Gender Identity, Everyday Politics, and Social Media: Indonesian Female Millennials' Social Media Activism

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate how the female millennial generation engages in the expression of everyday politics on social media. Millennials are often perceived as disinterested in political matters; however, it is argued that they possess unique characteristics that shape the way they articulate their political preferences. By advancing previous research on gender, social media, and political resistance, this study fills a gap in the existing literature, as previous studies primarily focus on women's involvement in political resistance on social media without specifically examining millennials, particularly females, and their utilization of social media for expressing their political preferences.

To conduct this investigation, a multimodal discourse analysis method was employed, analyzing posts on Twitter and Instagram that articulate political expressions by female millennial protesters against unjust government policies. The findings reveal that female millennials exhibit a distinctive attitude when expressing their political preferences. There exists an interplay between gender identity and politics, manifested through everyday life political narratives. For instance, female millennials employ the use of makeup as an analogy to symbolize their political standpoint. Additionally, they informally frame political issues. Social media platforms offer support by enabling female millennials to share images and videos that amplify the narrative of everyday life politics.

Keywords: Millennials, Gender identity, Visual images, Everyday Politics, Social Media activism, SDG 5: Gender Equality, SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

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Introduction

The primary objective of this study is to examine how the female millennial generation in Indonesia use social media to articulate their political expression. Indonesia ranks 87th out of 146 countries in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2023. This rank indicates significant gender gaps in political engagement, health, education, and economic participation (Nurhajati, 2023). In addition, according to the 2020 Global Media Monitoring Project Report, gender representation in Indonesian media was still considered as unequal and stereotyped. Thus, the media representation of women and girls is still inferior (Nurhajati, 2023). In 2020, there were 34% millennials out of the total Indonesian population (Finaka, 2020). It is expected that millennials continue to dominate the Indonesian population until 2035. In the Indonesian context, social media is often considered a "secret weapon" for oppressed Indonesians (Holmes & Sulistyanto, 2016). According to David Holmes and Sulistyanto Sulistyanto (2016) after television, social media is the second most influential source of political information. Within this situation, it is significant to examine how female millennials in Indonesia articulate their identity and their political expression especially through social media. Social media offers its users freedom to represent themselves and engage in variety types of political activism. I argue that female millennials in Indonesia articulate their unique political expression on social media.

Millennials are said to be the "always on" generation (Rideout & Watkins, 2019) as they are constantly connected to digital media and social media in particular. This fact has an implication to their involvement in their lives, including their social, economic and political or civic life. They have less engagement socially and even passive engagement in civic life. A survey on millennials social media behaviors by Victoria Rideout and S. Craig Watkins (2019) in the United States shows that millennials tend to "remaking a civic life" by organising political movements and joining political groups through social media resulting specific social media activism. For instance, a study by Labor and San Pascual (2022) in the Philippines indicates the role of young people/students for minority group's right on social media.

Millennials' social media activism is accomplished through several social media platforms. A survey by Stacy Jo Dixon (2022) in the United States shows YouTube, Facebook and Instagram are the most accessed social media platforms by millennials. This survey also shows the differences between male and female millennials' social media usage. Female millennials prefer to use Facebook and Instagram for their activism. The use of these social media platforms by female millennials also showed in studies by Inaash Islam (2019) that explore Muslim female social media activism to

counter Western media stereotypes of female Muslim and by Manyu Li et al. (2020) that examined female activists who use social media to empower females against sexual assault. Gayle Kimball (2019) in her study shows how social media allows young women to organise uprising and to enter global activism. Another study by Rahul Kapoor (2022) shows the significant role of female students in participating in the movement against online harassment. In this sense, social media has been using by female activists to articulate their identity and to develop their feminist discourse.

The role of technology, particularly social media, in the women's movement has been a focal point of feminist discourse. Judy Wajcman (2004) highlighted feminism's long-standing concern regarding the impact of technology on women, while Gilang Parahita (2019) argued that digital technology platforms have become spaces for mobilizing women and voicing feminist perspectives. In Indonesia's post-authoritarian era, women's political participation has gained visibility, marked not only by the 2019 election, which witnessed a breakthrough with over 20% of women elected to the People's Representative Council (Aspinall, et al., 2021) but also by the use of social media as a tool for supporting women's political activism (Parahita, 2019). This aligns with global studies by Elhan Gheytanchi and Valentine Moghadam (2014) and Victoria Newsom and Lara Lengel (2012), which highlight the contributions of women's political activism on digital media, or cyber activism, to social and political change. According to Mary Joyce (2010), digital activism refers to the use of digital infrastructure technology include the network and the device for economic, social and political campaign contexts. Martha McCaughey and Michael Ayers (2003) and Sandor Vegh (2003) added the term activism in the digital as political resistance or political activism on the Internet.

Over the past decade, Indonesia has witnessed numerous protests against government policies, with participation from various groups such as college students, laborers, and journalists. For instance, in 2019, college students, along with journalists and laborers from major cities, rallied against the government's controversial bills such as labour laws. Jakarta, Surabaya, and Yogyakarta witnessed passionate demonstrations where young people demanded the government to address issues such as sexual violence and the revision of the law on corruption eradication (Movanita & Galih, 2019). The protests lasted for three consecutive days, resulting in casualties and injuries. This particular movement stands out as it involves millennials in expressing their political concerns, despite surveys indicating that only a small percentage of millennials in Indonesia show interest in socio-political issues (Tashandra, 2017). Ashley Rouse and Stella Ross (2020) argue that millennials generations have unique political identity

that conditions political choices, attitudes, and beliefs. In line with this statement, Patrick Fisher (2019) states that "millennials have a distinctive generational identity that is fundamentally rooted in cultural shifts resulting from the social, economic, and political events that took place as they were becoming politically socialized" (p. 5). Thus, in terms of political attitudes and preferences, millennials have distinct experiences. Considering that millennials are heavily influenced by technology, particularly digital technology, and are known for their reluctance to engage and participate in political activities, this study argues female millennials express their political preferences on social media during such rallies in unique and distinctive ways. Therefore, this study contributes to the understanding of female millennials' social media activism and the articulation of their identity and political preferences.

