

Practices and Debates of Digital Human Rights Activism Across Nations

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Abstract

This study explores the ongoing debate about human rights as both a concept of social movement and a legal, institutional entity requiring organizations. The rise of digital media creates opportunities for collaboration between various stakeholders, allowing them to focus on the ultimate goal of activism: social change. We analyze the debates and implementation of digital activism related to human rights issues through a systematic literature review of 38 articles. The literature presents an ongoing debate between two conceptualizations of human rights: one as a social movement and the other as institutionalized within formal structures. This debate has implications for understanding the dynamics between organizational repertoires of activism and grassroots digital movements, particularly regarding the role of online contention. A mapping of the period from 2006 to 2023 reveals that citizen and local community initiatives more often drive digital activism than formal organizational campaigns. However, as the boundaries between these forms of activism increasingly blur, transnational collaborations encompassing NGOs and grassroots movements (including indigenous, diaspora, and citizen-led initiatives) have gained strength in digital activism. These developments suggest that sustained cooperation between organizational actors and grassroots movements is essential for achieving meaningful social change.

Keywords: *digital activism; human rights; NGO; grassroots movement*

INTRODUCTION

Activism and human rights are inherently intertwined, with Individual awareness of human rights often sparking social movements that drive social change. Overtime, historic waves of activism have crucial role in institutionalizing human rights. As a result, discussions about activism are inseparable from the pursuit of social change, which frequently center around securing civil, political, and fundamental human rights or addressing human rights violations. Digital tools provided means to strengthen the amplification of human rights issue, which is now gaining popularity as digital activism.

Several studies have linked the role of digital activism to social change in human rights issues, some parties that have used digital activism to fight for social change in human rights issues are NGOs [1], [2], [3], [4], [5], [6], [7], [8], and grassroots communities themselves [9], [10], [11], [12], [13], [14], [15], [16], [17], [18], [19], [20], [21], [22], [23], [24], [25].

Similarly, professionals in authoritative roles contribute to digital activism by drawing attention to issues within their expertise, enabling greater legitimacy and visibility for specific causes [26], [27], [28], or professions that have a more significant opportunity to be heard [29] to

the diaspora who are no longer in the area where a particular human rights issue occurs [30], [31], [32], [33].

Moreover, the effectiveness of digital activism is often shaped by the socio-historical and cultural contexts in which these efforts unfold. The socio-historical context of what is considered a violation heavily influenced the human rights issues addressed in each instance of digital activism that feature different themes [34]. Several cases of human rights violations, along with the expansion of information and communication technology, utilize digital activism for advocacy [2], [12], [24], [28], [35]; indigenous people's movements in opposing colonialism [16], [21], and against regimes that alienate their rights [9], [25] have also experienced an increase in the use of human rights framing and utilizing digital activism; several studies discuss the issue of feminism in the framework of human rights [32], [7], [1], some human right activism are intertwining resistance to colonialism and the objectification of women [4]; several studies discuss climate change and raise the framing of the environment as a fundamental human right [27], [18]. Meanwhile, one of the most frequently raised themes is regarding political rights, which can take the form of political participation, which, with the development of technology, is increasingly easy to find online [3], [10], [11], [12], [13], [14], [19], [20], [22], [23], [33], [36], [37], [38].

Given the wide range of themes related to human rights issues in digital activism, limited research explores how socio-political contexts shape the effectiveness and sustainability of digital activism, particularly in integrating grassroots movements with institutional efforts for long term social change. This study addresses this gap by examining how different countries have utilized digital activism to demand social change and identifying the debates that have emerged from its implementation. By doing so, it contributes to understanding how digital activism facilitates social change in human rights while highlighting areas for future exploration.

METHOD

This study employs a systematic literature review (SLR) to map and assess existing knowledge on the debates and practices surrounding digital activism in human rights issues. Unlike traditional narrative reviews, SLRs adopt replicable, scientific, and transparent procedures, ensuring rigor and minimizing bias in synthesizing findings from diverse studies (Mengist et al., 2020). By using a structured approach, SLRs help gather relevant publications and documents that meet pre-determined inclusion criteria, offering a robust foundation for answering specific research questions.

