

# Digital Spaces as a Terrain for Feminist Resistance Against Mainstream Masculinity in Indonesia

Ni Nyoman Clara Listya Dewi<sup>1\*</sup>, Rachel Olivia Christina<sup>2</sup>, Goura Victoria Pattiselanno<sup>3</sup>, Ni Wayan Rainy Priadarsini<sup>4</sup>

Udayana University<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>

[claralistya@unud.ac.id](mailto:claralistya@unud.ac.id)<sup>1\*</sup>, [christina.2312521037@student.unud.ac.id](mailto:christina.2312521037@student.unud.ac.id)<sup>2</sup>,  
[pattiselanno.2312521029@student.unud.ac.id](mailto:pattiselanno.2312521029@student.unud.ac.id)<sup>3</sup>, [rainypriadarsini@unud.ac.id](mailto:rainypriadarsini@unud.ac.id)<sup>4</sup>

## Abstract

This article examines how digital citizenship initiatives in Indonesia reflect feminist International Relations (IR) critiques of participation and power, which remain predominantly masculine and elitist in nature. Historically, political engagement and public participation have been structured around male dominance, framing participation as a masculine-coded activity. Although feminist movements have long struggled for women's political inclusion, gender disparities persist, including in digital spaces. Internet access, an essential prerequisite for digital participation, remains uneven worldwide: in 2019, only 48 percent of women had access to the internet compared to 58 percent of men. This gender gap continues to shape who is able to enter and meaningfully engage in digital deliberation in terms of quantity and communicative expression. Through a literature-based analysis, this study explores how Indonesian digital citizenship initiatives, such as Jakarta Feminist, Emancipate ID, and networks of Indigenous women and advocacy groups, embody feminist critiques of patriarchal participation structures. The analysis focuses on how these initiatives integrate gender-inclusive practices, including vulnerable group-friendly design features, moderation mechanisms that amplify women's voices, and gender-disaggregated participation data. The findings suggest that digital citizenship in Indonesia not only broadens opportunities for public participation but also serves as a political arena that challenges traditional hierarchies of power, contributing to the redefinition of participation in more gender-equitable terms.

**Keywords:** *Digital Participation, Gender, Digital Space, Indonesia*

## 1. Introduction

Since its emergence in 2004, Facebook has rapidly become one of the most widely used social media platforms globally. Shortly thereafter, platforms such as Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), and TikTok developed into major digital spaces through which users communicated and shared information. The virtual sphere has increasingly functioned as a vital medium for many individuals, facilitating interaction across geographical boundaries and enabling the formation of diverse online communities. At its core, social media fulfills fundamental human needs for interaction, belonging, and communal engagement (Global Society World News, 2024). As a result, it has become an essential component of contemporary social life in many countries. The growth of the Internet and social media has transformed the landscape of mass communication and expanded the concept of the public sphere, originally defined by Jürgen Habermas as a domain where citizens engage in rational-critical debate and generate public opinion that shapes social and political processes.

This transformation has prompted the emergence of new conceptualizations, particularly the notion that traditional public spaces, such as town halls, have shifted to digital formats. Digital platforms now play a significant societal role in disseminating emergency information, fostering solidarity-based communities, and facilitating various online events and social movements, collectively referred to as community digital town squares (CDTS) (Clara & Tunjung, 2023). In many cases, these platforms have contributed to the democratization of communication by providing opportunities for marginalized

groups to articulate their voices alongside dominant institutions. Notable examples include Indonesia's #17+8 People's Demands movement and the #MeToo and Black Lives Matter movements in the United States, all of which gained momentum through social media and connected individuals across transnational boundaries.

However, the increasing commodification and manipulation of digital platforms threaten their very essence, shifting their functions from serving public interests to advancing profit and power (Global Society World News, 2024). In Staab's (2022) study, *Social Media and the Digital Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, it is argued that while social media has indeed transformed the public sphere, these transformations do not necessarily align with the normative values of deliberative democracy. Instead, social media often amplifies hegemonic discourse and entrenches traditional power relations within society (Demirhan, 2014). Social media has therefore evolved beyond a mere space of interaction; it has become a medium that reconstructs and reinforces the masculine social practices. The idealized image of men is produced and circulated through curated visual content, contributing to the construction of the "ideal man" and generating structural effects that marginalize women's bodies. Power relations reproduced through such imagery frequently position women as complements, followers, or supporters of strong, dominant, and authoritative male figure.

