

**Biased Representation of Digital Feminist Activism: A Critical
Look at Cyberfeminism**

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The development of technology facilitated by computer networks creates ambiguity over women's empowerment. On the one hand, the intersection of technology and women's freedom of expression has led to the emergence of cyberfeminism. The participatory culture encourages the growth of feminist movements to facilitate public engagement and empowerment. However, several overlooked challenges persist in the representation of women's concerns. Consequently, we undertook this study to offer critique and contemplation on digital feminist activity. This study presents a contradictory perspective, providing a counterbalance and an alternative narrative to the prevailing emphasis of previous research on the glorification of cyberfeminism and activism movements on social media. Using virtual ethnography, we examine five feminist activist accounts on Instagram as the locus of study: @indonesiafeminis, @lawanpatriarki, @perempuanfeminis, @muslimahfeminis, and @perempuan.merdeka. The findings indicated a representation bias within the five digital feminist accounts. Digital feminists prioritize the interests of women within their own groups rather than fostering knowledge and empowerment among all women. They do not advocate for the interests of women from varied backgrounds. Therefore, this study looks into and criticizes the concept of cyberfeminism. The outcome further reinforces the notion that technology embodies paradoxical values: It can resolve women's issues while simultaneously generating new inequalities.

KEYWORDS: cyberfeminism; digital feminist activism; representation; social media

1. INTRODUCTION

Some scholars consider technology a milestone of the fourth wave in feminism because of its potential to inspire a powerful and reactive movement (Cochrane 2013). The new media culture promotes democracy (Yuliarti 2020); and digital culture facilitates public engagement and empowerment (Jenkins 2018). These advances in technology help feminist activists reach supporters, promote ideas, and boost public awareness of progressive problems as digital feminism has expanded.

Social media as a platform for activism has now become a new space to voice women's issues, reaching a much wider audience than before. It can facilitate information dissemination about women's issues at faster speeds and raise awareness on gender inequality. It can empower and allow women to participate in public discourse. What would happen, however, if Indonesian feminist activists produced gender issues on social media? Through a comprehensive analysis of select feminist Instagram accounts, this study asks: Does digital feminist activism in Indonesia truly represent the voices of all women?

The rise in social media accounts created to promote feminism marks a turning point for Indonesian feminism. These accounts play crucial roles: @indonesiafeminis (Indonesian feminist), @lawanpatriarki (fighting patriarchy), @perempuanfeminis (feminist women), @muslimahfeminis (Muslim women feminist), @perempuan.merdeka (independent women), @indonesiaperlufeminis (Indonesia needs feminists), @perempuanmenggugat (women suing), @perempuanpeduli (women caring), and others. The digital environments they establish have become essential venues for the advocacy of gender equality and empowerment. Take for example, @indonesiafeminis, which focuses on sexuality, gender diversity, and class consciousness, or @perempuan.merdeka, which explicitly opposes capitalism, sexism, racism, homophobia, and transphobia. Their primary task is to expand their outreach and ensure that this struggle is not limited to a select group but is genuinely inclusive and representative of the varied experiences of women throughout Indonesia.

The growing number of feminist social media accounts, however, raises problems regarding representation. The issues highlighted may resonate more with specific societal segments and less with the realities faced by women from other demographics. According to the 2018 survey of Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia (APJII), internet penetration in Indonesia has predominantly catered to Java Island at 55%, urban regions at 71.4%, and rural areas at 61.6%. The highest rate of internet usage was observed among individuals aged 15 to 44, particularly individuals in junior high school and in doctoral education levels. In terms of employment, entrepreneurs, consultants, civil servants, and the private sector remain predominant (APJII 2018). Consequently, internet access is unevenly distributed across Indonesia. The disparity between information-rich and information-poor populations is substantial.

Dhyta Caturani, a feminist activist in Indonesia, criticized the state of feminist activism in Indonesia because of how the participants in the digital feminist movement predominantly originate from urban, middle-class backgrounds.

Ini adalah kritik saya terhadap gerakan feminis Indonesia. Sebagian besar feminis liberal berasal dari latar belakang perkotaan dan kelas menengah. Mereka memiliki privilese untuk mengakses banyak hal, seperti referensi bacaan feminis dalam bahasa Inggris. Apa upaya mereka untuk mendobrak dinding itu? Apakah interseksionalitas, jargon kita, sudah diterapkan dalam gerakan kita? Ya, tapi hanya oleh segelintir dari kita melakukannya.

[I criticize the Indonesian feminist movement. Most liberal feminists come from the urban and middle-class. They have the privilege of accessing many things, like reading feminist references in English. What do they do to break down the wall? Has intersectionality, our jargon, been implemented in our movement? Yes, but only a handful of us do.] (Kartika 2019)

A crucial question arises considering the demographics of digital feminist activists who are mostly middle-class, urban,

highly educated, and tech-savvy. Given the limited access to technologies among particular groups of women—specifically young, middle-class, highly educated, technologically competent, and urban inhabitants—significant concerns on representation are raised. Therefore, this study presents a contrasting perspective, serving as a counterbalance and an alternative discourse to the predominant focus of prior research on the celebration of cyberfeminism and activism movements on social media.

THE GENERAL LANDSCAPE OF CYBERFEMINISM AND DIGITAL FEMINISM

Cyberfeminism is a critical framework that examines the intersection of feminism, technology, and cyberspace. It provides a viewpoint to analyze how technology might serve as arenas of resistance where conventional gender inequalities are perpetuated. Gillis, Howie, and Mumford (2004) called cyberfeminism a philosophy that recognizes the power differences between men and women in digital discourse and that wants to change this situation. It is based on practices and theories related to technological coding and seeks to further analyze the complex relationship between gender and digital culture.

