

CHAPTER II

LIBERAL FEMINISM IN DIGITAL SPACE: GLOBAL CONTEXT AND INDONESIAN LOCAL LANDSCAPE

2.1. Understanding Instagram as a Space for Digital Activism

Before discussing the spread and adaptation of American liberal feminist discourse in Indonesia's digital space, it is important to understand the platform where this process takes place. As the main platform used by @indonesiafeminis, Instagram plays a significant role in shaping how content reaches audiences and how audiences interact with it. Rather than serving only as a space for sharing information, Instagram influences the visibility, circulation, and reception of content through its features and platform design. Understanding this role is important because discussions about digital activism cannot be separated from the platform where they occur. The way content is presented, distributed, and engaged with is closely connected to the technological environment provided by the platform itself. Therefore, this section provides an overview of Instagram as a space for digital activism before moving to a more specific discussion of the @indonesiafeminis account.

2.1.1. The Role of Instagram in Digital Activism

The development of internet technology over the last two decades has changed the way people participate in public life, including in social activism. During the early stage of the internet, often referred to as Web 1.0, users mainly acted as recipients of information because communication largely moved in one direction. This situation changed with the emergence of Web 2.0, which allowed users to create and share their own content. As a result, the production and circulation of information were no longer controlled only by traditional media institutions. Ordinary users also gained the ability to participate in creating, sharing, and debating ideas in the digital space (van Dijck, 2013, pp. 4–6). Because of this development, social media has become more than a communication tool. It now

plays an important role in shaping how information and public discussions are produced and circulated online.

These changes have also influenced the way social movements are organized. According to Castells (2015, pp. 15–17), contemporary social movements are closely connected to digital networks because they grow and spread through online connections that link people across different locations and social backgrounds. Through these networks, messages can reach large audiences in a relatively short time. One example can be seen in the growth of hashtag activism since the mid-2010s. Hashtags such as #MeToo, #BlackLivesMatter, and #TimesUp show how digital platforms can support collective action on a global scale. Jackson, Bailey, and Foucault Welles (2020, pp. 3–5) also argue that hashtag movements do more than create temporary online discussions. They can open space for voices that are often overlooked in mainstream public conversations.

Among the many social media platforms available today, Instagram has become one of the most widely used spaces for digital activism. Since its launch in 2010 and its acquisition by Meta in 2012, Instagram has grown into one of the largest social media platforms in the world, with more than two billion monthly active users as of 2023 (Meta, 2023, para. 1). This large user base makes Instagram an important platform for reaching and engaging audiences. However, its significance for activism is not only related to the number of users. Instagram is built around visual communication, where photos, infographics, carousel posts, stories, and reels play a central role in how information is shared and received. As a result, the platform influences not only what messages are communicated but also how those messages are presented to audiences.

This characteristic can be understood through the concept of affordances. Bucher and Helmond (2018, pp. 233–235) explain affordances as the possibilities for action that emerge from the interaction between users and technological systems. Drawing from the work of Gibson (1979, p. 127) and Norman (1988, pp. 9–11), they argue that these possibilities are shaped by both platform design and user practices (Bucher and Helmond, 2018, pp. 236–237). In the case of Instagram, the platform encourages content that is visually appealing, concise, and easy to

consume. This affects the way activist messages are communicated. For example, infographics can simplify complex issues into more accessible formats, while carousel posts allow information to be presented in several connected slides. At the same time, features such as hashtags and tagging help content reach audiences beyond an account's immediate followers (Jackson, Bailey, and Foucault Welles, 2020, pp. 17–19).

These features help explain why Instagram has become an important part of contemporary digital activism. Poell, Nieborg, and van Dijck (2019, pp. 4–6) describe this broader process as platformization, referring to the growing influence of digital platforms in different areas of social and cultural life. In this context, Instagram is not simply a tool that activists use to distribute information. The platform also shapes how content is presented, circulated, and encountered by audiences (Poell, Nieborg, and van Dijck, 2019, p. 4). Therefore, understanding the role of Instagram is important for examining how the @indonesiafeminis account communicates feminist ideas and reaches its audience.

2.1.2. How Instagram Algorithms Shape the Visibility of Feminist Content

One factor that strongly influences digital activism on Instagram is the platform's algorithm. The algorithm affects what content appears on users' feeds and how widely a post can be seen. Since Instagram replaced its chronological feed with an algorithm-based system in 2016, content is no longer displayed simply according to the time it was uploaded. Instead, the platform selects and prioritizes content based on a range of factors that are not fully visible to users. As a result, visibility on Instagram is uneven, and important content does not always reach a large audience.

