

Social media and virtual sisterhood: the Instagram account @perempuanberkisah as a space for women's solidarity

Tri Kurnia Revul Andina

Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Email: trikurniarevul@uny.ac.id

Estavita Chantik Pembayun

Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Email: estavita.c@mail.ugm.ac.id

Prasakti Ramadhana Fahadi

The University of Melbourne, Australia

Email: pfahadi@student.unimelb.edu.au

Abstract

The practical and interactive nature of social media has played a pivotal role in fostering unity among women. Social media has evolved into platforms for women to express their worries, share their fears, discuss their problems, and be more emphatic towards each other. In this virtual realm, a distinct form of solidarity has emerged, allowing women to amplify their voices beyond the confines of the non-virtual world. An exemplary illustration of this phenomenon is the Instagram account @perempuanberkisah, which actively advocates for women's issues, particularly focusing on cases of violence. @perempuanberkisah curates diverse content, frequently featuring themes related to violence, including posts tagged #kisah18+ and #triggerwarning. Notably, the content goes beyond mere storytelling; it includes ongoing support for the individuals sharing their experiences, both from the @perempuanberkisah team and the broader community of women, as evidenced by the supportive comments flooding the posts. This study aims to delve into the virtual solidarity that has taken root among women within the @perempuanberkisah community, particularly within the context of contents labelled #kisah18+ and #triggerwarning. This research uses the virtual ethnography method with descriptive-critical analysis. The result shows that virtual solidarity emerges from the empathy shown by @perempuanberkisah and women on Instagram through almost the entirety of their content. The sense of belonging and shared experience have generated solidarity among women despite the lack of interactions beyond the virtual space.

Keywords: *Instagram, social media, solidarity, women, virtual sisterhood*

INTRODUCTION

When discussing the development of modern media, social media is consistently brought up. According to Fuchs (2014), social media is a crucial concept in the fields of media and communication studies, as well as in public discourse. Shirky (2008) argues that social media has garnered people's interest due to its capacity for facilitating sharing, collaboration, and collective mobilisation beyond conventional institutions and organisations. In addition, social media platforms can also foster public discourse and facilitate the open expression of

individuals' opinions, particularly in relation to matters of public concern (Shirky, 2011). Social media enables active engagement in public discourse, empowering individuals to transition from passive observers or readers to active contributors and participants in conversations (Benkler, 2006). Livingstone (2013) also addresses the phenomenon of audience transformation and asserts that the emergence of new media has fundamentally altered the framework through which individuals (as mediated audiences and the general public) engage in an increasingly mediated society.

Social media has introduced a level of flexibility in the process of communication, which has implications for the sociocultural dimensions of society, particularly in relation to the distinction between private and public domains. There are assertions that the distinction between public and private domains has become blurred as a result of the emergence of new media (Habermas, 1969; Meyrowitz, 1985; Thompson, 1995). Fuchs (2014) elaborated that the advent of social media has caused the distinctions between the opposing concepts of modernity to become less clear, and the distinctions between play and work, leisure and working hours, private and public life, and home and offices to become less defined. However, Fuchs (2014) argues that the timing of personal information publication for communicative purposes is inconsequential, as companies, countries, and other entities lack the ability to exploit and cause harm to the public using this information.

Social media has also opened new avenues for marginalized groups, including women. Social media offers a new virtual space for collective discussions, negotiation processes, and social solidarity (Fisse & Hass, 2020). Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter can foster discussions on women's rights issues and gender equality, especially among government and policymakers (Kumari, 2020). Loiseau and Nowacka (2015) stated that social media has a potential to promote women's rights, as well as oppose discrimination and stereotypes against women. Indonesia has a substantial user base on social media, with a staggering 170 million individuals actively engaging on platforms such as YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter (We Are Social & Hootsuite, 2021). Between 2022 and 2023, Instagram and Facebook have the largest user base in Indonesia. Notably, the demographics demonstrate a clear trend: Facebook mainly appeals to male users, while Instagram is predominantly favoured by women, with their representation reaching up to 56% (Napoleon Cat, 2023).