To conduct the SLR, we utilized the Preferred Reporting Item for Systematic Review and Meta Analysis (PRISMA) protocol. PRISMA was selected over other methodologies due to its reliable, relevant, and effective systematic review protocol for conducting a comprehensive search and selecting relevant Scopus articles for review, thus meeting the objectives of this paper. Thus, we outline the systematic review of the literature generated from the Watase Uake System.

The first step is to identify keywords selected in the articles: "human rights activism" AND "digital activism." The PRISMA menu in Watase recommends these two keywords for a Systematic Literature Review (SLR). The justification for these two keywords is to detect research articles with the theme of digital activism on the human rights issue. Two main themes are needed. Namely, human rights and digital activism, and we carry out the article selection that focuses on digital activism with human rights issues or on human rights issues and explicitly mention the use of digital activism.

To address the research question, "How are the debates and practices of digital activism on human rights issues in various countries?" We systematically selected articles using the search keywords "human rights activism" AND "digital activism" applied to the fields of articles, abstract, or keywords within the Scopus Database. This initial search, conducted through the Watase Uake System, yielded 301 potentially relevant articles.

After excluding duplicates and other irrelevant titles, the second step is the screening of the 230 articles' abstracts based on specific criteria. The following criteria helped narrow the scope of articles in Scopus: 1) Articles published in scientific journals indexed in Scopus; 2) The time range from 2014 to 2024 to capture recent developments in the field ; 3) Articles from all Scopus quartiles (Q1–Q4) to ensure inclusivity; 4) Articles discussing digital activism explicitly in the context of human rights issues, or conversely, human rights issues with explicit mention of digital activism.

By addressing to these criteria, the review ensures inclusively while maintaining a focus on high quality, relevant studies. The systematic selection reduces the risk of bias and provides a robust foundation for analyzing how digital activism contributes to social change in human rights. Upon reviewing the manuscripts' abstract, we identified several issues. We excluded most historical studies from this review, except for a few that connected historical contexts to contemporary issues. We also removed articles that focused solely on the educational process. Finally, we excluded articles classified as systematic literature reviews (SLRs). We removed 118 articles that did not fulfill our criteria. We are left with 112 articles to retrieve, unfortunately we are unable to retrieve 61 articles due to accessibility restrictions, therefore the ultimate number of article that we are able to retrieve is 51 articles, we filtered out 13 articles that did not meet our criteria after thorough reading, leaving us with 38 articles for qualitative synthesis.

Figure 1 below explains the review process.

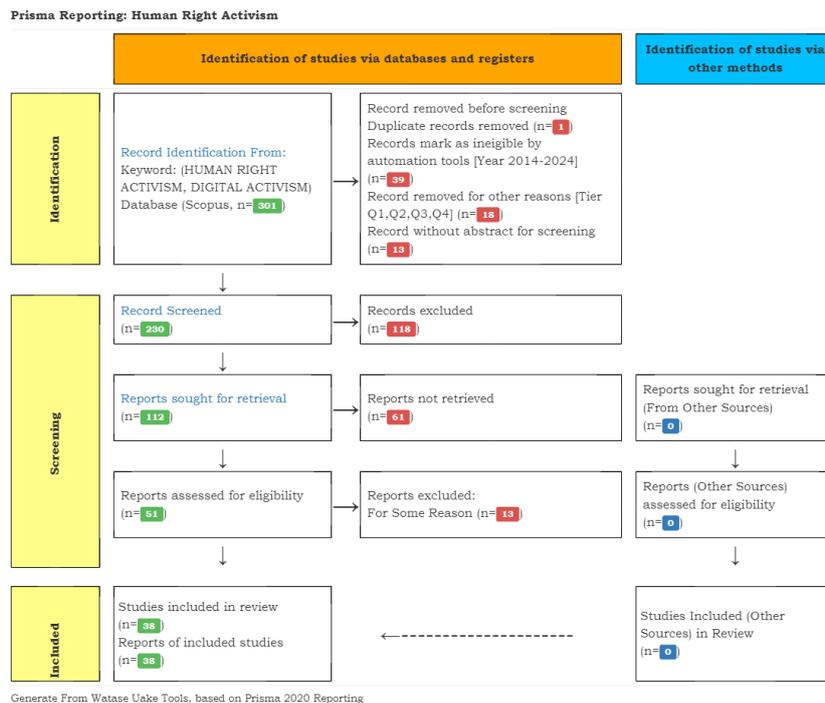


Figure 1. Prisma Report
 (Source: Watase Uake Tools)