Tanner and Gillardin (2025) refer to this phenomenon as toxic communication, which encompasses a spectrum of harmful content ranging from criminal behaviors such as hate speech, cyberstalking, incitement to hatred, and defamation, to non-criminal but damaging expressions, including the promotion of stereotypes about specific social groups (e.g., the notion that a woman's place is in the home). This spectrum also includes intermediate forms, such as trolling. Together, these practices illustrate how digital platforms facilitate communicative environments that reinforce gendered power structures. Although digital spaces appear open and more conducive to deliberation, structural and cultural barriers continue to sustain the dominance of the mainstream masculinity. Consequently, the value systems embedded in society position the ideal male figure as the primary normative standard, thereby diminishing women's social roles. This normative standard indirectly shapes gender hierarchies that differentiate and constrain men's and women's roles.

While digital platforms allow for diverse forms of expression, traditional gender representations persist; these representations do not stand alone but are interwoven into broader societal structures (Sonni et al., 2025). Such representations are further reproduced through social media algorithms that reflect and reinforce the existing societal stigmas. Consequently, digital spaces cannot be viewed as inherently liberatory from gender norms; rather, they often perpetuate the structures of inequality present in the offline world. Castaneda (2022) highlights that gender bias is embedded in algorithms and data processing systems, suggesting that digital technologies are far from neutral. Major platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram frequently feature masculine figures in high-engagement topics such as politics, business, and health, thus reinforcing existing gendered stigmas related to masculinity and femininity.

Moreover, the structure of digital spaces exacerbates inequalities in access. Persistent gender gaps in digital literacy, internet use, and mobile device ownership limit women's opportunities to fully participate in the digital economy (World Bank, 2022). In many Global South countries, limited access, digital skill gaps, and sociocultural constraints reinforce the digital gender divide (Ferreira, 2025). Women often face structural barriers, including restricted private space, domestic responsibilities, and limited autonomy, which collectively reduce their opportunities to access the Internet and engage with digital platforms. These constraints restrict women's participation, creating greater opportunities for

men and allowing digital ecosystems and algorithmic practices to lean toward a masculinized perspective. The persistence of these inequalities has contributed to the emergence of digital feminist discourse and activism in Indonesia.

The dominance of masculinity on digital platforms has encouraged women and gender rights advocates to create safer, more reflective, and more critical alternative spaces that function as forms of resistance against mainstream masculinity. In Indonesia, several initiatives have pioneered digital feminist engagement, including Magdalene.co, Emancipate ID, Jakarta Feminist (JF), SAFEnet (Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression Network), Perempuan Berkisah, and Konde. These platforms demonstrate the need to understand how digital spaces emerge and evolve as sites of resistance to unequal access and gendered power relations in the Philippines. Accordingly, a deeper examination is required to explore how digital platforms challenge gender bias and construct alternative spaces of safety and empowerment. Based on the foregoing discussion, this study formulates the following research question: How does digital space serve as an arena for feminist resistance to mainstream masculinity in Indonesia? This study analyzes the dynamics, strategies, and roles of digital feminist platforms in articulating counter-discourses to the dominance of masculinity in online spaces.

## **2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development**

The way humans interact as social beings has undergone a process of transformation, with physical interactions shifting to digital interactions. This digital interaction takes place through social media without geographical or time constraints. This interaction has created a new platform called the Community Digital Town Square (CDTS) as a place for free discussion in the digital realm between communities (Clara and Tunjung, 2023). The concept of the CDTS has emerged as a critical metaphor for understanding the transformation of public spaces in the digital age. The term envisions a virtual reincarnation of the traditional town square—a central space where people gather, exchange information, debate, and form collective opinions.