Bucher (2018, pp. 48–50) describes this condition through the concept of algorithmic power. Rather than controlling users through direct restrictions, algorithms influence what becomes visible and what receives attention. Some posts are promoted to wider audiences, while others gradually become less visible without being removed from the platform (Bucher, 2018, pp. 52–54). For activist accounts, this creates uncertainty because content that addresses important social issues may only reach a small portion of followers. Several factors are believed to

influence this process, including likes, comments, saves, shares, user interests, and the consistency of an account's activity (Caplan and Boyd, 2018, pp. 4–5). Tufekci (2017, pp. 23–25) argues that this situation can create inequalities in digital activism because groups with greater resources and stronger networks often have more opportunities to increase their visibility than groups with fewer resources.

Another issue often discussed in relation to platform visibility is shadow banning. In this situation, content remains on the platform but becomes more difficult for users to find. Gerrard and Thornham (2020, pp. 1268–1270) found that this type of restriction can disproportionately affect content that challenges dominant social norms or represents groups that are often marginalized. Their findings suggest that platform systems are not entirely neutral because decisions about moderation and visibility are shaped by particular rules and priorities (Gerrard and Thornham, 2020, pp. 1272–1273). However, algorithms should not be viewed as the only factor that shapes activist practices. Research shows that activists often develop different strategies to increase visibility, such as using hashtags, choosing posting times carefully, and building engagement with their audiences (Caplan and Boyd, 2018, pp. 8–9; Freelon, McIlwain, and Clark, 2022, pp. 14–16). This shows that the relationship between users and platforms is not one-sided, as both continue to influence each other.

These issues are particularly relevant in the context of feminist activism. Instagram has become one of the main spaces where feminist ideas are shared, discussed, and circulated. According to Mendes, Ringrose, and Keller (2019, pp. 5–7), social media has contributed to the growth of a more accessible form of feminism that can reach audiences beyond academic or activist communities. At the same time, this development has generated debate among feminist scholars. Some argue that the visual and viral nature of platforms such as Instagram can oversimplify complex feminist issues by placing greater emphasis on content that is attractive and easy to share (Mendes, Ringrose, and Keller, 2019, pp. 9–10). Others see this accessibility as an opportunity to involve a wider range of people in feminist discussions, including those who may not have previously engaged with feminist ideas.

This discussion can also be seen in the use of feminist hashtags. Jackson, Bailey, and Foucault Welles (2020, pp. 19–21) argue that hashtags do more than organize online conversations. They can help redefine social issues and provide space for voices that are often overlooked in public discussions. Through these networks, people from different backgrounds and locations can exchange experiences and perspectives (Jackson et al., 2020, pp. 22–23). However, visibility within these networks is not distributed equally. Existing inequalities related to race, class, and geography can still influence whose voices receive greater attention online (Jackson et al., 2020, pp. 25–26).

These issues become even more important when feminist discourse moves beyond its Western origins and enters different social and cultural contexts, including Indonesia. Appadurai (1996, pp. 35–36) argues that global ideas are not simply accepted by local audiences. Instead, they are interpreted, adapted, and sometimes challenged based on local experiences and conditions. For this reason, feminist discourse shared through Instagram does not remain exactly the same when it reaches different audiences. Its meaning can change depending on the social, cultural, and political context in which it is received (Appadurai, 1996, pp. 38–39). In Indonesia, Lim (2013, pp. 636–638) shows that social media has become a space where different groups compete to promote their own views and values. Similar dynamics can also be seen on Instagram, where discussions are shaped not only by social debates but also by the platform's visual features and content distribution system (Lim, 2013, p. 641). As a result, feminist accounts in Indonesia often need to balance ideas that come from global feminist discussions with the realities of local social and cultural contexts. This tension is closely related to the process of glocalization that forms one of the main concerns of this study.

2.2. Profile and Content Characteristic of @indonesiafeminis Account

After discussing Instagram as a platform that influences how digital activism content is produced and circulated, the focus now shifts to the @indonesiafeminis account as the main object of this study. As discussed in the previous section, the account does not operate independently from the platform. Instead, its activities, content distribution, and interactions with audiences are shaped by the features and systems provided by Instagram. Therefore, understanding the profile and characteristics of the @indonesiafeminis account is important for connecting the broader platform context with the ways audiences interpret its content.