Furthermore, this study builds upon previous research on gender, social media, and political resistance. Existing studies in Indonesia (e.g., Hanifa ,2020; Parahita, 2019; Winarmita, 2020) which focus on women social media engagement in general) have primarily focused on factors contributing to women's involvement in political resistance on social media, overlooking the specific utilization of social media by millennials, especially females, in articulating their political preferences Consequently, this study provides an original contribution to the field by examining the unique utilization of social media by Indonesian female millennials in the context of identity and political resistance. Although the results of this study may resonate with the utilization of social media by millennials in other regions for political resistance, the findings hold particular significance within the specific cultural and socio-political context of Indonesian female millennials. As argued by Merlyna Lim (2013), within the context of Indonesia, social media can only transform into political engagement under particular conditions. In addition, Bart Barendregt and Florian Schneider (2020) state that within Asia context,

> "[W]hat happens under the banner of digital activism is not necessarily politics with a capital P but, rather, consists of everyday forms of engagement, with sometimes seemingly vulgar contents and often familiar routines and natural forms, yet in their impact such 'banal activism' may have political implications" (p. 5)

While numerous studies have explored the articulation of political issues through visual images, none have specifically examined how female millennials visualize their political preferences on social media. A study by Nadila Sinulingga and Rosy Pagiwati (2018) shows that female use social

media extensively, especially visual platform such as Instagram, to think about their self-confidence, especially their body image. Yuyun Surya (2018) discussed the use of self-visualization as a strategy for identifying with a particular political movement in her study on Papuan political resistance online. Lina Khatib (2013), who focused on the use of visual images in the Middle East, posited that political struggle revolves around presence and visibility, as the desire to eliminate an image can only be achieved through a new image.

According to Lim (2011), social media has provided a new platform for popular and cultural expression. Indonesia's New Order regime, which ended in 1998, was one of the initial movements in which online media played a significant role in distributing political information. Oppositional groups express their dissent through online group chats and disseminate it internationally (Molaei, 2015). Several social media movements took place in Indonesia between 2009 and 2011, including the well-known Anti-corruption Committee case, also referred to as "Gecko vs Crocodile," and the "Coins for Prita" case (Lim, 2013).

As demonstrated above, social media activism can influence offline events in Indonesia. For instance, the Gecko vs Crocodile case started in April 2009 when Susno Duadji, a corrupt national police chief in the Criminal Investigation Agency (Bareskrim), discovered that the KPK (an independent anti-corruption agency) had wiretapped his phone during a corruption investigation (Lim, 2013). The national police chief expressed his discontent by comparing the KPK's significance to a common house gecko [*cicak*] fighting a crocodile [*buaya}*. Subsequently, two KPK deputy chairmen, Chandra Hamzah and Bibit Samad Riyanto, were arrested on charges of blackmail and bribery. They contended that the charges were an attempt to undermine the KPK and that they were being framed. Most Indonesians viewed these charges as fabricated (Lim, 2013). The public showed support for the KPK through social media by initiating the Movement of 1,000,000 Facebookers to back the two KPK deputy chairpersons. Within a month, one million members joined this Facebook group in support (Lim, 2013). According to Lim (2013), 5,000 Indonesians participated in a street rally in Jakarta to support the KPK, organized by the Indonesian Corruption Watch. Similar rallies occurred in various cities across Indonesia. In December 2009, the charges against the two deputy chairpersons were dropped due to public pressure.

Another notable case is the Coins for Prita movement, which began in May 2009. Lim (2013) argues that this movement for Prita represents a women's movement and protest. Prita Mulyasari was ordered by the court to pay a fine for defaming Omni International Hospital in Jakarta. Prita

had emailed her friends and relatives about her dissatisfaction with the hospital's services. In response, the hospital accused Prita of defamation. The court not only found Prita guilty of defaming the doctor and the hospital, imposing a fine, but also sentenced her to six months in prison. However, her case did not attract widespread attention until it circulated through social networking sites, including Facebook. Lim (2013) notes that the Facebook page garnered over 20,000 supporters, with ordinary Indonesians sympathizing with the images of a distraught Prita, who was separated from her two young children. The movement gained momentum when a Facebook user suggested contributing 500 rupiahs (equivalent to 5 cents) to pay Prita's fine. Subsequently, the Coins for Prita campaign spread to other cities in Indonesia and even among Indonesian communities abroad. The campaign raised a total amount far exceeding Prita's fine. Recognizing the massive support for Prita, Omni International Hospital dropped its civil lawsuit. In December 2009, the court ruled Prita innocent, considering that she did not distribute her email through social media. Prita's email had gone viral after her friend distributed it on social media. Prita donated the money she received from supporters to charity (Lim, 2013)

Literature review

This literature review aims to discuss existing theories used in this study on the female millennial generation engagement in the expression of everyday politics on social media. This study focuses on the way female millennials articulate their political preferences through posts and comments on Twitter and Instagram pages. The purpose of this section is to provide a theoretical and conceptual framework including 1) five categories of social media activism practices including issues of hacktivism, slacktivism, and clicktivism in the activists' involvement in digital activism; 2) the everyday politics that refers to the intersection between social media and political activism; 3) the concept of the politics of millennials as a form of analysis of millennial generations' political attitudes and policy preference; and 4) the concept of identity, gender and their relation to social media. These theoretical and conceptual frameworks help shed light on the interrelation between female millennials, political resistance and social media activism.