The process continues through Microsoft Excel, where the author categorizes the articles using the help of typeset.io (Scispace), particularly to identify the cases and actors of activism. Common categories include title, author, year, quartile, method, novelty, limitations, and recommendations. Special categories include the countries discussed in the article, focus, case, actors, and theories.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research analyzes 38 articles on digital human rights activism published between 2013-2024, revealing key trends and patterns in the field.

Article output fluctuated over the decade, with peaks in 2017 and 2019 (7 articles each) and lows in 2018 and 2023 (1 article each). The majority (71%) were published in top-tier Q1 journals, indicating high academic quality. Meanwhile for geographic focus, The United States led discussions with 9 articles, reflecting its historical role in institutionalizing human rights post-WWII. The UK and China followed with 5 articles each, alongside 5 global studies. Additional countries included Australia, Japan, Brazil, Russia, and Indonesia (2 articles each).

Method-wise, qualitative approaches dominated (33 articles), employing methods like interviews, case studies, ethnography, and social media analysis. Only three studies used quantitative designs, while two combined both approaches. In terms of thematic Analysis, political rights emerged as the primary focus (36%), followed by women's rights (15%) and human rights violations (13%). Worker's rights accounted for 8%, while climate justice, immigrant rights, indigenous rights, LGBTQ+ rights, and minority rights each represented 5% of the studies. This distribution demonstrates digital activism's broad application across diverse human rights issues globally.

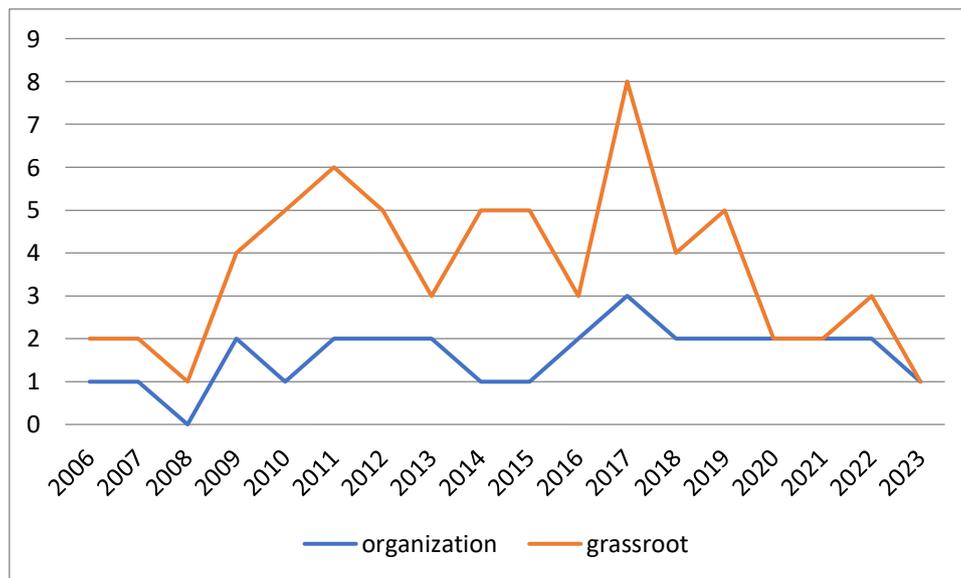


Figure 2. Trends in Digital Activism Practices
 (Source: Researcher)

In the line graph in Figure 2, we can observe the ebb and flow of digital activism on human rights issues. One of the debates that often arises in the literature on human rights activism, both activism carried out with digital tools and traditionally, is related to the debate between human

rights as a social movement idea and human rights as law. The implication of this debate is the view of human rights activism as elitist activism. In contrast, early human rights resulted from social movements, especially the proletariat class, that opposed the domination of a particular class [39]. Digital tools provide grassroots movements with more opportunities to engage in activism on human rights issues [13]. However, institutionalized human rights require the legitimacy of the leading institutional and procedural channels to realize rights or resolve rights violations, so NGO activism is essential. Figure 2 will reveal the dynamics of grassroots and elitist activism practices in the digital realm in the last twenty years.