The CDTS encompasses a broader, organic, and often chaotic ecosystem that consists of social media platforms, online forums, chat rooms, and blogs. Theoretically, this concept is rooted in Jürgen Habermas's work, *“The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An inquiry into a category of bourgeois society”* (1991) on the “public sphere,” where citizens engage in rational-critical discourse. Habermas viewed the public sphere as being limited to the “haves,” but since various socio-economic changes, the public sphere has continued to undergo structural change. The large number of people who have begun to use the digital public sphere has brought about changes, where rational-critical debate has begun to turn into consumerism and entertainment. The digital public sphere or CDTS is seen as a potential platform for the realization of such a public space, although in practice, it often deviates significantly from Habermasian deliberative ideals.

The evolution of the CDTS cannot be separated from the rise of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (X), Instagram, and TikTok. These platforms have become the main infrastructure for contemporary public life, where news is consumed, identities are expressed, and social movements are coordinated (Cohen et al. 2021). They serve as arenas for the dynamic exchange of ideas and markets for attention and influence. A key characteristic of the CDTS is its decentralized nature; no single authority controls the conversation. Instead, discourse is shaped by millions of users, platform algorithms, and influencers, creating an environment that is both democratic and vulnerable to manipulation. Feminism is defined as a women's movement that demands full equality between women and men. Feminism is not a rebellion of women against men but an effort to combat systematic injustice and end oppression against women (Wibowo et al., 2022). In their paper entitled *“Kesetaraan Gender:*

*Sebuah Tinjauan Teori Feminisme*” (2022), Wibowo et al. state that the feminist movement has begun to strive for gender equality, but there are still few gender activists through feminism in Indonesia. Feminism is a difficult topic to discuss in Indonesia because of the deeply rooted patriarchal culture that creates systematic injustice for women.

This patriarchal culture imposes limitations on both women and men, or what can be referred to as femininity and masculinity. Patriarchal culture instills the concept of mainstream masculinity, which is toxic. Gusri Wandu, in his journal entitled “*Rekonstruksi Maskulinitas: Mengungkap Peran Laki-Laki dalam Perjuangan Kesetaraan Gender*” (2015), states that masculinity is greatly influenced by culture, so that the values of masculinity can differ from place to place. In Indonesia, mainstream masculinity is still part of social life, where men are required to be strong, not allowed to cry, and not allowed to be effeminate. Wandu reveals that toxic masculinity gives men a higher position than women, but with a heavier burden. Feminism is needed to achieve gender equality, which is a state where men and women have equal and comparable positions in obtaining their rights as human beings (Audina, D. J., 2022).

This systematic injustice is deeply felt by Indonesian women, and Indonesia's CDTS facilitates new and dynamic forms of feminist resistance. The feminist movement has undergone significant transformation in line with the development of digital technology, where CDTS has become a vital part of the articulation and organization of feminist resistance. According to Manijeh Daneshpour (2025) in her paper titled “Introduction to the Special Issue: Feminist Solidarity, Resistance, and Social Justice” feminist resistance is a form of collective contribution to feminist practices that places a double burden on women. Daneshpour argues that feminist resistance must continue to evolve and be collective to achieve the main goal of the feminist movement: gender equality. Through hashtags circulating on Indonesian social media, such as #MulaiBicara, #MeToo, #WomanSupportWoman, and #PerempuanBergerak, issues that were previously considered taboo, such as sexual violence, harassment in the workplace, and the double burden of domestic work, have been brought into the national conversation through digital media. This decentralized digital campaign functions as a politics of recognition that aims to validate women's experiences and make hidden injustices visible. This form of resistance is not only about protest but also about the creation of counter-knowledge and reframing public discourse on gender and sexuality.

### **3. Methodology**

This study uses the literature review method, which can be defined as a series of activities involving the collection of reference materials, methods of viewing and recording, and processing research materials (Zed, 2003). A literature review involves collecting data by exploring magazines, books, documents (in print or electronic form), and other data sources deemed relevant to the study.

## **4. Results and Discussion**

### **4.1. Power Relations in Digital Platform**

Indonesia's Central Bureau of Statistics in 2023 showed that 46.95% of women in Indonesia accessed the internet, compared to 53.05% of men. The gap between these statistics begs the question of why. In Indonesian culture, women, especially married women, have multiple responsibilities that are time-consuming and consistent (Purwanto, 2021). Married Indonesian women juggle the roles of mother, caregiver, supportive wife, and a fundamental part of their local social communities, in addition to having jobs and professional obligations. The society they live in perpetuates the condition where a majority of women barely have enough time to handle their priorities, let alone have time to actively participate on digital platforms. Although some use social media as their professional platform, they are

a small part of the larger group that does not use digital platforms at all. The already limited participation is further affected by content moderation on digital platforms.