Social media activism

Social media activism can be defined as an activity that is supported by social media platforms (Gerbaudo, 2015). Unlike other forms of online activism, social media activism has distinct characteristics. It relies on specific platforms that emphasize identity management and the creation of friendship networks. Therefore, social media activism is unique in

that it builds upon identity and network formation as the foundation for activism (Marichal, 2013) Within the realm of identity management, social media activism is often considered a form of micro-activism, which refers to politically oriented communication that reflects micro-level expressive political performances (Marichal, 2013). Micro-activism suggests that political activity online often serves as a space for articulating political identities rather than driving social and political change. Thus, political activity on social media can be seen as discursive practices aimed at performing one's desired political self or idealized political identity (Marichal, 2013).

According to Suay Özkula (2021) there are five categories of digital activism, they are: 1) advocacy and political commentary, include explicit support for particular ideologies in the form of likes, shares pictures, videos, hashtags and comments; 2) recruitment, movement-building and campaign, include creating collective contents in the form of campaigns, recruiting and mobilizing activists to join the movements; 3) organization and coordination, include organising activities online and offline; 4) online direct action and civil disobedience, include creating political memes, "post or email bombings"; and 5) research and documentation, include spreading information about specific political issues based on data and documents to increase awareness (pp. 67-70). In addition, there are three categorisation on digital activism based on the activists' involvement in the movement, they are; 1) hacktivism that refers to intrusive access to digital system and organisation aimed at providing direct impact to the political goals, 2) slacktivism that refers to passive activities include liking and sharing the posts, and 3) clicktivism that refers to clicking to join and sign in petition in particular platform such as Change.org (Castillo-Esparcia et al., 2023, p. 7).

Feminists have long utilized social media as a tool for their social movements. Studies by Hester Baer (2016) and Manyu Li et al. (2020) indicate that women actively engage in social media activism by sharing resources, discussing issues, disseminating feminist ideas, and connecting different and diverse groups, enabling them to create various forms of protest and activism. Furthermore, Emma Turley and Patrick Fisher (2018) note that social media provides a visible platform for feminists to address experiences relating to sexism and misogyny. In the case of Indonesia, Monika Winarnita et al. (2020) argue that female journalists fully leverage social media to support their political engagement and negotiate their gendered ideals. Additionally, Ledia Hanifa (2020) argues that although political participation does not differentiate between men and women, there is a lack of women's participation in expressing their opinions or criticizing public policies. Nevertheless, the extensive use of social media has enabled

women politicians to articulate their views more effectively. Prihartini's study (2019, as cited by Hanifa, 2020) found that during the 2019 legislative election campaign, women candidates utilized Instagram and Twitter to communicate with their constituents. Hence, women politicians are actively involved in social media activism or micro-activism.

Jose Marichal (2013) identified the four dimensions that ecompass micro-activism: expressivity, identity, signifiers, and length. Expressivity and identity encompass a range of political identity discourses created by social media users, including the use of physical characteristics as markers of identity. Signifiers refer to language elements such as punctuation, capitalization, and word/sentence length used by users to express emotions and political views that may not be effectively conveyed through mainstream media. According to Marichal, platforms like Facebook provide a meeting point for individuals to form groups, shape membership, and engage in discourse. He adds that users can signal their identification with group expectations and deliver opinions and interests related to politics or other issues.

Regarding the creation of networks, social media platforms facilitate the diffusion of emotional narratives. Paolo Gerbaudo (2012) argues that social media channels condense individual sentiments of indignation, anger, pride, and a sense of shared victimhood, transforming them into political passions that drive mobilization (p. 14). Thus, social media serves as a symbolic space that emphasizes unity rather than diversity as the foundation for mobilization. Consequently, participants often overlook differences among themselves. This tendency can be problematic from an anti-authoritarian perspective. Nevertheless, several cases worldwide, such as the Indignados movement in Spain (Anduiza et al., 2013) and the occupation of Tahrir Square in Cairo that sparked the Egyptian revolution (El Tantawy & Wiest, 2011), highlight the significant role of social media in uniting and mobilizing participants based on emotional narratives in political activism against authoritarianism. Therefore, social media's involvement in social movements is characterized by identities and narratives reflected in personal orientations that sustain friendships and sharing (Gerbaudo, 2012).

The everyday politics: Political activism on social media

The use of social media as part of the everyday practice around identity and community has sometimes invoked its users to engage with politics (Highfield, 2016). Politics on social media can be discussed implicitly and explicitly along with other personal or community topics. Even though social media were not initially created for political purposes, they have been utilised for political discussion and mobilising political movements

by communities. The focus on friendship and sharing that typifies social media activism has made the relationship between the political and the use of social media as the personalisation of politics or "everyday politics" (Highfield, 2016, p. 7). It implies that political issues are framed by users' interests and experiences and are formed without a clear leadership. Thus, how politics are discussed on social media is highly informal as individuals contribute to the discussion based on their perspectives.