Digital activism has intensified debates over whether human rights should be viewed primarily as a grassroots social movement or as a legal-institutional framework. Critics often perceive institutionalized activism as elitist, despite the fact that human rights historically emerged from working-class struggles against domination [39]. The rise of digital tools has expanded opportunities for grassroots actors to engage in human rights advocacy [13]. However, legal and institutional approaches, often led by NGOs, remain crucial for legitimizing and addressing rights violations. Below we discuss how grassroots and elite-driven digital activism have interacted and evolved over the past two decades in the global context.

The advances and retreats of digital activism (2006-2015)

The emergence of digital activism in 2006 is closely associated with Julian Assange, a controversial journalist who revolutionized investigative reporting through WikiLeaks. This platform exposed numerous financial, political, and military crimes committed by various organizations and governments. In an interview with human rights lawyer Prof Mads Andenæs regarding the UNHCR investigation into Julian Assange, It takes courage and active support from civil society to become a professional whistleblower [40]. WikiLeaks was one of the incidents that inspired the transparency project before spreading throughout the world as a new form of activism, some calling it hacktivism [28], [41]. In 2013, whistleblowing activism re-emerged in the United States after WikiLeaks, Edward Snowden was one of the United States intelligence officers involved in the transparency project by conducting whistleblowing activism, namely leaking through digital media that the government was abusing its authority by conducting "mass surveillance, and targeting and tracking individuals, gathering private data" especially against activists, demonstrators and journalists [28]. Supporting evidence about how digital activism sustain exposure and transparency are the findings about activism in China ranging from 2008 to 2014, in which grassroots citizens in China escalated their activism with more offensive digital activism. Several high-profile incidents sparked online collaboration and mass dissent to corner lawbreakers who would typically go unpunished, providing evidence of digital populism, the efficacy of online politics, and the impact of new media dynamics on protest and collective action in China [23].

Beside exposure and transparency, digital activism also brings about global reach and international solidarity. A study observed that digital activism focused on fulfilling political rights occurred globally since 2009 and strengthened in 2010. Several cases demonstrate activism, such as netizens changing their profiles to photos of Ahmadinejad as a form of political support, the number of likes on social media for movements like Occupy, and the solidarity shown for the Rohingya ethnic group in Myanmar, who experienced genocide. With increasingly blurred boundaries, digital activism becomes inevitable for anyone with Internet access. The

implementation of activism is still familiar, such as the repertoire of contention via social media, namely through digital mobilization and campaigns. Although the methods used are still rooted in early forms of activism, a study emphasizes that a typology is needed to evaluate activism in the digital era based on radical democracy [19]. Especially for the Occupy movement [42] and Arab Spring [38], wherein the former human right case underscore that for the past 200 years labor movements have been limited by national identities, with the advent of digital platforms, have slowly built international solidarity; and the latter supported by digital tools to oppose repressive government by increasing connectivity with global networks.

In 2007 to 2014, activists also use digital tools to empower marginalized group. As evident in one NGO in Palestine that saw the potential of digital tools to collaborate with the grassroots to expose daily human rights violations faced by indigenous women. The NGO B'Tselem created the Camera Project to encourage Muslim women to document the violence they experience in gendered visual activism [4]. In 2009 in Japan, a Google Maps incident that exposed the historical layers of Buraku settlements sparked grassroots minority activism to demand equality with online awareness campaigns and online solidarity [9]. It is essential to note that the Burakumin community historically descends from individuals with lowly jobs who were once placed in the lowest caste in Japan. The stigma surrounding the Burakumin community persists post-war, as evidenced by the Google Maps censorship incident, which demonstrates that Japan still maintains this cycle of taboo [9]. This study's findings align with research on minority activism in Japan, which compares how global human rights efforts have influenced three minority groups [25]. Encouraged by the global community, local movements create new political opportunities, increase the flow of international resources, and provide a framework for social movements. This support and the concept of global human rights shape local movement actors. While local activists, aided by global actors, initiate and navigate movement activities, subsequent actions can continuously shape and reshape these movement actors [25]. Furthermore, in 2013, one of the digital activism emerged from the minority movement, namely the activism of the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) group, which then embraced more groups for allyship, one of which was Queer and many other gender identity groups, so that this movement was named LGBTQ+. A study examined the movement and emphasized that seemingly simple and insignificant activism can combat micro-aggressions and raise awareness of important issues, such as adopting a logo and displaying the logo online [8]. In Egypt, for example, women who are members of the Muslim Sisterhood, a group connected to the Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan al-Muslimin), are implementing activism increasingly shifting from offline to online. The researcher reveals that the Muslim Sisterhood movement challenges traditional stereotypes and gender norms, creating its own digital space to challenge the stereotype of women as the weaker sex, thereby challenging masculinity [1].

