Performing Digital Citizenship in Teacher Education: Female Teacher Educators' Rights Claiming through Cyberspace in Punjab, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT: This paper examines how female teacher educators in Punjab, Pakistan, enact digital citizenship using rights-claiming practices in cyberspace. Using a constructivist grounded theory approach, semi-structured interviews were held through Zoom with twenty-seven female participants. The NVivo 15 program with AI-assisted coding was used to analyse the data, employing constant comparative methods and theoretical sampling. It gave rise to three theoretical concepts: Negotiating digital professional presence, claiming pedagogical autonomy through digital acts, and resisting gendered digital surveillance. The results show that female teacher educators practice digital citizenship based on explicit and implicit rights claim-making through everyday digital activities to negotiate tensions among institutional callings, technological closings, and transformative openings. These practices cut across institutional, gendered, and national spaces and thus form a transversal space of cyberspace, which can be regarded as an intersection of professional and gendered identity. This research adds theoretical knowledge on the ways marginalised educational professionals practice performative rights-claiming practices, which develop the conceptualisation of digital citizenship outside of Western settings.

KEYWORDS: Digital Citizenship, Teacher Education, Rights Claims, Constructivist Grounded Theory, Female Educators, Pakistan, Cyberspace

Introduction

The changes in digital platforms have fundamentally reorganised the structure of professional work carried out by teacher educators, but the political aspects of the changes are still under theory (Williamson, 2021). By uploading their lesson plans and looking into Zoom calls when female teacher educators in Pakistan join one, the resources shared in WhatsApp groups, and their activities in institutional learning management systems, they do not merely do something technical, but they also do a digital act of asserting their professional autonomy, pedagogical authority, and access to educational technologies by gender (Isin & Ruppert, 2020). It is these acts, understood as performed utterances, that cross-institutional and legal jurisdictions introduce digital citizens into existence via the procedures of obedience, submission, and subversion (Butler, 2021; Isin & Ruppert, 2020). In this situation, when female professionals operate in a world with overlapping patriarchal, institutional, and technological bottlenecks, it is important to know how they practice digital citizenship to understand how education changes today.

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ITE in Punjab, Pakistan, does not function in a very simple environment but in sociocultural structures which influence the professional participation of women (Qureshi & Kalsoom, 2022). The ITE workforce is mostly represented by female teacher educators who are under constant limitations in terms of professional mobility, institutional power, and access to technological means. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Pakistani higher education has led to the rapid adoption of videoconferencing, learning management systems, and digital assessment tools (Adnan & Anwar, 2020). This technological transformation offers new arenas to explore this matter concerning how female teachers define professional identities by making use of digital engagements. Recent research explores experiences of online teaching (Moorhouse & Kohnke, 2021), digital differences in the education of Pakistani women, and the use of technology by women, but the issue of how the female teacher educator realises digital citizenship through the rights-claiming practice has not been researched.

Critical digital studies convey that being active through the Internet signifies political subjectivity by producing opportunities to make rights claims across national borders and legalities (Close, 2016; Isin & Ruppert, 2020; Milan & Velden, 2016). The digital acts performed include blogging, messaging, posting, and sharing, and have a legal, performative, and imaginary force that forces the existence of citizen subjects to be (Isin & Ruppert, 2020). By saying or doing, I, we, or they have a right to, persons place themselves in a position of subjectivity, and may engage in a subjective process that entails being subordinate to conventions and has the possibility to subvert them (Isin & Ruppert, 2020). These theoretical perspectives do not have much of a connection with empirical studies of the performance of digital citizenship by educational professionals in non-Western cultures. Technology adoption studies in teacher education focus on the development of competencies (Tondeur et al., 2019) or infrastructure issues (Farooq et al., 2020) instead of analysing digital acts as political performances in which professionals can assert the right to pedagogical independence, professional representation, and access to technology.

There are three gaps connected to this study. The current digital citizenship body of research favours Euro-American settings and activist movements over ordinary educational institutions' digital practices of Global South educational professionals (Milan, 2015). Second, teacher education research considers technology adoption, technical competency development, and not political performance with rights claims and identity negotiation (Starkey, 2020). Third, the literature on the lives of women professionals in Pakistan is both focused on the restrictions and lacks analysis of agency by women in digital practices that combine institutional and gendered aspects. The existence of these gaps renders a lack of insight into the way female teacher educators in the contexts of gender inequality and rapid technological progress undertake digital citizenship.