The politics of millennials

The politics of millennials is the term coined by Rouse and Ross (2020) to refer to the analysis of millennial generations' political attitudes and policy preferences. According to Pew Research Centre, millennials are those who were born in 1980s (Dimock, 2019) or between 1980 to 2000 ("Millennials: The me, me, me generation," 2013). These generational categorisations are mostly defined by marketer and popular writer. They share unique characteristics include lack of attachment to traditional institutions, digital natives and so accessing social media on daily basis or "always on" generation (Rideout & Watkins, 2019). They also lack engagement in civic or political life. These distinct characters affect their political attitudes, policy preferences and levels of political engagement. However, their political attitudes are different when they are engaged with social media. A study by Rideout and Watkins (2019) on the millennials' political engagement through social media in the United States found that more than 50% of millennials use social media as a tool for social and political engagement. They have involved in activities such as sign an online petition, donate to a social cause online, participate in social media campaigns to influence government decision or action as well as post political-related contents on social media. Thus, they are using social media to express their political views or even to inform their off-line involvement. These situations become the factors that affect the millennials' political identity.

Identity, gender, and social media

Identity defines how individuals interpret and understand themselves as part of greater community. It has psychological, social, cultural, and political dimension (Gunduz, 2017). It is used to construct, maintain, and/or reconstruct a sense of personal identity (Berzonsky, 2011). Identity encompasses an individual's thoughts, feelings, and how they are known to others. Therefore, identity construction is a collaborative process between individuals who declare their identity and a society that acknowledges and endorses it. A critical aspect of these definitions is that identity depends on both an individual's interpretation and how others perceive them.

Contemporary society in the 21st century has witnessed the emergence of social media usage, which has become an integral part of everyday activities. Its ubiquity has made social media not only a means of connecting users but also a platform for articulating identity. Social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and blogs, promote social interaction among participants through the exchange and sharing of user-generated content, emphasizing user participation (Eisenlauer, 2013; Georgalou, 2017). Thus, the construction of identity on social media is facilitated by these specific platforms. As a user-generated medium, social media allows users to consciously and unconsciously express their identity. The conscious aspect of identity is evident when users construct their identity in the profile section, selecting information related to their identity. Additionally, users unconsciously convey information about their identity through interactions such as posts and comments (Vasquez, 2014). Therefore, users' identity assertion is presented in the site's profile section and interactions. However, the platform's design limits the construction of identity in the profile section, preventing users from unilaterally deciding on relevant information categories for their identity. Previous research on identity in social media has primarily focused on the representation of individuals through user profiles (Boupha et al., 2013; Pan, et al., 2017;).

In addition to providing platforms for identity expression in the profile section and through posts and comments, social media also facilitates identity construction through multimodal affordances. Users can develop their identity through verbal messages and visual images, which are key resources for constructing identities on social media. The display of visual images, such as photos, has been widely used for identity presentation, especially with the rise of smartphones with camera technology (Rettberg, 2014). The accessibility of fast broadband technology, enabling the sharing of audio and video files, has further supported the use of multimodal affordances for identity presentation. Some physical attributes related to identities, such as tone of voice and facial expressions, are replaced by written words and emoticons, respectively. Written words and visual images are the primary multimodal affordances used by social media users for identity presentation (Rettberg, 2014). Therefore, multimodal affordances on social media platforms have become an important aspect of identity presentation.

Through social media's multimodal affordances, users employ various strategies to construct their identity, including gender identity. Research by Susan Herring and Sanja Kapidzic (2015) on teens, gender identity, and social media usage reveals that teenagers use visual self-presentation to articulate their gender identity, aiming to create a favourable or ideal impression on others. Another study conducted by Bronwyn Carlson

(2013) found that social media users often make implicit claims about their indigenous identity. Explicit claims include verbal and narrated self-descriptions. Identity also encompasses physiological characteristics, such as skin colour, body shape, hair, and facial features, which can be recognized through pictures. Thus, these visible properties can be considered explicit claims.

Methodology

Research method: Multimodal discourse analysis

This study aims to explore how female millennials express their political preferences and identity through social media. Specifically, the study examines posts related to female millennials' involvement in rallies, considering both verbal language and visual images. Lawrence Frey et al. (1999) argues that analyzing language choices can offer insights into individuals' characteristics. Given its focus on the visual and verbal aspects of language within a specific social media context, this study employs a multimodal discourse analysis as its research method. This method pays attention to the particular aspects of the medium and situation being studied. Social media is considered "multimodal" as it incorporates various modes, including visual, audio, and moving images (Eisenlauer, 2013). Furthermore, the study analyzes the interrelationships between the texts and the socio-cultural, historical, and political contexts surrounding the production and transmission of multimodal texts, aiming to understand the meaning conveyed by the posts. To explore the contexts shaping the texts in this study, relevant academic literature and mass media publications were gathered and consulted, as they provide important insights into the posts' meanings beyond their denotative interpretations.

Through multimodal discourse analysis, elements of social media text can be explored. Social network sites have pushed multimodal analysis much more to the centre of discourse analysis. There are tendencies of researchers carrying out discourse analysis to focus on powerful, top-down texts and discourses in mass media generally and print media particularly. With the advent of social media, several of the shared assumptions in text research such as the notion of the linearity of media power (one-to-many) and the singular mode media character have been challenged.

There are benefits and challenges in applying discourse analysis to social network sites. The main benefit of applying multimodal discourse to analyse social media text is that it potentially includes all modes of communication on social media. Previous research on new media only pays attention to interactivity instead of multimodal characteristics of the media.