The rising use of social media was also followed by the development of women's activism on Instagram in Indonesia (Parahita, 2019). Instagram @perempuanberkisah.id is one of the accounts that progressively voice women's issues. Perempuan Berkisah is a community founded by Alimah Fauzan with the purpose of providing a platform for women to share their stories and express themselves (Syamsiyah, 2020). Perempuan Berkisah operates not only on Instagram, but also on YouTube, Facebook, and its own website. The primary objective of this community is to provide women with the platform to exchange and discuss their personal experiences. Perempuan Berkisah utilises its website and Instagram page to disseminate narratives pertaining to sexual violence, domestic violence, toxic relationships, and related topics, with the aim of motivating women who have experienced similar situations to promptly seek assistance. Perempuan Berkisah publishes narratives of women while adhering to ethical guidelines, which prohibit the disclosure of the identities of survivors or victims, as well as any personal information about them. Among all the posts on Perempuan Berkisah's Instagram feed, those labeled with #kisah18+ garnered significant engagement, evident from the substantial number of comments, interactions, and discussions. Those posts marked #kisah18+ contain experiences of women which are highly sensitive and are trigger warnings. For example, a post from October 4, 2022, was tagged with #kisah18+ and was about forced marriage, child marriage, domestic violence as per the teaser post of the carousel that says: "*Aku adalah korban perjodohan dan perkawinan anak. Suamiku sering melakukan KDRT terhadapku. Aku merasa, hidupku sangat menderita hingga membuatku depresi bahkan terlintas ingin mengakhiri hidup*" ("I am a victim of forced arranged marriage when I was a child. My husband often batters me. I feel that my life is very painful, and it makes me depressed, and I've even thought of killing myself").

The majority of the comments received on this post express support for the sender, praising her for her remarkable strength and assuring her that she is not alone, as they are there to support her. Many also express their belief in a higher power's love for her and send virtual gestures of comfort from a distance. They also provided their viewpoints on married life and strategies for managing the situation. Social media has facilitated a platform

for women to engage in action, share their personal narratives, and offer commentary on the experiences of other women. This study aims to comprehensively examine the mechanisms and dynamics through which women establish a sense of solidarity via social media platforms. This study seeks to examine the utilisation of social media to advance feminist efforts, as outlined in the theory of fourth wave feminism (Blithe & Neal, 2021), specifically within the global South. Moreover, it will serve as a crucial contribution to the ongoing discussion in the field of social media and digital communication studies in Indonesia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media and Virtual Women's Solidarity

There have been numerous debates regarding the precise definition of social media. In his work, Fuchs (2014) argues that social theory is essential for comprehending the criteria that define "the social media". Fuchs draws upon various social theories, such as Emile Durkheim's concept of social facts, Max Weber's understanding of social relations, Ferdinand Tönnies' notion of social community, and Marx Weber's perspective on social cooperation. According to Fuchs (2014), the social term can be understood as an information process that consists of three interconnected aspects: cognition, communication, and cooperation. Social media serves as a platform for mirroring the social dynamics in society, facilitating communication, and fostering cooperation and collaboration. Social media has established a digital framework that significantly influences the organisation of society and the formation of public opinion (Van Dijk & Poell, 2015:1).

Conversely, social media discussions are rarely linked to Habermas's concept of public space. Habermas' concept of public space can be categorised into three key aspects. Firstly, public space serves as an arena for communication, facilitating interactions between individuals. Secondly, the public itself plays a vital role in promoting democracy, particularly at a grassroots level. Lastly, public space acts as an agent, enabling the transmission of aspirations and desires from the grassroots to the wider society (Schuler & Day, 2004:4-6). The interactions among the three domains within the public sphere generate public opinion through consensus and engagement among participants in the public sphere (Habermas, 2015:2). Nevertheless, Habermas's notion of public space has faced criticism, with some arguing that it is regarded as an exclusive concept and appears idealistic (Cela, 2015: 196). In the meantime, the feminist movement raises additional criticisms, arguing that Habermas' depiction of the public sphere fails to encompass all segments of society, including women and representatives of lower-class groups (Papacharissi, 2002:11). Fuchs (2010) discusses the significance of Habermas's notion of public space in his article "Alternative Media as Critical Media," although he does not directly address social media. Fuchs employs the concept of 'contra-public space' as introduced by Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge in 1972. This concept aims to facilitate the participation of lower-class groups, including women, in the discourse surrounding media-related matters. The lower class's opposition to the media is crucial in combating the dominance of the elite class (Fuchs, 2010). In his article titled "Cyberspace, Internet, and New Public Spaces: Indonesian Middle-Class Political Online Activism," Jati (2016) asserts that the utilisation of cyberspace is crucial for understanding the occurrence of activism on social media. Cyberspace is a recently emerged public domain that has the potential to captivate the interest of all sections of the population, enabling communication and interaction at any time and location (Jati, 2016:25). The parameters of cyberspace encompass netizens as auxiliary participants in public space and gatherings for shared interests and objectives, as well as social media serving as a manifestation of public space (Jati, 2016:30).

