Feminist Activism in Digital Culture: Problems of Class and Ethics

Muria Endah Sokowati
Communication Department, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Indonesia
Corresponding author, e-mail: muriaendah@umy.ac.id

Abstract

Social media is a platform used by feminist activists for activism. It overcomes spatial and temporal barriers, and helps spread the movement's message more quickly and efficiently. The participatory culture encourages the feminist movement to develop more massively. Many argue that social media helps feminist activists to empower women. Related to the statement, this study observes how activism practices in social media represent women's voices and problems. This study also seeks to reveal the problems in the movement. The researcher observed five accounts of feminist activists on Instagram (@Indonesiafeminis, @lawanpatriarki, @perempuanfeminis, @muslimahfeminis, @perempuan.merdeka). Through the virtual ethnography method, the researcher found a representation problem when digital feminist accounts published the problems experienced by women through their content. These accounts only represent middle-class women's problems. There is also an ethical problem because these accounts tend to be reactive by ignoring the ethics of doing activism.
Keywords: Cyberfeminism; Participatory Culture; Digital Activism; Digital Divide; Digital Ethics

Abstrak

Media sosial menjadi platform yang digunakan aktivis feminis sebagai sarana aktivisme karena mampu mengatasi hambatan spasial dan temporal, juga membantu menyebarkan pesan gerakan lebih cepat dan efisien. Budaya partisipatif mendorong gerakan feminis berkembang lebih masif. Banyak pihak berpendapat bahwa media sosial membantu perjuangan aktivis feminis untuk memberdayakan perempuan. Penelitian ini berupaya untuk melihat bagaimana praktik aktivisme di media sosial, apakah media sosial memang menjadi ruang yang mampu mewakili suara dan problem-problem perempuan. Penelitian ini juga berupaya untuk mengungkap persoalan-persoalan yang muncul dalam gerakan tersebut. Untuk itu, peneliti mengamati lima akun aktivis feminis di Instagram (@Indonesiafeminis, @lawanpatriarki, @perempuanfeminis, @muslimahfeminis, @perempuan.merdeka). Lewat metode virtual ethnography, peneliti menemukan adanya problem representasi saat akun-akun feminis digital mencoba mewakili problem-problem yang dialami oleh perempuan lewat konten-kontennya. Akun-akun tersebut hanya mewakili persoalan perempuan di kalangan kelas menengah. Selain problem representasi, ada pula problem etika. Akun-akun feminis digital cenderung reaktif dengan mengabaikan etika dalam melakukan aktivisme.
Kata Kunci: Cyberfeminisme; Budaya Partisipatif; Aktivisme Digital; Kesenjangan Digital; Etika Digital

Introduction

Modern communication technology supported by the networked computer, personalized technology, and digital image has produced digital culture. The digital culture and the massive use of communication technology encourage more personal user participation, dynamic visual environment, and high-speed connectivity features. As a logical consequence, digital culture gives rise to new and radical representations of the ongoing, chronic changes.

As part of the new media culture that has a vital role in various fields, including democracy (Yuliarti, 2020), digital culture accommodates public participation and empowerment (Jenkins, 2018). It creates spaces for the public to express and actualize themselves and encourages the practice of activism. The activists use digital media to reach supporters, promote ideas, and build awareness of the progressive issues in the broader community. Digital technology gives hopes that the media will accommodate public spaces to create a democratic society.

The features of digital technology accommodate feminist activists' visions of social changes. On social media, like *Facebook*, *Twitter,* and *Instagram,* or *YouTube,* some accounts were created to promote feminism, such as @indonesiafeminis (feminist Indonesia), @lawanpatriarki (fight patriarchy), @perempuanfeminis (feminist women), @muslimahfeminis (feminist Muslimah), @perempuan.merdeka (independent women), @indonesiaperlufeminis (Indonesia needs feminist), @perempuanmenggugat (women sue), and @perempuanpeduli (women care). These accounts support the feminist movement to fight for gender equality and empowerment. For example, @indonesiafeminis supports sexuality and gender diversity and also prioritizes class awareness; and @perempuan.merdeka states in its profile, "*Let us hand in hand, fight against capitalism, sexism, racism, homophobia, and transphobia.*"

The rise of these accounts indicates a turning point for feminism as a social movement in Indonesia. As is known, social media is one of the internet-based media that users can easily use to fulfill their information and communication needs (Febriansyah & Muksin, 2021). Therefore, social media can reach women's voices that have not been heard. Previously, some women's issues were not exposed to conventional media openly. However, the situation has changed nowadays. It is not difficult to find the narratives that have been marginalized on social media. In this case, social media helps to circulate messages of women's problems and experiences and facilitates women to be aware of gender inequality issues. Moreover, social media can empower and support women to engage and involve in public discourses.

However, the same old story, technology always brings paradoxical values, either empowering or muting the subject. On one hand, we can have much hope that technology can solve women's problems. On the other hand, there will always be consequences. The speed, access, time, and values of technology create a side effect that anyone should anticipate. The increasingly integrated media technology and all its implications make it necessary for us to question the role and impact of these activists in accommodating contemporary issues (Fotopoulou, 2016).

This paper seeks to reveal the problems in feminist activism in the digital space. There are two problems shared here, class and ethics. Among several writings glorifying the rising of digital feminist activism in Indonesia (Alatas & Sutanto, 2019; Marlina, 2019; Parahita, 2019), this paper attempts to revitalize this discussion from a different point of view.

Fotopoulou (2016) inquired an exciting question, while feminist activists taking

advantage of media technology to disseminate their idea, does it mean that they are still feminists? It is the same old contrasting question of whether communication technology becomes the solution or reproduces gender inequality.

Harraway (2006), in her masterpiece, *Cyborg Manifesto*, viewed that technology has become a potential source of empowerment for women. The gap between women and technology occurs when there is a binary construction between culture and nature, in which men are considered part of the culture category. In contrast, women are included in the nature category. Therefore, men are used to being closer to technology than women. Harraway talked about *cyborgs* as mythical creatures produced by merging man and machine, summarizing how technological developments have blurred the boundaries between "natural" and "automated" human bodies. Thus, *cyborg* represents the blurring lines between biology dan technology. Harraway highlighted that myths and tools mutually constitute each other. If a *cyborg* is free from such a myth of gendered power relations from technology, it can redefine how people view science and technology. As a consequence, it can give a better understanding of social relations. Technology can help women empower marginalized groups. The internet can offer a new strength for women.