In social media, text is understood through interaction of people with the medium and the communication modes that are used to deliver text. In this regard, text in social media is the result of both users' interaction and its technological platforms. By applying multimodal discourse, all modes of communication are explored. Furthermore, multimodal discourse analysis not only pays attention to all modes of communication but it also looks at the relationships between modes and detailed nuances of meaning-making such as different impressions and meanings between the use of visual image and/or verbal language to express identity (Henriksen, 2014) Multimodal discourse provides additional ways of understanding such zones and the ways in which they emerge. Multimodal discourse explores the way different modes complement and reinforce each other.

Unit of analysis

The units of analysis in this study include elements of multimodal texts. They are verbal language/writing, elements of the visual image, and elements of interactivity on Twitter and Instagram sites. The elements of verbal language are sentence structure and organisation, word choice and jargon such as in the caption of the visual posts. The elements of a visual/audio-visual image are image type, structure and organisation. Visual image type includes picture and audio-visual image includes audio and video. Image structure and organisation can be seen from the composition or arrangement of visual/audio-visual elements such as colour, line, shape and viewpoint. The elements of an interactive characteristic are likes and shares.

Data collection technique

To collect data for the study, a directed approach (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) was employed, focusing on posts related to rallies. Data were collected within the period of 2019 to 2021. Posts related to rallies that involved female millennials were extracted from Instagram, Twitter and Tik Tok using keywords: demo, millennials and Indonesia. These posts then were selected based on the themes that emerged from the concepts utilised in this study, they are identity, political expression and social media activism. A directed approach in content analysis emphasizes the use of a theory to guide the creation of coding categories based on the data. Consequently, not all posts on social media platforms were included, as the study prioritized posts that aligned with the study's themes, while excluding irrelevant posts such as advertisements and greetings.

Data analysis procedure

The data analysis procedures developed for this study are based on Dennis Jancsary et al.'s (2016) analytical procedure for multimodal texts.

These procedures provide a systematic approach to analyze the collected data. The first step involved coding the collected posts according to their themes. The coding categories were developed around the theme of female millennials participating in rallies. The second step involved examining the multimodal elements present in each post to classify them into their respective theme categories. To classify which post belongs to what theme, elements of multimodal texts in a post have to be identified and examined. These elements are interrelated. The collected posts were coded to assign attributes to specific units of analysis. In examining the multimodal texts, a researcher can look for different kind of objects, actions, settings to capture the visual text and can look for metaphor, jargon, word choice and technical aspects such as the use of capital letters in a verbal text (Jancsary et al., 2016). The classification process required the identification and examination of the multimodal elements within the posts. These elements are interconnected. The collected posts were coded to assign attributes to specific units of analysis, which in this study include the verbal language/writing and visual image elements found in the posts on social media platforms. Finally, the third step involved analyzing the text's context or meaning concerning its broader context.

There is a lack of prescription regarding how research on social media texts should be done. Previous studies on multimodal discourse analysis on social media employed various methodological procedures such as Volker Eisenlauer (2013), who used Critical Hypertext Analysis (CHTA), Elisabetta Adami (2013), who employed a social semiotic framework, Jannis Androutsopoulos (2008), who used discourse-centred online ethnography (DCOE), Susan Herring (2010), who used Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis, and Majid Khosravinik and Mahrou Zia (2014), who employed social media discourse analysis. However, Taylor (2001) argues that researchers can choose any methodological procedures so long as the selection is purposefully based on their specific research topic and focus as well as answer the research question. Thus, researchers must explain their detailed and thorough procedure with justification of their choices. Within this context, this study offers an alternative analytical procedure in studying social media texts.

Ethical consideration

One of the first considerations in studying social media post is ethics, particularly whether the interaction takes place in public or private space and its relation to informed consent and anonymity (Khosravinik & Unger, 2016). According to Kozinets (2015), internet research ethics "stretch from legal issues such as liability for negligence and damage to reputation to

conventional research ethics notions of informed consent and respect, to social issues such as autonomy and the right to privacy" (p. 133). These issues need to be carefully considered by researchers when studying social media since the ethical issue may become an obstacle for the continuity of the research. There are two types of internet research: text-based (no informed consent needed) and person-based research (consent needed) (McKee & Porter, 2009). Text-based research considers internet-based communications as primarily public and assumes internet research as associated more with "public observation and public archive work" (McKee & Porter, 2009, p. 82).

The next ethical consideration is related to anonymity (Khosravinik & Unger, 2016, p. 219). Kozinets (2015) notes that researchers "have to avoid inappropriately revealing the identities of informants, any other confidential information about them, or information that could lead to their identification" (p 129). This study cannot fully guarantee the anonymity of social media users since this study collected data from users' posts that were traceable and could be used to reveal their identities. However, throughout the research, individual users were identified as social media users, but not by their names. Names and picture profiles of individuals whose posts analysed and presented in this study were redacted, and images were blurred.

Results and discussion

This section explores the way female millennials articulate their identity on social media. It looks at the way female millennials present and express themselves through posted and shared messages. Their online identity is significant because it forms the basis of their political preference. It also examines the way female millennials construct their identity as social media activists through the use of visual images. In addition, this section also discusses the way female millennials develop discourse of their engagement in political movement on social media. As noted by Highfield (2016) the utilisation of social media to express identity invokes the use of identity as one of the elements to engage with politics. He also coins the term "everyday politics" to refer to political issues that are framed by users' interests and experiences. Thus, how politics are discussed on social media is highly informal as individuals contribute to the discussion based on their perspectives.