Before discussing audience reception, it is necessary to first examine the profile, mission, content, and position of the account within the wider digital environment. This is important because the way feminist ideas are communicated is closely related to the people and organizations that produce them. Banet-Weiser (2018, p. 9) argues that feminist discourse in popular media cannot be separated from the institutional context and communication strategies behind it. Similarly, Gerbaudo (2021, p. 3) explains that social media has become a space where different meanings, ideas, and viewpoints are continuously produced, shared, and debated. For this reason, understanding how @indonesiafeminis presents feminist discourse can help provide a clearer context for analyzing how audiences respond to and interpret its content. Therefore, @indonesiafeminis needs to be understood as a site of meaning production that actively frames gender issues within Indonesia's digital space. This position underscores that analyzing the account is an important step before examining the process of interpretation by the audience.

2.2.1. Account Profile: A Discursive Agent in Indonesia's Digital Space

This study takes the Instagram account @indonesiafeminis as the main object of research due to its role in consistently producing and circulating feminist discourse in Indonesia's digital space. Based on data from Instagram, the @indonesiafeminis account was first created in May 2016. At the time this study

was conducted, the @indonesiafeminis account had around 107,000 followers with a total of 9,371 posts.



Figure 2.1 Instagram Account Profile of @indonesiafeminis
Source: Researcher's screenshot, (April 10, 2026)

In the description stated in its Instagram bio, the @indonesiafeminis account declares its mission to promote and prioritize diversity in sexuality and gender as well as class consciousness (@indonesiafeminis, April 2026). These data show that the @indonesiafeminis account is not only active in quantitative terms, but also has an ideological orientation that is openly stated to the public. This position serves as a basis for understanding the role of the account as an actor that consciously produces discourse. The identity of the account is not only formed through textual statements, but also through symbolic elements that are immediately readable by the audience. The account's logo displays a transgender symbol with a red background that semiotically communicates an ideological position even before the audience reads its content.



Figure 2.2 Logo of the @indonesiafeminis Account
Source: Instagram @indonesiafeminis (April 20, 2026)

The choice of the transgender symbol, rather than a more conventional feminist symbol, indicates an orientation that goes beyond a binary framework and

moves toward the recognition of diverse gender identities and sexualities (Hall, 1997, pp. 24–26; Butler, 1990, pp. 6–8). The red color used in the logo further strengthens the account's association with ideas of social change and collective struggle, which are also reflected in its mission. Therefore, the logo functions not only as a visual identity but also as a way of communicating the values that the account wants to promote. Through this visual identity, the @indonesiafeminis account has already provided an initial picture of how it positions itself and how it wants to be recognized by its audience.

The emergence of the @indonesiafeminis account is closely related to the growth of digital feminist activism during the second half of the 2010s. At the global level, the #MeToo movement, which gained widespread attention in 2017, encouraged the growth of feminist discussions and advocacy efforts across social media platforms, including Instagram (Jackson, Bailey, and Foucault Welles, 2020, pp. 145–147). In Indonesia, several social and political developments also contributed to this trend. Public debates surrounding the *Rancangan Undang-Undang Penghapusan Kekerasan Seksual* and the growing influence of religious conservatism brought gender issues into wider public discussion (Nurmila, 2021, p. 45). At the same time, younger generations became increasingly interested in conversations about gender equality. These conditions created an environment in which accounts such as @indonesiafeminis could develop and attract audiences. Therefore, the account can be understood both as part of a broader global movement and as a response to issues that emerged within the Indonesian context.

Beyond sharing information about gender-related issues, the @indonesiafeminis account also plays a role in shaping how those issues are discussed and understood. Through its content, the account highlights particular perspectives, raises specific concerns, and encourages audiences to think about gender equality in certain ways. This role is consistent with Hall's (1997, pp. 24–26) concept of signifying practices, which argues that meaning is produced through language and representation. In this sense, each post can be seen as an attempt to communicate particular meanings to audiences. However, audiences are not passive recipients of those messages. They may accept, negotiate, reinterpret, or even reject

the meanings offered by the content. This idea is important because it helps explain why audience interpretation becomes a central focus of this study and provides a basis for examining the forms of representation found in the content of the @indonesiafeminis account.

2.2.2. System of Representation and Multimodal Characteristics of Content

A noticeable feature of the @indonesiafeminis account is the way it consistently combines visual and written elements in its content. Most posts include illustrations, infographics, colors, and typography that are accompanied by captions containing explanations and arguments. These elements work together to communicate particular ideas and messages. Rather than functioning separately, each element supports the others in helping audiences understand the issue being discussed. For this reason, the content shared by @indonesiafeminis can be seen as more than simple informational posts. Each post is carefully arranged to communicate certain ideas and encourage audience engagement with the topic.