The interactive nature of social media facilitates the utilisation of cyberspace as a platform for fostering solidarity. Fuchs (2010: 186) contends that due to the customary exclusion of women from public spaces, it is crucial to engage in collective endeavours in order to enhance their influence and thereby make progress towards their desired objectives. Solidarity is defined as the collaborative endeavours aimed at questioning and changing the existing social order (Subašić et al., 2008). Individuals who possess more advantages can utilise their privilege to alleviate the struggles faced by marginalised groups by standing in support alongside them. For example, men

can advocate for gender equality alongside women by leveraging their privilege to challenge patriarchal systems through various means, such as utilising social media to amplify the movement (Fahadi, 2022). When women actively participate and support each other, it is called sisterhood. Sisterhood creates a strong support network that covers different areas of life (Torcuato et al., 2017). Hooks (1986) proposes a new understanding that sisterhood should recognise the intricate social circumstances of women and should be founded on a sense of unity among women from different backgrounds. Demographic factors, such as gender, can foster collaboration or virtual solidarity (Ruef et al., 2013). Women's solidarity can be defined as the establishment of constructive connections between women to combat oppression and enhance their own empowerment (Lagarde, 2001 in Ojeda, 2013). In their article "Producing Solidarity in Social Media Activism: The Case of My Stealthy Freedom," Stewart and Schultze (2019) provide a precise definition of solidarity. They describe it as a personal sentiment that involves actively supporting and dedicating oneself to the collective well-being of others. Solidarity is considered a key attribute of social movements.

Moreover, according to Kristianto et al. (2021), solidarity actions on social media respond to crises and can arise from individuals, organizations, and communities. Similarly, Maryani (2017) explains that the development of social media broadens public involvement in social solidarity-based transformation and raises marginal issues in the public space. Through uploading, sharing, and commenting online, people form their identities according to the picture of the world they wish for (Smith et al., 2015). Participation in social media allows people to form a sense of oneness with others who share views (Bennet & Segerberg, 2011). People may also feel solid affective reactions to injustice, such as anger or sympathy, and believe that groups can act effectively to achieve communal goals (Bandura, 2000). Collaboration carried out virtually can bring together parties with common goals and then form networks that support each other (Banks-Weston, G. & Kolski, T. 2022).

This study will contribute to the ongoing discussion on intersections between social media and virtual solidarity among women. Social media are often perceived as egalitarian platforms which bring a positive impact, especially for those who previously lacked access to speak up for justice. Therefore, this study will look at deeply on how a community, utilizes social media Instagram to promote women's rights and to raise awareness on women's issues, resulting in forming virtual solidarity among women.

Solidarity, social media audience, and participatory culture

The audience plays a pivotal role in discussions pertaining to social media. The audience of interactive social media differs from that of conventional media, which typically operates in a one-way manner. Shirky (2008) argues that social media enhances the capacity to share, collaborate, and engage in collective action beyond the confines of conventional institutions and organisations. Consistent with the aforementioned statement, Jenkins et al. (2009) contend that social media possesses attributes that facilitate audiences in sharing their content and engaging in socially significant advocacy, even at the grassroots level. Participatory culture allows audiences to actively engage in the creation of culture, rather than just passively consuming it as listeners or spectators (Jenkins, 2009 in Fuchs, 2014: 53). Activities such as commenting, sharing, and creating are accessible at all times and in all places. These activities are becoming more common and are intended to facilitate connections between users and media content (Dahlgren, 2013; Jenkins; Ford; Green, 2013, Pers; William, 2010). According to Livingstone (2003:28), the current audience can be described as "interactive media users" who are becoming more engaged in the process of choosing, directing, creating, and consuming texts. According to Zhao (2019: 136), the traditional notion of a passive audience has been superseded in the digital age. Nowadays, the audience is highly motivated to generate and disseminate information.

The participatory dimension adds a new social or relational component that did not appear in the previous audience definition (Livingstone, 2013). Audiences are perceived as active in interpreting journalistic texts and messages, in production, content dissemination, and public debates in the online space (Suau, 2015). In a new media ecosystem in which media is part of everyday life, audiences are becoming more relational and participatory, the distinction between public and audience is blurred, and private and public spaces are also blurred (Papacharissi, 2010). Trisilowaty (2012), in an article entitled "*Perempuan dan Media Sosial sebagai Pilihan*

Komunikasi Terkini (Women and Social Media as the Contemporary Communication Preferences)” explains that women, especially those living in busy urban areas with high and tight mobility, utilize social media platforms such as Twitter to effectively communicate with others while managing their daily activities. According to Lubis (2014), women use social media because its characteristics, such as participation, openness, conversation, community, and connectedness, provide opportunities to safely channel their aspirations, feelings, and ideas. In an article entitled “Instagram Therapy and How Women Use Social Media For Mental Health Support, Solidarity,” Gravel-Patry (2021) explains that women are looking for ways to overcome their mental health problems with social media such as Instagram which can help them build community and solidarity.