Gender identity and political expression on social media

As noted by Georgalou (2017) the construction of identity on social media is facilitated by the specific platform characters. As a user-generated

medium, social media allows users to consciously and unconsciously express their identity. Social media offer "an ideal environment for the expression of the 'hoped-for possible self'" a realistic, socially desirable identity an individual would like to establish given the right circumstances through its platforms. In addition, social media usage has boosted users' sense of who they are and who they ought to be through its interactivity and multimodality. Interactivity refers to the transfer of information between participants in communication settings. Interactive messages push participants to continue the interaction because the circulated messages are relevant to the whole conversation. Thus, on social media, messages are considered interactive when posts receive comments, likes, and shares. Comments, likes, and shares are responses that encourage the continuation of interaction between users. Multimodality refers to the use of different modes of communication include visual images, verbal messages as well as audio visuals.

This study reveals that female millennials are using physical depiction showing gender distinctiveness to articulate their identity. This articulation is supported by the social media platform multimodal character that allows the use of visual images along with verbal messages. Through their Instagram accounts they post pictures when they were joining rallies to articulate their political preferences. As argued by Jorg Habler, et al (2023) personal depictions are very common in social media campaigns while addressing policy issues in posts. These posts contain self-portrait in close-up and medium shots emphasizing their feminine gender identity. The emphasis on the feminine aspect is also showed in the way they express their attitudes toward the political situation. Female millennials employed a distinct form of expression by drawing an analogy between the makeup they wore and the political climate. By creating posters with handwritten messages about the cosmetics they used, they related their personal experiences to the political situation. The use of the posters that contain their opinion toward political situation implies that they have created political commentaries and at the same time created contents for campaign against the unjust situation that threatened the unitary state of the republic of Indonesia. These posters were used to demand the Indonesian government to address issues such as sexual violence and the revision of the law on corruption eradication. The posts on social media that contain shared pictures/visual images and political statements used in the rallies, according to Özkula (2021), is considered as digital activism.

The visual images of female protesters holding makeup-themed posters went viral on social media, as depicted in Figure 1. The combination of their visual appeal and the association of makeup with femininity contributed to

their widespread popularity and engagement. In this sense, these posts are forms of mobilisation for activists to join the movement. Within Indonesia context, social media users tend to only share the posts instead of join the movement offline. This phenomenon is known as slacktivism that is a form of passive political activities in digital media (Castillo-Esparcia, et al., 2023). Slacktivism is quite common among social media users in Indonesia (Purnama, 2021). For instance, the use of the hashtags during 2019 presidential election (#sosindonesiaelection) disasters (#savesinabung) and also for the policymakingcritics (*#gagalkanomnibuslaw)*.

Figure 1

Female protesters and the makeup analogy.

Note: From JAKARTAINFO, by A.Nablia, 2019 (https://www.instagram.com/jktinfo). Copyright 2019 by JAKARTAINFO

Figure 1 comprises two distinct posts featuring female protesters holding posters that employ the make-up analogy. One poster reads, *Pak, skincare-ku mahal dipake panas-panasan, tapi gapapa soalnya NKRI lebih mahal harganya* [Sir, compare to NKRI, my expensive skincare is nothing]. Another poster states, *Gapapa make upku luntur asal bukan keadilan yang luntur* [wearing smudgy make-up is fine, annihilate justice is not fine] accompanied by numerous lipstick marks scattered across the poster. The use of make-up in the context of political movements or oppression is not a novel concept. As argued by Michele White (2018), make-up can serve as a feminist tool against oppression. In this vein, female millennial protesters have contributed a feminine voice to the rally. However, by foregrounding femininity in their participation, female millennials perpetuate the stereotype that mass rallies are primarily a male domain. Therefore, when Indonesian female millennials engage in these rallies, they often feel the need to articulate their femininity alongside their political preferences. This indicates that political issues are framed by the interests and experiences of the protesters, often expressed informally. It also highlights the claim

that millennials prioritize everyday politics. The use of everyday politics as expressed by female millennials in Indonesia is in line with the millennials' attitude trend in other Asian countries. As argued by Barendregt and Schneider (2020) within Asia context, "what happens under the banner of digital activism is not necessarily politics with a capital P but, rather, consists of everyday forms of engagement, with sometimes seemingly vulgar contents and often familiar routines and natural forms" (p. 5).

The use of the make-up analogy in the rally, which gained viral attention, brings forth another significant point: the ideal make-up for mass rallies. Figure 2 features a tweet from one Twitter account, explaining the recommended make-up for participating in a mass rally.

Figure 2

Recommended make-up for a mass rally'

Note: From https://twitter.com, by Badgaldidi, 2019 (https://twitter.com @badgaldidi). Copyright 2019 by Twitter.com

