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RESEARCH ARTICLE



Hartazgo: #YoTeCreo as an expression of digital feminist activism in Venezuela

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ABSTRACT

On 27 April 2021, #YoTeCreo sparked as one of the first major instances of digital feminist activism (DFA) against sexual violence in Venezuela. Women united using both Twitter (since renamed 'X') and Instagram, shared their experiences. #YoTeCreo trended and opened further discussions on the prevalence of sexual violence. Through qualitative interviews with eight #YoTeCreo founders, this article centres women's experiences in organizing in DFA against sexual violence in Venezuela and examines the factors that encouraged the leaders to create this campaign. Through the qualitative analysis, I argue that #YoTeCreo was not simply a transplantation of the #MeToo from North to South. Instead, it was sparked by cross-border movements of ideas, persons, and places; the role of media and entertainment; the role of migrant women; the feeling of 'hartazgo', a sense of empathy, and sorority. This article expands on DFA in the Global South; as one of the few contemporary articles analysing DFA in Spanish, attentive to Venezuela's unique cultural and political circumstances, where academic research is underdeveloped. Finally, it expands feminist knowledges and the existing research on DFA by prioritizing the voices of women leading DFA in the Global South

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#YoTeCreo Venezuela as an instance of digital feminist activism

In 2021, an anonymous Instagram account was created under the username @AlejandroSotoStrupo. This account invited Venezuelan women who had experienced sexual violence perpetrated by Alejandro Soto, Venezuelan singer, to submit their testimonies for future legal action. In the following days, social media platforms such as Instagram and Twitter (now 'X') were used to report sexual harassment perpetrated by men that belong to the music and theatre community in Venezuela. On 27 April 2021, #YoTeCreo movement ('#IBelieveYou') emerged, created by 74 women from the music industry, including female artists and singers.¹ After the creation of this hashtag, thousands of Venezuelan women took to social media to share their stories of sexual violence and harassment.² Similar to #MeToo, #YoTeCreo exposed high-profile men on social media.³ Some of the men accused of perpetrating sexual violence in the entertainment and music industry resigned from their positions or were fired. Additionally, a famous writer, who was exposed by the pseudonymous Twitter account named 'Pia', committed suicide after admitting responsibility for accusations against him.⁴ #YoTeCreo movement used its social media platforms to amplify the testimonies of women and girls who wanted to share their own experience of sexual violence by reposting, retweeting or sharing. Less than a week after the creation of the database proposed by #YoTeCreo in their initial statement, the account received 585 testimonies. According to Caracas

Chronicles and Probox monitoring of the hashtags in 2021, #YoTeCreo had around 6,595 tweets, with messages of support for victims reporting sexual violence in Venezuela, being one of the largest hashtags for feminist activism in Venezuela in 2021.⁵

Like other instances of DFA, the spark generated by #YoTeCreo was followed by a public discussion about cultural practices that normalize violence – such as rape culture, discrimination, and violence against women – led by leaders of the movement and by local activists and NGOs.⁶ This DFA received enormous media attention from women's rights activists and recognition from newspapers and journalists in Venezuela. While #YoTeCreo was quickly compared to #MeToo this article challenges this comparison. By interviewing the activism of #YoTeCreo, I explore the motivations and circumstances that lead the creators and founders of this movement to organize and activate this feminist online response. Finally, part of this article explores and analyses the conditions in which #YoTeCreo emerged in Venezuela.

Literature

The rise of digital feminist activism from a Latin America perspective

There is an emerging body of literature on digital feminist activism and the #MeToo (Mendes et al., 2019; Quan-Haase et al., 2021; Sen, 2020). Both the journals *Gender Studies* and *Feminist Media Studies* have numerous articles detailing hashtag activism and digital activism. It's been argued that hashtag activism and DFA have allowed the dissemination of topics such as awareness of violence against women reach beyond traditional NGOs and personal social circles and create collective knowledges of solidarity across borders that allow feminist activism to shorten distances and built support networks (Clark-Parsons, 2022; Zimmerman, 2017). The uses of hashtag activism have been a popular form of feminist activism as it allows the transnational dissemination of issues surrounding VAW on social media and increases the awareness on such topics (see Mendes et al., 2018).