Digital activism also supports accessibility and innovation of activism method. This is evident in the case of British Columbia parents in Canada, where participants saw how social media could reduce costs by enabling collaboration between individuals and groups [15]. In China, grassroots activists practiced digital activism by editing images, creating lip-sync videos, and making parodies of famous films, known as e'gao. These practices illustrate how, within just one year, the Global South quickly adopted the digital activism strategies of Global Northern countries using digital tools. A study underlines the similarities in rhetoric between city parks and social media, namely about openness, freedom, and democracy [43]. The potential for digital

activism in 2015 gained attention among Native Americans. In the United States, Native American Tribes increasingly used social media or social networking platforms to influence policy through social change, particularly in the case of the Oak Float protection from transformation to mining company as part of the Omnibus National Defense Authorization Act of 2015. Apache Stronghold's activism in response to the Oak Float rezoning involved using Twitter hashtags in Native American political discourse on Twitter, categorizing it into topics of identity, civil rights, current events, and environmental issues [21].

Digital activism also offers the advantage of strengthening democratic processes, as shown in a 2010 study of grassroots movement in Eastern European countries such as Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Estonia that confronted some challenges to free speech. There has been a media upheaval in Russia, with alternative political views increasingly challenging to emerge due to the government's dominance of various media outlets, including national broadcasting, radio, print, and the Internet. In addition, the lack of established independent media outlets has led many Russians opposed to the government to seek alternative ways to express their discontent, mainly through social media [17]. The opposition continued through 2012, where grassroots communities in Russia utilized new media for digital activism in political rights. This activism involved spreading social solidarity, conducting awareness campaigns, and engaging in public surveillance, which later transitioned to offline activities aimed at securing inspection rights in places of detention through the Public Observer Commission (Obshchestvennye nablyudatel'nye komissii/ ONK) [3]. Not only does digital tools support political activism, but also climate change issue as shown in 2011 by Australian climate change activist which had led the institutionalization of the movement within the Climate Commission. This case highlighted the importance of science communication to the general public as a critical factor in influencing action and gaining support for climate-related initiatives, providing a unique perspective on the importance of public engagement [27].

The shift of human rights activism into the digital realm has not always gone smoothly, as some efforts have faced criticism, such as grassroots movements advocating for migrant rights mobilized a collective response to the Illegal Immigration Control Act (HR 4437) in 2006 [44]. There is expression of concerns that digital tools could dilute activism, leading to "slacktivism" that lacks the passion and dedication of traditional activism [31]. Online activism has been criticized to provide limited impact, the virtual nature of digital activism through internet memes weakens its consistency and impact on offline political deliberation, as participants are less likely to form solid organizational structures for offline activism outside of social media interactions, these forms of cultural digital activism may lead to little regime change due to limitations in offline mobilization and impact [17]. In addition, contemporary da'wah (Islamic propagation) activism in Indonesia has received scrutiny over several digital activisms that do not detail direct interactions with traditional or direct activism, so their digital activism is considered not to promote democratic values [11].

Digital activism also raises tension between online and offline activism, with concerns about the gradual loss of physical spaces for political participation and the weakening of social dynamics. Young activists have expressed concerns about activism shifting solely to digital spaces, emphasizing the importance of physical protest spaces [20]. There is also organizational challenge, where network logic poses problems even among horizontal collective actions driven by the grassroots, one of which is that the mobilization is not command-based or involves

traditional control mechanisms [15].