This post has garnered significant attention on social media platforms, with over 28 thousand Twitter users engaging with it and 33 thousand likes. Its popularity underscores its virality on Twitter and other platforms. The post reads, "Maybelline superstar foundation is so good, gangs. [Joining the rally] from early morning to evening, the make-up base is still flawless, fully covered [the face], and very light. It may get a bit oily due to the hot weather, but overall it holds up well. Highly recommended for a rally." This post serves as an illustration of the intersection between gender and politics, showcasing how cosmetics are incorporated into the narrative of everyday politics. As argued by Highfield (2016) politics on social media can be discussed implicitly and explicitly along with other personal or

community topics. The fact that social media were not initially created for political purposes, this study reveals that they have been utilised for political discussion and mobilizing political movements by Indonesian female millennials. The focus on sharing that typifies social media activism has made the relationship between the political and the use of social media as the personalization of politics or "everyday politics" (Highfield, 2016, p. 7). In this study political issues are framed by female millennials' interests and experiences in the use of the cosmetics that cannot be separated from their daily lives. This is in line with Rideout and Watkin's study (2019) that women are more likely to post on social media in daily basis than men. Thus, this study shows how politics are discussed on social media in a highly informal as Indonesian female millennials contribute to the discussion based on their gender identity perspectives. The articulation of female millennials identity is also built upon the way they wear their university jacket. It denotes professionalism, seriousness of purpose and formality. The suit jacket is the standard for formal wear in both social and professional settings as well as is associated with traits such as power and conformity. This fact implies that they develop a sense of formality despite the informal narrative of politics they have created on social media.

Female millennials social media activism

Social media activism suggests that political activity online often serves as a space for articulating political identities rather than driving social and political change. Thus, political activity on social media can be seen as discursive practices aimed at performing one's desired political self or idealized political identity (Marichal, 2013). In addition, identity construction is the important factors that influence the role of social media in the movement. As argued by Gerbaudo (2012), "it is impossible to understand the role of online media as means for mobilisation without an appreciation of the ways in which their use reflects and enacts the value, identities and narratives which typify the movements" (p. 9). In this regard, the use of social media in political resistance has endorsed a new form of online activism.

This study reveals that Indonesian female millennials more likely to create the desired political self-performance than to drive political change as can be seen in Figure 3 and 4. These figures exemplify the construction of an emotional space within which collective action can unfold.

In the case of the involvement of female millennials in the political movement against the Indonesian government through social media platforms, which enable users to generate and share information through posts, they tend to cover the event from a more personalized perspective, emphasizing human-interest content and prominently featuring visual

images. This emphasis on the convergence of multimodal content, connectivity, networking, and identity management on social media platforms is highlighted by Gerbaudo (2015) as a defining characteristic of social media's involvement in social movements. These platforms reflect individuals' identities and narratives, as they prioritize personal engagement, sustaining friendships, and sharing (Gerbaudo, 2015, p. 9). Furthermore, visual images play a significant role in articulating ideas within these contexts. The political movement that took place on September 24th, 2019, gained viral attention on social media due to the protesters' demands for the Indonesian government to prioritize legal matters and the visual representation of millennial protesters' political attitudes. Within this context, Indonesian female millennials are engaged in an explicit support and created campaign for political movement against Indonesian government. Özkula (2021) argues this type of social media activities is considered as digital activism especially hacktivism.

Throughout history, visual images have played a significant role in political endeavors. Khatib (2013), who examined the use of visual images in the Middle East, asserts that "the image is central to the political struggle, which is an ongoing process of images competing, overturning, erasing, and replacing one another" (p. 1). According to Khatib, political struggles revolve around presence and visibility, as the elimination of an image can only be achieved through the emergence of a new one. Images within the political sphere reinforce and interact with each other, thus playing a crucial role in the dynamics of political struggle. Additionally, Khatib (2013) argues that "the significant political moments of the past decade are predominantly remembered through images" (p. 1), citing examples such as the collapse of the Twin Towers and the toppling of Saddam Hussein's statue in Baghdad. Within Indonesia context, the use of visual images to express political resistance is also used by Papuans who use social media to its fullest potential to gain support internationally (Surya, 2018).

In accordance with Khatib's perspective, Braidotti (2015) suggests that activists also employ self-visualization as a means of identifying with specific political movements. For instance, specific colors, flags, and uniforms are utilized to distinguish and contrast themselves from their opponents during rallies. In this study, the use of self-visualization by millennials, particularly female millennials, is prevalent in articulating their political attitudes, as depicted in Figure 3. The self-visualization is combined with political memes as shown in the right-hand side top and left-hand side down in Figure 3. The use of political memes is one among digital activism categorisation that aims to deliver political statements as part of the campaign and mobilisation (Özkula, 2021).

Figure 3

Instagram accounts showing visual images.

[The Unitary States of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) is final. Why the people's rights and the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK)'s authority are being cut off?]

[I thought my heart is weak, in fact the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) is weak, too]

[corruptors' jails are more luxury than my rented room]

[Indonesian house of representatives break their promises similar to my ex-boyfriend]

Note: From https://instagram.com. by P. Hapsary, 2019 (https://www.instagram.com/p/B2y1z6PJ0jZ/?utm_source=ig_embed&utm_campaign=loading&img_index=7). Copyright 2019 by Instagram

Figure 3 includes two different types of visual images taken from the three different Instagram accounts (due to research ethical consideration, the account names and pictures of persons are redacted). These images were used by protesters during the September 24th, 2019 rallies. The first image shows a female wearing a yellow jacket, which is the alma mater jacket of the University of Indonesia in Jakarta. She is holding a handwritten poster that says, "The unitary states of the Republic of Indonesia (*NKRI*) is final, but why Commission on Corruption Eradication's (*KPK*) authority and citizens' rights are discounted?" The female protester is surrounded by males wearing similar jackets, and the picture was taken at the People's Consultative Assembly's headquarters. This picture not only focuses on the poster but also highlights the female protester, which within Indonesian millennials generation context is still considered as unusual and extraordinary, as it is not common to see female millennials participating in such rallies. However, much older female protesters are common in rallies in Indonesia especially those female labours. For instance, during International Women's Day, hundreds of female labours have joined the rally to demand gender equality in workplace (Davina, 2022).