Many people believe that the internet can help the struggle of feminist groups. Through social media, some feminist activists voice their messages globally. Technology can build a strong and reactive movement, so some scholars consider it a milestone of the fourth wave in the feminist movement (Cochrane, 2013).

Nevertheless, in many cases, cyberfeminism provokes a new problem of impartiality. In India, for example, digital feminist activism created a rift between the feminist ideologies of the older and younger generation (Jain, 2020). #MeToo, as the global movement spread by social media, was irrelevant for the older generation since it did not touch the main problem in Indian society caused by unequal caste structure.

Fotopoulou (2016) confirmed, quoting Van Dijk in her book *Culture of Connectivity*, that digital activists celebrate technological rather than social. Hence, they disregard the question of cultural specificity and ignore an investigation of agency in multiple sites. This paper attempts to explore this issue further. I explain some problems coming with digital feminist activism, more or less, highlighting Fotopoulou's concern. Digital feminist activism, in some ways, is successful in empowering women. Nevertheless, they still do not represent other women groups' interests.

Technology has a masculine characteristic. It often causes disinterest among women to involve in technology. Wajcman (in Gurung, 2018) found that technology is both a source and cause of gender inequality. Wajcman observed that women's disinterest in technology is due to gender stereotyping with deeply ingrained masculinity cultures. Women are asked to be masculine to adapt to technology.

One of the masculine characteristics mentioned in this research is digital culture, providing space for aggressive behavior. Bullying is one example. The aggressive behavior has caused inconvenience for some women, especially the digital immigrants. Ironically, aggressive behavior is performed in digital feminist accounts.

Method

The researcher used virtual ethnography as the method of this research. This method is adapted from ethnography, which is used to understand social interaction in digital communication (Nasrullah, 2017).

As virtual ethnographic research, this research follows the consensus described by

Abidin & Ida (2018) as follows:

1. First, the study should focus on text-based communication as research focus. This study carefully observed five feminist accounts on *Instagram*: @Indonesiafeminis, @lawanpatriarki, @perempuanfeminis, @muslimahfeminis, and @perempuan.merdeka. The five accounts were chosen because they have a large number of followers. The researcher assumed that a large number of followers indicates the account's popularity. Therefore, it is sufficient to describe the dynamic discourse of feminist ideology that the researcher wanted to explore. The number of followers of the five observed accounts is mentioned in Table 1.

Table 1. The Number of Followers of Each Account

No.	IG Account	The Number of Followers
1	@Indonesiafeminis	184K
2	@lawanpatriarki	98.4K
3	@perempuanfeminis	28.2K
4	@muslimahfeminis	10.6K
5	@perempuan.merdeka	6,095

To limit the research, the researcher only focused on the contents produced by five accounts during February 2020. The researcher also observed the comments on each content. For 29 days, the researcher collected at least five major themes that emerged: sexual harassment and violence, gender bias regulation, LGBTQ, misogynist culture, and women empowerment.

2. Second, during the research process, the traditional method of taking detailed field notes is still carried out by the researcher as a participant observer. The researcher has been the follower of these accounts, so it helps the researcher to conduct participatory observation.

This step is followed by an accurate review; identification of emerging patterns; local literature review that may exist; development of advanced propositions; and the use of literature to develop a theoretical perspective.

Results and Discussion

Feminist Activism Indonesia in Digital Space

Jurriëns & Tapsell (2017) stated that digital media allows for considerable changes to take place since the fast-growing internet penetration and a large number of netizens using the platform to advocate for various causes such as advocacy on gender issues. The rise of gender problem advocacy has led to contemporary feminist approaches. Discussions on contemporary feminism, mentioned by some academic works of literature, are motivated by two critical events that both took place in America: Women's March and #MeToo (Oren & Press, 2019).

Women's March is a parade event raising the importance of paying attention to women's rights. The activity began with an invitation sent by activist Teresa Shook to 40 of her friends on *Facebook* to protest against Trump's Inauguration Day. Several million people worldwide took to the streets on January 21, 2017, to protest against Donald Trump, sexism, and misogyny. There have been no political consequences so far, and the US government has not been significantly affected. Still, it was an

impressive grassroots movement evoking many people to realize that the personal is also political.

Other countries, such as Pakistan, Australia, Canada, Germany, and Indonesia, took this action. This movement successfully became a global movement. It voiced global issues and was also encouraged by several celebrities, such as Alicia Keys, Charlize Theron, Katy Perry, Miley Cirus, Scarlet Johansson, Jennifer Lawrence, and Adele. In Indonesia, Women's March was first held by the Jakarta Feminist Discussion Group on March 4, 2017.

#MeToo movement is a movement against sexual harassment and sexual violence. The movement started going viral in October 2017 as a hashtag on social media posts to show the widespread prevalence of sexual violence and harassment, particularly in the workplace. This movement follows allegations of sexual harassment against Harvey Weinstein, a well-known Hollywood producer. Tarana Burke, a social activist and community organizer from the United States, started using the phrase "Me Too" in early 2006, and the phrase was later popularized by American actress Alyssa Milano on *Twitter* in 2017. Milano encouraged victims of sexual harassment to tweet about it and gave the public awareness of how serious this problem was. Several posts and responses have emerged from American celebrities, including Gwyneth Paltrow, Ashley Judd, Jennifer Lawrence, and Uma Thurman.

The actors, artists, and celebrities who helped amplify this movement were not only limited to the US but also other countries. In 2018, actress Tanushree Dutta reported sexual harassment by actor Nana Patekar. This case started the #MeToo wave in India. #MeToo movement also opened the sores of the K-Pop entertainment industry, marked by the arrest of Seungri and Jung Joon-Young for their involvement in illegal prostitution and revenge porn. #MeToo also developed and adapted to the context of each country. In South Korea, #MeToo triggered the *Escape the Corset* movement that fought against South Korea's absurd beauty standards. In Japan, #MeToo became #WithYou as solidarity with the victims of sexual harassment at work. In Thailand, #MeToo became #DontTellMeHowToDress, in response to government officials who warned women not to wear sexy clothes to avoid sexual harassment. In Indonesia, this movement became #UninstallGrab to protest the harassment experienced by *Grab* users.