Donna Haraway, in her seminal work “A Cyborg Manifesto” (2006), posits that technology serves as a possible source of empowerment for women. The conservative ideological framework establishes a contrast between culture and nature, situating men within the cultural realm and women in the natural domain, therefore excluding women from technology. However, she also sees a promising future for gender equality through technology. Furthermore, Haraway speaks of cyborgs as mythical creatures resulting from the merging of humans and machines, summarizing the extent to which technological developments have blurred the lines between the “natural” and “automated” human bodies. Thus, cyborgs represent the blurred line between biology and technology. Haraway highlights that myths and tools mutually shape each other. If cyborgs were freed from the myths about gendered power relations of technology,

it could redefine the way people view science and technology, leading to a better understanding of more equal social relations. Technology can help women empower marginalized groups; the internet can offer new power to women.

Haraway's point of view is one of the important concepts in cyberfeminism, providing a critical study and praxis movement that offers ideas about women's liberation to fight patriarchal, heteronormative culture. This patriarchal culture is strongly embedded in society, so women are often in a marginal and subordinate position in masculine culture. Technology is interpreted as a means to liberate women from domination and oppression. For this reason, cyberfeminism is used to look at the relationship between women and technology.

The term cyberfeminism combines the words cyber and feminism, or feminism in cyberspace. The word cyberspace itself describes a space formed by connected digital data, where everyone can navigate themselves in this space (Leary 1994 cited in Sadari 2016). Thanks to a computerized system, this space provides a variety of facilities that empower individual users. Users can utilize these facilities according to their interests without relying on the authority of other parties. On this basis, feminist groups pin their hopes on technology for women's empowerment. However, in practice, technology does not consistently resolve gender problems. When technology is viewed as empowering, new issues that Haraway did not consider arise: the existence of representational bias. Therefore, despite technology being regarded as a means to amplify marginalized voices, cyberfeminism may unintentionally maintain representational bias.

Gayatri Spivak (1999) investigated women's voices as unrepresented subalterns. In postcolonial studies, the term subaltern denotes social groups that exist outside the power hierarchy whose voices and perspectives are systematically ignored or unrecognized by the dominant group. Subalterns are marginalized populations that are voiceless in historical or political discourses (e.g., the impoverished, agrarians, workers, women, or minority groups). According to Spivak, intellectuals

in positions of authority with access to dominant discourses, such as academia, media, and public forums, frequently fail while attempting to represent subaltern groups. They unintentionally ignore subaltern voices because they interpret their own narratives, leading to biased and inaccurate depictions. In articulating the subaltern, they may potentially eliminate the subject's voice.

The voices of subaltern women are silenced not because of a failure of articulation but a failure of representation. According to Stuart Hall (1997), representation is the production of meaning for concepts in our minds that are then conveyed through language. It allows us to refer to the real world (objects, people, or events) as well as the imaginative world. In the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, a dictionary quoted by Hall in his article entitled *The Work of Representation*, there are two explanations for representation: (1) Representation is describing, depicting, imagining, or explaining something to remember something by placing the similarities that something has with other things in our minds or our senses. (2) Representing means symbolizing or replacing.

Spivak (1988 cited in Noviani 2020) explained that these two concepts of representation may lead to problems. Representation has limitations; it is neither neutral nor a value-free practice. Consequently, representation inevitably provides possibilities for specific interests to exercise their power. Thus, representation generates bias in ideological interests, potentially leading to the silencing of the subjects it represents. Rather than empowering subjects, representation marginalizes those who are oppressed.

CYBERFEMINISM AND DIGITAL FEMINISM LANDSCAPE IN INDONESIA

The feminist movement in Indonesia has employed digital media as an essential arena for activity, discussion, and mobilization. This movement exemplifies a tangible implementation of cyberfeminism. In Indonesia, platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and several online forums have emerged as new arenas for gender-related concerns. In contrast to conventional

feminist movements that depend on in-person gatherings, digital feminism functions through hashtag campaigns, viral narratives, and content generation.

Numerous research on digital feminism and social media activism indicates favorable developments in the feminist movement within social media. Parahita (2019) examined the emergence of feminist activism on social media. Marlina (2018) analyzed the gender socialization movement within the same context. Alatas and Sutanto (2019) explored cyberfeminism and initiatives aimed at empowering women via new media. Wijdan, Santoso, and Siscawati (2024) emphasized that social media has emerged as an essential instrument for facilitating inclusive and collaborative advocacy in the digital realm, while Salsabila and Diera (2022) investigated the strategies taken by *Jurnal Perempuan* to disseminate feminist discourse via social media advocacy. These previous studies examined how social media aids feminist activists in promoting women's problems and the techniques employed to optimize social media for advocacy purposes. Nonetheless, it is not devoid of issues—an area of interest and concern, which remains unexplained in prior studies on digital feminism and activism.

Certain studies have already disclosed the dilemma of the contradiction around the ability of information and communication technology to empower women. Jouët (2018) mentioned that the heightened exposure of digital feminism has incited a resurgence of aggressive cyber-sexism.¹ This, however, does not suggest that feminists are fully empowered given the return of conservative forces in European countries. Esposito and Semenzin (2025) found that online platforms facilitate feminist expression while concurrently amplifying gender vulnerability. How does the background of presented literature on feminism in Western societies compare to that in Indonesia? Given the lack of study on this topic, we believe it presents an opportunity for us to initiate a discourse on this issue.

2. METHODOLOGY

We conducted a virtual ethnography to acquire a comprehensive analysis of feminist Instagram accounts engaged in activism. This method focuses on ethnography on screen (Cruz and Ardèvol 2013). It includes a broad range of methodological approaches to present the complexities of a virtual interaction mediated by a computer and the internet (Domínguez et.al 2007). Instagram provided a suitable area of study because of the potency of its visuals and narratives that facilitate comprehension and encourage emotional engagement and empathy.

The primary source of information in ethnography is observation, allowing the researcher to observe the subjects and their behavior in their digital environment. We began conducting online fieldwork by observing five feminist accounts on Instagram: @indonesiafeminis, @lawanpatriarki, @perempuanfeminis, @muslimahfeminis, and @perempuan.merdeka. We selected these accounts based on multiple considerations as outlined below:

1. Issue Relevance: The selected accounts consistently address women's issues, such as women's rights, gender-based violence, or equality in many posts.
2. Visual Material Quality: The selected accounts exhibit commendable visual material, including clear infographics, and appealing designs, which are significant because activism depends on visual allure to capture attention and communicate its message.
3. Engagement Dynamics: The volume of comments, replies, stories, and conversations shows that all accounts engage with followers. They effectively broadcast information, interact, and build communities.
4. Networks and Collaborations: These five accounts collaborate with other accounts, influencers, and organizations. This shows how social movements establish networks and disseminate their impact inside the digital ecosystem.