Research Questions

This paper examines the experiences of female teacher educators in Punjab, Pakistan, who practice an act of digital citizenship in the form of making rights claims in cyberspace. The study was informed by three research questions:

(1) What is the process by which digital acts are employed by female teacher educators in professional contexts?

(2) What are the implicit and explicit rights claims of female educators in everyday digital spaces, and how do they apply?

(3) How do these acts of rights claiming make diverse ways of constructing professional and gendered identities in cyberspace?

Based on the Constructivist Grounded Theory approach (Charmaz, 2014), the present study is an analysis of semi-structured Zoom calls or interviews with 27 female teacher educators to derive theoretical categories by which digital citizenship develops due to enacting performative practices across institutional, technological, and gendered borders. The paper proceeds with a literature review, providing the methodology, illustrating the theoretical categories and data modifying them, reflecting the implications of the meaning of digital citizenship and teacher education practice, and moving on to subsequent research directions.

Literature Review

Digital Citizenship and Rights-Claiming Practices

The scholarship on digital citizenship has grown out of instrumental notions of competency in technical capacities and Internet safety into critical models of power and politics that focus on the nature of the subject (Choi, 2016). In earlier studies, digital citizens were profiled as online civic users who had the ability to use the Internet to engage in e-governmental practices (Mossberger et al., 2007). These instrumentalist practices were opposed by critical digital scholars, who believed that digital citizenship comprises performative engagements with subjects that make rights claims that cross national boundaries and legal orders (Isin & Ruppert, 2020). Isin and Ruppert (2020) theorise digital as performativity utterances that have legal, performative, and imaginary power that actualise citizen subjects through the process of callings, closings, and openings. Digital conventions are called upon by callings; possibilities are limited in surveillance and regulation, as other openings make it possible to establish new capabilities to claim rights and performance by enacting subjectivities (Isin & Ruppert, 2020). This performative version of rights never represents rights as a prior claim to sovereignty; instead, it represents rights as claiming to have done or have failed to do something by actions that both submit to and subvert prevailing conventions (Butler, 2021; Zivi, 2012). The use of digital citizenship by non-activist professionals has not been well researched, and empirical research shows that the ability of activists' digital rights claims to address privacy, access, and data ownership issues (Milan & Velden, 2016) is clear. Critical insights into the digital practices of female teacher educators as rights-claiming actions are a progression of the citizenship theory of spectacular politics into more mundane professional activities.

Gender, Technology, and Professional Identity in Pakistani Education

In the Pakistani context, gender shapes the patterns of access, adoption, and use of technology in educational settings by influencing the converging forces of patriarchy, institutional action, and inequalities of infrastructure (Rashid & Asghar, 2016). Scholarly literature records enduring digital disparities in women's educational use of technology, affecting both device possession and Internet connectivity, as well as parental monitoring of online experiences. The women in the teaching fraternity and the teaching educator fraternity negotiate institutional spaces in which technology choices are subject to masculine dominance, giving male administrators and male technical staff an upper hand. There is literature on how women devise negotiation

tactics about access to technology, such as family permission, professionals' identity to rationalise an online presence, and a women-only digital space. However, this literature largely constructs women as captive subjects who are adapting to technological change, instead of actors who conduct political actions via digital media. Advocates of feminist digital studies suggest considering how women can empower themselves by performing everyday digital activities that disrupt gendered power relations (Fotopoulou, 2016). Analysing digital practitioners, including teacher educators' acts as rights-claiming performance, will allow an understanding of the way women negotiate and resist gendered technological constraints in the profession.