Another downside of the rise of digital activism is the adoption of extremism as a consequence of opposition politics that lack a substantive vision as shown by NGO activism in legal assistance and high-profile campaigns with Salafi-Jihadi groups [2]. Although these controversial actions are seen as shortcomings, they demonstrate that NGO activism plays an important role in providing legal support.

Ultimately, one of the major challenges faced by digital activists between 2006 and 2014 was the spiral of silence, where not all issues managed to break through to mainstream media, which at the time was considered a key indicator of successful activism [23].

Peak of Digital Activism (2016-2018)

According to Figure 2, peak of activism in the last two decades occurred between 2016 and 2018, in which digital activism experienced a significant surge, marking a pivotal moment in global social movements. This period saw a peak in online engagement, driven by widespread access to digital tools and social media platforms and increasing global awareness of human rights issues. The rise of digital activism during these years reflects a shift in how social movements operate, with online platforms enabling rapid communication, global solidarity, and public participation in ways previously unimaginable. The accessibility and immediacy of digital tools empowered grassroots movements and NGOs alike, allowing activists to bypass traditional media and government censorship, directly engaging with audiences worldwide. This peak in digital activism highlighted the power of online platforms and underscored the growing influence of digital spaces in advocating for human rights, social justice, and political change.

In Indonesia, for instance, students have responded to widespread criticism of their digital activism, which some view as disconnected from direct action. They are now harnessing online mobilization through the hashtag #SaveKPK, aiming to encourage participants to engage in demonstrations and bridge the gap between digital and physical activism [22]. However, they continue to face criticism for its impact on policy changes, which is considered minimal. Online mobilization and protests have begun in some countries, including Zimbabwe, in its struggle against authoritarianism. Although mobilization via SMS has been carried out since the 2000s by the Kubatana organization movement, online mobilization reached its peak in Zimbabwe in 2016 with the hashtag #ThisFlag [13]. Direct activism and digital action show that specific contexts require a mix of both approaches to optimize the movement's effectiveness.

In 2016, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, saw grassroots activism protesting human rights violations occurring during the Olympics' run-up. A mega-event in a city that stripped marginalized populations of their rights, including evictions and police violence, sparked digital activism. Technology, particularly smartphones, helped these groups highlight the violations. Apps like WhatsApp, which provide free, instant, and secure communication, have made it much easier to spread warnings about police operations, with Facebook playing a similar role [24].

In 2017, human rights framing was also used in digital environmental activism in Hong Kong. A quantitative study attempted to prove whether human rights awareness can spur environmental activism. The findings proved that human rights awareness has the power to predict environmental activism behavior. The findings provide insight into the Hong Kong government's lack of transparency and accountability in environmental policy-making, which in recent years has put environmental conservationists and human rights advocates on the defensive

amidst growing environmental activism campaigns [18].

A previous study noted that digital activism centered on the pursuit of political rights gained momentum globally in 2009 and became more pronounced in 2010, mainly through online solidarity actions protesting the Rohingya genocide in Myanmar [19]. Subsequently, in 2017, Rohingya asylum seekers worldwide engaged in digital activism, contributing to regional and global socio-political conversations by highlighting their collective action and political resistance on social media platforms. Another study examined how social media posts from the Rohingya community reflect memories of loss, suffering, and the desire for home, all interwoven with their transnational digital connections. It also explored the influence of Islam, Muslim solidarity, and narratives of Muslim victimhood in shaping their identity and political resistance. The concept of oppositional consciousness is a central focus of the study, emphasizing how it empowers marginalized groups to challenge dominant systems. The Rohingya community highlights its efforts to counteract social, cultural, and political erasure through online activism as a critical form of resistance [30].