According to Hall (1997, pp. 28–30), meaning is produced through systems of representation that help people understand reality. On Instagram, representation is not limited to written language. Images, colors, typography, layout, and captions also contribute to how meaning is communicated. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006, pp. 20–22) further explain that different semiotic elements can work together in the process of meaning-making. This can be seen in the content of @indonesiafeminis, where visual and written elements are often used together to explain the same issue. As a result, audiences do not only receive information but are also exposed to particular ways of understanding that information. This shows that representation always involves choices about how an issue is presented and understood.

The content posted by @indonesiafeminis also follows a fairly consistent pattern. Visual elements are commonly used to introduce issues in a simple and accessible way, while captions provide additional explanations and arguments. This combination helps make complex topics easier to understand for a wider audience. In many cases, the visuals attract attention first, while the captions encourage audiences to engage more deeply with the issue being discussed. Because of this relationship, audiences receive not only information but also guidance on how the

issue can be interpreted. This suggests that the account pays attention not only to the content of its message but also to how that message is communicated.

The consistent use of visual and written elements is also important for this study. The content cannot be fully understood by examining text and visuals separately because both works together in shaping meaning. For this reason, a multimodal discourse analysis approach is useful in examining how different elements interact within a single post. In addition, the recurring use of particular visual styles suggests that the account carefully considers how its messages are presented. Rentschler and Thrift (2015, pp. 330–332) argue that visual choices in digital activism are often part of a broader communication strategy rather than purely aesthetic decisions. This perspective helps identify recurring patterns in the content of @indonesiafeminis, which will be discussed further in the following subsection.

2.2.3. Content Typology: Structure and Discursive Functions

Based on observations of the account's content during the period from January to March 2026, a total of 79 posts were analyzed in this study. All of these contents were then classified into two main categories based on the position of gender as an analytical framework. The classification was not based on visual form or post format, but on the discursive function performed by each content so that the analysis focuses on the role of gender in framing the social reality being conveyed. The categorization based on the position of gender as an analytical framework serves as an initial step to understand more specific patterns of meaning production in the account's content. The classification was not based on visual form or post format, but on the discursive function performed by each content so that the analysis focuses on the role of gender in framing the social reality being conveyed. The categorization based on the position of gender as an analytical framework serves as an initial step to understand more specific patterns of meaning production in the account's content.

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Figure 2.3 Instagram Homepage of @indonesiafeminis Showing the Variety of Uploaded Content

Source: Researcher's documentation, (April 10, 2026)

The first category includes content that places gender as the main analytical lens in reading social reality. Content in the first category explicitly discusses issues such as gender-based violence, gender roles, and bodily autonomy as the main focus of discussion. Within the first category, gender is not *only* present as a topic, but as a framework that directs the entire analytical process. Tong (2009, pp. 11–13) explains that liberal feminism often combines analysis of structures of inequality with attention to individual lived experience. The pattern of combining structural analysis and individual experience can be seen in content that connects social norms, regulations, and stereotypes with concrete experiences close to the everyday lives of the audience. Thus, content in the first category functions as a space to articulate the relationship between structure and experience simultaneously.



Figure 2.4 Example of @indonesiafeminis Title Post Addressing Gender as the Primary Analytical Focus
Source: Researcher's documentation (April 10, 2026)



Figure 2.5 Example of @indonesiafeminis Explanation Slide Addressing Gender as the Primary Analytical Focus
Source: Researcher's documentation (April 10, 2026)

Ahmed (2004, pp. 144–145) emphasizes that a text can be considered feminist discourse when gender is used as a tool to examine power relations. This principle helps identify the content in the first category as feminist discourse. The content goes beyond discussing women or vulnerable groups by drawing attention to the social factors that contribute to inequality. Instead of only presenting information, it encourages audiences to think critically about the issues being discussed. As a result, everyday realities that are often accepted without question are presented from a different perspective and open to further reflection. The focus

on this representational function clarifies the position of the first category as the central focus of analysis in this study.

The second category includes content that discusses broader social, political, or cultural issues, with gender present as an additional perspective. In content belonging to the second category, gender is not the starting point of analysis, but is used to enrich the understanding of the issue being discussed. The presence of gender is contextual and appears as one dimension of interpretation among various other factors. The difference between the first and second categories shows that gender can function at different levels within the same discursive structure. Tong (2009, pp. 13–14) notes that the difference between structural analysis and contextual application is a characteristic inherent in liberal feminism. This pattern is reflected in the difference in function between the first and second categories.