Teacher Education and Digital Transformation in Pakistan

Existing challenges in Pakistani teacher education include improving quality, curriculum reform, capacity building of institutions, and integration of technologies (Halai, 2024). During the COVID-19 pandemic, ITE programs switched to emergency remote teaching, which led to the urgent introduction of videoconferencing software, digital delivery of content, and online assessment (Adnan & Anwar, 2020). The issues explored in research include inadequate infrastructure, lack of digital skills, and resistance at the institutional level (Farooq et al., 2020). Research records the experience of teacher educators who switch to learning management systems, videoconferencing, and digital assessment systems; however, this scholarship emphasises the technical and pedagogical aspects of technology adoption without paying much attention to the political aspects of digital practice. Studies of technology use among teacher educators abroad also revolve around a competency framework and professional development paradigm (Tondeur et al., 2019). According to critical scholars, it is important to analyse how educators seek to negotiate professional identities in digital practices when it comes to power relations and institutional politics (Williamson, 2021). Teacher activism and professional agency studies show that educators can leverage pedagogical autonomy and professional identities by claiming these strategies through multiple practices (Mockler, 2022), but research that links the area of activism research and digital practices is not well established.

Cyberspace as Transversal Space in Educational Contexts

Instead of a distinct virtual space, cyberspace is a transversal space that is produced through the act of digital activities that disrupt institutional, national, and social borders (Isin & Ruppert, 2020). Educational cyberspace is developed as a result of cross-border actions between formal and informal learning, institutional and personal communication, and professional and domestic domains (Facer, 2021). The studies report on the development of the hybrid learning space by educational actors who blend physical and virtual spaces, institutional and social spaces, and formal and informal practices (Ryberg & Sinclair, 2016). To teacher educators, cyberspace traverses teacher preparation programs, schools and working schools, professional networks, and policy environments (Philpott & Oates, 2017). Nevertheless, research on educational cyberspace that involves scholarship seldom considers theories of citizenship or rights-claiming. To gain insight into the socialisation of digital citizenship by female teacher educators, it is important to analyse how their action establishes transversal spaces where professional labour, gendered identities, and institutional politics converge. This framing sheds light on the fact that mundane digital practices are political performances that assert professional agency, pedagogical power, and access to technology.

Methodology

Research Design

The present research involves the use of the Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) approach (Charmaz, 2014), designed to address the question of how female teacher educators in Punjab, Pakistan, perform digital citizenship by practising rights-claiming. CGT offers a relevant methodology to investigate emergent processes and meaning-making in situations in which the existing theory provides a weak explanation of the phenomena (Charmaz, 2014). This approach to methodology becomes justified due to the correspondence between the research questions, which are oriented to the processes of performing digital acts, and the prioritisation of action, meaning, and emergence of CGT. The simultaneous data collection and analysis features of CGT allow theoretical sensitivity to the negotiation process of the digital citizenship of each participant in particular sociocultural settings (Charmaz, 2014). This paper examines under-theorised phenomena: How do Pakistani ITE female educators act as digital citizens? - which necessitates an inductive theory building based on experiences and meanings of participants as they interact with sensitising concepts of digital citizenship scholarship (Isin & Ruppert, 2020)

Philosophical Paradigm

This study takes a constructivist epistemological and ontological basis (Charmaz, 2014). The data, as well as the analysis, are epistemologically construed as a social construction that people make through mutual experiences and relationships between the researcher and participants (Charmaz, 2014). The performance of female teacher educators as digital citizens comes out in knowledge co-construction, as the performance is based on the interactions between the researcher and the participant, as the interview unfolds. On the ontological side, the research presupposes multifaceted realities that are possible due to the different experiences that members have in an obdurate but continuously changing world (Charmaz, 2014). Associated with various local worlds, female teachers occupy institutional spaces, families, and technology, and their Internet practices affect these worlds. The resultant grounded theory is just one of the possible interpretations of the research, instead of being an objective discovery in recognition of the positionality of the researcher and interpretive decisions in the analysis process (Charmaz, 2014).

Participants and Sampling

The first sample was a purposive selection of female teacher educators who worked in both government and private ITE institutions in the province of Punjab. Inclusion criteria were: (1) female gender identity; (2) working within the ITE programme (B.Ed., M.Ed., M.Phil., or PhD); (3) one year of minimum experience in teaching practice; (4) use of digital platforms regularly to conduct professional activities; and (5) readiness to take Zoom interviews. The exclusion criteria were male teachers, teachers, and those who taught non-educational disciplines. Fifteen participants were recruited in the first stage using institutional contacts and professional networks. Theoretical sampling guided subsequent recruitment from varied institutional roles (lecturers, assistant professors, associate professors), institutional contexts (public universities, private universities, teacher training colleges), and technological settings (urban high-bandwidth access, suburban limited connectivity). The final sample included twenty-seven female teacher educators of early career lecturers, mid-career lecturers, and senior professors. Eight institutions were used to collect the participants: three were

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public universities, three were private universities, and two were teacher training colleges. Each participant was actively involved in videoconferencing solutions (Zoom, Microsoft Teams), learning management tools (Google Classroom, Moodle), and communication tools (WhatsApp, email).