Supporting the above findings on the role of digital media in advocating for victims of human rights violations are research findings on digital activism involving NGOs, academics, and the Uighur community to voice the Chinese government's human rights violations against Uighurs and Turkic citizens. The escalation of detentions has increased since 2017, as has activism that speaks out about these human rights violations. The activism was a form of solidarity and pressure on countries to protect Uighurs in China and abroad through policies and laws. The United States government and Congress have been the most vocal about the detentions in Xinjiang. Legislative measures, such as the Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP) and the Uyghur Intervention and Global Unified Humanitarian Response (UGHUR) Acts, offer a framework for sanctioning Chinese officials responsible for human rights abuses in Xinjiang and mobilize US law enforcement to end the abuse of Uyghur Americans, demonstrating the parallels between activism and state action. The study focuses on institutional human rights activism to immediately address the issue of human rights abuses in Uyghur [35]. To this end, we see that activism by the United States and the United Kingdom primarily legitimizes the primary institutional and procedural pathways for realizing rights or resolving rights abuses [2]. Legal activism emphasizes that one way to promote social change is by integrating international human rights law into domestic law and litigation in national, supranational, or quasi-judicial courts [45].

The merging of organizational repertoires and digital media is also taking place in contemporary Chile to counter colonialism. Mapuche digital media and activism have become powerful tools against daily-based oppression in Wallmapu and support the decolonial struggles of Mapuche organizations and communities. One of the things that has been made possible by the presence of digital tools is how Mapuche organizations and communities from Wallmapu have gained the support of their diasporic networks and other actors, thus bringing collaboration with a series of online and digital communication tools and information platforms since the late 1990s. Digital activism has, in turn, become an essential instrument in the complex dynamics of conflict in Chile [16].

A study highlights the significant role organizational repertoires have played in institutional digital human rights activism [1], [2], [3], [4], [7], [8], [35], [37]. One key example is the culmination of academic efforts through institutional channels, such as the UN Working Group's 2019 report, "Gender Dimensions of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights,"

presented at the UN Human Rights Council. This movement, which began in 2009, demonstrates how academics have translated social movement theories—including political opportunities, mobilization structures, and strategic planning—into feminist goals, influencing policy-making in the context of business and human rights despite neoliberal obstacles [26].

Similarly, another study focusing on NGOs in institutional digital human rights activism yielded comparable results. Using a qualitative, in-depth approach, the researchers conducted comparative analyses of various NGOs, emphasizing digital pathways, supporter agencies, evolving digital practices, and diverse representation [6]. They interviewed 24 individuals, including those working for pre-digital organizations like the International Committee of the Red Cross, Oxfam, Greenpeace, and Amnesty International, and digital-native organizations such as Change.org, 350.org, Jhatkaa, and Mob Lab. Interviewees were located across North America, South and Southeast Asia, Europe, and Latin America, offering a global perspective on the role of NGOs in digital human rights activism.

The study's findings are how digital adoption in non-governmental organizations (NGOs) reflects a shift in advocacy approaches, with a shift from staff-dominated to supporter-led roles. Supporter-centric approaches can increase participation by giving supporters more control over campaign topics and strategies, often involving digital natives more connected to these methods. The connection can broaden the reach of marginalized audiences and increase supporters' engagement. However, while digital tools can broaden participation, their role in deepening engagement is more limited, and individual and organizational capacity remains critical. In addition, using digital tools carries data security risks and requires stringent governance arrangements. To optimize digital adoption, NGOs must balance staff and supporter approaches, establish meaningful supporter journeys, and manage data well while leading by example in implementing appropriate digital norms [6].

Sustainable Digital Activism (2019 onwards)

Digital activism has evolved significantly in recent years, demonstrating both the power of collective action and the challenges inherent in navigating complex social and political landscapes. As we went through various instances of activism from 2019 onward, it became clear that collaboration among organizations, grassroots movements, and individual advocates is essential for fostering sustainable digital activism.

In 2019, The COVID-19 era witnessed one of the most prominent online activism in China. The activism was related to the death of Dr Li Wenliang, who had previously received pressure from the Chinese government to 'not spread rumors and false comments by the police regarding COVID-19.' Dr. Li was the first to warn his colleagues about the virus. His death sparked a monumental online mourning movement across the Chinese Internet (Cao et al., 2022). However, despite this phenomenal display of digital activism, no policy changes occurred, leaving many disappointed and highlighting the limitations of digital activism in comprehensively addressing public concerns [12]. This incident underscores that digital platforms can mobilize significant public sentiment but do not always translate into tangible political outcomes.