Figure 2.6 Example of @indonesiafeminis Post that Not Addressing Gender as the Primary Analytical Focus

Source: Researcher's documentation (April 10, 2026)

The difference between the first and second categories has important implications for the research design. Out of a total of 79 posts during the research period, 53 posts meet the criteria as content that uses gender as the main analytical lens, or about two-thirds of the overall data. Content in this category is then used as the main corpus in the analysis. The decision to select content that uses gender as the main analytical lens is based on the need to ensure that each text analyzed meets the criteria as feminist discourse in an analytical sense. Ahmed (2004, p. 144)

emphasizes that the presence of gender as a topic is not sufficient without an accompanying analysis of power relations. Therefore, content that only mentions women or vulnerable groups without structural analysis is not included in the corpus.

The methodological decision to limit the corpus to content that positions gender as the main lens also affirms the focus of the study on the discursive dimension most relevant to the purpose of the analysis. With this limitation of the data corpus, the study is able to maintain sharpness in reading the patterns of discourse produced. This approach also avoids mixing generally informative content with content that performs analytical work on inequality. A narrower focus also makes it easier to identify recurring patterns in how meaning is communicated through the content. Building on this discussion, the next section examines the people involved in the account and how they contribute to the creation and circulation of content within a wider digital environment.

2.2.4. Network Dimension and Collective Discourse Production

Another important aspect of understanding the @indonesiafeminis account is its connection with other communities and activist accounts in digital space. The account does not operate on its own, but is part of a wider network of individuals and groups that discuss similar social issues. These connections can be seen through activities such as reposting content, collaborating with other accounts, and participating in joint campaigns. Because of this, the content shared by @indonesiafeminis cannot be viewed as something that is produced entirely independently. The account is continuously interacting with other accounts and communities that contribute to the circulation of ideas on social media. Therefore, the position of @indonesiafeminis is better understood as part of a larger conversation taking place in the digital public sphere.

Papacharissi (2020, pp. 8–10) describes this kind of connection as networked feminism, which refers to feminist activism that develops through digital communication and participation from different users. In this context, the distinction between those who produce content and those who consume it becomes less clear. Users can respond to, share, reinterpret, and even contribute to the

discussion themselves. As a result, feminist ideas are no longer circulated through a single source but through ongoing interactions among many connected individuals and groups. This perspective helps explain why the content found on @indonesiafeminis can be seen as part of a broader network of feminist discussions rather than as the product of one account alone. This perspective helps to see the account as a node within a larger ecosystem of meaning production. The interconnectedness of digital networks as described earlier becomes even more evident through the use of Instagram collaboration features that allow a single post to appear simultaneously across multiple accounts. This collaboration feature changes the way content is distributed because it no longer depends on a single source, but is spread through several actors at the same time.

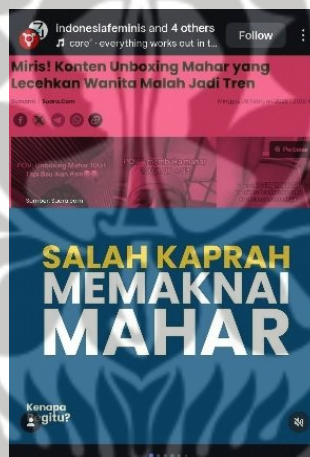


Figure 2.7 A collaborative post by the @indonesiafeminis account with another account on Instagram

Source: Researcher's documentation (April 10, 2016)



Figure 2.8 A screenshot of the accounts collaborating in a single @indonesiafeminis post

Source: Researcher's documentation (April 10, 2016)

Castells (2020, pp. 14–16) explains this network-based communication pattern as the main characteristic of digital communication, where the production and distribution of information take place in a connected way among actors. In this condition, the process of meaning-making is no longer fully in the hands of a single producer, but is the result of contributions from several parties involved in the network. Hall (1980, pp. 128–130) refers to this collective meaning-making process as multi-actor encoding because meaning is formed through the involvement of more than one actor in the process of message production. This shows that the discourse that emerges has a more open nature toward collective contribution.

