

## **GRASSROOTS FEMINIST NETWORKS AND INTERFAITH SOLIDARITY AGAINST RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE: A DIGITAL ETHNOGRAPHY FROM INDONESIA**

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### **Abstract**

*This study investigates how grassroots feminist networks in Java confront religious intolerance through digital activism. Amid escalating online hate speech and rising religious conservatism in Indonesia, these networks have strategically mobilized social media to construct counter-narratives that challenge patriarchal and exclusionary religious discourses. Employing digital ethnography, the research analyzed online interactions, campaign materials, and symbolic expressions across feminist platforms from 2020 to 2024. The findings reveal that these networks foster inclusive interfaith alliances and cultivate alternative safe spaces for marginalized voices—particularly women and religious minority groups. While digital platforms offer avenues for empowerment and visibility, activists also contend with backlash in the form of online harassment and ideological suppression. Although the study is limited to digital data and lacks offline ethnographic immersion, it offers original insights into the intersections of gender, religion, and digital resistance in Southeast Asia. It contributes to the growing literature on feminist digital activism and underscores the need for comparative, cross-platform research in future studies.*

**Keywords:** *feminist activism, religious intolerance, digital ethnography, grassroots networks, Southeast Asia*

### **Abstrak**

Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana jaringan feminis akar rumput di Jawa melawan intoleransi beragama melalui aktivisme digital. Di tengah meningkatnya ujaran kebencian daring dan menguatnya konservatisme di Indonesia, jaringan ini memanfaatkan media sosial untuk membangun kontra-narasi yang menantang wacana patriarkal dan eksklusif dalam agama. Dengan menggunakan etnografi digital, penelitian ini menganalisis interaksi daring, materi kampanye, dan ekspresi simbolik pada berbagai platform feminis sepanjang 2020 hingga 2024. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa jaringan tersebut mendorong aliansi lintas iman yang inklusif serta menciptakan ruang alternatif yang aman bagi suara-suara terpinggirkan, khususnya perempuan.

dan kelompok minoritas agama. Meskipun platform digital membuka ruang pemberdayaan, aktivis juga menghadapi serangan balik berupa perundungan daring dan penindasan ideologis. Penelitian ini terbatas pada data digital tanpa keterlibatan etnografi luring. Kendati demikian, penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi orisinal terhadap kajian persinggungan gender, agama, dan perlawanan digital di Asia Tenggara, memperkaya literatur tentang aktivisme digital feminis, serta menyerukan studi komparatif lintas platform di masa mendatang.

**Kata kunci:** aktivisme feminis, intoleransi agama, etnografi digital, jaringan akar rumput, Asia Tenggara

## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia experienced a marked increase in religiously motivated social tensions in recent years. This trend was evident in large-scale movements such as the 2016–2017 Islamic Defence Action, the #2019GantiPresiden campaign, and mobilizations opposing the 2020 Omnibus Law on Job Creation. These tensions were often fueled by perceptions of injustice and socioeconomic inequality, which mobilized collective action along religious identity lines (Kuswana et al., 2024). Moreover, interreligious conflicts remained profoundly shaped by the historical legacy of Muslim–Christian relations, which had been fraught with suspicion and prejudice since the Dutch colonial period and continued into the post-independence era (Arifianto, 2009). Despite various initiatives, such as religious tolerance education, serious challenges persisted due to limited government intervention and the lack of sustained interfaith dialogue (Al Qurtuby, 2025; Parker, 2014).

In this context, grassroots feminist networks in Indonesia turned to digital media as alternative arenas for activism, particularly given the limitations of conventional public spaces. Digital platforms expanded opportunities for women and marginalized groups to participate in public discourse, amplifying voices that had historically been unheard or excluded (McLean, 2018). Digitalization not only facilitated transnational feminist solidarity but also enabled the formation of hybrid online identities, alternative safe spaces, and new modes of resistance. Unlike traditional political organizations, feminist activists have utilized digital technology to construct movements that reflect their values and address pressing socio-political challenges (Banerjee & Kankaria, 2022). Global campaigns such as #MeToo and #EverydaySexism illustrated the potential of digital media to challenge sexism and patriarchy (Mendes et al., 2019), even as women activists encountered online harassment and forms of cyberviolence that mirrored patriarchal control in offline spaces (Martínez, 2021). Yet, the rise of digital activism

also exposed women to intensified forms of social control, cyber violence, and surveillance (Martínez, 2021).

This study focuses on grassroots feminist networks in urban and semi-urban areas of Indonesia between 2020 and 2025. It examines how activists utilized Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and local online forums as platforms for campaigns, advocacy, and community engagement. To analyze the symbols, narratives, and practices that emerged within these networks, the study employs a digital ethnography approach combined with critical discourse analysis. This methodological approach enables an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of feminist activism in digital spaces and its contributions to shaping socio-religious change in Indonesia.