5. Narrative and Representation of Identity: As a qualitative study, all accounts serve as appropriate material because their compelling narratives effectively represent their identities, revealing how a problem is articulated and creating empathy through genuine stories.
6. The Number of Followers: The large number of followers of a social media account would indicate high popularity. Followers of five accounts are summarized in table 1.

Table 1. Number of Followers of the Instagram Accounts Studied

Account	Numbers of Followers
@indonesiafeminis	184,000
@lawanpatriarki	98,400
@perempuanfemenis	28,200
@muslimahfeminis	10,600
@perempuan.merdeka	6,095

Owing to the substantial volume of posts from the five accounts, we were compelled to restrict the analysis duration. Hence, this research focuses on the contents produced by five feminist accounts during February 2020. During this time, there were several cases of sexual harassment and violence that attracted the attention of feminist activists, such as sexual harassment by influential people (public officials, activists, or self-motivators), sexual violence at educational institutions (campuses or Islamic boarding schools), and the enactment of gender-discriminatory legislation. The data collected for this period is adequate to fulfil the research objectives.

This research aims to comprehend the culture, interactions, and social significances established between followers and account owners. Thus, we as researchers were engaged in both content observation and active involvement. We performed participant observation by monitoring the discussions and actively engaging in the online discourse. Through participant observation, we interacted with the social actors in a computer-mediated environment and participated in their online activities to understand the meaning of their actions. We kept in touch through our pre-existing personal

Instagram accounts, posted content (e.g., images, captions, comments), as well as commented and participated in their online activities, particularly discussions in the comments section. We also interpreted and evaluated comments and responses to obtain a comprehensive understanding.

The deployment of content and participant observation distinguishes virtual ethnography from content analysis because the data gathered extends beyond mere counts of likes or comments or from other qualitative text analyses focused on specific texts rather than the interaction between account owners and their followers. The critical information of our research comprises the narrative unfolding in the comments section, in dialogues among users, in shared memes, and in the manner in which people cultivate solidarity through daily interactions.

Following the collection of Instagram posts within the given timeframe (by screenshots and copying the text), we identified the units of analysis, which include posts, photographs, captions, and comments. Subsequently, we performed descriptive coding utilizing quantitative data (likes and comments) and qualitative data (developing labels to characterize visual aspects, categories of posts, or significant hashtags). Next, we manually conducted thematic coding. We collected five predominant themes that emerged: sexual harassment and violence, gender bias policy controversy, LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer), misogynistic culture, and women's empowerment. The final steps involved reviewing the data, recognizing emergent patterns, performing a literature review, formulating advanced propositions, and utilizing literature to establish a theoretical perspective.

3. DISCUSSION

Digital media has facilitated significant transformation due to the rapid increase in internet access and the large number of netizens using these platforms to campaign on various issues, including gender issues (Jurriëns and Tapsell 2017). The rise of gender activism has led to contemporary feminist approaches. Current feminist discourse, as noted in numerous academic sources, is

propelled by two pivotal events in America: the Women's March and the #MeToo movement (Oren and Press 2019).

Both the Women's March and #MeToo demonstrate how grassroots initiatives powered by social media can grow into powerful global movements advocating for women's rights. The Women's March was a demonstration emphasizing the significance of women's rights advocacy. The event commenced with activist Teresa Shook extending an invitation to 40 of her Facebook friends to protest Trump's Inauguration Day. On January 21, 2017, millions of individuals globally demonstrated against Donald Trump, bigotry, and misogyny. It was a remarkable grassroots movement that prompted several individuals to recognize the intersection of the personal and the political in countries like Pakistan, Australia, Canada, Germany, and Indonesia (KumaparanNews 2017). It articulated worldwide concerns and received endorsement from numerous celebrities, including Alicia Keys, Charlize Theron, Katy Perry, Miley Cyrus, Scarlett Johansson, Jennifer Lawrence, and Adele.

Concurrently, the #MeToo campaign emerged as a significant movement against sexual harassment and violence. The campaign went viral in October 2017. The hashtag was used on social media to highlight the widespread incidence of sexual violence and harassment, particularly in professional settings. It arose from the sexual harassment allegations against Harvey Weinstein, a prominent Hollywood producer. Tarana Burke, an American social activist and community organizer, coined the slogan "Me Too" in early 2006, which was subsequently popularized by actress Alyssa Milano on Twitter in 2017. Milano urged victims of sexual harassment to tweet about their experiences, thereby raising public awareness of the severity of this issue (Gill and Rahman-Jones 2020). A multitude of posts and replies has surfaced from American celebrities, including Gwyneth Paltrow, Ashley Judd, Jennifer Lawrence, and Uma Thurman. The actors, artists, and celebrities that contributed to this movement were not exclusive to the US but also included individuals from other nations.

#MeToo evolved and adjusted to the specific situation of each nation. In 2018, actress Tanushree Dutta accused actor Nana Patekar of alleged sexual harassment. This case initiated the #MeToo movement in India. The #MeToo movement exposed the K-Pop entertainment industry, highlighted by the arrests of Seungri and Jung Joon-Young for their participation in illicit prostitution and revenge porn. In South Korea, the #MeToo movement catalyzed the Escape the Corset initiative, which opposed the country's unreasonable beauty standards. In Japan, #MeToo transformed into #WithYou to express support with victims of workplace sexual harassment. In Thailand, the #MeToo movement transformed into #DontTellMeHowToDress as a reaction to government authorities advising women to refrain from wearing provocative attire to prevent sexual harassment. In Indonesia, the movement emerged as #UninstallGrab to protest the harassment faced by GrabCar users (Putri 2020).