Some factors have encouraged the success of the two movements spread worldwide and affected many people. *First*, the two movements' experience and spirit of resistance to systematic and structural inequity are the global problems. *Second*, there is considerable support from several figures in the media industry. *Third,* social media enables publishing of public conversations globally and at almost the same time (Putri, 2020).

Inspired by global feminist movements, some feminist activists in Indonesia take advantage of the internet and social media as an essential part of their movement. Consequently, feminist activists in the digital space are growing along with its success in introducing gender and feminism narratives to the broader public. Young women with high education, technology literate, and connection to global feminist networks have driven the movement. They understand the power of social media as a useful tool to educate, engage and mobilize followers (Kartika, 2019).

According to Parahita (2019)*,* feminist activism on social media was initiated by two events. *First*, the Feminist and Gender Writing Class was conducted by *Yayasan Obor* and joined by millennial women. The writing clinic was able to sharpen the writing skill and widen the insight into gender and human rights among young women.

Their ability to operate technology encouraged them to initiate producing content on feminist issues on social media.

Second, the Jakarta Feminist Discussion Group (JFDG) initiated activism on *Facebook*. Kate Walton, an NGO activist from Australia, created the organization and actively discussed feminism issues. Its members are young people, highly educated, and most workers. Social media has become the primary vehicle to discuss gender and feminism issues to the lack of mainstream media reports on gender and feminist issues. JFDG also has to counterbalance the rapid development of fundamentalist views, which also use social media. JFDG's activities occur in cyberspace and other offline activities such as community gatherings, hanging out, reading feminist book clubs, film screening for critical issues, and holding the Feminist Festival biennale. JFDG also has managed World's March Jakarta and Indonesia since 2017.

In the following years, several online initiatives have emerged in response to the need for information on feminism. *Magdalene*, an online feminism magazine founded in 2013, provides a space for young feminists to share personal experiences and opinions about the socio-political conditions in Indonesia. Besides, more online platforms have emerged to introduce feminist concepts to young people, such as *Indonesia Feminis, Lawan Patriarki, Perempuan Bergerak,* and *Konde.co*.

At the same time, the Muslim feminist movement has also developed. In 2017, three Muslim organizations, namely Alimat, Rahimah, and Fahmina (ARAFAH), initiated the Women's Ulama Congress (Kongres Ulama Perempuan Indonesia/KUPI) in Cirebon. The success of this forum in bringing together several scholars and academics from all over Indonesia shows that gender equality is an essential part of Islamic teachings. Their perspective is very different from the conservative groups' ideology placing women in a hierarchical position. The results of the congress criticized three main issues: sexual violence, child marriage, and environmental degradation.

Besides, some young people pay attention to gender justice issues through the productivity of their writings, such as Kalis Mardiasih, a columnist with a boarding school education background, and Laily Fitri, an academic in Theology. Both of them have many followers on some social media accounts. Some communities have also sprung up, such as the Progressive Islam Forum (a left-wing organization accommodating feminism and Islam) and the Progressive Muslim Halaqah (an online discussion forum focusing on gender and Islam issues). Both forums have the initiative to reach students and young people throughout Indonesia through *Instagram*.

Sisterhood: The Pseudo-Integration of the Feminist Movement

The diversity of feminist movements in the digital realm has implications for the various highlighted issues. The researcher observed five feminist accounts, as mentioned before and found so many diverse issues. During February 2020, there were several cases of sexual harassment and violence, which attracted the attention of feminist activists. From several cases of sexual harassment and violence, the five accounts had a different focus of attention. @lawanpatriarki looks very aggressive in responding to abuse cases by a motivator claiming to be a psychologist named Dedi Susanto to his clients (Dedi Susanto is a motivator and doctor of psychology who opened a psychology consultation practice illegally. He manipulated and sexually harassed his clients). Thirty-seven uploaded contents discussed the case. Compared to @indonesiafeminis, @lawanpatriarki only uploaded three contents related to the case. @indonesiafeminis uploaded more varied cases, for example, four contents related to

the case of Andre Rosiade, who raided prostitutes, two contents about female circumcision, and others were cases of crime and sexual harassment on campus or involving activists and the son of *kyai* (religious leader) as perpetrators. @perempuanfeminis uploaded four contents about the Dedi Susanto case.

@indonesiafeminis was more interested in issues related to gender-biased regulation. During February, there were at least three controversial bills related to women's issues: the PKS (Penghapusan Kekerasan Seksual/Elimination of Sexual Violence) Bill, the Family Resilience (Ketahanan Keluarga) Bill, and the Job Creation (Cipta Kerja) Bill. Responding to the importance of ratifying the PKS Bill and against the Family Resilience and Job Creation Bill, @indonesiafeminis posted 26 contents related to the issue. Compared to @lawanpatriarki, which only posted eight contents of the same issue.

@perempuanfeminis, @muslimahfeminis, and @perempuan.merdeka focused more on misogynist issues (35,29% for @perempuanfeminis, 69,23% for @perempuanfeminis and 100% for @perempuan.merdeka), such as the case of blurring faces of female members of student executive boards (BEM/Badan Eksekutif Mahasiswa), Jakarta State University (Universitas Negeri Jakarta/UNJ, BEM UNJ posted photos of the organization's officials. Still, the faces of the female students were obscured, causing controversy), women's clothes, women's objectification, and some similar cases.