The reliance of women activists on digital platforms was particularly significant within a context of heightened religious polarization. Social media has emerged as a critical channel for self-expression, community building, and resistance against gender-based violence (Ridho & Sa'ad, 2024). Prior research has shown that digital networks enable activists to respond collectively to violence, harassment, and exclusion (Maryani & Karimah, 2019; Su'ada, 2023). Grassroots feminist movements proactively formed online communities that provided dialogue, advocacy, and solidarity spaces. Aprianti and Pramiyanti (2020), for instance, highlighted how young women used social media to articulate rights-based claims, while Dewi et al. (Budiarti, 2024) demonstrated the role of podcasts and literacy movements in fostering feminist knowledge exchange. Through these platforms, women were able to collectively reflect on experiences of violence and cultivate awareness of gender-based challenges (Wiranata & Putri, 2021).

Digital media also functioned as an alternative public sphere for women whose participation in formal settings was often constrained by social norms. Social platforms created opportunities for advocacy, expression, and visibility, even as cases of online gender-based violence escalated, particularly during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Hayati, 2021; Sylvina et al., 2023). Social media has further bridged gender gaps, enabling women to participate more actively in public life and thus strengthen their civic and political presence (Maryani & Karimah, 2019).

The use of digital media by women activists was therefore not only a strategy of advocacy but also a tool for building solidarity and strengthening women's positions in a society increasingly polarized by religion. These activities enhanced the visibility of gender issues and contributed to broader social change

(Hasyim & Makruf, 2022; Pratiwi & Arawindha, 2021). Yet the relationship between grassroots feminism and resistance to religious intolerance in Indonesia remains underexplored. Existing studies primarily focused on the interaction between state policy and community responses (Setiawan et al., 2024) or on religious moderation efforts in education (Khasanah et al., 2023), without adequately addressing how feminist activism intersected with these dynamics.

In the digital domain, literature on feminist use of online platforms in Indonesia remained limited (Kebingin et al., 2024). While digital ethnography emerged as a promising approach for analyzing online practices and interactions (Lane & Lingel, 2022), few studies applied it to grassroots feminist networks. Ardèvol and Cruz (2013) emphasized the value of examining media practices through digital ethnography, which opened opportunities for understanding how feminism adapted and evolved in digital contexts. Similarly, Cottica et al. (2020) and Lane and Lingel (2022) highlighted methodological innovations that could shed light on feminist strategies for confronting religious intolerance online. Moreover, resistance to intolerance through art and culture suggested additional avenues for inquiry. Aji et al. (2021) demonstrated how Indonesian indie music served as a medium of resistance, prompting the question of whether feminist networks also mobilized cultural forms to express dissent. Integrating art, gender, and religious resistance within local contexts offers new insights into the interplay of identity and activism.

The urgency of this study lies in the relative neglect of local cultural and religious contexts within the global literature on digital feminism. Much literature tends to treat digital feminism from a universal perspective, overlooking how local variations shaped feminist activism. Research has indicated that while digitalization has amplified women's voices, local socio-religious dynamics, such as intolerance, significantly constrain feminist engagement (Jackson, 2018). A contextualized approach is therefore crucial for understanding how feminist movements operate within Indonesia's religious framework, particularly given the role of intolerance as a barrier to women's empowerment (Schuster, 2013).

Accordingly, this study examines locally rooted feminist digital networks that amplify the voices of women often marginalized in global narratives (De Benedictis & Mendes, 2024). By analyzing these networks, the research contributes to understanding how women in Southeast Asia navigate challenges such as religious intolerance while fostering more inclusive approaches grounded in local realities (Loke et al., 2016). This study is based on the hypothesis that grassroots

feminist networks in Indonesia actively utilize digital platforms to resist religious intolerance and promote interfaith solidarity. It further posits that feminist digital activism contributes to the reconfiguration of dominant religious narratives in ways that advance inclusivity and pluralism. Specifically, the study examines the digital strategies these networks employ in responding to intolerance, the alternative narratives they develop, and the challenges they encounter in leveraging digital platforms—ranging from technical barriers to cultural resistance. The analysis also assesses the broader impact of feminist digital activism on local socio-religious dynamics, including its influence on public perceptions of gender and religion.

The novelty of this research lies in its cross-disciplinary approach, integrating feminism, religious studies, and digital ethnography. By focusing on Indonesian feminist networks, the study highlights underexplored dynamics within contemporary social and political life. This approach not only contributes to feminist scholarship but also enriches debates on tolerance, pluralism, and activism in Indonesia. Finally, the adoption of digital ethnography represents a methodological innovation with the potential to advance feminist research in Southeast Asia, offering new tools for understanding activism in the digital era.

## METHODS

This study employed digital ethnography and critical discourse theory as its primary methodological framework. Together, these approaches provide an in-depth understanding of how resistance is constructed and communicated through symbols, language, and digital interactions. Digital ethnography enables not only the direct observation of phenomena but also the exploration of meanings generated within digital environments, thereby supporting a deeper understanding of how online communication practices and cultural patterns are shaped, negotiated, and sustained.

As Cleland and MacLeod (2022) argue, digital ethnography opens new research spaces by recognizing the centrality of online environments in contemporary ethnographic inquiry. They emphasize the importance of incorporating digital platforms—such as X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and Facebook—into social research, given their role in shaping everyday interactions. Similarly, Eslit and Escalona (2023) highlight how cultural dynamics are expressed and contested within digital communities, offering insight into the ways identity and belief are articulated in online contexts.