Motivated by worldwide feminist movements, several feminist activists in Indonesia used the internet and social media as integral elements of their advocacy. As a result, feminist activists in the digital space are proliferating with its success in disseminating gender and feminist narratives to the wider audience. Parahita (2019) asserts that feminist activism on social media in Indonesia commenced with two events: the Feminist and Gender Writing Class organized by Yayasan Obor and digital activism on Facebook initiated by the Jakarta Feminist Discussion Group (JFDG), which managed the World's March Jakarta and Indonesia in 2017.

In subsequent years, other online initiatives have emerged to address the demand for insight into feminism. It is now quite simple to locate numerous social media profiles that discuss feminist issues. Some important platforms and figures that emerged are as follows: (1) Magdalene, an online feminist journal that offers a platform for young feminists to express personal experiences and perspectives regarding the socio-political landscape in Indonesia, alongside Indonesia Feminis, Lawan Patriarki, Perempuan Bergerak, Konde.co, and others; (2) the Muslim feminist movement driven by three Muslim

organizations—Alimat, Rahimah, and Fahmina (ARAFAH)—established Kongres Ulama Perempuan Indonesia or KUPI (the Women’s Ulama Congress) in Cirebon; (3) Kalis Mardiasih and Laily Fitri, prominent advocates for gender justice, have gained public recognition through their extensive writings on various social media platforms; and (4) communities like the Progressive Islam Forum and the Progressive Muslim Halaqah that seek to engage students and youth throughout Indonesia using Instagram.

Upon repeatedly examining feminist narratives, especially on Instagram, we relate our preliminary findings to intriguing inquiries posed by Fotopolou (2016) in her study, *Feminist Activism and Digital Networks: Between Empowerment and Vulnerability*. She questioned whether feminist activists remain consistent in advocating for women’s issues when using media technologies to promote their ideas. This inquiry is pertinent to other concerns, including whether communication technology serves as a solution or reinforces gender inequality.

The feminist movement attempts to empower women as an expression of solidarity among them. Centuries of patriarchal culture have rendered women victims of oppression. Fostering a sense of solidarity among women is essential to address this issue. Parahita (2019) stated that the primary objective of digital feminists is to educate the public about sexuality, gender consciousness, and feminism, while fostering solidarity among women. She identified three primary connected objectives: (1) combating sexual harassment, rape, and gender inequity; (2) cultivating public awareness that Islam and feminism may coexist harmoniously; and (3) elevating intersectional feminist concerns within society, including the safeguarding of minority rights (workers and migrants), promoting understanding of ecofeminism, and advocating for the societal acceptance of the LGBTQ community.

However, the idea of digital feminist activism might offer potential risks as it is based on similar conceptions of oppression. Particularly, collective oppression is misleading as it obscures and undermines the varied and intricate social experiences of women. Women encounter distinct challenges as gender issues frequently intersect with economics, ethnicity, race, and religious concerns.

DIGITAL FEMINISTS ON INSTAGRAM

The large number of feminist movements in the digital space has highlighted various issues (see table 2): cases of sexual harassment committed by prominent individuals (public officials, activists, or self-promoters), issues of sexual violence within educational institutions (universities or Islamic boarding schools), and the challenges resulting from the enactment of gender-discriminatory laws. Activism carried out by feminist groups on the internet appears to be representative of a single constructed community and is only available to certain people (Hinsey 2013). As we quoted in the previous section, Dhyta Caturani stated that liberal feminists who use social media as part of their activism are elitist or only represent the interests of certain groups of women (Kartika 2019). The results of our research also indicate this issue. We discovered bias in the representation of activism carried out by digital feminist accounts, especially the five selected accounts for our research.

For the issue of sexual harassment and violence, the five examined accounts had different points of focus. @lawanpatriarki appeared aggressive in responding to cases on this issue by introducing a motivational speaker named Dedy Susanto who claimed to be a psychologist to many of his clients. For example, certain posts contained captions that employed derogatory language or swear words, such as “*bangsat*” or “*bajingan*” (a curse), “*mampus*” (you’re dead) and “*Ndase*” (your head, it is also a curse), “*Asu*” (Dog), and “*Tai Anjing*” (Dog stool). In addition to swearing, @lawanpatriarki also invited the followers to mock Dedy Susanto: “*Makasih yang udah DM☺, Boleh kali sekali lagi hujat @dedisusanto*” [Thanks for the Direct Message, everyone is welcome to mock @dedysusanto once more here]. Dedy Susanto became a subject of controversy after model and Instagram influencer Revina VT accused him of sexual harassment. Subsequently, it was revealed that Dedy Susanto had sexually harassed clients during therapeutic sessions (CNN Indonesia 2020a). @lawanpatriarki uploaded 37 content discussing the case.

Table 2. Configuration of the Issues Presented by the Selected Instagram Accounts

Account		@lawanpatriarki	@indonesiafeminis	@perempuanfeminis	@muslimahfeminis	@perempuan.merdeka	Total
Issues	Topic/Cases						
	Andre Rosiade raided a sex worker	2	4	-	-	-	6
	A son of a well-known religious leader from an Islamic boarding school in Jombang raped his student	2	1	-	-	-	3
	Sexual violence in campuses	2	3	3	-	-	8
	Sexual violence perpetrated by leftist activists	-	2	-	-	-	2
Sexual Harassment and Violence	Sexual harassment committed by Dedy Susanto to his clients	37	3	4	-	-	44
	A Papua provincial government official raped a high school student	-	1	-	-	-	1
	Sexual crimes committed by GrabCar drivers	-	1	-	-	-	1
	Sexual harassment during demonstrations	-	1	-	-	-	1
	Female genital mutilation	-	2	-	1	-	3
	Others	7	10	5	2	-	24