In terms of geography, the literature on DFA has focused mostly the United States and Europe (Quan-Haase et al., 2021). Even though studies on #MeToo and DFA have expanded to other countries, like Bangladesh, China, South Korea and India (Cheema, 2023; Dey & Mendes, 2021; Iftakhar, 2020; Sun, 2019; Yin & Sun, 2020). There are few studies that examine the implications and origins of #MeToo and DFA in Latin America. Notably, there are studies from Argentina and Mexico. Rovira-Sancho (2021) analysed how the Mexico #MeToo campaign took root and how activists carried out a digital campaign in a country overwhelmed by femicide and impunity. Another study in Mexico discussed how #MeToo mobilizations have successfully led to widespread consciousness-raising about women's rights in the region (Dominguez, 2021). In the case of Argentina, Garibotti and Hopp (2019) explored #MeToo as a window of opportunity for existing digital feminist movements to expand and build new ways of organizing feminist activism.

These studies suggest that in Latin America, and long before #MeToo, DFA have used hashtags to make visible different forms of violence. In Argentina, the #NiUnaMenos ('#NotOneWomanLess') digital feminist activist campaign began in 2015 on Twitter to make visible intimate partner violence and the increased numbers of femicides and other forms of gender-based violence in the country (Bedrosian, 2022; Garibotti & Hopp, 2019; Palmeiro, 2019, Piatti-Crocker, n.d.). Moreover, Mexico had its own #MeToo campaign in 2019. This campaign was premeditated and calculated, which differed from other instances of DFA that often arose in a more organic way. The hashtag #MeToo Mexico started by creating several anonymous accounts used to report and expose perpetrators (Rovira-Sancho, 2021). These are just a few examples of how Latin American feminists used digital technologies to bring sexual violence to light, as well as the serious issue of impunity for this violence; the constant danger to women's lives and bodies from street harassment and more extreme forms of violence like femicide; revictimization of violence; and the conundrum of a patriarchal culture that continues to disrespect and discriminate against women. This article will contribute to new

knowledge on how one DFA campaign #YoTeCreo emerged in Latin America, where impunity and VAW continue to rise, and challenge the current Euro-US centric focus on DFA.

It's been argued that activists approach feminist activism differently depending on their regional and geographical contexts. One study suggested that mobilization and activism carried out in English and Spanish contexts are different ways of performing of activism (Larrondo et al., 2019; Ureta et al., 2021). In the English-speaking Global North, discussions are often facilitated through formal organization, while Spanish-speaking feminist activist discussion tends to be more subversive and less mediated by institutions or organizations (Larrondo et al., 2019; Ureta et al., 2021). This underscores the theme of this special issue on 'feminist media activism in transition' where digital feminist activism is dynamic, transformative, and constantly adapting not only to geographic and cultural contexts but also through platform in which they are conveyed.

It is also important to recognize that while DFA creates spaces for women to identify and expose social inequality and sexual violence, hashtag activism and #MeToo have also been criticized for centring the voices of white, middle-class, cis-gendered women (Mendes et al., 2019). One can say that its importance relies on the possibilities of '[i]dentifying privilege, difference, representation, and racism from an intersectional approach' (Zimmerman, 2017). Even on platforms that appear to be 'democratic' and horizontal, such as Twitter, gaps persist, including how offline structural social inequalities can prevent certain groups from accessing these platforms (Clark, 2016).

Understanding the complexities of DFA and online activism, this paper intends to answer the following questions: How did #YoTeCreo emerge in the Venezuelan context? What were the circumstances or elements that made #YoTeCreo possible? And why was the #YoTeCreo movement founded? By answering these questions, this article deepens the understanding of DFA in a country unexplored and contributes to better understanding the unique and political circumstances of Venezuela, and most importantly, centres on founders' narratives, their work and labour, as well as the complexities and struggles of creating and leading online feminist activism in Venezuela.

Feminist methodology

DFA researchers have recognized the importance of qualitative research designs that involve gathering data directly from participants and activists. They have encouraged '[r]esearchers to continue to explore the experiences of those who are participating in such initiatives so that we can understand the fuller picture and long-term effects and impacts of such feminist activism' (Mendes, Ringrose, et al., 2018). This research fills a gap by exploring the key facts that allow DFA to emerge in Venezuela by centring on the founders' voices of this movement. To understand how #YoTeCreo emerged in Venezuela, an unexplored case in the literature on DFA, I conducted semi-structured interviews with eight leaders of #YoTeCreo. This research centres on their experience, with the understanding that their views are not universal and do not represent necessarily the views of Venezuelan women (Harding, 1987). Nevertheless, these experiences are an important part of documenting and storying DFA, particularly in Latin America and the Global South where research is lacking (see also Loney-Howes et al., 2021).