Duggan (2017) further contends that all forms of ethnography are now influenced by digital contexts, which blur the boundaries between the virtual and the real. By engaging with the epistemological foundations of digital ethnography, researchers can achieve a more comprehensive understanding of how social interactions unfold in the digital era. In parallel, Бapxатoвa (2023) highlights the increasing importance of computational analysis in ethnographic research, proposing methods that enable scholars to “listen to and tell” digital social stories while upholding the core principles of ethnography.

The utility of digital ethnography for examining subcultural practices has been demonstrated in studies such as Crowe and Hoskins’ research on adolescent subcultures, which shows how digital platforms provide a holistic view of behaviors and motivations within broader social contexts. At the same time, ethical considerations remain central. Ardèvol and Cruz (2013) caution that digital ethnography must carefully address the methodological and moral challenges of working with media practices, routines, and online communities.

In this study, digital ethnography was combined with critical discourse theory to create a nuanced analytical framework. This enabled the researcher not only to observe phenomena but also to analyze how language, symbols, and narratives are mobilized to construct identities and negotiate power within digital communities. The data included tweets, Instagram captions, Facebook posts, YouTube comments, campaign visuals, posters, and videos circulated across various platforms. These materials were systematically collected based on their relevance to themes of gender, feminism, and interfaith solidarity in digital activism. This methodological combination enabled the tracing of both the forms of resistance articulated by grassroots feminist networks and the ways they responded to dominant power structures within Indonesia’s digital sphere.

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

### **Empirical Data Visualization**

Based on the results of digital ethnography observations, researchers collected approximately 1,200 uploads from Twitter/X, Instagram, and YouTube between 2020 and 2024 using the hashtags #PerempuanLawanIntoleransi, #SolidaritasLintasIman, and #FeministVoices. From the overall data, the analysis

showed three dominant themes: (1) interfaith women's solidarity narratives, (2) criticism of religion-based hate speech, and (3) advocacy for gender equality in digital public spaces.

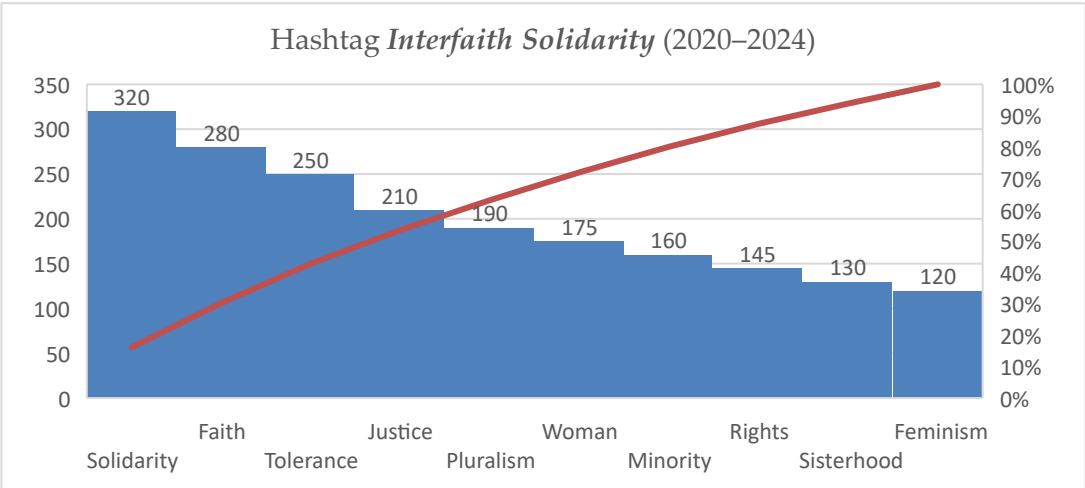


Figure 1. Word Cloud #PerempuanLawanIntoleransi Hashtags (2020–2024)

The word cloud (Figure 1) displays the words that appear most frequently, including 'solidarity', 'faith', 'justice', 'pluralism', and 'tolerance'. Meanwhile, keyword network analysis shows that there is a strong knot between the terms 'feminism' and 'pluralism', which are closely linked to the narrative of 'cross-faith sisterhood'

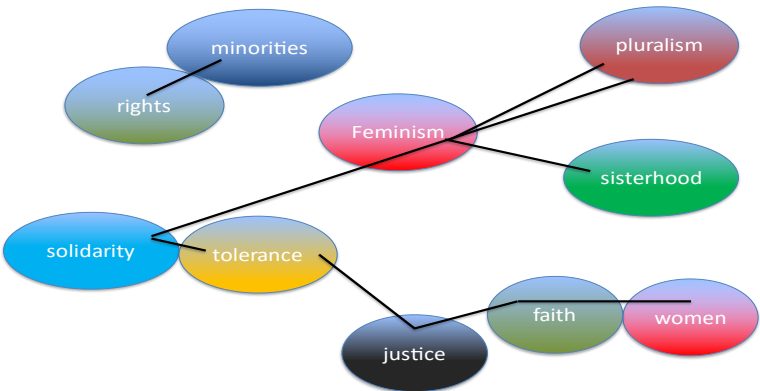


Figure 2. Keyword Network: Feminism, Pluralism, and Interfaith Solidarity

As shown in the figure 2 above, it suggests that the fight against religious intolerance is conducted in conjunction with the struggle for gender equality.