The data show that the five feminist accounts focus on different issues. However, they are connected when they have concerns about the same issue. For example, @indonesiafeminis posted content related to Dedi Susanto's case from @lawanpatriarki; or @muslimahfeminis uploaded content about the meaning of *Syar'I* (According to Islamic teaching, *Syar'i* means the regulation from *Allah)*. Attention to the same issue can emerge when multiple accounts post the same content from other accounts, such as @magdalene.id, @safenetvoice, @lbhpadang, or @changeorg_id. Some accounts, when uploading content with specific themes, also mention feminist accounts and are reposted by the account in question, as in the following illustration:

Figure 1. The Illustration
Source: @lawanpatriarki, @perempuanfeminis

The researcher's analysis of the various highlighted issues, including solidarity to support each other on the same issue, differs from Kartika's analysis (2019). Kartika

saw the rift in the feminist movement. The various perspectives of feminism have caused disagreement by feminist groups in responding to some issues. There were several cases behind Kartikas's analysis. *First*, the case occurred in March 2019 when a badminton athlete, Jonathan Christie, took off his clothes after winning a gold medal. Overreaction of women triggered debates about women's sexuality, whether it was a sexual expression or sexual harassment done by women.

There was also a debate about social class and religion. Kartika (2019) quoted a feminist activist, Dhyta Caturani, who said that there were still a group of feminists who considered the struggles of peasants and women laborers not to be fully part of the feminist movement because they were often victims of patriarchal culture at home. Another debate was about the prohibition of wearing the *niqab* (a type of cloth used to cover the face) on campus, which provoked controversy between people who saw the *niqab* as the choice and the others who considered it a sign of oppression. The debate, according to Kartika, has implications for the counter-productivity of the gender equality movement. Not only have they caused public confusion about the feminist movement, but disagreements also have created a rift in the feminist movement itself.

Kartika's analysis was motivated by her view of the feminist movement in Indonesia, which adopted different approaches, from liberal to radical, to address various issues, such as sexual violence, worker protections, and many more. Meanwhile, the selection of digital feminist activist accounts to be the object of my analysis was not based on ideological differences but many followers. The number of followers does not indicate a different ideology. Based on the analysis, the five accounts did not show significant ideological differences.

The five accounts are connected; they respond to each other on specific issues. Supporting each other suggests a "united feminist movement" or sisterhood. Bell Hooks (2000) described sisterhood as political solidarity between women. The enactment of the male domination culture for centuries has made women victims of oppression. It is necessary to build a feeling of solidarity between women to overcome the problem.

As a politics of solidarity among women, sisterhood is mentioned in Parahita's research (2019). The essential projects of digital feminists are public education about sexuality, gender awareness, and feminism, and building solidarity among women. She observed 17 feminist accounts and saw three main objectives interrelated among them. *First*, fighting against sexual harassment, rape, and gender injustice. *Second,* building public awareness that Islam and feminism can go together. *Third*, raising intersectional-feminist issues amongst the public, such as protecting minority rights (labor and migrants), building awareness of eco-feminism, and promoting social acceptance of the LGBTQ community.

However, Hooks (2000) further stated that the vision of sisterhood could be harmful since solidarity is built on the same idea of oppression. The idea of collective oppression is misleading because it disguises and negates women's diverse and complex social realities. Women have different problems because gender problems often overlap with class, ethnicity, race, and religion.

Mohanty (in Jain, 2020) warned that western feminist tends to believe in their value system only and view themselves as saviors to other women. They assume the existence of global sisterhood, but they fail to realize that not all women worldwide experience the same discrimination conditions as women in western countries.

The conception of common oppression reduces women's complex problems, thereby hiding other essential affairs. Sisterhood has the potential to remove marginal

voices that should become the main focus of feminism. Feminist groups' expectation of gender equality is limited to their social class interest. It implicates class bias, which then leads to representation bias. The next section explores more about this issue.

Women's Elite Movement and Representation Bias
Caturani (in Kartika, 2019)*,* an activist, said,

"*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.*"
["This is my criticism of the Indonesian feminist movement. Most liberal feminists come from urban and middle-class backgrounds. They have the privilege of accessing many things, such as feminist literature, references in English. What are their attempts to break down the wall? Has intersectionality, our jargon, been applied to our movement? Yes, but only some of us do so."]
Caturani's concern is represented in the discussion of gender issues and feminism in the five accounts.

There is class bias in the struggle of digital feminist activism. The discussion topic in the five accounts only represents middle-class, well-educated, technology literate, and urban young women.

A report from East Ventures about the Digital Competitiveness Index (EV-DCI) 2020 shows that the vast development of the digital economy is concentrated merely in Java and big cities in Indonesia (*Kesenjangan Digital Masih Menjadi PR Besar*, 2020). It causes the high digital divide in Indonesia. Inadequate infrastructure and economic conditions are the causal factors. Another critical problem in the digital divide is the lack of content in *Bahasa Indonesia* (Mallisa in Ariyanti, 2013). Content in *Bahasa Indonesia* determines the public ability to access technology. Rural areas or others with low levels of education, of course, have difficulty understanding the English content. Thus, the use of language is critical in narrowing the digital divide.

Therefore, when feminist digital accounts often use English-language content, it is a problem. What subjects do these accounts represent? The researcher discovered a lot of English used in the discussion. Check out some examples of contents in English as follows:
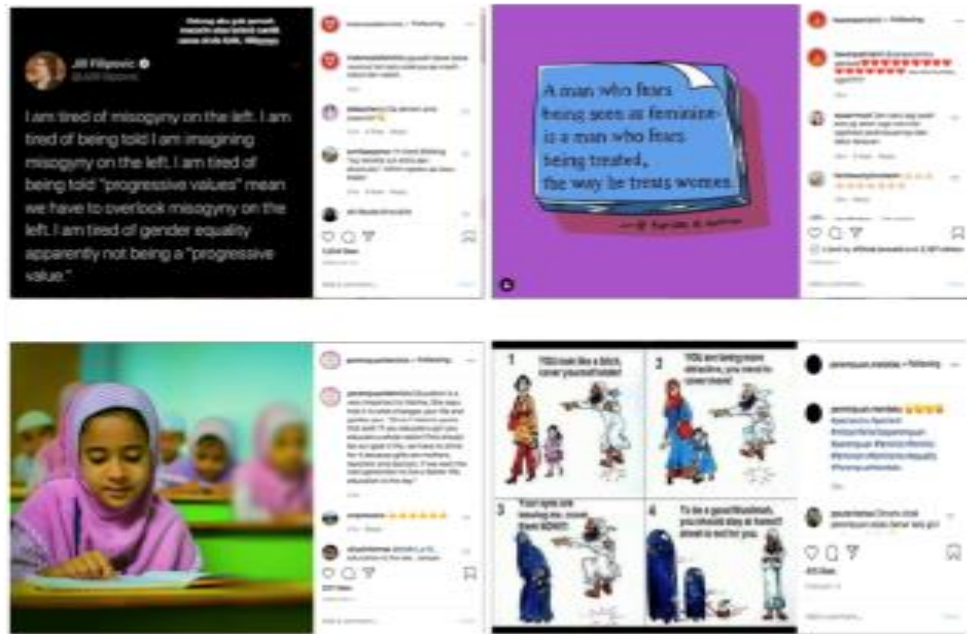
Figure 2. Examples of Contents Written in English
Source: @indonesiafeminis, @lawanpatriarki, @perempuanfeminis, and
@perempuan.merdeka