Within a broader framework, this network-based communication pattern can be understood through the concept of connective action developed by Bennett and Segerberg (2013, pp. 46–48). The concept of connective action explains that collective action in digital space is not always built through formal and hierarchical organizational structures. Instead, participation is formed through content connections that are easily shared and adapted by various actors according to their respective contexts. This pattern makes discourse production more flexible while also being distributed among many parties connected within the network. Thus, the discourse produced by @indonesiafeminis cannot be understood as belonging to a single entity, but as the result of collective construction within the digital ecosystem.

The implication of the networked nature of digital systems, as explained previously, strengthens the position of the account as part of a broader system of digital feminist discourse. The production of meaning is always in relation with other actors who also shape the direction and dissemination of the discourse. This also shows that the position of the account in this study is not only important as a content producer, but as part of a larger structure in the circulation of digital feminist discourse. Thus, the analysis of this digital network dimension becomes an important bridge for understanding how feminist discourse in a global context can undergo shifts and adjustments when operating in the Indonesian context. The perspective of digital networks in feminist discourse production also opens space to see the process of glocalization as the result of interaction between global networks and local practices in discourse production.

2.3. Historical Development and Core Principles of Liberal Feminism in the United States

American liberal feminism is one of the most influential traditions of thought in shaping global feminist discourse. The influence of American liberal feminism can be seen not only in feminist theory but also in the way gender issues are discussed in international public spaces, including on digital platforms. Understanding this tradition is important for the present study because many of the ideas associated with liberal feminism continue to travel across national boundaries and appear in different local settings. However, these ideas do not remain unchanged when they enter new contexts. Instead, they are interpreted, adapted, and sometimes challenged according to local social and cultural conditions. For this reason, it is important to examine the origins, historical development, key principles, and global spread of liberal feminism before discussing how these ideas are received and reshaped in Indonesia. Without this background, it would be difficult to understand why certain meanings are maintained while others change when feminist ideas circulate in Indonesian digital spaces.

The roots of liberal feminism can be traced to Enlightenment liberal thought in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This intellectual tradition emphasized reason, individual freedom, and equality as the foundations of a just society. It was based on the belief that all individuals possess rational capacity and therefore deserve equal treatment (Tong, 2009, pp. 11–13). The ideas of John Locke contributed significantly to this tradition through his argument that every person possesses natural rights, including the rights to life and liberty. Nevertheless, these principles were not applied equally in practice. Women were largely excluded from the liberal conception of the individual, creating a contradiction that later became the focus of feminist criticism (Tong, 2009, p. 13).

Mary Wollstonecraft was among the earliest thinkers to challenge this inconsistency. In *“A Vindication of the Rights of Woman”*, she argued that women possess the same rational abilities as men and should therefore have equal access to education and participation in social life (Tong, 2009, p. 14). Her work challenged the belief that women's subordinate position was natural and instead pointed to the social conditions that limited their opportunities. Similar arguments were later developed by John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill, who viewed gender inequality as a social problem that restricted human progress. Rather than rejecting liberal principles, they argued that gender equality should be understood as part of the broader liberal commitment to freedom and equal rights (Tong, 2009, p. 15).

Tong (2009, p. 2) further explains that liberal feminism remains closely connected to these liberal foundations. Within this perspective, gender inequality is understood as the result of social and institutional arrangements rather than biological differences. Because these arrangements are socially created, they can also be changed through legal, political, and social reform. This idea later became central to many liberal feminist movements and influenced the way feminist issues were discussed beyond their original context.

The history of American feminism is often described through a series of waves, each associated with different priorities and forms of activism. Although this model simplifies a much more complex history, it remains useful for understanding major developments within feminist movements (Reger, 2021, p.

12). The first wave focused largely on political rights, particularly women's suffrage, and reached a significant milestone with the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. However, the movement mainly reflected the experiences of middle-class white women and did not fully address the concerns of other groups (Reger, 2021, p. 15). The second wave expanded feminist concerns to issues such as employment, education, and discrimination. During this period, works such as Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* helped draw attention to forms of inequality that many women experienced in everyday life (Tong, 2009, pp. 18–20).

The third wave emerged partly in response to the limitations of earlier feminist movements. Feminists increasingly highlighted the diversity of women's experiences and questioned approaches that treated women as a single, unified group. The concept of intersectionality introduced by Crenshaw became particularly influential because it demonstrated that experiences of inequality are shaped not only by gender but also by factors such as race, class, and other social identities (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140). More recently, the fourth wave has developed alongside the growth of digital communication and social media. Movements such as #MeToo illustrate how feminist ideas can spread quickly across countries through digital platforms and connect people who may never meet in person (Vachhani, 2024, pp. 1480–1481). As a result, feminist activism increasingly operates across national boundaries and within global digital networks.