Account		@lawanpatriarki	@indonesiafeminis	@perempuanfeminis	@muslimahfeminis	@perempuan.merdeka	Total
Issues	Topic/Cases						
Gener-Based Regulation	The draft law on Family Resilience (Ketahanan Keluarga)	4	8	2	-	-	14
	Omnibus Law (the draft law on Cipta Kerja)	1	7	-	-	-	8
	The draft law on the elimination of sexual violence (Penghapusan Kekerasan Seksual/PKS)	-	4	-	1	-	5
	Women labor law cases	1	2	-	-	-	3
	Others	2	5	-	-	-	7
LGBTQ	LGBTQ cases	9	2	1	-	-	12
Misogynistic Culture	Members of the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (Komisi Perlindungan Anak Indonesia/ KPAI) claimed that swimming with men who release sperm can cause pregnancy	4	3	2	-	1	10

Account		@lawanpatriarki	@indonesiafeminis	@perempuanfeminis	@muslimahfeminis	@perempuan.merdeka	Total
Issues	Topic/Cases						
Misogynistic Culture	Members of the Jakarta State University (UNJ) Student Executive Board (Badan Eksekutif Mahasiswa/ BEM) posted pictures on social media, but the faces of the female members are obscured	4	7	5	2	-	18
	Women objectification cases	2	-	1	-	1	4
	Women subordination cases	7	1	2	1	-	11
	Men and women relationships	6	5	3	5	-	19
	Others	2	-	5	-	-	7
Women Empowerment	Women empowerment cases	9	2	1	-	-	12

The other accounts, particularly @indonesiafeminis and @perempuanfeminis, covered a more diverse range of cases on the issue. @indonesiafeminis had 4 posts about Andre Rosiade's case² regarding the raid on prostitutes, 2 posts addressing female circumcision, and 4 content pertaining to sexual crimes and harassment occurring on campuses or involving activists and clerics' children as perpetrators. @perempuanfeminis also posted content about sexual violence in campuses and other cases.

@indonesiafeminis was more interested in issues related to gender-biased regulations. In February, there were at least three controversial bills related to women's issues, such as the PKS (Elimination of Sexual Violence) Bill, the Family Resilience Bill, and the Job Creation Bill. The proposed legislation for the Elimination of Sexual Violence has faced significant opposition from conservatives who consider it excessive. Legislators interrogated the outlawing of marital rape. They associated it with the Islamic principle that a wife is obligated to serve her husband (CNN Indonesia 2020b). The Family Resilience Bill, proposed in 2020 to protect and support families, has caused controversy over its blatant intrusion into the private domain of families, domesticating women's duties, and its potential regulation of familial spiritual and ethical matters. Principal complaints encompass excessive governmental intervention, probable gender and class bias, and conflicts with existing legislation (Amindoni 2020). The debate around the 2020 Job Creation Bill focuses on apprehensions that it compromises labor and environmental rights to promote investment (Debora 2020). Responding to the importance of ratifying the PKS Bill and opposing the Family Resilience and Job Creation Bill, @indonesiafeminis posted 26 content related to this issue. On the other hand, @lawanpatriarchy only posted 8 pieces of content on the same issue.

Most of the content posted by @perempuanfeminis, @muslimahfeminis, and @perempuan.merdeka focused more on misogynistic issues, such as the case of blurring the faces of female BEM UNJ members (students' organization),³ women's clothing, objectification of women and several similar cases. The content posted by these three accounts is not as much as those posted by @lawanpatriarki and @indonesiafeminis.

These data show that the five feminist accounts focused on different issues. However, each account was linked by a common issue: when @indonesiafeminis shared content related to the Dedy Susanto case from @lawanpatriarki or when @muslimahfeminis posted content regarding the interpretation of *Syar'at*—an Indonesian term originating from the Arabic word *shari'ah*, denoting something which follows Islamic principles.

Similar attention was observed when many accounts disseminated identical content from other accounts, such as @magdalene.id, @safenetvoice, @lbhpadang, and @changeorg_id. Certain accounts also referenced feminist accounts while uploading content with certain topics. Their posts are then reposted by the account referenced.

According to table 2, the five most frequently addressed issues by the digital feminist accounts are: (1) the Dedy Susanto case, (2) gender relations, (3) the obscuring of the faces of female BEM UNJ members, (4) the Family Resilience Bill, and (5) LGBTQ. Issues related to women's empowerment have the same number as LGBTQ issues. However, due to the diversity of the variants, we opted to disregard this issue. Concerns at the grassroots level, including cases of female workers, violence, and sexual harassment among the lower middle class, are addressed but to a somewhat lesser extent than those pertaining to the middle class. Therefore, the struggle for digital activism is class bias. The concerns presented predominantly reflect normal middle-class issues. Furthermore, the conversations in the five accounts exclusively reflect the perspectives of the urban middle class, characterized by high levels of education and technological proficiency.

On February 28, @lawanpatriarki posted a recommendation letter from the National Commission on Violence Against Women regarding the rights of female workers at PT Alpen Food Industry.⁴ This post was an example of an advocacy carried out by Komnas Perempuan for female workers. @lawanpatriarki's form of support was only posting letters without captions. As a result, this post received minimal attention from followers, garnering 746 likes and 2 comments during the period of data gathering. Contrastingly, one piece of posted content on the Dedy Susanto case could reach 9,041 likes and 1,178 comments.

The lack of attention to grassroots issues has resulted in digital feminist activists tending to be elitist. As a consequence, the concerns expressed by the five accounts do not sufficiently represent the perspectives of women without access to social media and modern technology which, in this instance, can be classified as a subaltern group. Grassroots women's groups with

the characteristics of those who come from the lower classes are uneducated, poor, and do not have sufficient access to power. Conversely, Instagram feminist activists, characterized by their high levels of education and middle-class status in urban areas, align with the intellectual group described by Spivak. However, intellectuals failed to assert or promote their capacity to investigate and advocate for subaltern people. They generalize the diversity of subaltern groups. This circumstance evokes Spivak's assertion that the "silencing" of women's voices is a failure of representation. Therefore, the representation problem must be truly recognized and anticipated by digital feminist accounts when articulating the interests of subaltern women.

As explained by Kartika (2019), the rapid growth of feminist activism in the digital space gives the impression that the feminist movement in Indonesia is singular. She gave an example of how conservative groups assume that the feminist movement only defends liberal values. It underlines the issues of inequality among grassroots groups. The representation bias is intensified by the prevalent usage of English in conversations on feminist accounts, which perpetuates inequality.