The Indonesian female millennial protesters' appearance is considered neat and tidy, in contrast to the typical political activists who participate in the similar rallies. This extraordinary aspect is evident in the number of likes received by this post, which exceeds 56 thousand. The number of likes on social media is considered a form of positive feedback and meaningful engagement with the content.

The second image, also from one of the accounts, is a cartoon illustration created by puspahapsary. It was inspired by the September 24th rallies and depicts a male wearing a blue jacket, assumed to be an alma mater jacket, holding up a poster that reads, *Aku kira yang lemah Cuma hatiku, ternyata KPK juga* [I thought my heart is weak; in fact, KPK is too] There is also a female protester holding a poster that says, *Penjara koruptor lebih mewah dari kos gw* [Corruptors' jails are more luxurious than my rented room]. This post received almost 22 thousand likes.

The last image shows a female protester holding a poster that criticizes the Indonesian House of Representatives for breaking their promises, comparing it to her ex-boyfriend. This image exemplifies how millennials use visual images to express their political attitudes.

These four posts illustrate how millennial protesters articulate their political standpoint. They express their anger towards the Indonesian government, which has shown a lack of commitment to establishing a credible and clean government. They use everyday terms such as "discount," "weak heart," "rented room," and "ex-boyfriend" to construct a narrative of

political struggle. Millennials also utilize distinct expressions to convey their interests in politics. As argued by Ross et al. (2019), millennials have unique characteristics that shape the way they express their political preferences. While some individuals use posters to voice their political standpoint, others employ dancing as a form of political expression, as depicted in Figure 4.

Figure 4

TikTok dance while joining the rally.

Note: From JAKARTAINFO, by JAKARTA INFO, 2019 (https://www.instagram.com/jktinfo). Copyright 2019 by instagram.com

TikTok, the most downloaded application and highly popular in Indonesia, is a social media platform that focuses on content sharing, particularly related to dance. It has taken individualization and creativity in video sharing to new heights. The short-time dance style on TikTok has become popular and is now being utilized by female protesters to show support for political activism during the September 24th rally. Figure 4 displays a group of Indonesian female protesters dancing together. Although the dance itself is not directly related to the rally, it has garnered media attention and gone viral on platforms like Twitter and Instagram. This dance has become a distinctive feature of the rally, as political activism in the form of rallies rarely incorporates such events. Moreover, it exemplifies the unique way in which Indonesian female millennials articulate their political attitudes. The utilization of TikTok as the outlet to express political attitudes implies the blur boundaries between politics "with the capital P" and the everyday politics that is more personal and informal. The visual

representation of these dances, as depicted in Figure 4, underscores the significant role of visual images in expressing political preferences. In this sense, social media plays as a means of mobilisation for Indonesian female millennials who are engaged in political movement. Social media creates the "choreography of assembly" as the symbolic construction process of public space that enables the circulation of an emotional narrative to maintain users' sense of togetherness through the use of visual images. This narrative translates political engagement into social media activism.

Conclusion

The result of this study echoes the trend elsewhere, such as in the Philippines and Vietnam where female millennials activism is mushroomed (Purnamasari & Konety, 2023), as well as in Iran, Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt (Gheytanchi & Moghadam, 2014) where women had involved in social media campaign for their rights and democratization. The involvement of females in social media campaigns is not limited to political issues. A study on female social media campaigns in Bangladesh indicates that women's safety and security is also a significant issue. They created a safe public transportation for women campaign on Facebook (Das, 2019). Similar case on the use of picture and visual images as part of the expression on social media in this study also showed in social media-based environmental movement in Cambodia (Young, 2021). The findings of this study highlights different and specific aspects of the women's social media movements. This study reveals that female millennials emphasised their identity that become the basis of their political preference. It also emphasises the way female millennials construct their identity as social media activists through the use of visual images. Indonesian female millennials are using physical depiction showing gender distinctiveness to articulate their identity. In addition, the study highlights the way female millennials develop discourse of their engagement in political movement on social media. Indonesian female millennials are increasingly engaged in everyday politics that is lighter, more personal and informal through social media. Social media plays as a means of political expression for them. Even so, this study reveals that Indonesian female millennials more likely to create the desired political self-performance than to drive political change. While the mainstream media representation of women and girls is still inferior (Nurhajati, 2023), this study shows that Indonesian female millennials were no longer represented as inferior. They actively engaged in politics, voice out their political statements and activities on social media. Posters and political memes were created as means of campaign, political statement and mobilisation to join the movement. They commonly use personal

depictions in social media campaigns while addressing policy issues. In this context, Indonesia female millennials were engaged in slacktivism, a digital activism that is passive as they only share posts without intrude the access to digital system (hacktivism) or joining the petition (clicktivism). This is in line with the fact that identity construction is the important factors that influence the role of social media in the movement. The use of visual images and the incorporation of everyday politics by millennials are facilitated by social media platforms, which enable multimodal content and prioritize connections, networking, and sharing. Social media plays as a means of mobilisation for Indonesian female millennials who are engaged in political movement. Social media creates the symbolic construction process of public space that enables the circulation of a personal narrative (such as the use of cosmetics as the analogy) to maintain Indonesian female millennial's sense of togetherness through the use of visual images. Therefore, the use of social media by female millennials for political resistance has endorsed a new form political activism that is gender-based, personal and informal. In this sense, this study also reinforces the notion that millennials generations have unique political identity that conditions political choices, attitudes and beliefs (Rouse & Ross, 2020).

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