Keywords 1	Keywords 2	The Power of Relationships
Feminism	Pluralism	0.92
Feminism	Sisterhood	0.87
Solidarity	Tolerance	0.85
Tolerance	Justice	0.83
Pluralism	Solidarity	0.80
Justice	Iman	0.78
Iman	Woman	0.74
Minoritas	Right	0.70

Table 1. Keyword Network: The Power of Relationships

The table above shows the interrelations between key words or hashtags, indicating interconnectedness among concepts. Words such as feminism, solidarity, tolerance, justice, woman, and minoritas (minority) placed significant mentions in the Twitter (X).

### Resistance Digital Strategy is Narrative and Symbolic

This study found that grassroots feminist networks have consistently adopted an approach that utilizes empathic narratives, victim testimonies, and alternative religious symbols to challenge the dominance of patriarchal and spiritual interpretations. In this context, the use of visuals such as illustrations, poems, progressive religious quotes, and infographics is crucial in conveying an inclusive message of diversity. This concept aims not only to raise awareness of women's experiences but also to articulate injustice in a way that is accessible to the broader community.

Considering the feminist mission that drives the normalization of victim narratives, Halper et al. note the importance of collective solidarity in empowering individuals to make informed choices about reproductive health and access to medical care (Budiarti, 2024). People involved in feminist organizations often offer powerful personal testimonies, creating a space where their voices, which are usually marginalized, can be heard. In this context (Ridho, 2021). Gebhard et al. show that feminist movements can serve as a means to break patriarchal ideologies through collective support, and this has proven effective in the context of victims



of violence bringing their experiences to the surface to create dialogue. However, there is no direct evidence to support all of these claims in existing references (Gezinski et al., 2023).

Feminist networks are also very active on social media, which enables them to utilize these platforms to support their movement. Lee emphasized that while social media can facilitate mobilization, it also presents challenges in terms of maintaining the authenticity of collective action, as individual performance often dominates the course of activism (Lee, 2022). However, the reach that social media platforms can provide, as well as the ability to connect local experiences to global issues, allows feminist networks to explore new ways to articulate their struggles against gender-based violence and the disregard for women's rights more broadly. (Jiang & BihongGao, 2024).

Meanwhile, the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) cannot be ignored, as they not only mobilize individuals but also advocate for feminist ideas globally. As expressed by Subramaniam, NGOs function as agents that produce and disseminate feminist discourse, thereby strengthening the organization of grassroots movements that focus on issues directly affecting the lives of community members (Subramaniam, 2016). This highlights the importance of collaboration between NGOs and feminist networks in advocating for policies that promote gender justice and equality.

In many contexts, narratives and symbols drawn from religious traditions serve as bridges to build a more inclusive understanding of gender equality. Roded explains that religious feminists, both Muslim and Jewish, use religious symbols and values in their struggle to create greater gender equality and challenge patriarchal readings of sacred texts (Roded, 2012). This concept is also further explained in the context of feminist studies of theology, which demonstrate how alternative interpretations can foster a more egalitarian understanding in religious practice (Dobrovolska, 2023).

The communication strategies used by feminist movements, including the use of poetry, illustrations, and infographics, are integral to the way they create collective memory and archive women's lived experiences. In Cruz's analysis of alternative organizations, it is evident that there is a strong connection between visibility and communication in the pursuit of gender justice across various contexts (Cruz, 2017). Harnessing modes of artistic expression also enables women to reframe their narratives and experiences, which are often overlooked in the dominant discourse.

With the emergence of more digitally connected feminist movements, as exemplified by the movements in Iran following Mahsa Amini's death, it has become clear that feminist networks can adapt and develop strategies in a changing political environment (Vachhani, 2024). Adaptation to social and institutional challenges is a crucial factor in the ongoing struggle. The ability to organize effectively while still prioritizing the voices and experiences of marginalized women requires a fast and responsive approach to the ever-changing needs of the field.

### **Women Organizing Interfaith and Identity Solidarity through Digital Platforms**

To effectively counter hate speech and religious exclusion, digital activism led by women across religions has emerged as a significant force. The coalition fosters an inclusive environment and leverages platforms like Twitter and Instagram for advocacy. These platforms serve as collaborative spaces that promote solidarity among women from different backgrounds, allowing them to amplify their voices against intolerance. The digital space provides an opportunity for marginalized groups, especially women, to raise awareness and promote the values of tolerance amid increasing incidents of bigotry and hate speech (Silva & Hansson, 2024).

Research shows that social media serves as an empowerment tool for women, providing access to resources and forming networks that facilitate their growth and collaboration (Moroojo, 2021). Hamid et al. highlight that social media empowers women by discussing various dimensions, including economics, social culture, psychology, politics, and law (Hamid et al., 2016). Empirical evidence suggests that respondents view social media as a suitable platform for addressing women's issues, supporting the notion that these digital platforms can foster women's empowerment. This collective engagement exemplifies how digital activism can reframe conversations around gender and religion, promoting tolerance and understanding (Dewi, 2020).