The East Ventures report on the 2020 Digital Competitiveness Index (EV-DCI) showed that the rapid development of the digital economy in Indonesia has only occurred in urban areas and is concentrated on Java (East Ventures 2020). This condition is a contributing factor to the significant digital divide in Indonesia. A recurring obstacle in the digital divide is the necessity for content in the Indonesian language (Ariyanti 2013). The lack of Indonesian language content affects an individual's ability to access the internet. Rural areas with a lower level of education require assistance in understanding English language content. Thus, language has an essential role in bridging the digital divide.

Analysis of the data revealed a substantial amount of English content, including photographs, memes, captions, and location fields, that did not specify the location but rather included administrator remarks on uploaded images or comments made by account followers (see figure 1).

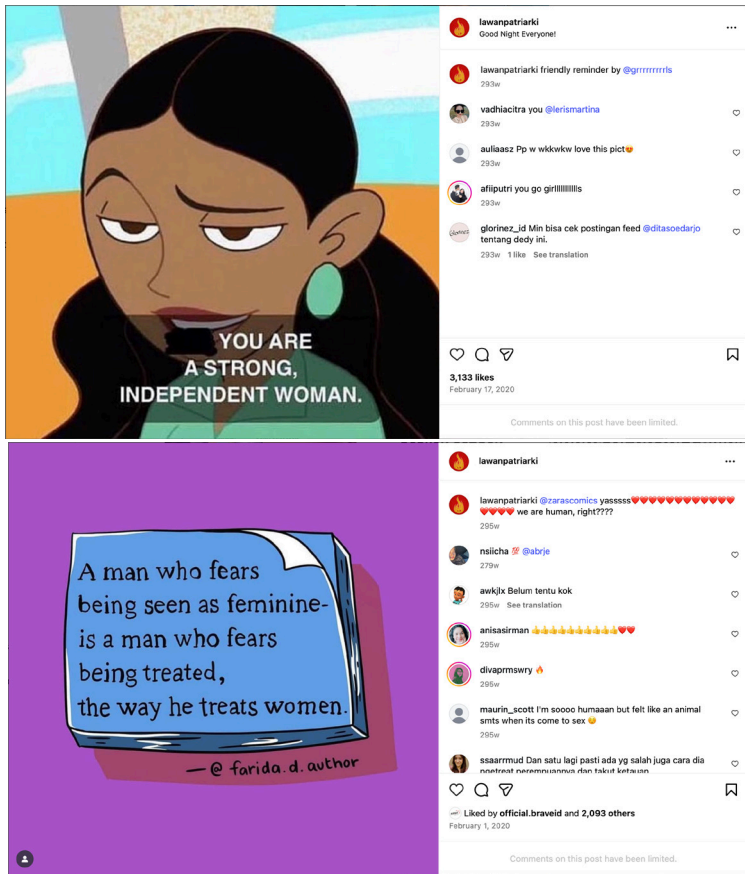


Figure 1. Sample of English content posted by @lawanpatriarchy. *Top*, Posted on February 17, 2020.⁵ *Bottom*, Posted on February 1, 2020.⁶

Figure 1 depicts two posts published by @lawanpatriarki in English containing memes that highlight motivating phrases. The image above was posted with an English caption, “Good Night everyone!” This was followed up with the comment by @lawanpatriarki that reads, “friendly reminder by @grrrrrrrrls,” indicating that it was a repost from @grrrrrrrrls. The image below delivered a satirical commentary aimed at those who abuse women. This meme was also a repost from @zarascomics, as stated in the English caption, “@zarascomics yasssss ❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️❤️ we are human, right???”

Similar to the administrator, the followers frequently composed sentences in English (see figure 2). Feedback from followers of @indonesiainfeminis and @perempuan.merdeka in the comments section are also written in English. The image above depicts a screenshot of an article about the raid on prostitutes by Andre Rosiade. In response to the post, @savitripw wrote: “Sex workers will always be treated like shit, and it is so sad?? Like, please try to fix the poverty system before trapping people who need money to LIVE JFC.” In the image below, @jkeanyse commented: “Lady = and you not for married with folk lady!!! go away.”

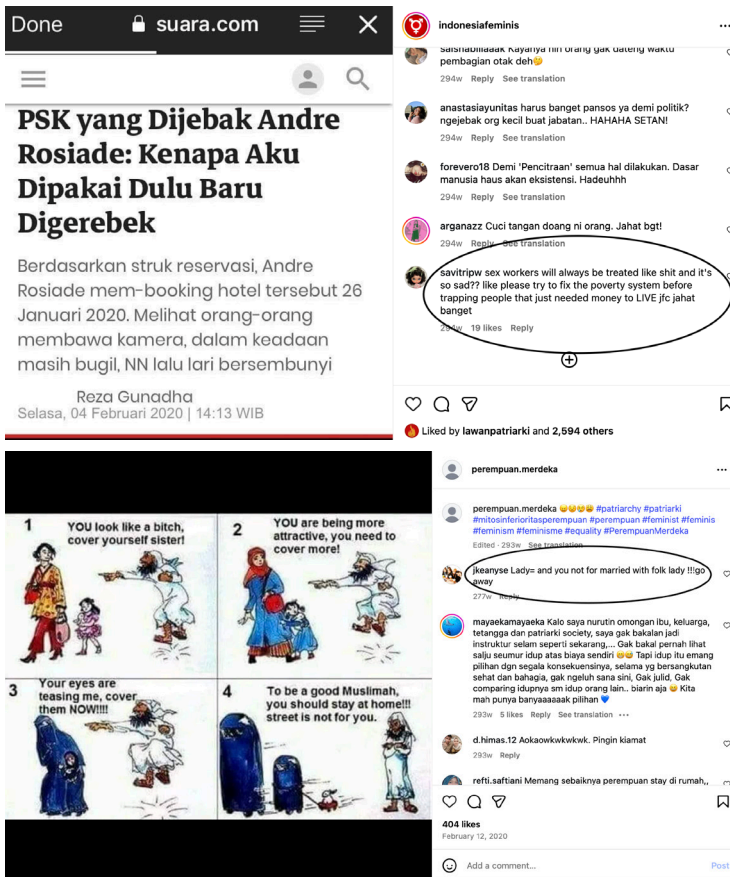


Figure 1. Examples of English phrases used by followers of @indonesiainfeminis and @perempuan.merdeka. *Top*, Content posted by @indonesiainfeminis on February 4, 2020.⁷ *Bottom*, Content posted by @perempuan.merdeka on February 12, 2020.⁸

The use of English by the followers of feminist accounts shows that they have the same demographic profile as the administrators of the selected Instagram accounts. The interaction between the administrator and followers is apparent because of their mutual understanding as represented in their shared language. The grammatical errors in the English sentences or comments are not an issue.