In recent years, large digital platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X, and TikTok have conducted content moderation and filtration using algorithms. These algorithms, powered by artificial intelligence (AI), are designed to filter out inappropriate words, gestures, pictures, videos, or other forms of digital content that violate the platform's guidelines (Golunova, 2025). The main purpose of these algorithms is to ensure that users are protected and enjoy a safe space to conduct online activities. Digital platforms that use algorithm-based content moderation expect this to open up more opportunities for marginalized groups, such as women and gender minorities, to speak up and engage in discussions with the general public (Golunova, 2025). Despite the seemingly noble purpose of these algorithms, their implementation and work are not always aligned.

Algorithms are designed to detect the explicit rather than the implicit meaning of digital content. This has led to cases where genuinely harmful content against women (e.g., sexual harassment, domestic violence) is left untouched because it is considered 'a dark joke', while content that aims to educate and protect women (e.g., feminist advocacy) is removed because it is considered a violation of the platform's guidelines. This content that strengthens patriarchal values such as 'women are only good for what is between their legs' and 'girls should act dumb to attract boys' become the popular rhetoric. The algorithm sees that these types of content result in a high engagement rate due to the responses from people who agree or disagree with the content; therefore, instead of being removed, it ends up going viral (Igben & Acchugbue, 2024).

This is why women on digital platforms are forced to curate their content into what is considered attractive by the general public. Content that highlights a woman's physical appearance (e.g., small figure, light skin, fair hair, etc.) is one of the most common categories on digital platforms (Kushwaha, 2024). Unfortunately, these contents are not inclusive in terms of relatability because they reflect what the male gaze expects from a woman and are not realistic. To increase engagement, women on digital platforms are willing to go to great lengths to meet expectations. According to Kuswaha (2024), some examples of these extreme actions are excessive exercise, unnecessary cosmetic surgeries, and unhealthy eating habits. This situation places women in a vulnerable position, where they can refuse to conform and face public opinion influenced by a harsh, sometimes even cruel, patriarchal lens or choose to harm themselves to conform but be seen as nothing more than pretty faces (i.e., be objectified).

The objectification of women enables sexual violence to occur. When women are viewed solely as objects to satisfy male desires, it degrades their dignity as human beings (Awasthi, 2017) and places them on the margins of society, in danger. That is why movements like #MulaiBicara are so important in raising awareness and challenging the status quo, where women are marginalized. #MulaiBicara is a digital movement that was initiated by Lentera Sintas Indonesia, Campaign.com, and Magdalene.co and emerged during multiple news reports of brutal rape cases occurring in multiple regions of Indonesia in 2016 (Stephani & Sarwono, 2018). This movement was born to destigmatize the taboo of discussing sexual violence and victims of sexual violence in Indonesian society. This has proven to be successful because the Indonesian media, public society, and decision-makers have become more involved in addressing the prevalence of sexual violence in Indonesia.

#### ***4.2. Digital Platforms as an Arena for Discourse and Gender Politics***

Digital platforms and social media have become central venues for discourse in modern society because of their accessibility, where they do not require participants to be in the same place or engage

simultaneously, allowing groups of people from diverse backgrounds to join conversations anytime, anywhere (Dewi & Wijanarka, n.d.). Initially, content on these platforms focused on providing entertainment, such as parodies, music videos, and pranks, but it has since evolved to encompass educational and advocacy-oriented material. Prominent social movements such as #MeToo and #MulaiBicara illustrate how social media facilitates activism and raises awareness about gender politics and social justice issues, mobilizing widespread participation and fostering informed discussions. The broad reach and convenience of interacting on these platforms empower people from various backgrounds to engage in dialogues (Rahayuningsih et al., 2025) that might otherwise be inaccessible, allowing them direct interaction with content creators and shaping their understanding of these issues. However, this inclusivity is accompanied by challenges such as online misogyny and harassment, which exacerbate gender inequalities and create hostile environments for women and marginalized groups to speak out.