In addition, the prevalence of hate speech directed at women and minority groups requires efficient strategies for detection and response on social media platforms. Hate speech against women is an integral part of online discourse, with research showing that it can account for nearly 50% of hate speech on platforms like Twitter (Lingiardi et al., 2019; Perelló et al., 2019). Advanced models are being developed to address this challenge, as demonstrated by Huang et al., who propose enhanced detection methods to effectively identify and classify hate speech. By

highlighting this correlation, it becomes clear that the environment on social media platforms not only invites conflict but also provides the necessary tools for marginalized communities to resist and drive social change (Pamungkas, 2015).

The community-building aspect of social media serves as a practical foundation for women seeking comfort and collective action against acts of hate. For example, digital alliances among women of different faiths are crucial during times of rising intolerance, as they provide mutual support and solidarity through shared experiences and campaigns (Lia, 2021; Mursyidin et al., 2022). Therefore, social media can serve as an active agent of change, fostering a culture of dialogue and resistance to hate speech (Fahdiyansyah & Susiati, 2024).

Moreover, the scientific implications of this finding are varied. They signal that social media strategies must be deeply integrated into women's empowerment initiatives, especially in the face of rising intolerance (Arip Ardiansyah & Mukarom Nugraha, 2024). Various studies emphasize the need to address online hate speech issues through effective policies, educational programs, and community engagement practices (Basile et al., 2019). Understanding the socio-political dynamics that govern online interactions can facilitate more effective strategies to reduce hate speech (Nulita et al., 2023).

A crucial aspect of this discussion centers on the role of digital platforms as a battleground for ideology and social change (Ridho & Sa'ad, 2024). The narrative of women's empowerment emerges not only from personal testimony but also from collective community efforts aimed at reconfiguring public perceptions of gender roles and religious affiliation (Shata & Seelig, 2021). The involvement of women from different faiths in digital activism challenges patriarchal structures and social norms that often lead to exclusion and discrimination. By leveraging Instagram and Twitter as advocacy platforms, these women create a digital presence that draws attention to their struggles and victories, expanding the scope of understanding and tolerance.

Bridging the gap between digital activism and women's empowerment demonstrates the critical role social media plays in fostering solidarity against hatred and exclusion. When women from diverse backgrounds collaborate effectively to fight hate speech, they not only advocate for their communities but also set a precedent for future generations. By relying on empirical research and building a robust framework for understanding hate speech on social media, scholars and practitioners can better equip themselves to leverage these digital tools for positive social change.

### **Social Media Used as an Alternative Safe Space**

In recent years, the practice of feminism in cyberspace has undergone significant development, with digital media becoming a safe space for feminist communities to voice criticism of conservative groups. This digital space allows women, especially those who are marginalized, to challenge patriarchal forces and discuss important issues without the direct risk of criminalization that they face in conventional public contexts. As described in Lafuente's research, feminist communities, including groups such as Las Femi Diskas, developed strategies of virtual engagement to counter violence experienced in private and public spaces, thus demonstrating that digital media serves as a bastion of resistance (Murillo Lafuente, 2023).

Furthermore, a study by Maryani et al. and Parahita suggests that social media, often referred to as "fourth wave feminism," has provided a new space for feminist activism by organizing and mobilizing support (Kurniadi et al., 2020; Parahita, 2019). Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have become fertile ground for feminist activists to share their views and advocate, driving discussions on gender equality and women's rights in Indonesia. In a broader context, this phenomenon is observed worldwide, including in China, where the Douyin platform is utilized to foster feminist discussions among younger generations (Meng & Literat, 2023). As such, digital media offers a level of access and engagement that is difficult to achieve through traditional channels, creating a safe space for feminists to express themselves.

The transition from conventional public spaces to the digital realm presents various challenges and opportunities. We can see how digital feminism can create a supportive community, despite the risk of retaliation from conservative and misogynistic groups. Jackson and Banaszczyk describe how the handling of feminism hashtags can spark online backlash, highlighting the tensions between feminists and the backlash from those who disagree (S. J. Jackson & Banaszczyk, 2016). In addition, Eslen-Ziya points out that anti-feminist and misogynist movements often use the same space to reinforce traditional narratives that curb the role of women (Eslen-Ziya, 2022).

Feminist practices in cyberspace have also adopted a variety of strategies to protect themselves from harmful attacks and criticism. Wong Linabary et al. note that the forms of feminist activism that emerge in social media account circles often involve the use of memes and humor as a means to build awareness and support

(Linabary et al., 2020). This aligns with a study by Galpin, which demonstrates that digital feminist movements frequently operate at the intersection of interconnected identities, allowing women from diverse backgrounds to collaborate and discuss their experiences within a broader context (Galpin, 2022).