Purba and Prihandita (2017) elucidated that language serves as a marker of class. Indonesian is used by nearly all social strata, encompassing individuals from the bottom middle economic and social groups. They investigated the use of language in young people's conversations on social media. People that regularly speak English typically possess an educational background from prestigious universities and have a favorable socioeconomic status. Their use of English signifies the advantage of their status among the upper middle class.

Prayoga and Khatimah (2019, 50–51) demonstrated that English is becoming a significant entity in urban society.

Bahasa Inggris melekat sebuah simbol yang dapat mempengaruhi identitas pemakainya. Bahkan perkembangan pola pikir terhadap penggunaan bahasa Inggris tidak berhenti pada alasan praktis-pragmatis untuk mengungkapkan jati diri dan penguasaan informasi tetapi telah berkembang lebih jauh menyangkut prestise dan manfaat ekonomis.

[English has a symbol attached to it that can influence the identity of its users. In fact, the development of the mindset regarding the use of English does not stop at practical-pragmatic reasons for expressing identity and mastery of information. However, it has developed further regarding prestige and economic benefits.]

English evolved as a symbol of prestige for specific socioeconomic classes, signifying that its speakers are educated individuals with global access. Thus, the use of English by digital feminist accounts suggests that their material is aimed at a specific demographic. Women from suburban regions, lacking higher

education, or belonging to the elderly demographic, constitute groups resistant to utilizing English. Therefore, the online content in feminist narratives is not designed for them.

EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Digital technology and social media have been demonstrated to serve as responses to the obstacles encountered by feminist organizations. Upon reviewing our findings, the examination of the five feminist accounts on Instagram revealed an ambivalence in the practice of digital feminism. Due to representational bias, the increased activity of feminist activism online may not necessarily resolve gender problems.

Donna Haraway concurred that women must enhance their technological proficiency to effectively interact with the “informatics of domination” and challenge these systems (Toto and Scarinci 2021, 137). This condition is difficult to execute in Indonesia. The digital divide is an essential issue that hinders the promotion of a democratic environment. There are numerous factors that contribute to this disparity, including the sluggish dissemination of technology due to the significant challenge of access. Modern equipment, including the internet, is inaccessible to numerous regions of Indonesia. Despite physical access being available, exorbitant internet service fees provide a barrier for certain individuals. Inadequate skills pose another significant issue because educational attainment influences an individual’s digital literacy. Poor technological skills hinder an individual’s ability to utilize digital gadgets effectively.

In Indonesia, a belief that technology is a male domain and a masculine sphere persists. Consequently, the contribution of women to the advancement of information technology remains significantly less compared to that of men. Numerous factors contribute to the digital divide for women: (1) geographical conditions restrict women’s access to technological information due to their limited mobility compared to men; (2) persistent illiteracy among many women, minimal access to education and

information, uneven distribution of technology training, time constraints, and insufficient economic resources; and (3) the enduring influence of patriarchal culture within the technology sector. Therefore, the realm of information technology remains predominantly male-dominated (Wahyuningtyas and Adi 2016).

The challenge of discarding the masculine and patriarchal perception of technology has raised doubts about the concept of cyberfeminism. Sadari (2016) summarized several ideas of feminists who question the capacity of cyberspace to empower women precisely because it remains dominated by a patriarchal culture that freely instills its ideology. For instance, cyberspace continues to objectify women. Take for example, men's visual gratification and the unrestricted availability of pornographic material online that relegates women to the status of objects of gaze.

Technology also has masculine characteristics as demonstrated by the online harassment and bullying of women. Women who regularly articulate their opinions and critiques on injustice experience threats of violence, doxing, and organized defamation attempts. A commonly addressed concern is the violence faced by female journalists who are subjected to internet abuse, especially those reporting on gender, human rights, or political matters. PR2Media's research revealed that 85.7% of the 1,256 female journalists questioned in Indonesia have encountered several forms of violence (Yusuf 2023). This illustrates how masculine dominance in digital environments may be used to suppress and regulate women's voices, similar to how men exercise power in real life. Another example is content moderation algorithms that potentially fail to identify gender-based hate speech, making the network unsafe for women. According to Golunova (2025), recent technological developments have not enabled women to engage on social media without experiencing hateful or derogatory information or suffering discriminatory constraints on their expression. The automated systems employed in content moderation tend to perpetuate exclusion and discrimination.

This situation often results in women's disinterest in being involved in technology. Wajcman (2010 cited in Gurung 2018) found that technology is both a source and a cause of gender

inequality. He observed that women's disinterest in technology is caused by gender stereotypes with deeply embedded cultural masculinity. Therefore, women are encouraged to adopt masculine traits in order to adapt to technology. For example, women engaging in online discussion forums often feel compelled to conceal their identities as men or adopt aggressive, violent masculine behaviors, such as employing harsh language—a fact corroborated by the data collected for this study.

Not only does technology carry out oppression in new forms, it also triggers problems of impartiality or inequality. The situations we examined demonstrate that technological development creates gaps. The gaps may arise between the contemporary generation and the preceding generation, the demographics of those in the center of modernity and those in peripheral regions, highly educated versus low-educated or uneducated populations, or individuals categorized as information-rich versus information-poor. Klein (2010 cited in Hinsey 2013) asserted that the capacity and opportunity to use the internet is a privilege that women of earlier generations lacked. Interestingly, digital feminist activism in India has resulted in a split in feminist ideology between the older and younger generations (Jain 2020). For example, #MeToo as a global movement spread by social media is irrelevant to the older generation because it does not address the major problems in Indian society caused by the unequal caste structure.