This is evidenced by Annisa's (2023) study of female cosplayers in Indonesian digital spaces. While cosplay provides women with a platform to express their creativity and identity, representation in digital media often sexualizes and objectifies them. These portrayals frequently involve verbal abuse and harassment, adding to the challenges women face online. Nonetheless, many female cosplayers actively resist these negative representations by controlling their self-presentation and building supportive communities that challenge these limiting stereotypes. This case highlights the complicated nature of digital representation, where women experience both empowerment and objectification simultaneously (Annisa, 2023). Another example of women's representation in digital media appears in TikTok videos in Indonesia, where research conducted by Mukti and Asriadi (2023) shows that women are often portrayed with a focus on beauty and sexuality, reflecting socially constructed gender biases. This representation tends to commodify women's bodies to attract more viewers, reinforcing patriarchal and objectifying narratives. However, TikTok also allows women to express themselves creatively and discuss important social issues, such as gender equality and body positivity. Women use the platform to showcase various talents, support one another, and spread empowering messages, despite the presence of stereotypical portrayals (Mukti & Asriadi, 2023).

To address these challenges, digital platforms have implemented various features and policies to protect and support vulnerable users. For instance, Instagram offers the Abuse, Spam, and Scam menu within its Help Center, which allows users to report abuse anonymously and take actions such as restricting or blocking offenders. It also provides phone support and educational resources to combat bullying, harassment, and other forms of online abuse. TikTok similarly provides a Support Center for reporting hateful comments, harassment via direct messages, and related issues. Beyond protective measures, TikTok also supports creators through initiatives such as the #WomenOfTikTok community, launched to celebrate and uplift women creators who bring about positive change through the platform. These efforts illustrate how digital platforms are evolving beyond content sharing to become active spaces for feminist activism and advocacy. By establishing safe reporting mechanisms, user education, and community-building campaigns, they work to create safer and more inclusive environments that amplify marginalized voices while combating gender-based violence online.

### ***4.3. Forms of Feminist Resistance***

In Indonesia's socio-political landscape, characterized by growing religious conservatism and entrenched patriarchal norms, the digital space has become a significant area of resistance for feminist movements (Hanif et al., 2024). The CDTS makes it easier for Indonesians to speak out and initiate movements as a form of feminist resistance. This digital transformation not only provides new tools for mobilization but also gives birth to innovative and contextual forms of resistance. These forms of

resistance are not limited to open protests but also manifest in subtle yet powerful practices. At the heart of this transformation is the emergence of the practice of “digital sisterhood” reflecting a sense of commonality and solidarity among women. Digital sisterhood is a construction of solidarity and a network of support among women built and strengthened through digital platforms (Aurora & Shuri, 2021). This concept is the backbone of the contemporary Indonesian feminist movement, enabling the creation of safe spaces, the provision of material and emotional support, and the coordination of collective action in an environment that often feels hostile by utilizing CDTS.

Digital sisterhood practices in Indonesia respond to the marginalization of women's voices in mainstream public discourse. In a context where physical spaces for expression are often limited by social norms and community pressures, digital spaces offer an alternative that, while not entirely free from threats, allows for a freer articulation of experiences and demands. Indonesia has several feminist resistance movement initiatives in the digital space, such as the @magdaleneid and @emancipate accounts. id, and @jakartafeminist, which operate on Instagram and X (formerly Twitter). The manifestations of feminist resistance through digital sisterhood as a reflection of solidarity among women are diverse and can be categorized into three types:

a. Mass Awareness and Education Campaigns

Social media platforms, such as Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok, can be used as spaces for discussion and information dissemination. Accounts that discuss feminist issues, such as those mentioned above, have been and can continue to create informative content that is easy to digest (such as infographics, short videos, and threads). This content contains education related to feminist issues, such as gender-based violence, basic human rights regardless of gender, consent, and intersectional feminism. Digital campaigns through feminist social media accounts can also be done with something as simple and short as a hashtag in each post, such as #MulaiBicara, #PerempuanBergerak, #WomanSupportWoman, and so on. Gradual efforts made through regular content posting or embedding hashtags in each post can certainly increase women's awareness of the rights they should be able to obtain with the concept of gender equality. By making complex feminist theory accessible to a wide audience, they desacralize knowledge and democratize feminist discourse.