Inspired by Verta Taylor, I employed a feminist methodology using some of the elements Taylor considers as a feminist methodology, including gender and inequality; experience: everyday experience of gender oppression; reflexivity; and participatory research (Taylor, 1998). I structured the interviews by paying attention to women's struggles from their viewpoint, including their experience of gender oppression and discrimination. To understand what sparked #YoTeCreo, it was vital to centre on the experience of their founders. Also, the use of semi-structured interviews are important tools which are used to reflect, amplify, endorse, and highlight women participants and their narratives in their own words and time. Inspired by Taylor's final element of conducting feminist methodology, I incorporated some aspects of participatory action research by sharing my analysis and findings with the participants. This occurred after completing all interviews and analysing the data. During this meeting, I engaged in a conversation with most of them about the study's results.

This approach extended their involvements beyond the interview, moving away from non-participatory and extractive data collection methods. Unlike conventional empirical approaches, this method redistributes power and breaks down the separation and hierarchy between the research and researcher (Taylor, 1998)

Participants of #YoTeCreo

For this study, I purposively set out to recruit original signatories of #YoTeCreo rather than recruit those who may have used the hashtag in social media posts. Although I recognize the value of the former, gaining insights from the founders was essential to my research questions. I started by reaching out to Ella Bric (trumpet player, singer and producer, two-time Grammy award winning producer) who was publicly recognized as the founder of #YoTeCreo. She explained during the interview, that although there were 74 signatories of the statements, some had leadership roles (approximately 20), and some were just signatories. After that interview, I employ snowballing sampling. Finally, I ended up interviewing a total of eight leaders as I reached the saturation point (Dworkin, 2012). The interviews were conducted online using Zoom between May 17 through 2 June 2022.

All eight participants were from Venezuela and identified as cis-gendered women and able-bodied. In understanding power and privilege, it's important to note the homogeneity of the participants and their highly influential status as artists, singers, and members of the entertainment business. All participants agreed to use their full names, they are recognized in the acknowledgement section and are quoted in parts the findings. This project was conducted as part of the author's Master's Thesis at Osgoode Hall Law School and ethical clearance was obtained by the Office of Research Ethics at York University, Canada (Muskus, 2022).

Data analysis

I used Trint to transcribe the interviews in Spanish and then used Atlas AI software for coding. I combined both deductive and inductive approaches to the analysis (Bingham & Witkowsky, 2022). I started with a deductive analysis using pre-developed codes guided from my research question. Upon re-reading each interview, I then did an inductive analysis, otherwise called, 'bottom-up' analytic strategy where I identified new trends or themes from the interviews (Bingham & Witkowsky, 2022). The deductive-inductive approach to qualitative data was employed as a feminist methodology that allows the interviews to speak to the researcher and, in this process, the viewpoints of participants emerged and not only predetermined themes (Bingham & Witkowsky, 2022).

Discussion

I identified seven thematic themes that emerged from the interviews, in the following sections I will explain all these findings. These include: 1) how the leaders amplified the testimonies being disseminated on social media; 2) the purpose behind the hashtag #YoTeCreo (I Believe You); 3) how #MeToo was the closest reference the participants had on DFA; 4) the role of migrant women in mobilizing feminist consciousness; 5) *Hartazgo* as a collective impulse for the spark of #YoTeCreo. Finally, the struggles and hidden costs of participating in online activism including: 6) emotional costs and the 7) invisible and unpaid work carried out by #YoTeCreo leaders.