Data Collection

An intensive interview method of data collection was used according to the CGT methodology (Charmaz, 2014). Semi-structured interviews conducted using Zoom ensured that pursuing the meaning of the participants was possible, and flexibility was offered to follow emerging theoretical directions (Archibald et al., 2019; Herdiyanti, 2024). The process of creating interview protocols, however, involved sensitising ideas from the digital citizenship literature, but offered openness to the experiences and interpretations of those who participated in the interview. Interview questions revolved around the following themes: the digital space of professional work; experiences of adoption and use of education technologies; negotiation of access to and use of technology; values assigned to digital professional work; experiences of institutional support and limitation; and future projections on digital professional practices. The interviews took approximately 50-80 minutes and were conducted in English and Urdu, depending on the preference of the participant, and were videotaped with the consent of the participants. Data were collected between February and August 2025. Informed consent was implemented. The AI-based transcription functionality of Zoom produced first-time transcripts that were confirmed and later edited by paying close attention to the recording, and the Urdu language blocks were translated into English during verification (Archibald et al., 2019; Herdiyanti, 2024).

Data Analysis Procedures

Charmaz describes the CGT procedures that were used as a basis of analysis (Charmaz, 2014). The first coding was line-by-line with the use of gerunds to identify actions and processes, resulting in codes such as negotiation of family permission, credibility with professionals, resisting administrative surveillance, and the assertion of pedagogical authority. The most important initial codes were coded to summarise larger data segments via focused coding. The constant comparative method was used throughout the analysis period, where the data were compared and matched according to data, codes, and new categories and compared with the new data (Glaser, 2001; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Categories, defined properties, specified relationships, and raised theoretical questions were elaborated in analytical memo-writing that guided the activities of the later data-collecting process. Theoretical sampling was aimed at identifying specific actors and interview questions to narrow down the emerging categories of rights-claiming practices, gendered negotiations, and institutional power relations. Theoretical integration was ensured by sorting memos to determine the relationship between categories and building a theoretical framework that explained the mechanism of development of digital citizenship through performative activities. The data collection process was completed until theoretical saturation.

Use of CAQDAS Software

NVivo 15 was used to support the qualitative data analysis process, that is, it supported: initial and focused coding arrangement with forty-seven interview transcripts organised; constant comparative analysis which permitted measuring the segments of data among participants and institutional settings in a systematic

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fashion; memo-writing and analytic notes which recorded the theoretical insights and queries; and a visual mapping of emerging categories and their relations (Mortelmans, 2025). The AI-supported coding options in NVivo suggested initial thematic codes that were critically assessed and mostly improved by the analytic interpretative process so that the software did not supplement the depth of analysis (Beekhuyzen & Bazeley, 2024). Record keeping facilitates the effective search of coded segments during theoretical sampling of data and category refinement (Bazeley & Jackson, 2019).