The account owners, content providers, and their followers have used the English language. In the comments on the posted content, some followers used English to express their opinion. It shows that the discussion involves netizens having more or less the same profile. Check the following illustration:
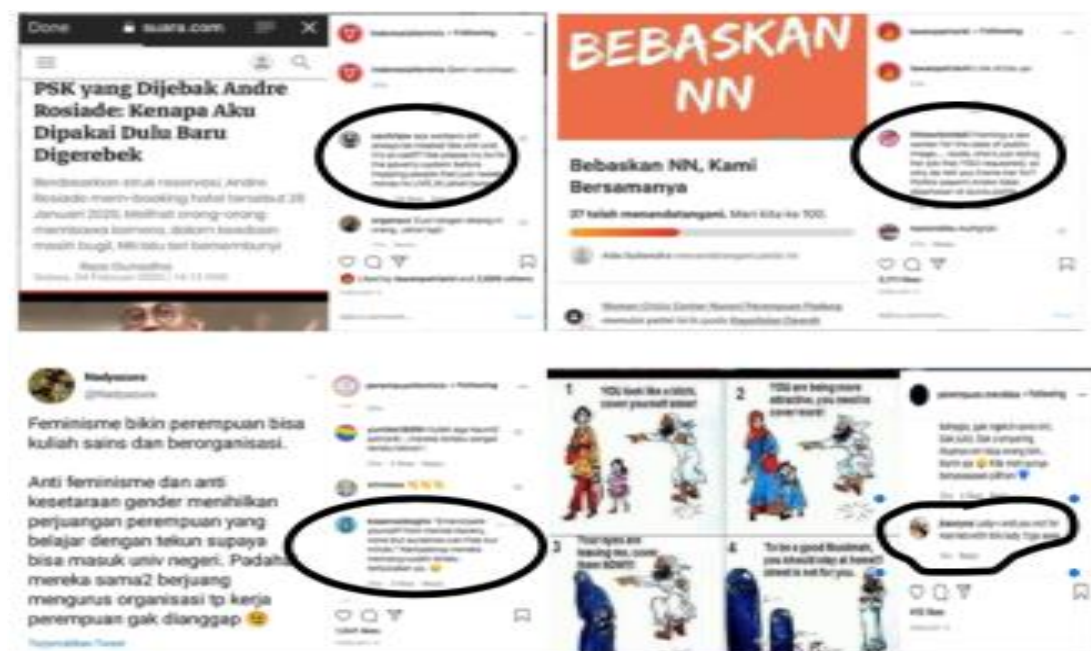

Figure 3. Examples of English Used by followers while Discussing Issues

Conversation in English becomes familiar for urban, highly educated, and young people. Purba and Prihandita (2017) explained that language is a signifier of social

class. *Bahasa Indonesia* is used by almost all social classes in Indonesia, including those from the middle to lower economic and social classes (although some people still prefer to use the local language). They researched the use of language in youth conversations on social media. They found that young people who used English mostly had overseas education and established financial backgrounds. The use of English demonstrates their privileged position in the upper-middle class.

Prayoga and Khatimah (2019) researched *The Mindset of Using English in Urban Communities* and confirmed the same idea. They showed that English has become the entity of urban society. They said,

"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 language is a symbol affecting the identity of the user. In a mindset of the English user, there is a prestige and economic benefit instead of practical-pragmatic reasons for self-expression and information mastery."]

English becomes a prestigious symbol for a particular social class, which signifies the user as well educated and has global access.

The elitist of the digital feminist movement can also be traced through the content uploaded by the five accounts. The issues raised mostly were those in middle-class circles. The configuration issues uploaded are explored in the following table:

Table 2. The Number of Contents

Issues	Account Topic/Cases	@lawanpatriarki	@indonesiafeminis	@perempuanfeminis	@muslimahfeminis	@perempuan.merdeka	Total
Sexual Harassment and Violence	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 violance in campuses	2	3	3	-	-	**8**
	Sexual violence perpetrated by leftist activists	-	2	-	-	-	**2**
	Sexual harassment committed by Dedi Susanto, a motivator, to his clients	37	3	4	-	-	**44**
	A Papua provincial government official raped a high school student	-	1	-	-	-	**1**
	Sexual crimes committed by *Grab* drivers	-	1	-	-	-	**1**
	Sexual harassment during demonstrations	-	1	-	-	-	**1**
	Female Genital Mutilation	-	2	-	1	-	**3**
	Others	7	10	5	2	-	**24**
Gender Bias Regulation	The draft law on Family Resilient (*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	-	4	-	1	-	**5**

Issues	Account Topic/Cases	@lawa npatria rki	@indo nesiafe minis	@pere mpuan feminis	@musli mahfe minis	@peremp uan. merdeka	Total
	Seksual/PKS)						
	Women labor law cases	1	2	-	-	-	**3**
	Others	2	5	-	-	-	**7**
LGBTQ	LGBTQ cases	9	2	1	-	-	**12**
Misogynies 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**
	Members of the Jakarta State University (UNJ) Student Executive Board (Badan Eksekutif Mahasiswa/BEM) took 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's relationships	6	5	3	5	-	**19**
	Others	2	-	5	-	-	**7**
Women Empowerment	Women Empowerment Cases	9	2	1	-	-	**12**

Source: @lawanpatriarki, @indonesiafeminis, @perempuanfeminis,
@muslimahfeminis, @perempuan.merdeka during February 2020

On the table, the top five issues most frequently posted by digital feminist accounts are (1) the case of Dedi Susanto, (2) the relationship between men and women, (3) the obscuring of the blurring faces of female members of BEM UNJ, (4) the Family Resilience Bill, and (5) LGBTQ (Issues related to women empowerment have the same number as the LGBTQ issues, but because the variants of the issue are more diverse, the researcher ignore it). The selected issues were hot issues among the middle class. Some grassroots issues, such as cases of female labor, violence, and sexual harassment among the lower middle class, were also discussed, but only in small quantities. It means grass-root issues were not the priority.