The leaders amplified testimonies disseminated on social media

Members identified that #YoTeCreo was not carefully planned or organized and that their purpose was to amplify a conversation that started on social media with the account @AlejandroSojoStrupo as identified previously. The leaders wanted to centre the discussion on the voices of women without

fame or influence status. Like the literature on the diffusion of digital movements (Lee & Murdie, 2020), most participants agreed that this DFA was spontaneous, fast-paced and unplanned. Participants commented that they did not expect their statement would go viral on social media. According to Ella Bric: ‘the purpose was to make the problem visible, to make misogyny visible, to make visible the disadvantaged position that women have in a society like the Venezuelan one’. Another participant, Laura Guevara (singer, composer and song writer) mentioned during the interview ‘the purpose was to generate a platform where people could feel heard and supported. The purpose was to make the problem visible, to make misogyny visible, to make visible the disadvantaged position that women have in a society like the Venezuelan’. What leaders created is what’s known as ‘affective solidarity’ (Hemmings, 2012; Rovira-Sancho, 2021). #YoTeCreo leaders connected through feelings and shared emotions and fostered a consciousness-raising moment in the digital arena in Venezuela. This was driven by a desire of connection and transformation that was also ‘cognizant of power and privilege’ (Hemmings, 2012). They purposely used their fame, status and social media influence to shed light on women’s experiences of violence and amplify voices across the country.

I believe you, let’s start by believing the silence breakers

In contrast to #MeToo which suggests personal connection with violence, by saying ‘Yo Te Creo’ - ‘I Believe You’ the leaders centred the discussion on the voices of women without fame or influencer status. As Ariana (political activist) mentioned during the interview, before #YoTeCreo, women’s testimonies were doubted, particularly when naming public figures with credibility and fame, and for them, ‘[t]here was no doubt that this [referring to women’s testimonies] was true and it was very important to us that they [women exposing abusers] knew we believed them’.

#YoTeCreo leaders mentioned that they did not want to create a hashtag campaign of passive women that only shared stories of experiences of sexual violence but that as women who had experienced violence themselves, they wanted to acknowledge and recognized this violence. What participants identified is what scholars have referred to as ‘the second assault’ (Mendes et al., 2019), in which survivors are revictimized when police, friends and family, doubt their testimony, they are not believed, or their experiences are called into question. When the leaders decided to use the phrase #YoTeCreo (I Believe You) they intended to break the chain of shame, which was important in the activation and spark of the movement in Venezuela. The use of this hashtag also meant that leaders engaged in the ‘politics of listening’ as an act of listening and amplifying women’s stories given them validation and value, they dignified the experiences of women who used the hashtag (Bassel, 2017; Mendes, Keller, et al., 2018). Laura Guevara explained it very clearly ‘what we wanted was to provide a platform to the anonymous stories, to the invisibility of those people and elevate the important of their stories’.

#MeToo was the closest reference the leaders had on digital feminist activism

As noted by participants, #MeToo was a key inspiration for the spark of #YoTeCreo. Most mentioned that #MeToo was their main source of inspiration. For example, Mafer Bandola (musician and bandola llanera player), mentioned ‘we all had MeToo as a reference, and for me, it was the biggest reference’. And Natascha Tiniacos (poet and scholar) commented ‘Yes, it was inspired. We always talked about it [#MeToo] as an inspiration but knowing that our culture is very different’.

Additionally, I wanted to understand from the founders’ views what they thought about this immediate comparison between #MeToo and #YoTeCreo Venezuela. For them, the fact that both instances of DFA addressed sexual violence perpetrated by men from the entertainment business, even in different countries, was the most important similarity shared between both cases of digital activism. Also, because most #YoTeCreo leaders were closely related to the music industry and Hollywood, it made sense that they were familiar with #MeToo. For example, Nana Cadavieco (singer) shared that ‘although Hollywood is the one who quickly introduce the expression “me too” on social media, you realize that not only it has a history, but it’s

everywhere. And that's where I feel that's why #YoTeCreo is compared to #MeToo because of its origin, like it was born out of the Hollywood cases'. Similarly, to #MeToo, the alleged perpetrators belonged to the entertainment industry (e.g. music, theatre) in Venezuela. Lolo Bello (producer) a participant summarized it as 'it's that time of social media: Abusive men from the Media industry falling'.