American liberal feminism has also expanded beyond the United States through a variety of institutional, cultural, and digital channels. This process is not simply a matter of ideas moving from one place to another. Local communities actively interpret and adapt those ideas according to their own circumstances. Mohanty (2003, pp. 17–18) points out that global feminist discussions often involve unequal power relations, particularly when Western perspectives are treated as universal. In the digital era, social media platforms and English-language content have played an important role in spreading liberal feminist ideas to wider audiences (Wang, 2023, pp. 671–672). Academic institutions, international organizations, and transnational advocacy networks have also contributed to this process.

At the same time, the spread of feminist ideas does not automatically produce identical outcomes in different places. Movements such as #MeToo may travel globally, but the meanings attached to them often vary across contexts (Vachhani, 2024, pp. 1483–1485). Local audiences interpret these ideas through their own cultural values, social experiences, and political realities. This is why global feminism cannot be understood as a single and uniform phenomenon. Robertson's (1995, p. 28) concept of glocalization is useful here because it highlights the ongoing interaction between global influences and local responses. This perspective provides an important foundation for understanding how ideas associated with American liberal feminism are adapted, reinterpreted, and transformed within the Indonesian context.

2.4. Feminism within Indonesian's Socio-Cultural and Religious Context

Understanding feminism in Indonesia requires attention to the country's social, cultural, and religious conditions. As discussed in the previous section, American liberal feminism does not enter Indonesia as an idea that exists in isolation. Instead, it encounters a society that already has its own values, traditions, gender norms, and systems of authority. Because of this, feminist ideas are not simply accepted once they circulate in Indonesia. They are interpreted, debated, supported, and sometimes challenged by different groups within society.

Indonesia is also not merely a recipient of global feminist ideas. Local activists, communities, and organizations play an active role in shaping how those ideas are understood and discussed. Social values, cultural traditions, and religious beliefs often influence the ways people respond to issues related to gender equality. As a result, the development of feminist discourse in Indonesia involves ongoing discussions and disagreements among groups with different perspectives. These conditions make the Indonesian context more complex than a simple model in which ideas move directly from a global center to a local audience.

This complexity is important to consider when examining the women's movement in Indonesia. Feminist activism develops within social conditions that are shaped not only by global influences but also by local histories, institutions, and power relations that have existed for a long time. Mohanty (2003, pp. 17–18) argues that feminist analysis should avoid treating local societies as if they share the same experiences and social conditions. Each context has its own history and social realities. This perspective helps explain why feminism in Indonesia has developed in ways that may differ from feminist movements in Western countries.

The development of the women's movement in Indonesia itself began long before Western feminist ideas became widely discussed. For this reason, understanding the history of women's activism in Indonesia is important for examining how contemporary feminist discourse is received, interpreted, and adapted within the local context. The women's movement in Indonesia was born from local social and political contexts that later developed in line with interactions with global ideas. Therefore, the Indonesian women's movement cannot be reduced merely to an adoption from outside, but rather is the result of a complex and layered historical process (Robinson, 2009, p. 12). During the colonial period, awareness of gender inequality began to emerge in a form that was still fragmented but already significant. The figure of Raden Ajeng Kartini becomes an early representation of the articulation of criticism toward social structures that limit women's space of life, especially in access to education. Kartini's ideas emerged from personal experience as well as the influence of European liberal thought accessed through her intellectual correspondence (Blackburn, 2004, p. 27). Kartini's position at that time already shows that from the beginning, the discourse of women's emancipation in Indonesia has been situated at the intersection between local context and global influence.

Entering the early 20th century, women's collective awareness began to form through more structured organizations. The Indonesian Women's Congress in 1928 became an important point that marked the consolidation of various women's groups with diverse social backgrounds. In this forum, issues of education, marriage, and women's roles in public life began to be discussed collectively within

a national framework (Wieringa, 2002, p. 119). The existence of the Women's Congress in 1928 shows that from the beginning, the women's movement in Indonesia did not stand within a single ideology, but was plural and contextual. In the post-independence period up to the New Order era, the dynamics of the women's movement experienced significant changes due to state political intervention. Women's organizations developed within an increasingly controlled space, especially through institutions attached to the state structure. One of the peaks of this can be seen in the dissolution of Gerwani, which was followed by intensive political and moral delegitimation after 1965 (Wieringa, 2002, pp. 345–347). During this period, women's space of movement was not only limited politically, but also reduced to an institutionalized domestic role. Entering the Reform era, there was an expansion of women's participation in the public sphere and policy arena. The establishment of institutions such as the Komisi Nasional Perempuan (Komnas Perempuan) as well as the ratification of various regulations related to violence against women indicate progress in the recognition of women's rights (Blackburn, 2004, pp. 198–200). However, this development took place alongside the re-emergence of various forms of social conservatism that limit the expression of gender equality at the local level. The existence of such limitations at various levels shows that the history of the women's movement in Indonesia does not move in a linear way, but is filled with overlapping dynamics of progress and restriction.