Trustworthiness and Rigour

According to the criteria of Charmaz (2014), trustworthiness was ensured as a result of: credibility–close knowledge of the context of Pakistani ITE, as demonstrated by the professional practice of the researcher; presence of sufficient data breadth due to intensive interviews (75 minutes on average); logical comparison of various participants and institutional environments; logical connections existing between data and theoretical categories indicated by supporting quotations. Originality: Fresh conceptualisation of digital citizenship in the context of teacher education; theoretical and practical value to the study of the agency of professional women in technological change. Resonance: categories that describe the fullness of the experiences of participants; disclosing conceived meanings that are assumed about the use of gendered technology; validation through member checking with five participants. Usefulness: conceptual tools that may be used to explain the idea of digital professional practices; contributions to the digital citizenship knowledge base and teacher education policy; recommendations on supporting the technological agency of female educators.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical guidelines were incorporated into the study to address ethical issues. The procedures of informed consent gave more weight to voluntary involvement, confidentiality, right of withdrawal, and the emergent nature of inquiry, which enabled the researcher to explore unexpected themes (Creswell & Poth, 2024; Pietilä et al., 2020; Ryen, 2021). The anonymity of the participants was ensured by the use of pseudonyms and the elimination of institutional information. The information was stored in encrypted files on secure servers (Charmaz, 2024). Considering the issues of research work that may be quite sensitive concerning gendered restrictions and institutional power relations, the emphasis is specifically placed on emotional safety with the provision of counselling platforms and the option of responding to intrusive enquiries. Researcher reflexivity means continuous scrutiny of power relations in the co-construction of data, where the role of the researcher as a scholar who has been exposed to Pakistani educational situations and conditions is acknowledged, as well as where the position in the institution and personal experience are different (Whitaker & Atkinson, 2021).

Findings

The analysis showed that three theoretical categories defined how female teacher educators enact digital citizenship by rights-claiming practices: Negotiating Digital Professional Presence, Claiming Pedagogical Autonomy Through Digital Acts, and Resisting Gendered Digital Surveillance. These categories evidenced how digital citizenship is constructed in everyday activities in which callings to institutional conventions, closings through surveillance and regulation, and openings that produce new possibilities for professional agency are

involved.

Negotiating Digital Professional Presence

The cyberspace and gendered constraints female teacher educators were negotiating involved continuous procedures of establishing digital professional presence, performing acts that owned rights of professional visibility and recognition in cyberspace, and meeting institutional demands and gender-based restrictions. This group has two associated properties: building professional credibility via strategic visibility and crossing domestic-professional boundaries.

Professional credibility was a matter of intentional assertions that implied professional competency and organisational identity. The participants talked about the way they created digital professional identities carefully by way of profile photographs, email signatures at institutions, and presence in professional social media. One of the participants added:

By adding my qualifications and publications to the university website system, I was not merely filling out application forms, but I was telling the system: I am at the right place; I have made it to this point. It is a means of claiming space that male peers may deem as natural to them. (Participant 12)

These actions were performative statements which made claims of professional legitimacy in institutional cyberspace. It became especially important when teaching remotely during the pandemic: the physical institutional presence was gone and replaced by a digital one.

We used to be seen before COVID when we were present in department meetings, in our offices, and teaching classes. As soon as all were transferred to the Internet, we were forced to re-establish ourselves online. I ensured that I was actively involved in Zoom calls, shared resources in WhatsApp chats, responded to emails and was timely. All of these were translating to I am here; I am professional, and I add value. Our digital behaviours became our professional lives without having to be there in person. (Participant 19)

This quote exemplifies how digital acts serve to capitalise performances that cross physical-digital borders of professional accomplishment.

Crossing the line between domestic and professional implies dealing with the overlapping space when having a professional job at home. Most of the participants held classes and meetings via Zoom in domestic settings, which created conflicts between professional visibility and home privacy. The participants gave an account of camera position negotiation, visibility of background, and family interruptions.

In online classes, I used to place my camera in the right place to reflect the appearance of a professional background, such as a bookshelf on the wall, pinned certificates, and conceal the domestic environment behind me. Such border work was always a negotiation of being credible but secret enough not to lose privacy. (Participant 8)

These acts demanded rights to professional space in domestic situations, even though they did not allow institutional colonisation of home life. Other participants reported even more extensive boundary transgressions.

My children also occasionally appear in Zoom meetings. I felt embarrassed at first, but then I knew that this was exposing the truth of the reality we are in; we are professionals and mothers at the same time. Through this visibility, I can state that I have the right to be both, denying allegiance between professional competence

and family recognition. (Participant 23)

By reimagining traditional demarcations between the professional and domestic worlds, these actions constitute digital citizenship by bringing to light the previously unseen reproductive labour, even as they purport to be recognised as professionals.

Claiming Pedagogical Autonomy Through Digital Acts

The female teachers carried out the practice of digital citizenship by asserting pedagogic autonomy through digital practices that made claims on professional judgement and curriculum decisions. This category involves two qualities, which are a resistance to institutional standardisation and the establishment of the alternative spaces of pedagogy.