It is also vital to mention that participants were 'outsiders' to traditional feminist movements in Venezuela and did not come together through a centralized approach. For most #YoTeCreo leaders, this was the first time they actively engaged in feminist activism and specifically DFA. Few founders had engaged in the #MeToo online conversation as hashtag users and many were unfamiliar of previous iterations of DFA in Latin America, such as, #NiUnaMeNos or #MiPrimerAcoso. Nana explained in her interview 'digital activism wasn't something I had references for, I only had the #MeToo as a reference'. For many participants, living outside Venezuela (one participant in Mexico, five in the US and only two in Venezuela) and witnessing #MeToo or other forms of DFA enabled them to entangle these experiences to what they were witnessing with the cases surrounding @AlejandroSojoStrupo. Mafer Bandola noted how they made this connection, 'that [referring to other DFA] can be applied to what was happening in Venezuela'. This connection allowed them to understand the significance of this moment in the digital arena in Venezuela. Their position as outsiders facilitated by transnational flow and cross-border dialogue was key to shaping #YoTeCreo Venezuela (Sun, 2019). Moreover, the spark of #YoTeCreo generated what has been referred to as the 'contagion effect' that makes diffusion processes of digital activism unpredictable and spontaneous, this is when 'outsiders' (#YoTeCreo leaders) 'mimic' a collective action (previous DFA or #MeToo) without thoughtful planning (Lee & Murdie, 2020).

Additionally, #YoTeCreo leaders confirmed what Garibotti and Hopp (2019) argued, there are no transplantation of movements, but a window of opportunity created from previous digital social media movements can inspire new hashtag activism to emerge. As Nana Cadavieco pointed out when referring to previous DFA:

Different backgrounds or by different causes, eventually they're falling into the same conversations. They are tucking into the same themes. [...] every movement that begins will end up contributing to a network that gathers information, adding data, which is moving forward and that is advancing little by little the pending tasks a movement could have.

Dominguez (2021), who also researches feminist activism in Latin America, suggested that '[t]he mobilizations under the Ni Una Menos movement have, to an extent, successfully rallied the many subsections of the feminist and women's movement around a shared concern: violence' (p.425). These studies show that in Latin American, new DFA have been fuelled and made possible mostly due to pre-existing social movements and that digital feminist movements are moved through diversity, plurality, and network, with moments of transition that have shaped their evolution and impact (S. Alvarez, 1998; Garibotti & Hopp, 2019; Revilla, 2019).

The role of migrant women in mobilizing feminist consciousness

One question emerging from this research was how or why Venezuelan leaders from abroad could mobilize feminist consciousness in the country. Even though there is a small amount of research that understands the relationship of migrant women in facilitating or activating DFA in their country of origin, one study suggests that women might feel safer abroad when their abusers are still in their country of origin (Dey & Mendes, 2021).

Participants expressed that their biggest concern was not from defamation lawsuits like other DFA (see more Dey & Mendes, 2021), but being persecuted by the State, which was described as a dictatorial regime. Laura mentioned 'the fact that I was outside Venezuela allowed me, to be honest, freer, and allowed me to feel a little more protected'. However, participants that were in Venezuela, like Ariana (political activist), commented that 'we limit ourselves a lot, we self-censor because we were afraid of persecution'.

This research contributes to an understanding of that the contours of DFA are highly variable and fluctuates depending on the current political regime. There is also literature suggesting that political regimes and domestic structures play an important role in motivating or discouraging participation in DFA (Lee & Murdie, 2020). In the Venezuelan context, with an autocratic regime with a clear pattern of incarceration and persecution, women's rights mobilizations are diminished, and therefore, levels of participation in activism are reduced (Gombata & Cameron, 2021). It made perfect sense that the leadership of #YoTeCreo came primarily from Venezuelan migrant women.

Hartazgo

All participants commented on feelings of anger, frustration, and tiredness, and shared experiences of outrage. Ella mentioned that even before #YoTeCreo all of them were 'outrage', she added that 'Venezuelans are desperate to talk about these issues. Women are tired'. Additionally, Natascha Tiniacos mentioned how, having witnessed #MeToo in the States she knew 'the time had come for the bomb to explode in Venezuela'. Ana Elba also expressed feeling tired of years of responding to VAW by sweeping it under the rug, she shared 'as artists, we were tired of living the same things, so many things happen to us. It's like, this also happened to me, it happened to me too'. Laura Guevara also mentioned how much gaslight there was in Venezuela regarding women's rights and how, for her, the biggest ingredient was impunity, she added:

I felt like there was a lot of frustration, impotence and resentment, and there was no channel, there was no way out. And what started as simple Twitter comments from women who were frustrated, who were angry, who were in pain. It ended up becoming a mirror for all, where we saw ourselves and said Wow! This has happened to me too.