Activism contents on social media tend to represent the interest of certain groups. Merlyna Lim (2013) stated, "the social media environment is not neutral, bound to disparity and subject to domination." Dominating conversations and information on social media reflect its users' interests, choices, and preferences. It is undeniable that those conversation issues were propagated by social media engaging urban middle-class interest to receive the most coverage.

As a result, digital feminist activists who tended to be elitist were problematic. A large number of followers of these accounts has the potential to create representation bias. As Kartika (2019) explained, the rapid growth of feminist activism in the digital space gives the impression that there is a single feminist movement in Indonesia. She gave an example of how conservative groups assume that the feminist movement only defends liberal values.

The issues shared by the five accounts do not adequately reflect the voices of the subaltern groups. It reminds the researcher of the thinking of Gayatri Spivak (Gross &

Spivak, 2000) about women's voices as an underrepresented subalterns. Subaltern women's voices became silenced. According to Spivak, the cause is not a failure of articulation but representation. It is not because the subaltern women do not know how to speak for themselves. However, the problem lies with the intellectuals who have a role in representing them. Intellectuals claim that subaltern groups can and do speak for themselves. However, they cannot claim and romanticize their ability to multiply and seek out the voices of subaltern groups. Such claims seem to generalize the diversity of the subaltern groups.

The researcher found a problem of representation of the voices of subaltern groups of women. The subaltern women's groups or grassroots women's groups come from the lower classes, uneducated, poor, and do not have sufficient power access. Privileged, highly educated, and middle-class feminist activists in digital activism living in urban areas are relevant to the intellectual group described by Spivak. Do these intellectuals represent the voices of subaltern women? Based on the data explored, they do not.

Using Swearing Words: Ethic Disregard
Digital media, including social media, blur the boundaries between sender and receiver of messages. It is the characteristic of digital media that distinguishes it from conventional media and makes it very popular. Internet-based digital media provides freedom for its users. Freedom includes the ability to indulge the human senses. For example, when we consume books, it means we read books, whereas consuming radio means we listen to the radio; and consuming movies is watching movies. Then if we are accessing *Instagram*, are we reading, listening, or watching? We do all three.

The term "consumption," when applied to digital media, is inappropriate. The word "consumption" refers to a passive receiving activity. Meanwhile, in digital media, users are no longer passively accepting content. Users can provide feedback directly, like interpersonal communication. On social media, users can respond by clicking likes/dislikes, sharing buttons, or even writing comments. Moreover, users can become content providers. There is an overlapping role between sender and receiver. Hence, the term "sender/receiver" is no longer relevant. We call the user for the conversation participant on social media.

Social media has functioned as a means for users to express themselves freely. There are various platforms and spaces to convey opinions, thoughts, information, ideas, and emotions. For some people, this characteristic becomes the advantage of social media, which solves human problems. For the neo-futurist, digital media (including social media) has opened up space for democratization. Anthony Wilhemn (2000) introduced the concept of *neo-futurist, dystopian*, and *tecnorealist* to divide people based on their response to technology. *Neofuturis* refers to a person who sees technology as the answer to human problems in the modern era. Conversely*, dystopian* is the belief that communication technology is the potential to disrupt social and political life. *Technorealist* is the perspective that bridges the two concepts.

The debate about democratization in the digital age has been seriously concerned in the academic realm and everyday life discussion. Not all people are enthusiastic about the fast-growing technology of information and communication. For the dystopian, the freedom offered by technology implicates an ethical problem. Prajarto (2011) explained some inevitable conditions to create and maintain a democratic atmosphere, such as following the rules, obeying the norms and principles, being mature while practicing our rights, and respecting others' rights. The equality of *human rights*

and *human duties* becomes the basis of equity in democracy. It is the democratic ethic (Clancy in Prajarto, 2011).

It is a challenge for democratization. One classic problem is the debate between freedom of expression and moral ethics violations (Niebuhr in Prajarto, 2011). Besides, there is no legal sanction for ethical violations. This situation often drives individuals to violate ethics (Green in Prajarto, 2011). Continuous and tolerated violations have normalized the ethical violations. If we look at social media conversations, they do not describe Jenkins' (2006) participatory culture. He imagined participatory culture as follows, "…*a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one's creations, and some informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices. A participatory culture is also one in which members believe their contributions matter, and feel some degree of social connection with one another*…." Most of these conversations do not contribute significantly to constructive thought. Instead, some words or behaviors lead to bullying.

The researcher found many harsh and insulting words in the content of the accounts of feminist activists. These words appeared when an event provoked their anger. When the admin found content posted by individual accounts on *Twitter* or *Instagram* that tended to be sexist or differences of opinion between the followers, the admin did not hesitate to post harsh words on various lines. It is easy to find cursing words inserted in posted pictures, photos, or memes; or written as the caption of photos, images, or memes. Sometimes the researcher also found them in the comment lines. The location information that functions to share location has also been applied for sharing emotions by expressing swearing words. Here are some of the examples:
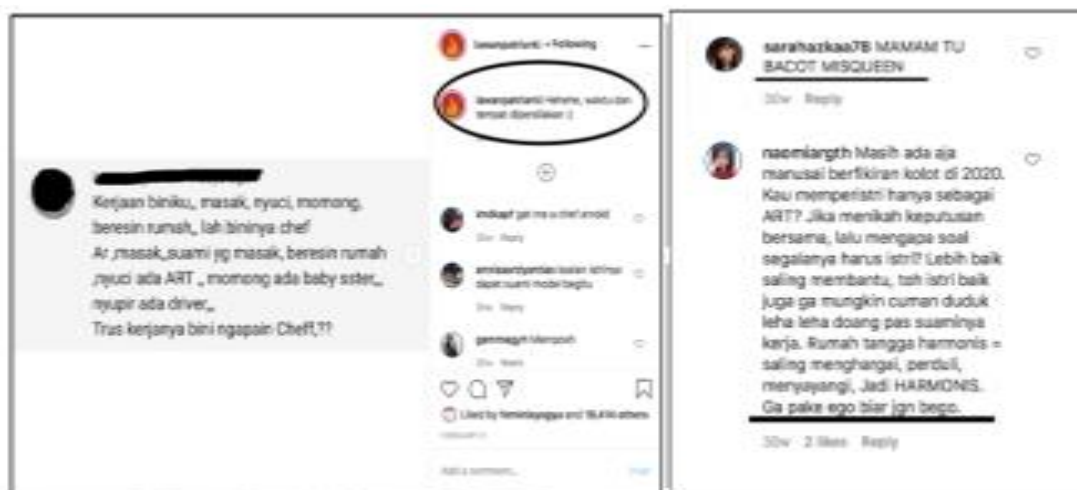