Opposing institutional standardisation entailed disrupting administrative efforts at standardising teaching, such as learning management systems, standardised tests, and surveillance technologies. The participants talked about the strains between the institutional requirements of providing uniform digital content and their judgment as pedagogues. One of the assistant professors stated:

Administration desires all course material to be posted to the learning management system in standardised form, that is, the exact format, same assessment rubrics, and so on. I adhere to minimum demands and create WhatsApp groups with my students, where we exchange extra resources, tackle questions which are not discussed in the official curriculum, and exchange critical opinions. That WhatsApp group is my move towards asserting pedagogical autonomy. I have the right to make decisions about the curriculum on my own basis, according to my professional judgement and the needs of my students, rather than the convenience of the administration. (Participant 15)

This quote shows that digital practices bypass institutional regulation and leave pedagogical authority outside the controlling administrative bodies. The designing of other digital spaces, WhatsApp groups, Google Docs accessed solely by students, and private Zoom meetings were many instances of openings that were against the institutional closings in relation to standardised curricula.

Some participants talked about their unwillingness to document all their teaching activities under the pressure of the administration, citing the right to teaching spontaneity and student confidence.

I said no when the administration asked me to record all Zoom classes to ensure they were of quality. I discussed with my department head that recording altered the classroom environment, the students grew reserved, and the natural discussion was impaired. I refused, stating that I had the right to establish learning conditions on the premise of trust as opposed to surveillance. (Participant 21)

These practices assert professional autonomy rights against institutional monitoring; they also provide digital citizenship, along with opposing technological shutdowns that limit pedagogical selection.

Designing alternative pedagogical spaces entails the creation of digital communities outside institutional platforms. The participants formed reading groups, mentoring groups, and professional development groups using digital tools that were strategically selected to have the relative independence of institutional influence. One of the older professors wrote:

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I have organised a WhatsApp group of female early-career faculty in various institutions. We exchange resources, talk about problems, and help one another as professionals. This is a space that is not defined by formal institutional institutions, but rather one that we take ownership of, and in this, we learn our professional practices and identities the way we like it, to our own terms. (Participant 5)

These practices establish transversal practices between institutional domains that make collective rights assertions about professional development led by educators, rather than administrators.

Resisting Gendered Digital Surveillance

Letting digital surveillance be challenged through feminist occurrences, female educators involved in feminist resistance acted in ways that disrupted feminine control over digital behaviours while seeking digital autonomy and privacy. The two properties in this category are subverting patriarchal monitoring and asserting the right to digital privacy.

Undermining patriarchal control over the body means that the online activities of females must be managed and accounted for by family and institutional pressures. Some participants reported having their family members ask why they devoted so much time to online meetings or why they needed personal space to have video calls. Such questioning was based on the presumption that men have to monitor and approve their actions on the Internet. The participants designed the following schemes for asserting autonomy:

At first, my husband wondered what I was doing in evening Zoom meetings, as he thought I was wasting time or evading family tasks. I began demonstrating my schedule of meetings to him about professional requirements and recording my academic output. However, I also assert the right not to explain all activities on the Internet. I made it plain to him that I am doing a job; I did not question what went on in his office, and he would not question what I do. That argument was my assertion of the same professional parity and entitlement to online professional freedom from surveillance. (Participant 17)

This act performs digital citizenship by staging the right to privacy in the workplace and questioning gendered policing across domesticity.

Institutional surveillance is achieved through administrative monitoring of the learning management systems, email monitoring, and demands for learning materials in a digital form that are instant and immediate. Female faculty members reported the feeling of having to reply immediately to an administrative message, with any other solution being a sign of unprofessionalism. The participants resisted this by creating the following digital barriers:

I set WhatsApp status overtly, stating when I am not available to do business and spend time with the family. This was criticised by some of my colleagues as being unprofessional, but I upheld the boundary. I am asserting the right to a professional life that does not involve a 24/7 online presence. (Participant 11)

These practices assert the privileges of time autonomy that oppose the technological closing of time, which imposes institutional authority on all hours.