Thus, the shift to the digital realm not only facilitates social advocacy but also creates new challenges related to political awareness and maneuvering. Further analysis by Okech shows that while digital spaces provide a level of freedom, they are also exposed to abusive and aggressive behavior, which can silence women's voices [68]. This is where it is essential to create a safe and inclusive community within the platform, allowing feminists to speak up without fear of backlash.

From the collectivity offered by digital media, there are significant implications for public policies and support mechanisms for women who are victims of gender-based violence. Puente et al. point out that community engagement in the digital space not only needs to be recognized as a form of activism but also needs to be integrated with public policies that guarantee protection and support for vulnerable individuals (Puente et al., 2017). This highlights the necessity for a comprehensive approach that integrates virtual activism with tangible policy reforms to promote the sustainability of feminist movements in the digital era.

Thus, a safe online space for feminists enables them to advocate for progressive social change without being caught up in the conservative backlash that often dominates public discourse. The presence of women in broader discussions through digital media represents a collective power that can change existing social, political, and cultural narratives. This underscores the importance of supporting and strengthening feminist networks in the digital realm as a key step in the struggle towards more substantial gender equality worldwide.

### **Resistance is Intersectional and Contextual**

Women's digital activism not only focuses on gender issues but also addresses issues of ethnicity, social class, and the religious marginalization of minorities, reflecting the complexity of women's experiences in various contexts. Women involved in digital activism often utilize social media to share their experiences and promote solidarity at both local and global levels. In this context, digital activism serves as a platform to divide narratives that are often overlooked in public discussions outside of cyberspace (Panda, 2023).

One form of this activism is evident in the hashtag activism that addresses the issue of gender violence. For example, the #ChallengeAccepted movement on Instagram, which originated with the goal of raising awareness about violence against women, illustrates how digitalization empowers women to organize and share their stories collectively. More broadly, this kind of movement reflects how social media can serve as a space for contestation, giving a voice to marginalized groups (Faniyi, 2023).

The existence of this digital activism is highly dependent on the local context. For example, activism that arises from awareness of intolerance in education or places of worship shows how local experiences can be articulated into larger narratives. (Mukherjee et al., 2022). In this context, women's resistance to oppressive social and cultural norms becomes particularly relevant. At the local level, this can be a protest against discrimination or violence experienced by religious minorities in their communities (Kanai, 2020).

Furthermore, an understanding of intersectionality is crucial in the context of women's digital activism. Intersectionality, as a framework that recognizes how individual identities (such as gender, race, and class) intersect with each other, helps explain the factors that influence women's experiences in the digital environment [75]. For example, the experiences of Muslim women at school may differ significantly from those of Christian women or women from wealthier backgrounds. Research indicates that gender, combined with socio-economic and religious status, can serve as barriers to active participation in a wide range of activities, including sports and education (Lim & De Graaf, 2021).

On the other hand, digital activism also plays a role in creating a safe space for women to gather and discuss their personal and collective issues. This is especially important for young women who may face stigma in their offline environment; in this case, social media serves not only as a tool to spread messages but also as a bridge to build a supportive community (Schuster, 2013). Activism through digital platforms enables the creation of solidarity networks where women can share resources, experiences, and solutions to the everyday problems they face due to social and gender injustices (Harris, 2019).

From both scientific and practical perspectives, this phenomenon offers insight into how women's activism can serve as a driving force for social change. (Alhajri & Aloud, 2023). For example, given the limited access to digital technologies for women from disadvantaged backgrounds, initiatives that focus on digital empowerment and training for women in local communities can increase

their participation in public discussions and amplify their voices in policies that affect their lives (McAdam et al., 2019).

The implementation of an intersectional approach in digital activism also has significant implications for training and education, particularly in the context of teaching about gender bias. Programs designed to raise awareness of the importance of intersectionality can play a crucial role in formal and non-formal education, preparing future generations to be more sensitive to the diversity of women's experiences in the digital world (Prasetyo, 2023).

Women's digital activism, with an emphasis on marginalized issues, not only empowers individuals but also invites the wider community to reflect on and change existing social norms (Khalid et al., 2024). By leveraging digital platforms to highlight and discuss specific issues faced by diverse groups of women, this activism creates space for the cross-cultural dialogue and collaboration that is essential in the face of today's global challenges (Arriaga, 2021).

### **Key Challenges: Digital Repression and Backlash from Conservatives**

Feminist networks in Indonesia continue to face a variety of online attacks, including doxing, hate speech, and "anti-religious" labelling by faith-based conservative groups. Hate speech cases in Indonesia take many forms, such as defamation and provocation, which create serious challenges for women's groups and feminist organizations in advocating for women's rights. As revealed by Prabandari et al., hate speech on social media has become an urgent issue, where many individuals and groups face serious threats both physically and psychologically as a result of such hate speech (Prabandari et al., 2021).

Despite the challenges, feminist networks have demonstrated remarkable resilience by employing digital protection tactics and collective narrative distribution to respond to these attacks. Research by Fortuna and Nunes shows that understanding the indicators of hate speech is crucial for identification and can aid in creating more effective protection strategies for individuals who are often targeted (Fortuna & Nunes, 2018). By adopting a more comprehensive approach, feminist activists can design safer interactions in cyberspace by utilizing gender-friendly and inclusive methods of surveillance.