b. Mobilization of Resources and Support

Women are highly vulnerable to violence, from domestic abuse to digital harassment. Solidarity among women in the digital world serves as a source of support, including psychological counseling, legal assistance, financial aid through online fundraising, and other emergency services. Additionally, when cases involving public figures or certain institutions arise, hashtags such as #Boycott or #Report can quickly become trending as a form of social punishment, demonstrating women's collective economic and political power. Collective actions initiated by feminist accounts transform abstract solidarity into concrete actions that directly alleviate victims' burdens and strengthen their bargaining positions.

c. Reclaiming Narrative

Through blogs, podcasts, social media threads, and digital storytelling platforms, Indonesian women share their personal experiences with highly stigmatized issues such as abortion, divorce, postpartum depression, sexual harassment in the workplace, and conflicts with family members over life choices. This collective storytelling practice serves a dual purpose: on an individual level, it validates experiences and reduces feelings of isolation; on a collective level, it politically dismantles taboos and shows that issues considered “personal” are in fact “political” caused by systemic structures of injustice. By building an archive of shared experiences, they create counter-knowledge that corrects the dominant narrative of Indonesian women as ideal, obedient and homogeneous.

When digital sisterhood practices in Indonesia are placed in a global comparative context, it is clear that feminist movements in various parts of the world utilize digital tools and strategies in ways that are strategically similar but also display significant contextual differences, especially in terms of navigating local challenges (Morgan, 2016). Strategic similarities lie in the use of digital platforms for the core functions of social movements in both countries. The #MeToo movement, which originated in the United States and then spread globally, is also rooted in the logic of digital sisterhood, where women from various backgrounds support each other to dismantle the culture of silence surrounding sexual violence perpetrated by powerful men (Michael & Kathleen, 2023). In South Korea, the #MeToo wave generated significant mass mobilization and legal pressure driven by online activism (Park, S., 2025). Similarly, the #NiUnaMenos (Not One Woman Less) campaign in Latin America, which focuses on combating femicide, uses very similar social media strategies to coordinate street protests involving hundreds of thousands of people in Argentina, Mexico and Chile (Bedrosin, 2022). These similarities suggest the existence of a global “playbook” for digital feminism that includes the use of hashtags, crowdfunding for legal support, and the creation of educational content.

Nonetheless, contextual differences are more revealing in understanding the unique character of Indonesian feminist resistance. The main difference lies in the framing strategies and discourse navigation. In many Western countries, where feminism has become part of a more established public discourse (although still controversial), movements can often use universal human rights language more directly and confrontationally. In contrast, in Indonesia, feminist activists often have to adopt a higher degree of “appropriateness.” They carefully reframe feminist demands in language that is in line with local values, culture, and religion to reduce resistance and broaden appeal. For example, the long advocacy for the ratification of the Sexual Violence Criminal Law (UU TPKS) not only uses a universal human rights framework but also strategically emphasizes the importance of protecting women's honor, the dignity of Indonesian families, and Eastern values (Nitha et al., 2024).

In addition, the intensity and source of the threats faced differ. While feminist activists everywhere face online harassment, Indonesian activists face more structured and multidimensional risks. They are not only confronted with ordinary misogyny but also with organized backlash from conservative religious groups with large followings and digital resources. The threats of doxing (leaking personal data), reporting to the authorities under ambiguous articles of law, and systematic smear campaigns add layers of complexity and extreme psychological danger (Munawwarah, 2025). These conditions force Indonesian feminists to develop strict digital security hygiene and collective mental resilience strategies that may not be as urgently needed by their counterparts in countries with more stable democratic protections as in Indonesia.

#### ***4.4. Digital Space as an Arena for Negotiating Gender Power***

Digital spaces, particularly social media, are often perceived as arenas for free expression, where individuals can articulate their identities and ideas without the constraints of stigma or stereotypes. These platforms enable users to participate in public discourse daily, shaping conversations through comments, content creation, and engagement with diverse communities. For instance, a woman content creator producing material typically coded as masculine, such as politics or technology, can be seen as performing a form of everyday negotiation within gendered digital norms. Such acts challenge prevailing stereotypes, even though gender inequalities remain highly visible online and competing narratives frequently collide with each other.