Fotopoulou (2016) stated that digital activists were celebrating technology, not really solving the social problems that were occurring. She argues that although digital technology offers utopian promises, it drives feminist movements to conform to a framework that may obstruct their objectives, transforming action into a commodified spectacle. Activism focused solely on concise and compelling social media narratives oversimplifies complex issues and detracts attention from difficult and time-consuming reforms to existing structures. The belief to always be connected overlooks the prevailing digital divide, wherein numerous women and oppressed communities lack the necessary access, skills, or time to participate in online activism (Fotopoulou

2014). Consequently, they often neglect the diversity of culture, which contributes to the different problems experienced by women. In the end, digital feminist activism has, to some extent, succeeded in empowering women. Nonetheless, they continue to fail in representing the interests of other women's groups.

In light of several critiques of cyberfeminism and the findings of this research, we contend that cyberfeminism fosters homogeneous communities while neglecting the diversity of women's issues. Consequently, technology often marginalizes non-users (Hinsey 2013).

4. CONCLUSION

Representation often creates problems when it provides opportunities for certain interests to exercise their power, especially if what is being represented is in actuality absent (Noviani 2020). The rapid development of technology and global connectivity has established a new public sphere, while also leading to profound socio-political tensions. Initiated by young women activists responding to contemporary gender issues, such as the gender-based violence and the rise of religious conservatism that aims to restrict women's bodily autonomy and freedom to express themselves, the emergence of feminist digital activism on social media has attracted Indonesian youth and young adults from the middle class and urban society who are technologically literate. Through social media, digital feminist activism, in principle, seeks to represent and present the interests of women who have so far been unable to represent themselves either due to limited access, lack of strong awareness, lack of capital (economic, social, or cultural), or other reasons. This progress is quite encouraging because it can build public awareness and knowledge of gender ideology. The growing awareness among women to speak out has led to many cases of sexual violence being exposed. Greater visibility of these issues has led to increased support from other women, strengthening the bonds of women's solidarity. Thus, several cases of gender injustice can attract wider public attention and sympathy.

Unfortunately, feminist groups have not succeeded in placing themselves in the position of the women they represent. The group of digital feminists in question have middle-class backgrounds, are highly educated, graduated from foreign universities, and live in urban areas. However, they are still like snails in their shells. When identifying the problems that occur, they are still limited to problems experienced by women within their circle. They have not yet broadened the scope of their attention to the problems of various other women. As a result, they only speak and work on behalf of the interests of the women in their circle and do not represent the interests of all women.

Digital feminist activism has indeed succeeded in building awareness and empowerment among women. Today, women dare to speak out when experiencing sexual harassment and violence. They speak out loud to demand equality in all fields. They have the power to fight for their interests. However, this only applies to certain groups of women: those who are highly educated, live in urban areas, are middle class, and are also technologically literate. Other groups of women remain silenced and ignored.

Spivak (and Marx) raise this representation problem, and it should be a concern for feminist activists. Feminist groups that are active on social media must increase access and attention to other women's groups in order to present their interests and voices, which have been absent until now. In this way, representation bias can be avoided.

If used wisely, technology should be empowering. Feminist activists should learn more about the potential representation problems that occur and also maximize the capacity of social media so that this platform can represent all women in all elements. If this can be done, cyberfeminism will become more reflective, more critical, and more rooted in feminist theory, which has helped grow the women's empowerment movement.

FIGURES

- 1 Sample of English content posted by @lawanpatriarchy. *Top*, Posted on February 17, 2020. *Bottom*, Posted on February 1, 2020.
- 2 Examples of English phrases used by followers of @indonesianfeminis and @perempuan.merdeka. *Top*, Content posted by @indonesiafeminis on February 4, 2020. *Bottom*, Content posted by @perempuan.merdeka on February 12, 2020.

TABLES

- 1 Number of Followers of the Instagram Accounts Studied
- 2 Configuration of the Issues Presented by the Selected Instagram Accounts

NOTES

- * The completion of this research paper would not have been possible without the support and guidance of LP3M of Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta. We would like to extend our gratitude to LP3M of Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta for the opportunity and their invaluable support in conducting this research project and completing the publication.
- 1 Aggressive cyber-sexism denotes any misogynistic, discriminating, and harassing conduct aimed at women and other gender groups within digital environments. It is an extreme manifestation of online misogyny that employs digital media to openly assault, threaten, or humiliate someone (Jagayat and Choma 2021).
- 2 House of Representatives member Andre Rosiade gained significant attention following his participation in a raid on commercial sex workers (PSK/Pekerja Seks Komersial) in Padang, West Sumatra, on January 26, 2020. Speculation emerged that the incursion on the PSKs was a calculated scheme devised by Andre. Andre posted the raid on his Instagram account on January 27, 2020. This raid faced criticism because it failed to comply with the appropriate protocols (Kompas.com 2020b).
- 3 The announcement of new board members by the Student Executive Board (BEM/Badan Executive Mahasiswa) of Jakarta State University (UNJ/Universitas Negeri Jakarta) on Instagram has elicited controversy. The Instagram post of BEM showcased images of all the new members. However, the photographs of the female members were blurred (Ramadhan 2020).
- 4 Female employees at PT Alpen Food Industry (AICE) experienced abuses of their rights, including discrimination about menstrual leave, exploitation of pregnant workers who were refused reduced hours, and challenges in accessing paid leave. These challenges come in conjunction with others such as insufficient wages and excessive working hours (Kompas.com 2020a).

- 5 See: <https://www.instagram.com/p/B8rEG6SgRO7/>.
- 6 See: https://www.instagram.com/p/B8B9Oa_g1XQ/.
- 7 See: <https://www.instagram.com/p/B8Jmx7mgsAV/>.
- 8 See: <https://www.instagram.com/p/B8dqarugCSD/>.

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