Understanding participants feelings spoke to me about *hartazgo*. This theoretical framework was developed by including a deductive-inductive approach, which allowed me to describe that it was mostly because of these feelings that #YoTeCreo went viral. As stated above, participants did not have background, training, or experiences involving feminist activism or women's rights in Venezuela, but instead had embodied knowledge. That is how I came to define participants experience as *hartazgo* (Muskus, 2022). This includes embodied knowledge from years of experience of violence against women that spans generations. Importantly, this *hartazgo* is collective not individual which lead to a statement, not by a single woman that said this had happened to me, but by 74 Venezuelan women stating this happened to us. Natasha noted the importance of collectiveness: 'it was because it was massive because we were such a powerful group'. Mafer mentioned the fact that there were many women 'acting in unison' and sharing stories was relevant to the spark. The importance of feelings entangled with parallel moments of digital activism is one of this study's richest finds (Muskus, 2022).

Hartazgo is also connected to Latin America where impunity is rampant, and it means the tipping point of years of collective experiences of violence; cumulative experiences from friends, moms, sisters, and over generations. It is a moment where you say: 'no more', it touches your heartstrings, and it is a moment where you decide you will not handle this further (Ahmed, 2017). It is connected to feelings of anger and frustration, but it is much more. It indicates embodied knowledges (Haraway, 1988), and thoughts entangled and connected to feminist knowledge. Similar to Sarah Ahmed's description of the feminist snap, *hartazgo* is collective, not individual, and it is nurtured and fuelled by the sorority between so many women who, by sharing their experiences with one another, actively decided to act by creating the digital feminist activism: #YoTeCreo.

Finally, two other important findings of this research came up as a part of the inductive analysis. Throughout interviews participants' expressed concerns about the emotional 'tax' (Mendes et al., 2018) that comes from leading digital feminist activism and the invisible costs of the unpaid labour they dedicated as part of the #YoTeCreo.

Emotional costs of online activism

Many participants discussed the emotional costs that #YoTeCreo had for them, which they described as a set of complicated contradictions. Some mentioned how the spark opened wounds from previous experiences of sexual violence. Ella commented how the team 'was gradually evolving into a healing team for ourselves because most of us were also survivors'. Others commented that they were shocked by the harsh testimonies they read and to realize the prevalence of sexual violence in their industry. Lolo Bello mentioned how some members expressed the need to distance themselves saying 'there were some who left saying "I can't handle this; I can't read this. This is becoming too much"'. Finally, the most famous women including Ella Bric and Laura Guevara, mentioned how by activating #YoTeCreo, they were scared to put their careers at risk through a possible backlash, while others shared that they had receive online threats. For example, Laura mentioned that her involvement in #YoTeCreo came with some consequences 'I have a group that all the time they are writing to me saying that they will cause sabotage so no one will listen to you, feminazi'. Many noted how because they had no previous digital activist experiences, they did not have the necessary tools to deal with this backlash. Others noted how emotionally drained they were to due the number of cases they documented and the hardship of women's stories of abuse, harassment, and sexual violence they dealt with. Ella shared 'we carried the burden of the country in our shoulders'. Due to their lack of experience and technical skills, it was hard to sustain the momentum, and they were not prepared for what happened next. Previous studies of online activism highlight how online and offline threats are deployed as mechanisms for silencing women (Jane, 2012). In the case of #MeToo Mexico, Mexican activists also reported suffering from online violence and threats (Rovira-Sancho, 2021).

The invisible and unpaid work carried out by #YoTeCreo leaders

Important complexities and challenges attend the work of leading DFA. In this case, participants discussed how they found it difficult to cope after their statement was released, due to the level of work involved in the middle of a pandemic. This work included giving interviews on tv and radio; participating in online events, including organizing live on their social media accounts; documenting cases; organizing and attending meetings with local NGOs to refer cases; and dealing with direct messages from women requesting their support on Twitter and Instagram. In contrast to the ways that digital activism is often written off as 'easy' or as slacktivism, participants highlighted the hours of the day they dedicated to #YoTeCreo and some mentioned that they even put on hold their own personal and professional projects to deal with the amount of work they had after the hashtag went viral. This speaks how DFA also has an embodied presence that reaches beyond the digital sphere.