This tension is particularly evident in the circulation and amplification of messages related to toxic masculinity and its influence on young people, who require supportive environments to form their

worldviews without exposure to harmful gendered content (Weale 2024). Digital feminist activism has gained significant visibility in response to these structural disparities. The #MeTooMovement, for example, has become a global advocacy framework through which survivors and allies demand accountability and policy reform related to sexual violence. The widespread use of this hashtag demonstrates substantial public concern regarding violence against women and exposes the enduring barriers that limit women's participation in digital public spheres. These constraints contribute to the broader marginalization of women in social and political life. At the institutional level, civil society organizations play a significant role in advancing digital feminist advocacy. Jakarta Feminist, for instance, has actively supported the case of Laras Faizati, a civilian detained for allegedly inciting mass protests in August 2025. Their intervention underscores the state's failure to protect young women who use digital platforms to voice their concerns about governance and social conditions. By mobilizing public empathy and urging collective awareness, such organizations highlight the urgent need to safeguard women's right to express dissent in digital spaces.

Digital space appears to be the perfect platform to provide more space for feminists to amplify their advocacy movements. Digital feminists use online posts as a space for advocacy, self-representation, and mobilization through the use of hashtags (Sun, 2024). According to Carvalho (2025), feminist activists utilize digital media to challenge patriarchy in urban spaces and how digital platforms function in advocacy and public participation. Through digital campaigns, critical content production, and the formation of online solidarity communities, they encourage the formation of a more participatory and emancipatory digital citizenship. This participation is not merely about using technology but also about demanding a safe, just, and equal space.

For example, digital activism through the "Beware of KBGO" campaign on Instagram has proven to play a significant role in supporting victims of KBGO in Indonesia and fostering public empathy. The "Beware of KBGO" campaign positively correlates with women's involvement in KBGO issues through digital education, policy advocacy, and the provision of legal and psychological support for victims (Khoirini & Widaningrum, 2025). As a "free" space, digital space can also be a medium for feminists to demonstrate their resistance through opinion essays. Therefore, Magdalene.co exists as an online platform that presents content, articles, and podcasts from a feminist and gender perspective. This online platform exists as a resistant response to media that overly prioritizes masculinity and shifts women's roles. One particularly bold article was written by Syifa Maulida in 2025, highlighting how the discourse on reforming the Criminal Code (KUHP) has the potential to restrict women's access to safe abortion. This article has been read 2,294 times since its initial publication in October 2025, indicating wide public interest in this sensitive topic.

Advocacy through digital spaces enables marginalized groups (including women and gender minorities) to construct their own narratives, disseminate knowledge, form solidarity networks, and attract the attention of the public and policymakers (Ratnasari 2021). Through digital platforms, feminists can freely produce counter-narratives to the dominant discourse on how masculinity is portrayed in social media. Therefore, a safe and comfortable digital space for women is essential. This is the case for SAFEnet, a civil society organization that actively advocates for policies that support the fulfillment of digital rights and a more human rights perspective. This includes efforts to increase civil society's capacity regarding digital rights. The role of civil society in promoting safe online platforms has been supported by government policies through the netizen protection policy in Indonesia, as outlined in Law No. 27 of 2022 concerning Personal Data Protection (UU PDP) and Law No. 1 of 2024 concerning the Second Amendment to Law No. 11 of 2008 concerning Information and Electronic Transactions (UU

ITE). However, the policy must have a strong legal aspect and an unbiased interpretation accompanied by a clear and effective law enforcement mechanism.

In the broader context of social media-based advocacy, several platforms, such as *konde.co* and *Perempuan Berkisah*, serve as important spaces for women to produce knowledge and articulate ideas that are often considered sensitive within mainstream society. For instance, a post published in October 2025 titled “If Your Wife Doesn’t Cook for You at Home” adopts a bold tone that challenges the prevailing stigma that domestic responsibilities, particularly cooking, are inherently the wife’s duty to perform. The post further urges the public to develop greater empathy toward femicide victims, whose murders are sometimes triggered by expectations surrounding household labor and the “food” they prepare. Another example can be found on *konde.co* in an article titled “Stop Technological Misogyny: The Long Chain of Gender-Based Cyberattacks and Disinformation,” which critiques the proliferation of false narratives about how women “should” behave, speak, and dress.