At the 2020 Olympics, athlete Raven Saunders, who is Black and queer, engaged in activism on the victory podium by displaying the X symbol with her arm, intentionally defying the International Olympic Committee's rule against protest actions. The subsequent digital activism created a wave of sympathy for Saunders [29]. Similar to the mourning movement for Dr. Li,

Saunders' actions sparked widespread discussion online, illustrating the intersections of identity and activism in the digital age.

In support of previous research on the role of international NGOs in addressing human rights violations, a recent study emphasizes the growing importance of international support in the digital age, particularly within human rights activism. This study evaluates the role of organizations like Amnesty International, exposing historical and contemporary human rights violations in the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia. One prominent issue is the persecution of political dissidents, where Amnesty International's term "Prisoner of Conscience" has become well-known in human rights circles. The organization's letter-writing campaigns, which mobilize local Amnesty groups, serve as practical efforts to support persecuted individuals. A notable example is the designation of Navalny, a political dissident, as a "Prisoner of Conscience" in 2021, a move that stirred controversy. This study sheds light on international human rights activism by focusing on the role of British activists in Soviet dissent and its relevance to modern Russian human rights activism. Despite some claims that expertise is losing relevance, the study emphasizes that trusted expertise remains vital for understanding and responding to human rights reports [37].

Similarly, from 2014 to 2023, the Muslim Sisterhood movement gained digital traction in Egypt [1]. However, this movement also exposed weaknesses in international NGO networks, particularly the fragile connections that are increasingly difficult to maintain in social media [37]. These vulnerabilities emphasize that while digital activism has potential, it must also contend with challenges that can undermine its effectiveness.

In conclusion, the examples of digital activism from various contexts illustrate the critical role of collaboration among organizations, grassroots movements, and individuals. Ultimately, we can better understand its potential for sustained impact by acknowledging both the achievements and challenges of digital activism. While challenges, such as the limitations of online activism and the fragility of networks, remain, the potential for sustainable digital activism lies in fostering these collaborations. By leveraging collective strength and shared resources, advocates can enhance their impact and navigate the complexities of social change more effectively in an ever-evolving digital landscape.

It is noteworthy that a major limitation of this study concerns article accessibility. While the initial search yielded numerous potentially relevant articles, full access to several articles was restricted due to various barriers, including paywalled articles and institutional access limitations. This potentially limited the comprehensiveness of our analysis, as some relevant articles may have been excluded from the systematic review solely due to access constraints.

CONCLUSION

The mapping of digital activism across countries shows the geographic distribution of countries covered in the articles. The United States and the United Kingdom stand out as the most frequently covered countries, with the United States having a significantly higher number than any other country. Digital activism in the United States is complex. It is discussed extensively in the articles reviewed, including transparency projects in democratic missions and NGO support for controversial digital campaigns on human rights violations. Other frequently covered countries include China, the United Kingdom, and Global, which cover cross-border issues. The result shows the geographic variation in the study of digital activism, with some countries

receiving more attention than others.

The literature presents an ongoing debate between two conceptualizations of human rights: one as a social movement and the other as institutionalized within formal structures. This debate has implications for understanding the dynamics between organizational repertoires of activism and grassroots digital movements, particularly regarding the role of online contention. A mapping of the period from 2006 to 2023 reveals that grassroots digital activism has been more dominant, particularly from 2016 to 2018, where there was a significant surge in initiatives led by ordinary citizens. In contrast, organizational activism has remained relatively consistent, albeit at a lower level than grassroots movements, maintaining steady involvement alongside grassroots efforts over the past five years. This trend shows that citizen and local community initiatives more often drive digital activism than formal organizational campaigns. However, as the boundaries between these forms of activism increasingly blur, transnational collaborations encompassing NGOs and grassroots movements (including indigenous, diaspora, and citizen-led initiatives) have gained strength in digital activism. These developments suggest that sustained cooperation between organizational actors and grassroots movements is essential for achieving meaningful social change.

Based on this result we recommend for activist to establish best practices for collaboration between NGOs and grassroots movements, as well as develop strategies to combine the resources of formal organizations with the agility of grassroots initiatives. Future study need to focus on studying successful cases of hybrid activism (combining organizational and grassroots approaches).

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI (if any)

In this study we use Watase UAKE as tool for our meta analysis. We also use chatGPT to tranlate and to proofread our grammar, as well as Grammarly.

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