Research on DFA has documented how this online activity includes unpaid labour, and how difficult it is to seek financial support for this type of work (Mendes et al., 2018). Ella shared her experience with this: 'we were in a very vulnerable position because we didn't have funds, we didn't have the economic infrastructure or the time to sit down and create the platform'. Ironically, like other offline, unpaid and invisible women's work, sustaining DFA can lead to burn out, and consequently, the unsustainability of online activism.

Unfortunately, digital feminist activism like #YoTeCreo is, as described by some participants such as Laura Guevara as, 'spontaneous, organic and impulsive', and I add: reactive and unplanned (Muskus, 2022). The leaders of the #YoTeCreo, as mentioned above, did not expect #YoTeCreo to go viral or gain such attention so quickly. This spontaneity and reactivity contributed not only to the #YoTeCreo spark, but also to the quick dissipation of the movement. This trend was also observed in the case of #MeToo Mexico: '[i]t was intense and brief. It was trending at the end of March 2019, but by mid-April interest in it had plummeted' (Rovira-Sancho, 2021). The invisible and unpaid nature of the leaders' work, combined with its emotional 'tax' (Mendes, Ringrose, et al., 2018), online threats and backlash (including the suicide of named perpetrators) were all deterrents for engaging in DFA. Expanding on the impacts and emotional effects on how participating and activating DFA is an opportunity for further research.

Conclusion

This research provides a novel exploration of DFA in Venezuela through the #YoTeCreo and expands the growing research on DFA and hashtag activism by centralizing and amplifying the experiences of women leaders in DFA through in depth interviews. This paper, therefore, shows the literature on DFA in Latin America, in Venezuela, where scholarly research is scarce. Conducting feminist research includes and start by listening to women's voices and centring their stories. As Mafer Bandola said in her interview: 'The answer lies with those who are in need'. Research that employs qualitative studies and elevates and highlights the voices of women participants in scholarly discussions is most needed, in particularly, in spaces where research is mostly conducted by white, cis, and English-speaking persons.

Throughout this paper, I have highlighted the need to attend more carefully to the role of political and local regimes in incentivizing or disincentivizing participation in DFA. Also, I have emphasized the need for future research on the influence of migrant women's feminist knowledge mobilization to their country of origin and vice versa. It's important when researching DFA not to ignore the costs, struggles, and challenges of sustaining and activating a spontaneous spark of DFA. This analysis of #YoTeCreo Venezuela shows, strikingly, that DFA does not rely upon academic or activist experience but can be generated by a collective sense of the necessity for change. As Ella argued, 'I think that many people sometimes think that in community work or activist work you have to have a degree (...) I think they lack the desire to want to make a change and make the decision to do it even when they don't feel they have the tools'.

#YoTeCreo is an example of DFA that can surge as a collective online space for solidarity between women and girls and built, maybe temporarily, create an 'affective digital community', in this case within Venezuelan women. Emotions and feelings expressed during the interviews by #YoTeCreo leaders and participants using the hashtags brings to light the importance of creating affects (Nau et al., 2022). This was due to the power of empathy, as a condition for understanding systemic violence and is the basis for alliance building. This paper allowed for further theoretical contributions, in particular the concept of *hartazgo*, which includes some core elements such as the collective and cumulative experiences of violence from different generations of women and girls. It also highlights the embodied knowledges and feelings of anger, outrage, a moment when you decide you can't take it anymore. *Hartazgo* is culturally located in a Latin American context where impunity is widespread. Finally, the *hartazgo* is not individual but it is linked with collectiveness and nurtured by sorority, empathy and solidarity.

Beyond understanding how this instance of DFA sparked, this paper highlights a deep problem in Venezuela: violence against women is rampant and the State has persistently failed to adequately address this phenomenon. The State response has been insufficient, leaving women fed up and fuelling a sense of *hartazgo*. Even if #YoTeCreo was reactive and spontaneous, DFA has demonstrated its ability to resurrect itself overtime, particularly driven by '*hartazgo*' in Venezuela. Although #YoTeCreo may seem to have dissipate it could reignite at any time by evolving, or adapting as DFA provides a powerful everchanging tool for women and girls to activate and amplify their voices against violence in the digital space.

Notes

1. YoTeCreoVzla, Press release of 'Yo te creó' movement vzla" (27 April 2021 at 2:07 PM), online: Twitter [translated by the author] <https://x.com/yotecreovzla/status/1387106163255398404>.
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