Moreover, Alfaro (2020) argues that the feminist movement utilises social media as a means to establish connections and cultivate a sense of unity among women who are impacted and highly susceptible during the COVID-19 pandemic. Gender-based violence and exclusion are significant catalysts for women’s utilisation of social media platforms such as Facebook to disseminate information and provide support to victims (Bossio & Diez, 2021). Bossio and Diez (2021) argue that sisterhood plays a pivotal role in feminist endeavours, such as promoting awareness of women’s issues through initiatives like the #MeToo and #WomensMarch campaigns. The prominence of solidarity movements initiated by and for women on social media has also increased. The hashtag #NyalaUntukYuyun was employed to express empathy towards a young girl who fell victim to sexual violence and to enhance public consciousness regarding the pressing need to eradicate sexual violence in Indonesia (Safitri & Angeline, 2016). In her 2018 journal article titled “Developing Social Security through Media Digital Media,” Maryani elucidates that digital media has the potential to challenge prevailing power structures and mainstream media. Furthermore, social media provides opportunities to foster social cohesion and unity (Maryani, 2018). Grassroot organisations are increasingly utilising social media platforms to advocate for increased public responsibility in achieving gender equality (Sharma, 2014). In Indonesia, various organised movements have established social media accounts (Marlina, 2020), including Jakarta Feminist, Feminis Yogyakarta, and Perempuan Mahardika.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative methodology and utilises virtual ethnography as a means of analysis. Hine (2000) asserts that the internet has the potential to give rise to cultural formations and a cultural artefact. Consequently, the internet necessitates a novel approach to ethnography. According to Hine (2000), virtual ethnography is a research method that focuses on studying the internet and examining its various entities and users. This method specifically emphasises the adjustments that ethnographers must make to effectively interact with participants or the public in online environments (Hine, 2017). The virtual ethnography method is employed to digitally observe the content of @perempuanberkisah.id that is labelled with the tags #kisah18+ and #triggerwarning. We analysed the perspective of the audience and extracted significant insights from their interactions and discussions in the comment sections. The virtual ethnography method enables researchers to observe interactions that occur in both virtual and physical realms. Prajarto (2018) suggests that the demarcation between the virtual and the real should not be perceived as inherently existing or unquestionable. Furthermore, the virtual ethnography method enables researchers to engage with the subject of investigation within a predetermined timeframe, intermittently, without fully immersing themselves for an extended duration (Prajarto, 2018).

We not only conducted digital observation, but also gathered pertinent data on the research subject. This data was then analysed using the framework of solidarity among women, sisterhood, and virtual solidarity, which are primarily established in online spaces or social media (Torcuato et al., 2017; Hooks, 1986; Ruef et al., 2013; Lagarde, 2001; Maryani, 2017; Bandura, 2000; Banks-Weston & Kolski, T, 2022). This study also utilises Ben Kei Daniel’s data analysis techniques of virtual ethnography (2010), which encompass the examination of media space and media object. Subsequently, we conducted data triangulation by engaging in interviews with female-identifying informants who authored comments on @perempuanberkisah’s posts accompanied by

a trigger warning. The research process was carried out between June and August 2022, spanning a duration of approximately three months. The process entailed acquiring data that was subsequently examined in both a descriptive and critical manner. Pseudonyms are used in this article to protect the personal information of the informants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Instagram @perempuanberkisah and How Virtual Solidarity is Cultivated

The Instagram account @perempuanberkisah is dedicated to promoting women's empowerment through its movement. The website of @perempuanberkisah indicates that it has additional affiliated accounts associated with the Perempuan Berkisah community, specifically @usahaperempuan and @konselorfeminis. We mention @konselorfeminis because Instagram @perempuanberkisah is also associated with the counselling services offered by Perempuan Berkisah to victims of violence. The Perempuan Berkisah community was originally established as a subsidiary of the Perempuan Indonesia Tumbuh Berdaya (Pribudaya) Foundation, a non-profit organisation that offers online counselling services with a feminist ethical framework. The community also provides support to victims of gender-based violence, advocates for women's empowerment, and runs campaigns to eradicate gender-based violence, particularly sexual violence. Perempuan Berkisah's website reports a membership count of 414 individuals from various regions of Indonesia in 2021. Perempuan Berkisah seeks to promote survivors' utilisation of counselling services and gradual recovery from their trauma by disseminating genuine narratives of other women who have encountered gender-based violence via their Instagram posts. Individuals desiring to share their narratives begin by utilising the complimentary online services. Perempuan Berkisah will seek the users' consent prior to publishing these stories on its social media platform. The contents have successfully facilitated the connection between senders and a wider audience, including the followers of Instagram account @perempuanberkisah.

