminist engagement on individuals and communities, in the long term. Also, other qualitative methods such as narrative and discourse analysis could be employed to explore discourses, stories and meanings constructed by men engaged in feminist activism. This has implications for highlighting the socio-cultural and political contexts that influence men's ideologies, identities and narratives of feminist activism.

Furthermore, comparative studies could be done to explore the distinction between the experiences of African men engaged in feminism with those of men from other racial and ethnic backgrounds. This can help in diving deep into the cultural and contextual factors that influence men's engagement with feminist activism, as well as the differences and similarities in male feminist engagement across diverse contexts. An exploration of these future directions can enhance the understanding of men's participation in feminism, add to the advancement of gender equality, as well as promote an informative, inclusive and transformative feminist advocacy.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this research has provided insights in the experiences of Ghanaian male feminist allies in their engagement with feminist activism. Through qualitative investigation, the research has illuminated a range of themes and insights that provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics and complexities in the experiences of male feminist allies. The findings reveal that male feminist allies engage in feminist activism for varied reasons, as well as have peculiar ways of doing activism. In spite of their commitment to the feminist cause, male feminist allies encounter a number of challenges including backlash, skepticism and religious factors. These



challenges emphasize the significance of creating a supportive and inclusive environment for male allies within feminist movements. They navigate these challenges by being indifferent, retaliating and building supportive networks.

In addition, the study has shown the importance of addressing stereotypes and misconceptions about male feminist allies. It has further foregrounded the significance of men's support in the feminist cause as this elevates an intersectional approach to feminism that centers the experiences of women. Also, the amplification of the voices of male feminist could lead to a more inclusive feminist movement that welcomes diversity and collective action.

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