The history of the women's movement in Indonesia is closely connected to the patriarchal values that continue to influence gender relations in many parts of society. These values can be found in customary traditions, everyday social practices, and even formal institutions. Although gender relations vary across regions and ethnic groups, many communities still place men and women in different social positions. This can be seen in the division of roles, access to resources, and expectations regarding leadership within both family and public life. At the same time, the Indonesian context is far from uniform. Some local traditions provide women with a stronger position in certain areas of life. The Minangkabau community, for example, is well known for its matrilineal system, where property and inheritance are passed down through the female line (Blackburn, 2004, p. 11).

However, this does not automatically mean that women and men hold equal power in all aspects of social life. Women may have important rights within the family or kinship system while still facing limitations in public decision-making and positions of authority. In many other communities, customary traditions continue to reinforce a clearer separation between the roles of men and women. These patterns did not disappear with modernization. In some cases, colonial and modern state institutions helped strengthen existing gender hierarchies by incorporating them into formal regulations and administrative systems. As Robinson (2009, pp. 16–17) notes, practices that were once more flexible in local settings often became more fixed and formalized over time. As a result, some gender norms became more deeply embedded in social and institutional life.

In the contemporary context, gender construction becomes increasingly rooted through long-term processes of social internalization. The concept of habitus shows that everyday social practices shape ways of thinking that are considered natural in gender relations (Alfirdaus, Divina, and Fitriyah, 2022, p. 118). The role of women as the primary caregivers in the family and restrictions on mobility in the public sphere are often accepted as something natural, rather than as a result of social construction. Resistance to feminist discourse also develops in the form of active social movements, including in digital spaces. Narratives that reject feminism as a foreign ideology show that patriarchy does not only operate passively, but is also reproduced through organized communication strategies (Alfirdaus, Divina, and Fitriyah, 2022, pp. 117–119). The dynamics of acceptance of feminist thought thus show that Indonesian cultural space is an arena of ongoing discourse contestation that interacts with religious and regulatory dimensions in shaping social legitimacy.

The digital public space in Indonesia develops within a regulatory framework that has a direct impact on the production and distribution of discourse. One of the main regulations that influences the dynamics of discourse production and distribution in Indonesia is the Undang-Undang Informasi dan Transaksi Elektronik (UU ITE), which regulates the boundaries of expression in digital spaces. These regulations mean that digital space is not entirely free from oversight.

Forms of expression shared online can still be subject to legal scrutiny. In practice, several provisions of the law have often been used in cases involving social criticism and personal expression on social media (Lim, 2017, pp. 414–415). Because of this, content creators may become more cautious when discussing topics that are considered sensitive. Beyond legal regulations, platform moderation also affects what can be shared and circulated online. Decisions related to content removal or limitations on distribution are often influenced by both platform policies and external pressures. For discussions surrounding gender and sexuality, these conditions can make digital space a less predictable environment for feminist expression.

In response to these challenges, activists have developed different ways to keep their messages visible. Some adjust their language, use less confrontational framing, or build networks with other accounts to strengthen their reach and support systems (Wijdan, Santoso, and Siscawati, 2024, pp. 349–351). These efforts show that users do not simply follow the rules of digital platforms but also find ways to work within them. At the same time, the widespread use of social media in Indonesia provides access to a large and diverse audience. This creates opportunities for feminist ideas to reach more people, while also making disagreements and resistance more visible (Parahita, 2019, p. 105).

For this reason, digital space in Indonesia is better understood as a place where different ideas, interests, and actors constantly interact. Feminist discourse develops alongside public resistance, platform policies, and algorithmic systems that influence what people see online. Rather than functioning only as a communication channel, digital platforms have become an important site where meanings are continuously debated and reshaped. Within this setting, American liberal feminist discourse does not simply move into Indonesia unchanged. Its meanings are adjusted and reinterpreted through ongoing interactions with local social, cultural, religious, and technological conditions discussed throughout this subsection.