Perempuan Berkisah adopts a unique method for publishing their content. The posts labelled with the hashtags #kisah18+ and #triggerwarning feature genuine narratives that have been anonymously published by the @perempuanberkisah team on their social media platforms. The purpose of anonymizing personal stories, in addition to honouring the senders' request, is to preserve privacy and safeguard the individuals affected. These posts are associated with or connected to @konselorfeminis, which has the objective of supporting women who have experienced violence. These posts include a detailed narrative description that expresses sympathy and admiration for the courage and resilience of the senders. In addition to the aforementioned content, the Instagram account @perempuanberkisah consistently shares informative posts centred around themes such as #KamuHarusTahu ("you should know"), #Pembelajaran ("lesson learned"), and #PercayaDeh! ("believe it!"). These posts specifically tackle topics related to violence against women and mental health. The following are the posts by @Perempuanberkisah, accompanied by comments from other women, which will be analysed in this section of the paper:



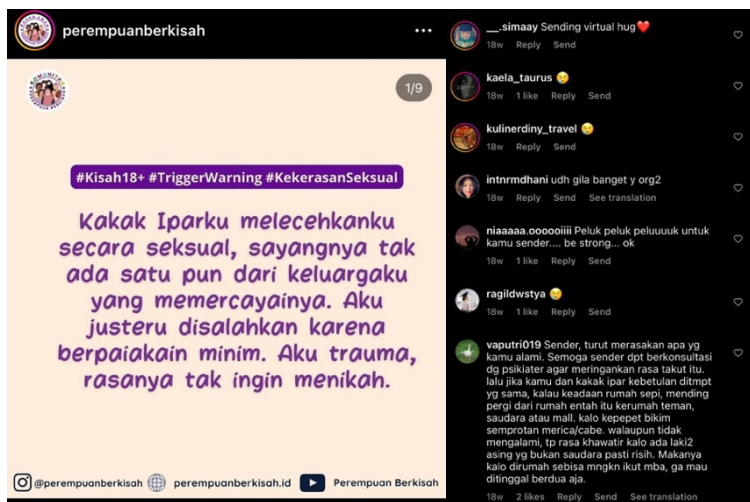
Picture 1: Instagram uploads of @perempuanberkisah and the comments column

Source: <https://www.instagram.com/perempuanberkisah/?hl=e>, July 27, 2022



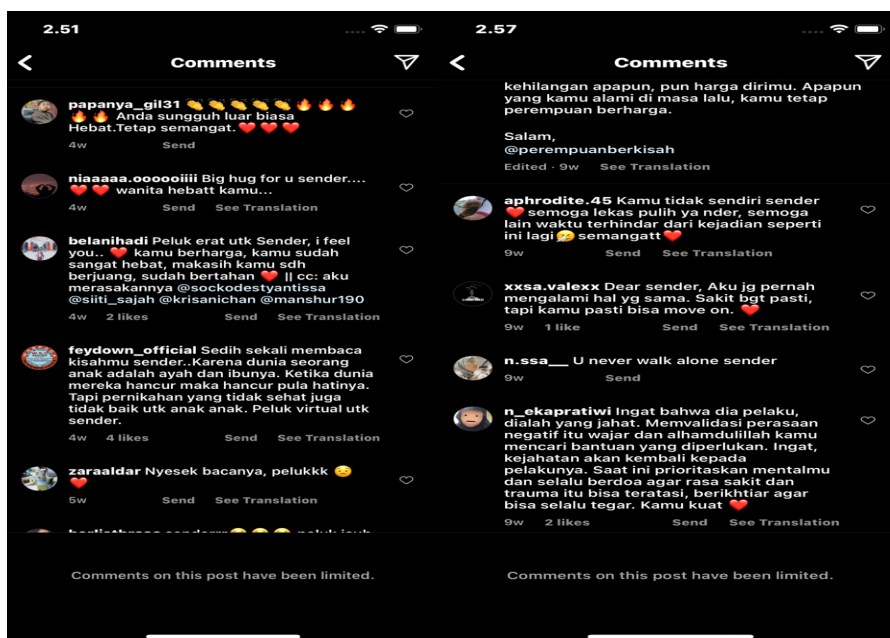
Picture 2: Instagram uploads of @perempuanberkisah and the comments column

Source: <https://www.instagram.com/perempuanberkisah/?hl=e>, June 4, 2022



Picture 3: Instagram uploads of @perempuanberkisah and the comments column

Source: <https://www.instagram.com/perempuanberkisah/?hl=en>, July 30, 2022



Picture 4 : Some comments on @perempuanberkisah’s posts

Source: <https://www.instagram.com/perempuanberkisah/?hl=en>, July 24, 2022

As seen in the comment columns, users sympathize with women who became victims of gender-based violence. For example, on the post titled “Momen KKN membuatku kembali pada lelaki. Sayangnya ketika hubungan semakin intens hingga aku hamil, lelaki itu memintaku aborsi karena dia belum siap menikah”, aside from support, the sender was given advice and there was also a discussion on the issue of abortion.