Figure 4. @lawanpatriarki Provoked the Followers to Bully Someone who Tweeted A Sexist Comment

On February 5, 2020, @lawanpatriarki reposted a conversation on *Twitter* from a user to Chef Arnold, a well-known celebrity chef. The tweet more or less read as follows, "My wife's duty is cooking, washing clothes, nurturing the children, tidying the house. What about your wife, chef? You are preparing the food, the housemaid has cleaned the house and washed clothes, the babysitter has taken care of the children, and the driver has taken her everywhere she wants. So, what is your wife doing then?" For

@lawanpatriarki, the tweet was sexist, positioning a wife as an unpaid housemaid. The tweeter placed his wife as a servant, not his partner.

@lawanpatriarki made a caption, "hehehe, time and place are yours …". The sentence read in the caption indicated that @lawanpatriarki gave time and place for the followers to comment on the tweet or even bullied it. The followers' comments "sound" bullying, such as "*MAMAM TU BACOT MISQUEEN*" or "*Ga pake ego biar jgn bego*". The word "*mamam*" means to eat, while the word "*Bacot*" is a curse. "*Bacot*" means a mouth, and saying "*bacot*" is much the same as cursing someone's saying. The word "*misqueen*" is pronounced in *Bahasa Indonesia* as *miskin* or "poor" in English. Overall, @sarahazkaa78 was saying, "take back your words" with a harsh choice of words. The sentence also contains expressions that denigrate a particular class. The phrase "*bacot misqueen*" refers to the tweet posted by @lawanpatriari means the poor who delivers the message (the tweeter is the poor who treats his wife like an unpaid servant because he does not have money to hire a housemaid). The researcher also paid attention to the use of capital letters. Capitalizing on online media posts means shouting or yelling, considered to violate ethics in online interaction. Another comment, "*Ga pake ego biar jgn bego*" from @naomiargth, is a mockery. "*Bego*" means stupid; she tried to say that the tweeter was stupid.

@lawanpatriarki used harsh expressions in some content, mostly while posting content relating to Dedi Susanto's case. Not just swearing, @lawanpatriarki also invited the followers to mock Dedy Susanto.

Figure 5. Mocking and Inviting to Blaspheme Caption

Translation: "Advising Dog in Dog's Cage" and "Thanks for the Direct Message ☺, Everybody welcomes blasphemy @dedysusanto again here."

Besides writing captions, @lawanpatriarki also created its custom location by stating derogatory sentences, as follows:
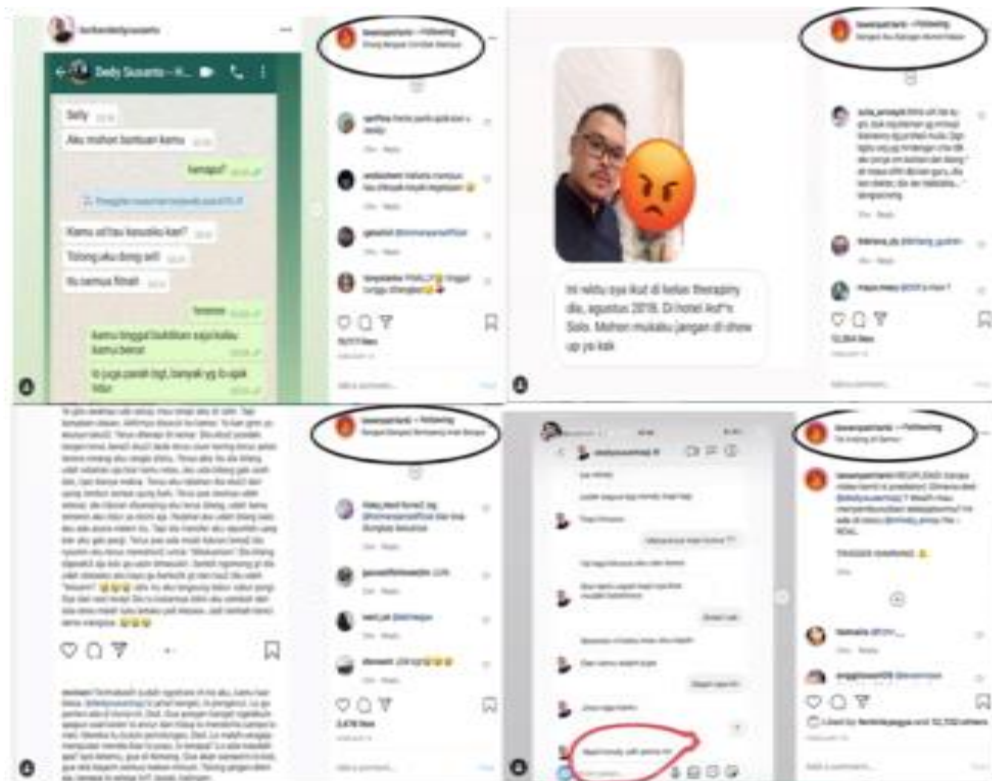
Figure 6. Swearing Words written by @lawanpatriarki

The researcher concern with the following four harsh sentences, "*Orang Bangsat Lbh Baik Mampus*", "*Bangsat Asu Bajingan Mumet Ndase*", "*Bangsat Bangsat Bertopeng Anak Bangsa*", and "*Tai Anjing di Semur*". In everyday life conversation, the four harsh sentences are examples of verbal abuse and the mixture of Javanese language and *Bahasa Indonesia*. The word "*bangsat*" is a curse, the same as the words "*bajingan*", "*Asu*", and "*Tai Anjing*". Other swearing words used are "*mampus*" and "*Ndase*".