As a claim to privacy in the digital aspect, it was to reject some digital actions that the participants viewed as excessive surveillance. Some members talked about their opposition to biometric attendance, mandatory

tracking of their locations in their work, and the demands to have cameras on during meetings at all times. One lecturer stated:

> Sometimes I have my camera off during long faculty meetings, especially when the conversation is about administration and management, and I do not have to contribute to it. Other administrators lamented this, implying that I was not involved. However, I said, this is my prerogative to control my image and attention to come out of this surveillance, in which faculty have to be watched like students. (Participant 27)

Claims of rights in forms of selective visibility and attention management are evident in these acts, which execute digital citizenship that is opposed to cultures of surveillance.

Collectively, such resistance activities form political performances with demands for professional autonomy, privacy, and gendered surveillance liberation. They illustrate the appearance of digital citizenship not through heroic activism but through mundane negotiations that exclude and include institutional, technological, and gendered borders.

Discussion

Theorising Digital Citizenship in Professional Educational Contexts

By illustrating how professionals engage in citizenship with everyday digital practices within the institutional context, the findings are a continuation of digital citizenship theory, but the study has gone further than activist movements and the Eurocentric environment (Isin & Ruppert, 2020; Milan & Velden, 2016). Professional presence struggles, pedagogical autonomy, and surveillance resistance, all articulated by female teacher educators, are performative utterances that are politically forceful and implicitly and explicitly difficult to negotiate rights in curricular authority, professional recognition, and digital privacy. Such results also challenge instrumentalist digital citizenship theories that focus on competencies and participation (Mossberger et al., 2007) and uncover the manner in which citizenship is achieved based on power relations, institutional politics, and identity negotiations. This shows that the theory of digital citizenship should be able to consider the role of subjects going through the overlapping relations of institutional, gendered, and technological power across daily professional activities (Fotopoulou, 2016).

Conceptual categories help shed light on the conflict between callings, closings, and openings in the execution of digital citizenship (Isin & Ruppert, 2020). As a reaction to the institutional appeals to take part in digital professional practices, which here include the utilisation of learning management systems, Zoom teaching, and maintenance of digital communication, female educators proceeded to deal with closings through surveillance, standardisation, and gender-based monitoring. Simultaneously, they made spaces available by developing alternative online spaces, opposing oversurveillance, and demanding rights to pedagogical freedom and professional privacy. This is a dynamic process that moves the knowledge of digital citizenship, not as a status that is attained, but as one in which there is submission and subversion of digital conventions at the same time (Butler, 2021). The results reveal the efficacy of professional digital citizenship in occupying rights that have not yet been given legal codification, the right to professional digital autonomy, modes of selective visibility, and time limits through performance that cuts across institutions and legal jurisdiction (Zivi, 2012).

Gender, Technology, and Professional Agency

The results are relevant to knowledge of gender, technology, and professional practice because women demonstrate agency in digital practices despite the challenges of patriarchy (Fotopoulou, 2016; Rashid & Asghar, 2016). The current literature reports on gender inequality as it dictates the access and use of technology by women in Pakistan (Rashid & Asghar, 2016), but the results show that women are not just subjects that have to integrate with their surroundings and adapt, but are also political actors engaging in rights-claiming behaviour to upset the balance of gendered power relations. The methods of women teachers to cross the boundaries between domestic and professional life, avoid being controlled by the patriarchal system, and demand their own privacy is feminist digital activism but with a professional instead of a politicised orientation (Fotopoulou, 2016; Khan, 2017). These practices are a way of re-theorising resistance in light of spectacular activism into everyday professional negotiations with a focus on gradual challenges to gendered technological practices.

The study indicates how professional identity is taken as a resource that facilitates the power of women to claim their digital rights, whereas other types of feminist activism are repressed. Labelling digital acts as career-related requirements as opposed to personal choices, digital literacy enabled women teachers to overcome family limitations, assert system space to work online, and evade male-directed monitoring. This observation adds to the literature on professional identity as a political resource (Mockler, 2022) by showing that identity and technological practices intersect to provide gendered agency. Nevertheless, there is also evidence of the limits of professional identity as a strategy: women have to perform professional legitimacy to have online freedom, rerouting the same assumptions that women need to justify their online activities, whereas men do not.