Besides observing the comment columns and analyzing these comments, we interviewed four female users who left comments on the posts of @perempuanberkisah. The first interview with Alika was conducted via a WhatsApp call in August 8, 2022. Previously, she commented on one of the posts “DEMI ALLAH.. YA ALLAH.. INGIN PELUK MBA NYA.. sender siapapun kamu mba, kluw mba berkenan, mba bisa DM saya, karena saya... Ahh saya ga bisa mengatakan disini tapi saya berharap bisa berbagi kekuatan.. semoga mba sender mau DM saya *emoji menangis**” (For Allah’s sake, ya Allah, I want to hug the sender.. sender, whoever you are, if you do not mind, please send

me a direct message because I.. Ahh I cannot say it here but I hope we can strengthen one another.. hope the sender will contact me through a direct message *crying emoticon). Alika acknowledged experiencing intense emotions upon reading narratives shared by other women on the @perempuanberkisah platform. Additionally, she acknowledged that she pondered it to such an extent that she recollected a previous traumatic event she had undergone. Alika attempted to establish contact with the senders, but received no response, despite her efforts to learn about the experiences of other women who had undergone similar circumstances.

“Mungkin sudah punya kekuatan sendiri ya. Kita sesama korban cuma bisa saling support lewat doa aja.”

“Maybe she was strong enough. We, as survivors of violence, we can only support each other through prayers.” (Alika, interview via WhatsApp call on 8 August 2022)

Although it was not possible to communicate directly with senders or survivors, Alika once shared a story with fellow Instagram followers of @perempuanberkisah about the sexual harassment she experienced.

The second interview was conducted with Bella in August 29, 2022, via Instagram call. Bella is a activist and an active member of one of the centers for gender studies in Indonesia. She previously commented on one of the posts *“Dear sender you have become a great woman who is brave and survives until this moment *emoji tangan*. Dari kamu aku banyak belajar bahwasannya menjadi orang tua adalah tanggung jawab yang berat. Dimana orang tua harus menciptakan iklim yang baik guna menunjang pertumbuhan anaknya. Kemudian poin selanjutnya adalah pentingnya pendidikan seks sejak dini yang bersumber langsung dari pemahaman yang diberikan orang tua pada anaknya.”* (Dear sender, you have become a great woman who is brave and survives until this moment *hands emoticon*. From you, I have learned that being a parent is not a simple task, it takes responsibility, in which parents should create a positive environment to support growth of their children. Another thing is, it is important for parents to give their children the proper sex education as early as possible). Bella follows @perempuanberkisah on Instagram to enhance her understanding of protecting children and women. Bella argues that accounts such as @perempuanberkisah represent a progressive action, as they shed light on the pervasive issue of violence against women. Bella likens this issue to an ‘iceberg’, suggesting that there are numerous victims who suffer in silence, far outnumbering those who are willing to share their experiences. Hence, when one or two victims come forward, it can serve as a catalyst for others to do the same. She expressed her initial curiosity regarding the posts that included a trigger warning. Consequently, she meticulously perused the contents one by one, evoking a profound emotional response and fostering empathy towards the survivors. Bella expressed her attempt to portray herself as a survivor and her admiration for those who have persevered and survived up to this point.

“Hal yang tak kalah penting adalah mengapresiasi korban karena telah berjuang dan bertahan hingga saat ini. Saya juga sangat mengapresiasi korban karena beliau ingin memberikan edukasi dan pelajaran agar lebih waspada dan hal yang dialami tidak dialami oleh orang lain.”

“What is more important is to appreciate senders because they survive until now. I also appreciate them because they willingly share their experiences which could be a lesson for others to be more careful and so that it does not happen to anyone else.” (Bella, interview via Instagram call on 29 August 2022)

Bella submitted the comments without making any direct contact with the victim. She desired to maintain the anonymity of the victim and had no requirement to ascertain their identities. Bella found it sufficient to acquire knowledge from the accounts of survivors without engaging in direct communication with them. Bella expressed her perspective on the Perempuan Berkisah community, characterising it as a platform for discourse, unity, and advocacy for women. @perempuanberkisah serves as a platform for educating and providing guidance to survivors in their journey towards recovery.

Subsequently, Cara was interviewed on August 5, 2022, via an Instagram call. She commented on the post *“Bismillah, untuk kamu semoga kamu kuat menjalani hidup. Semua orang punya ceritanya masing2. Jika kamu membaca tulisan ini, mungkin kamu butuh teman bercerita kita bisa saling support lwt dm. Km aku tau rasanya ketika kita ingin bercerita dan tidak punya teman yang bisa mendengarkan. Merasa sendirian dll. Semangat terus ya”* (Bismillah, I hope

you are strong enough to live your life to the fullest. Everyone has their own stories. If you read this, if you need someone to talk to, we can support each other through direct messages. We both know how it feels when we want to talk to others, but no one can be reached out, or how it feels to be alone. Cheer up). When she first opened the conversation, Cara admitted that she felt she was not alone because many other women had experienced the similar circumstance. She also revealed that she deliberately looked for accounts on Instagram that specifically discussed issues of sexual violence and women. Therefore, she later commented on the stories shared in the @perempuanberkisah's feeds to support women who have experienced the same thing she has. Cara stated that Perempuan Berkisah's presence helps women support and hold each other. In addition, according to Cara, Perempuan Berkisah encourages people to become more open to issues of sexual violence and other types of gender-based violence.