This article highlights the rapid spread of gender-based disinformation on social media and illustrates this through the case of Ibu Ana, a woman in a pink hijab who went viral after protecting demonstrators during the #17+8 protest. In a follow-up piece, *konde.co* asserts that the prevalence of digital insecurity experienced by women is a structural issue and should be recognized as the responsibility of the state, which is obligated to safeguard its citizens’ digital rights and security. These examples demonstrate that social media functions both symbolically and materially as a space that facilitates the sharing of experiences and supports the mechanisms of collective healing and recovery. While these forms of expression may appear bold, they ultimately serve to amplify women’s voices, challenge patriarchal structures, and foster communities of solidarity. A similar manifestation of this solidarity was evident when hundreds of Indonesian citizens in Melbourne organized a demonstration at Federation Square to support the 17+8 movement (Tempo, 2025).

Digital spaces (social media, online platforms, and the Internet) are not just places for communication but also spaces for struggles over power, meaning, and resources. When resistance forms, the existence of digital spaces is no longer about who dominates the discourse but also about how certain groups are represented and what narratives become dominant. When civil society begins to deconstruct dominant narratives, such as how feminists critique patriarchy, the feminist struggle becomes not only about content (symbols) but also about who controls the digital spaces (materials). Feminist and women’s groups, Indigenous communities, and scholars in the Global South/North, refusing to adhere to hegemonic datafication programs, have started to organize and fight back from within (Solar, 2022).

## **5. Conclusion**

### ***5.1. Conclusion***

Digital spaces, particularly social media, are no longer seen solely as a space for self-expression, but go beyond that, they have become spaces for producing ideas and negotiating notions of gender. Therefore, digital spaces have become arenas for contesting meaning and strengthening identities. Unfortunately, the algorithms used in today’s social media are still influenced by traditional views that tend to place greater value on masculine traits. Consequently, women often suffer from double vulnerability, stigmatization, and stereotypes that prevent them from fully participating in digital discourse. Nevertheless, digital spaces provide opportunities for resistance and foster social transformation. For example, social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and YouTube have become spaces for producing narratives that foster collective awareness and solidarity.

Social media is no longer an alternative medium but rather a primary platform for voicing feminist voices that have been marginalized in conventional discourse. For example, calls to voice anti-GBV in SAFEnet posts or space for expressing grievances in women's stories give greater meaning to the presence of feminists in the digital realm. Moreover, the emergence of the hashtag #MeTooMovement or #17+8 has sparked global empathy for cases that weaken women's positions in social life. This digital feminist discourse is another form of nurturing 'sisterhood' with a touch of solidarity and togetherness. Magdalene.co, konde.co, and Jakarta Feminist have proven that the digital space is a safe place to produce ideas, even if those ideas are anti-mainstream. Uniquely, these digital spaces have received a large response from women and marginalized groups, even though they operate amidst deeply rooted patriarchal values in Indonesia. This is in line with the principle of digital citizenship, where actors redefining the boundaries of power are predominantly women.

### **5.2. Limitation**

While this study provides a comprehensive overview of the dynamics of feminist resistance in digital spaces, several limitations should be considered.

- 1 It does not address less popular platforms, particularly those created independently by communities.
- 2 Extensive quantitative data are needed on algorithmic patterns, user demographics, and engagement on each platform in every discourse on gender issues.
- 3 Digital platforms, algorithms, and regulations change rapidly; therefore, some findings may not be long-term.

### **5.3. Suggestion**

Based on these limitations, several recommendations for future development are as follows:

- 1 Expanding the scope of platforms and digital ecologies by considering alternative platforms developed at the initiative of civil society organizations.
- 2 Encouraging collaboration between academics, activists, and digital platforms to encourage the formation of gender-sensitive regulations and platform design.
- 3 Connecting digital feminist research with policy by producing policy briefs that can be submitted to the government.

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