Figure 7. Other Swearing Words From @perempuanfeminis and @indonesiafeminis

Montagu (in Triadi, 2017) presented the definition of swearing as "*the act of verbally expressing the feeling of aggressiveness that follows upon frustration in words possessing strong emotional association.*" Swearing words are the expressions of hatred for someone to insulting, mocking or cursing. He observed some swearing words often used on social media posts. His findings are quite the same as mine. Referring to

Triadi's findings, the researcher found at least six reference variations of swearing words used by feminist accounts:

1. *Reference of States*, when the swearing words user attempts to describe an existing situation or situation. The words used include "*bego*" or stupid as a reference to mental state. The other word used is "*mampus*" or dead.

2. *Reference of Animals*, when someone uses words signifying animals addressed to someone to release the anger. Disgusting beasts, such as "*anjing*" or "*asu*" which means a dog, often symbolizes it. The other example is the word "*bangsat*" or parasite insects, as a reference to bad people. Those swearing words used by @lawanpatriarki many times refer to Dedy Susanto, considered a sexual predator.

3. *Reference of Things/Objects*, when referring to swearing words with stink or harmful things/objects. For example, the word "*tai*" means feces.

4. *Reference of Professions*, when using professions with a bad image, or an excellent or neutral image but already attached to bad connotation as swearing words to compare something. For example, the word "*bajingan*", at first it referred to a coachman of a cow-cart. This word becomes a curse when the passengers feel the cart walk very slowly so that the meaning changes. Now, this word is more often used as swearing words. The meaning is quite the same as "God Damn It."

5. *Reference of Part of The Body* is used to relate to the situation he/she is being cursed—for example, the word "*bacot*" (mouth) or "*ndase*" (head).

6. *Reference of Ghosts* refers to uncommon human's attitudes, so someone uses words symbolizing horrific ghosts. While not explicitly listed in this article, the researcher has also found other posts using swearing words regarding ghosts, such as the word "*setan*".

The researcher sees the use of swearing words on social media as an ethical disregard. The freedom of expression is arbitrarily understood as free to convey anything, including hatred. Expressions of hate through swearing words are bullying behavior. Bullying is violence, even though the bullying is aimed at the alleged perpetrator of sexual violence.

The researcher is not defending the perpetrator of sexual violence. As a woman quite concerned about gender and sexuality issues, the researcher condemned Dedy Susanto's act and all attitudes or behaviors violating the principles of gender equality. The researcher is concerned about the use of swearing words while expressing hatred or disappointment. The researcher argue\, expressing hatred using a curse or swearing words is inappropriate and violates ethical principles.

Feminist activists consider that the principle of presumption of innocence is problematic and not taking sides with the victims. Nathania (2018) noted that the *Balairung Press* (*Balairung Press* is the online media for UGM (Universitas Gajah Mada) students. The press revealed the rape case where Agni (not the real name), a student, was raped by her fellow while both of them participated in a field study) turned out to be criticized for violating the presumption of innocence. Some people criticized since the crime has never been proven in court. The principle of presumption of innocence is a problem faced by journalists and survivors in revealing sexual violence cases that have not been proven in court.

The #MeToo movement is also considered to break the presumption of innocence because it encouraged survivors to reveal the sexual violence they experienced and

expose perpetrators of violence on social media. Based on this phenomenon, social media is assumed as the "court" and netizens become the "judge". Besides, the investigation and trial processes, which sometimes blame the victims, also motivate the public to use social media to "punish" victims.

The researcher suggests social media as an alternative means to reveal the practice of sexual violence and gender inequality. However, as intellectuals, we need to use the proper strategy concerning democratic ethics. Using a curse or swearing words is no different from creating new violence. Violence is still violence in any situation. The feminist activists and their mission to fight for equality should keep far from violent acts. Violence breaks the principles of equality since it is a kind of effort to perform domination. The use of swearing words is an ethical violation, and it becomes dangerous if digital feminist activists normalize it.

Conclusion

The emergence of feminist digital activism supported by social media, initiated by young women activists responding to contemporary gender issues, such as gender-based violence and the rise of religious conservatism, has attracted Indonesian youth and young adults from the middle class and urban society, with high education and technology literate. 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. Support for the victims of sexual violence from other women is getting stronger and bonds women's solidarity. Thus, several cases of gender injustice can attract wider public attention and sympathy.

However, though social media and technology provide women empowerment, in many cases, digital culture creates problems. The high speed of access as the advantage of digital technology makes the issues blown up by digital feminist accounts quickly change. As a result, the public does not maintain many cases to completion. One case has not been completed yet, and then a new case is becoming viral. Public attention quickly turns to the new case.

The other problem is the representation bias. Digital feminist activists from a particular class fail to represent women's voices. The sisterhood or women's solidarity seems to be false empowerment. There is empowerment, but only for their circle. Solidarity only stresses one issue and puts aside the others since they believe every woman has the same problem.

Representation has limitations because it is not a neutral and value-free practice, so it always provides particular interests to exercise their power. As a result, representation always creates a bias of ideological interests, which can have implications for silencing the subjects it represents. Representations are intended to empower the subject to marginalize the oppressed. Digital feminist accounts should anticipate representing subaltern women's interests (Noviani, 2020).

The freedom of speech as part of digital culture implicates another problem. Digital feminist activist, while exposing misogynist people, has normalized the use of swearing words. The cursing habit keeps a distance from women or people from other groups. Digital immigrants or traditional women/people (from an older generation or still maintain the norms and tradition) like the researcher, for example, often feel shocked reading harsh words or comments. The public that initially sympathized could immediately become antipathetic. If the digital feminist movement aims to attract public

attention to gender-based issues, does it keep the movement away from the public precisely?

Acknowledgements

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