"Perasaan saya ketika melihat postingan Perempuan Berkisah dengan #triggerwarning dari perempuan yang menceritakan pengalamannya adalah sangat emosional, merasa kasihan, peduli tentu saja. Terlebih jika pengalaman hidup mereka mengenai kekerasan seksual. Mental saya bisa ikut down juga dan kembali teringat hal yang pernah terjadi dengan sangat kuat. Berefek terkadang menimbulkan kesulitan untuk tidur dan emosional sulit dikendalikan."

"When I saw @perempuanberkisah's posts of stories from women who share their experiences with a tag #triggerwarning, I felt very emotional, sympathetic, and of course I cared for them, especially, if their experiences were related to sexual violence. To be honest, it could affect me mentally and made me vividly remember things that have happened to me. When I remember those terrible moments, I would have sleeping problems, and I would struggle to control my emotions." (Cara, interview via Instagram call on 5 August 2022)

Cara conveyed her appreciation to the women who generously shared their life experiences as a means of imparting valuable lessons and promoting increased vigilance. Cara effortlessly recounted her experiences, regardless of weighing the pros and cons of sharing those stories. Cara also expressed her empathy by leaving comments that she intended to uplift the senders' spirits. Cara consistently left comments to prompt senders to contact her via direct message for further communication. Nevertheless, Cara has never received any direct personal communication.

Next, Dita, whom was interviewed via Instagram call on August 1 2022, stated that the content of @perempuanberkisah was "like a family, like a sister, like a mom" for her because she tried to embrace women, including herself. She previously commented "Peluk erat utk Sender, i feel you.. *emoji hati* kamu berharga, kamu sudah sangat hebat, kamu sudah berjuang, sudah bertahan *emoji hati*" (Hugs for sender, I feel you.. *love emoticon* you matter, you are amazing, you have worked hard, you have survived this far * love emoticon). Dita acknowledged experiencing ambivalent emotions, including sadness, and shed tears due to her recollection of a previous incident that had occurred to her. Dita confessed that she had been unable to read the contents of @perempuanberkisah for several years due to lingering trauma. Over time, Dita started to revisit the stories on the @perempuanberkisah platform and posted comments. Dita expressed that the content of @perempuanberkisah resonates strongly with Dita's own personal encounters as well as those of Dita's family and acquaintances. Until now, Dita had refrained from reaching out to survivors, but she consistently expressed approval by 'liking' every post from @perempuanberkisah and shared those posts with her friends and family. Dita engaged in conversations regarding mental health on the @perempuanberkisah platform, alongside addressing the matter of sexual violence. Dita finds @perempuanberkisah to be highly beneficial and enlightening. In addition, she appreciated the narrative style, which evokes a profound emotional response and fosters empathy towards the survivors.

"Peluk erat untuk mereka semua. Para kawan perempuan yang sudah bisa menceritakan pengalamannya. Mereka membuat langkah yang melegakan untuk diri mereka."

"Big hugs for all of them, fellow women who were able to share their experiences. They made a step of relief for themselves." (Dita, interview via Instagram call on 1 August 2022)

Instagram @perempuanberkisah as A Medium for Women to Gather in Sisterhood

Instagram account @perempuanberkisah is not just a one-way medium, but it also offers various avenues for building interactions. Instagram @perempuanberkisah depicts an accurate illustration of today's society, especially regarding how Indonesian women still face many obstacles. @perempuanberkisah's activity on Instagram reflects the cooperation and collaboration formed by social media. Instagram and its affordances have promoted participation, especially from those who are marginalized, and have encouraged the emergence of communities that voice women's issues. Instagram @perempuanberkisah can unite women through its social media content. In addition, social media is often identified with media that can reach more groups broadly, including marginal groups whose voices are often silenced. Social media is often used to fight injustice perpetuated by the authorities. As a marginalized group, @perempuanberkisah's Instagram allows women to express what they have kept secretly, to discuss what was otherwise deemed a "taboo", and to ask for help amidst their own fears and struggles. Women's experiences, especially those related to violence, surfaced through @perempuanberkisah and incite feelings of empathy, compassion, and a sense of wanting to protect fellow women. Social media stimulates the psychological aspects, providing a platform for individuals to channel and express a range of emotions. The issue of violence against women rarely becomes a priority in the national government's program. They cannot exclusively rely on the existing law on the elimination of sexual violence since the law enforcement and judicial system in Indonesia is often still very biased, oversimplified, and stereotypical. Some of the questions that are most often asked to the victims when they are giving their statements are "what were you wearing (when the assault happened)?" and "why did you put yourself in that situation?". This results in women's skepticism and distrust towards the legal system. Through the virtual space, women can seek relief and their own version of "justice", one of which being speaking up and telling their stories.