Cyberspace as Transversal Space in Teacher Education

These theoretical categories show the way female teachers construct transversal cyberspace that crosses institutional, domestic, and professional boundaries (Isin & Ruppert, 2020). Acts of professional presence negotiation from home space, the creation of WhatsApp groups, and communities of WhatsApp crossing institutional boundaries generate cyberspace that cannot be defined in the face of individual institutional and legal orders. This result promotes scholarship itself that conceives educational cyberspace (Facer, 2021; Ryberg & Sinclair, 2016) by showing that professional actors establish digital spaces that exist in parallel both in and outside institutional control. Transversal digital spaces facilitate collective professional learning, pedagogical invention, and opposition to surveillance by official institutionalised platforms.

This perception of cyberspace as transversal, not as a separate virtual space, sheds light on the material implications of digital actions on professional life, institutional politics, and gender relations. The digital actions of female educators transform power processes in institutions, reasserting pedagogical authority, disrupting gendered surveillance by asserting privacy rights, and reorganising professional learning by establishing independent learning communities. These material effects indicate that the digital acts have not only a symbolic, but also a performative nature, as they introduce new realities into existence by implementing them (Butler, 2021; Isin & Ruppert, 2020)

Limitations

The limitations of this study affect its generalisability and scope. The composition of the sample in female teacher educators restricts the understanding of the experience of male educators or administrators of digital professional practices, although such a direction made it possible to gain in-depth knowledge on the topic of gendered digital citizenship. All the participants had been working in Punjab province, not in other regions in Pakistan, with diverse sociocultural backgrounds, which has a limiting effect on the transferability of the findings. Theoretical saturation of core categories was reached, though more properties may arise due to subjects having a divergent institutional stance or technological situation. Researchers' positionalities, being scholars with knowledge of Pakistani education, allowed them to create a rapport and understanding, but might have influenced the information shared and data interpretation. Grounded theory is just one of the interpretations based on constructivist epistemology; different theoretical interpretations may be detected under the influence of alternative analytical schemes.

Future Research Directions

The study needs to be extended to male teacher educators and how they conduct digital career practices to gain insight into gendered disparities in rights-claiming acts. Comparative studies within Pakistani provinces and South Asian countries would provide a formal theory about digital citizenship in postcolonial learning settings. A longitudinal study that tracks the change in digital rights-claiming practices as technologies and institutional policies switch would shed more light on the process of citizenship development. Empirical research investigating the manner in which administrators experience and react to educators' claims over digital rights would provide an institutional view of these dynamics.

Conclusion

This paper shows how female teacher educators in Punjab, Pakistan, undertake digital citizenship by engaging in everyday actions that put forward tacit and explicit rights claims about occupational prominence, pedagogical autonomy, and release from male surveillance. Negotiating Digital Professional Presence, Claiming Pedagogical Autonomy through Digital Acts, and Resisting Gendered Digital Surveillance are presented as three theoretical categories with the explanation of processes through which women construct themselves as digital citizens as they manoeuvre between institutional, technological, and gendered power relationships. Through institutional appeal, female educators answer the call to engage in digital professional activities and resist closings by surveillance and standardisation, at the same time creating openings by creating different digital spaces and asserting their rights to professional privacy and autonomy.

The results also indicate that digital citizenship does not just arise through spectacular activism, but also through normal everyday professional activities about power negotiations and identity performance. To the professional woman manoeuvring patriarchal protocols and institutional surveillance, digital practices are political practices between professional and domestic spheres, institutional and personal communications, and submission and subversion crossing their boundaries. These practices bring about transversal cyberspaces that are at work both inside and outside of control by the institution and allow the collective development of professionalism and a challenge to surveillance. The research adds theoretical insights that

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digitally responsible citizenship in the workplace involves ongoing negotiations between following norms and breaking boundaries, exposing agency to structural restraints.

The theoretical framework contributes to scholarship by relating the theory of digital citizenship to teacher education research studies, feminist technology studies, and postcolonial research of professional studies. To inform practice and policy in teacher education, the research shows that strategies to uphold the professional engagement of female educators in digital technologies need to consider the institutions of surveillance culture alongside gender-related limitations of technology use and access to professional space. With the ongoing digitalisation process in educational institutions all over the globe, analysing the performance of marginalised professionals in terms of digital citizenship is important in fostering the development of fair and sufficient technological opportunities.

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