Studies have shown that narratives constructed collectively by feminist networks can serve as an effective response to hate speech. For example, in the context of digital activism, Elzayady et al. emphasized the importance of understanding online behavior and data use in developing hate speech detection

models (Elzayady et al., 2023). Feminist networks strategically adapt content and narratives to raise awareness of the issues they face, drawing lessons from the experiences of other women in their communities (Choi, 2024).

Furthermore, empathy can be a practical approach to dealing with hate speech. Papcunová et al. found that an empathy-based approach can reduce the negative impact of hate speech. However, it often requires adjustments in the implementation of content moderation on social media platforms [88]. By recognizing and appreciating each other's experiences, feminist networks can build solidarity and create safe spaces amidst the pressures they face.

In this context, there has been a shift in the way these groups interpret the attacks they experience. Research by Rahmi shows that strengthening digital literacy among vulnerable individuals is crucial for understanding how to deal with and counter hate speech in Indonesia, as well as the role of the Cyber Police established to monitor and address hate speech cases. This suggests that collaboration between the government and civil society can help create a safer environment for feminist members. This collaborative approach can help overcome the stigma attached to feminist activism and build a more positive narrative.

In addition, there are concerns that while existing safeguards may mitigate some of the adverse effects, doxing and defamation attacks often target more vocal feminist activists (Fileborn & Trott, 2021). Further research shows that young women in feminist communities are often the primary targets of online attacks, which give rise to injustice and violence in both online and offline contexts (Hangartner et al., 2021). Therefore, feminist networks need to enhance their protection strategies, making them inclusive and responsive to the evolving digital landscape.

In practice, strengthening cooperation among researchers, activists, and social media platform providers is necessary to foster a deeper understanding of hate speech and its impact on marginalized groups. As Gajardo and Mata demonstrate, adopting a holistic approach that incorporates education and treatment in the school environment can help build awareness of feminist issues and promote the early elimination of hate speech in society (Suprpto, 2012). The integration of diverse narratives in education can help address and prevent gender-based violence, both in the real world and online.

The resilience of feminist networks in Indonesia is rooted in collective strength and innovation in resisting ongoing attacks. By leveraging technology and narrative-based approaches, they not only survive but also strive to shape a fairer



and safer space for all parties in society. This effort requires support from various levels of society, both in the form of regulations and education on the importance of tolerance and respect for humanity.

### **The Critical Role of Digital Micronetworks and Collectives**

The social media landscape has undergone significant changes in recent years, illustrating that the success of resisting social media temptations depends not only on prominent public figures but also significantly on the collective engagement of smaller accounts with limited followers. This phenomenon is characterized by horizontal and non-hierarchical network relationships that emphasize community impact rather than personal popularity.

Personal interaction and community dynamics play a crucial role in shaping the effectiveness of social media resistance strategies (Mudzakkir, 2017). Reinecke and Hofmann's work highlights the dynamics of self-control in the context of media use, arguing that successful resistance to temptation consists not only of the motivation to resist but also the willingness to act (Reinecke & Hofmann, 2016). Implies that smaller, community-driven accounts can contribute positively to countering unhealthy media habits through collective motivation and shared support structures (Haryani, 2019). This idea resonates with Hammerl et al., who assert that the structure of social networks, including how smaller accounts interact within these networks, is critical in achieving measurable success in social media engagement. Their research emphasizes that success metrics should include not only the level of engagement but also the quality of community interactions, which can increase resilience to broader societal pressures delivered through larger, more popular accounts (Hammerl et al., 2019).

In addition, Gupta and Pandey highlight how emerging design trends in social media strategies resonate very well with specific audiences (Gupta & Pandey, 2023). Focusing on community engagement rather than an individualistic approach can lead to increased business efficiency, as dynamic interactions within smaller networks foster loyalty and trust among followers. Suggests that community-focused content can increase genuine popularity through meaningful interactions (Ridho, 2020).

Furthermore, Jones et al. document the integral relationship that small businesses have with social media, emphasizing that building relationships is paramount. Small entities often utilize social media to foster a deeper connection with their audience, ensuring that their presence is felt through genuine

interactions rather than a large number (Jones, 2015). This echoes the concept that it is not just the volume of followers that counts, but the nature and quality of interactions that can ultimately drive a community's effectiveness in resisting the temptations of broader social media.

The dynamics of smaller accounts also play a crucial role in disseminating important information about social issues, including climate change. Wibeck, finding that the efficiency of community influence can stem from localized grassroots engagement, supports broader discourse through shared knowledge and community values, reflecting a model of social engagement that extends beyond mere popularity (Wibeck, 2012). Through effective micro-engagement strategies, communities can reject untenable narratives and instead disseminate more grounded, community-centered knowledge. This supports the argument that horizontal networks involved in collective action can produce meaningful social impacts.

Further reinforcing this view is an analysis conducted by Mwaanga and Chrine, which focuses on the use of social media among small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Their study concluded that SMEs that leverage social media engage their target market directly and build brand visibility through community-driven efforts, contrary to the notion that success is only achieved by having a large number of followers (Mwaanga & Chrine, 2024). Instead, success comes from deep community connections that increase resilience to external social media pressure. The accumulation of knowledge, experience, and community support in smaller groups fosters a stronger basis for collective resistance to negative social phenomena.