@perempuanberkisah has created a new form of solidarity that resonates in virtual space. Virtual solidarity on Instagram @perempuanberkisah has stemmed from the complex array of emotions and challenges confronted by women. Feelings of anger, sadness, sympathy, and shared experiences have awakened women's desire to participate and help those in need. Through the participatory features which promote collective power, @perempuanberkisah allows a bigger chance for women to challenge the status quo the more they speak up. The women involved in @perempuanberkisah's Instagram activity are not passive actors who only watch other women's struggle, they also provide support in forms of virtual hugs, words of affirmation, and assistance to senders or survivors of violence. @perempuanberkisah provides a space for women to participate through meaningful acts, no matter how small they are, they can encourage other women to survive. Violence against women is usually not something that is openly discussed in public forums. However, through @perempuanberkisah, these experiences are shared to raise public awareness that violence exists, are real, and should not be ignored. It is also an effort to raise the issue of the repression of women's freedom over their own bodies and mind. @perempuanberkisah shows that social media helps build a more inclusive community for women and fosters solidarity between women who—even though they have never met in person—can support one another, feel sympathetic and empathetic due to their common stories, and are willing to reach out to others who might need help.

Social Media and Marginalized Groups Issues

As described in the literature review section, social media is often perceived to be an emancipatory medium for vulnerable groups, including women, capable of stimulating collective actions to create a more just society. Thus, audiences, no longer acting as passive actors, have become more vocal about specific issues. By observing @perempuanberkisah's activism on Instagram, we argue that social media has brought people together based on shared experiences and identity as members of a marginalized group. They manifest a sense of solidarity and sisterhood in various ways, from liking @perempuanberkisah's posts, sharing content, writing comments, contacting survivors to provide support, and healing from trauma so they can help other women. This virtual interaction also has the potential to continue to offline interaction. In these activities, there is also a negotiation process on matters that were previously considered private and taboo to discuss. To a certain level, we suggest

that these women's activities can be considered as resistance because their voices are often silenced under the pretext of covering up the disgrace of particular groups. Social media provides a space for women to empower themselves and each other. Social media offers women—particularly survivors of violence—improved access and support, addressing a gap where legal and social support may be insufficient. However, It is crucial to consider the potential impact of raised awareness and the extent to which sisterhood or solidarity can drive fundamental changes, including shifts in policies addressing violence against women in Indonesia. In addition, it is undeniable that virtual spaces such as social media also introduces an additional layer of vulnerability for women, such as hate speech and other forms of cyberviolence, including online gender-based violence. Therefore, it is essential to anticipate these possibilities and undertake efforts to prevent them.

CONCLUSION

Social media plays a crucial role in providing a platform for women to speak, particularly evident in the context of @perempuanberkisah. This social media account serves as a vital space for women, especially those whose voices are often marginalized and overlooked. In societies where discussing gender-based violence is considered taboo, treated as a disgrace, and seen as an embarrassment, survivors of violence find themselves in difficult and disadvantaged positions. @perempuanberkisah addresses this societal silence by utilizing content tagged #kisah18+ and #triggerwarning, sharing the experiences of women who have been victims of violence. However, @perempuanberkisah goes beyond merely presenting such content; it actively encourages victims and survivors to seek help, continue living, and prioritize their well-being. This Instagram account is a digital bridge, fostering virtual solidarity and sisterhood between senders and the audience. Despite never meeting in person, social media enables women to connect and interact, with comment columns filled with supportive messages offering help, advice, and expressions of concern. The interactive nature of the comments section indicates a shift from passive consumption to active engagement, allowing the audience not only to watch but also to express their thoughts on various content that comes across their social media accounts. Fellow women appreciate the courage of senders who have survived and shared their stories, offering valuable learning experiences for others. Additionally, women who have recently overcome trauma and shared experiences similar to the senders leave comments to ensure they do not feel alone, fostering mutual support among those who have been through comparable situations. The virtual solidarity stimulated on Instagram @perempuanberkisah creates a supportive, loving, and empathetic environment, transcending physical boundaries. This research highlights the reciprocal relationship between virtual and non-virtual activities, indicating the impact of online communities on real-world interactions. The research also underscores the evolving authority of audiences in consuming, producing, and distributing content, emphasizing their potential to create new, more inclusive, and humane spaces. Furthermore, the study on @perempuanberkisah is a valuable reference for activists, suggesting a similar approach to forming safe spaces for vulnerable groups. Such spaces have the potential to address structural problems, build supportive communities, raise awareness of women's issues, and foster solidarity, sisterhood, and a sense of belonging.

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