Regarding community resilience, Lin et al. highlight how community structures are adjusting their strategies in response to rapid growth, emphasizing moderation and content focused on collective well-being as paramount (Zheng et al., 2018). This aligns with popular sentiment, as smaller, more engaged communities are often more effective at maintaining a focus on collective goals than larger, louder platforms, which can easily be overwhelmed by competing narratives (Wang & Ouyang, 2023).

Ultimately, the implications of these findings resonate across the academic and practical domains. The incorporation of grassroots approaches and collective engagement can lead to new methodologies in the fight against harmful media use and can strengthen community interaction. This is particularly relevant in addressing public issues, where smaller accounts have a significant impact through

personalized trust-based relationships that may be difficult for larger entities to replicate due to their scale (Chan et al., 2024).

In conclusion, the success of resistance to the temptation of the media depends significantly on a community-focused strategy that prioritizes engagement over superficial popularity. Smaller account interactions on social media are not only important for fostering resilience but also for facilitating deeper and more meaningful engagement with critical social issues. This reinforces the idea that the collective action of less popular accounts can determine the trajectory of social narratives in the digital age.

The visualization of the word cloud (Figure 1) confirms that the terms 'solidarity' and 'tolerance' are at the center of feminist digital discourse. This shows that the grassroots feminist movement does not only advocate for gender issues, but also the word cloud visualization (Figure 1) confirms that the terms 'solidarity' and 'tolerance' are central to feminist digital discourse. This shows that the grassroots feminist movement does not only advocate for gender issues, but also positions itself as an agent of religious moderation. These findings strengthen the thesis of Vachhani (2024) that the politics of vulnerability in digital feminism can be reconstructed into cross-identity solidarity.

Furthermore, the analysis of the keyword network (Figure 2) shows a close relationship between the narratives of feminism and pluralism. This pattern shows that the digital strategy of feminist activists in Indonesia has succeeded in framing religious intolerance as a common issue, not just a minority issue. Thus, the empirical results of this study expand the literature on digital feminism in Southeast Asia by showing that women's resistance in the digital space is intersectional and contextual—encompassing gender, religion, and civil rights.

This discussion also confirmed that the digital space serves as an arena of resistance as well as protection, where women and religious minority groups can have their voices heard without being completely constrained by conservative

norms. The empirical findings reinforce the claim that digital ethnography is not only a method of observation, but also a means to understand symbolic constructions in crossfaith feminist activism, positions itself as an agent of religious moderation. These findings strengthen that the politics of vulnerability in digital feminism can be reconstructed into cross-identity solidarity.

Furthermore, the analysis of the keyword network (Figure 2) shows a close relationship between the narratives of feminism and pluralism. This pattern shows that the digital strategy of feminist activists in Indonesia has succeeded in framing religious intolerance as a common issue, not just a minority issue. Thus, the empirical results of this study expand the literature on digital feminism in Southeast Asia by showing that women's resistance in the digital space is intersectional and contextual—encompassing gender, religion, and civil rights.

This study demonstrates how grassroots feminist networks not only advocate for gender equality but also actively foster interfaith harmony through social media. This has not been highlighted much in previous literature, which tends to separate the issues of feminism and religious intolerance. The findings show that social media serves as a safe space for women and religious minorities to express themselves, build counter-narratives, and find support for solidarity across communities. Digital activism provides empowerment opportunities, but it also presents challenges in the form of counterattacks such as online bullying and ideological oppression. These findings confirm the existence of a dialectic between resistance and repression that is typical in the Indonesian context. With a focus on grassroots movements in Java, this study expands the understanding of Southeast Asian digital feminism, emphasizing the intersection of gender, religion, and technology. These findings provide a new framework for analyzing how interfaith solidarity can emerge from local feminist initiatives in the digital space.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates how grassroots feminist networks in Indonesia effectively employed digital platforms to counter religious intolerance and promote interfaith solidarity. These feminist actors constructed counter-narratives through empathetic storytelling, symbolic expression, and inclusive discourse, thereby challenging dominant patriarchal interpretations of religion. Their digital activism created alternative safe spaces in which marginalized voices—particularly those of women and minority religious groups—could be amplified and protected.

The study contributes to existing scholarship by providing an empirical and context-specific understanding of feminist digital activism in the Global South, where gender, religion, and technology intersect in unique and complex ways. It underscores the capacity of locally rooted digital movements to facilitate meaningful socio-religious transformation, even amid online harassment, political constraints, and broader socio-cultural challenges.

Scientifically and practically, the findings highlight the need for a multidimensional approach to understanding how grassroots feminist networks operate and persist in the face of patriarchal and religious dominance. This suggests that conventional academic frameworks may need to be revised in order to capture the lived realities of feminist resistance at the grassroots level. Moreover, the study points to the importance of policies that draw on local knowledge and individual experiences, thereby offering more inclusive and contextually grounded strategies for addressing gender inequality and religious intolerance.

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