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State Violence in Digital Spaces: Digital Feminism, Repression, and the Struggle of Women's Civil Society Organisations

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Abstract

This article analyses state violence in the digital sphere and its impact on women's civil society organisations (CSOs) in Indonesia. It also examines how feminist digital solidarity is formed and why it is fragile. Employing a critical feminist lens, this qualitative study uses cross-CSO online focus group discussions (involving urban, youth, progressive religious, disability, indigenous and LGBTIQ+ groups) and social media content analysis. The findings suggest that repression occurs through the intersection of lawfare (the ITE Law and the Criminal Code), surveillance, doxxing, moral stigma, and algorithmic discipline, resulting in a chilling effect and self-censorship. CSOs respond by implementing digital security measures, diversifying funding, adopting low-profile strategies, and establishing solidarity networks. However, transformative solidarity requires protection, equitable resources, and cross-issue alliances.

Keywords: state violence, digital feminism, technology-facilitated gender-based violence, digital solidarity, women's civil society organisations

Introduction

The 1998 Reform paved the way for various progressive legal policies that recognised women's rights. However, two decades later, Indonesian democracy has shown signs of regression. Rather than operating through overt physical repression, state violence now takes the form of legal operations and digital technologies that systematically enforce social hierarchies and control. Under the digital governance regime, the state is shrinking the public sphere by introducing various regulations, including the Criminal Code (KUHP), the Criminal Procedure Code (KUHAP) and the Electronic Information and Transactions Act (ITE Law). These regulations are open to multiple interpretations and are being used as instruments of lawfare to criminalise victims of online gender-based violence (OGBV) rather than protect them.

Regulations that were originally intended to protect citizens are often used to discipline and silence critical voices, including activists, journalists, and victims of sexual violence. Consequently, gender-based violence is taking on new forms in the digital sphere. Campaigns such as #KitaAgni, #SaveIbuNuril and #SahkanRUUPKS reflect the efforts of women and their supporters to seek justice when the law fails to provide protection.

The digital space is therefore neither neutral nor free. It is rife with social stigma and criminalisation through the ITE Law, with patriarchal logic being reinforced by technological and legal infrastructure (Pratiwi 2021). Consistent with this, Wibisono et al. (2025) show how platform algorithms, digital capitalist interests and legal frameworks work together to silence women, create an exclusionary, masculine online environment, and control women's bodies and self-expression.

In the Indonesian context, Ufen (2024) defines digital repression as the use of information technology to monitor, manipulate, or intimidate social groups that challenge the state. He identifies five main instruments used by the Indonesian government: 1) surveillance and cyber-policing, including spyware such as Pegasus; 2) censorship and shutdowns, including blocking social media access; 3) social manipulation and disinformation, including paid online influencers; 4) lawfare and criminalisation, including the ITE Law, KUHAP, and KUHP; and 5) targeted prosecution of academics, journalists and activists. These instruments demonstrate how

digital repression is carried out as an institutionalised state practice through law and technology.

From a feminist perspective, de Alwis (2024) views the internet as a new battleground for women. Online gender-based violence (OGBV) encompasses cyberstalking, online harassment, disseminating intimate images without consent, doxxing, slut-shaming, trolling, sending sexual content without permission, gender-based hate speech, misinformation and disinformation campaigns, threats of sexual violence and murder, image manipulation, and the proliferation of AI-generated sexual content. These forms of violence evolve alongside technological advancements, exacerbating existing gender-based power imbalances within legal regimes and digital platforms.

Amidst these pressures, the digital space has given rise to various new forms of resistance. Hermanto (2021) shows how women in Indonesia use social media to advocate for digital feminism, cultivate a collective political identity, create safe spaces, and foster solidarity within communities. The emergence of organisations such as Jakarta Feminis (JakFem) since 2014, the impact of online campaigns on the Women's March Jakarta, and the advocacy of the PKS Bill all demonstrate the digital space's capacity to support the political mobilisation of feminists.

However, digital solidarity has its limits. Azzahra et al. (2025) demonstrate that virality is fleeting and prone to decline in the absence of sustained organisational support. An example of this is the #JusticeForAffan campaign, which followed the death of an online ride-hailing driver who was run over by a Brimob vehicle in August 2025. Criticism of slacktivism also highlights the risk that digital activism can be performative and superficial, resulting in minimal structural impact (Tong & Botts 2020). Solidarity that relies solely on collective emotion and short-lived virality risks becoming an 'emotional circus', particularly amid intensifying legal repression and declining international funding for civil society.

In light of the above, this article aims to address three key questions: 1) How does state violence/repression operate in the digital sphere?; 2) How do women's civil society organisations (CSOs) adapt in repressive and underfunded situations?; and 3) How does feminist digital solidarity emerge in the face of challenges? The article analyses state violence against women in the digital space through legal instruments and digital repression practices, while exploring the adaptation strategies of women's CSOs in response to such situations. Due regard was given to the diversity of experiences among urban, grassroots, Indigenous, disabled, LGBT, and youth groups in conducting the research. Drawing on the diversity of experiences and vulnerabilities of women's CSOs, the paper concludes with recommendations and strategies to strengthen these organisations and prevent them from becoming trapped in superficial 'slacktivism', which could lead to the regression of the women's movement.

Research Methodology

This research takes a qualitative approach, focusing on the experiences of women's CSOs in confronting state violence mediated by law and digital technology, including repression and criminalisation, as well as dynamics of solidarity, in Indonesia. Data were collected via online focus group discussions (FGDs) due to the diverse backgrounds and geographical locations of the various organisations involved in the study.

Focus group discussions (FGDs) were chosen as the method to explore participants' collective experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of how state power, law, and digital infrastructure influence their advocacy work (Bryman 2012; Neuman 2014). This method allows exploration of contextual and reflective perspectives while maintaining the focus and depth of the discussion through a structured discussion guide. Participants were grouped according to social, institutional and status contexts, as suggested by Neuman (2014), to minimise power relations that could prevent open discussion.

In addition to FGDs, this study employs qualitative content analysis of women's CSO social media accounts (Instagram), where state repression, political visibility, and solidarity practices intertwine. This approach allows us to interpret the narratives, visuals, and digital communication strategies used by CSOs to respond to state repression, build solidarity, and negotiate the boundaries between public advocacy and criminalisation.

The unit of analysis comprises social media posts (including text, visuals, and interaction contexts) from 2021 to 2025. Content was selected based on three criteria: 1) representing the CSO's advocacy mandate and identity, 2) relating to relevant national issues or state policies, and 3) serving as a means of public education or collective empowerment. Each post was coded qualitatively according to analytical categories such as issue framing, language choices, visual style, forms

of calls to action and activism practices (repression, adaptation and solidarity). These results were then analysed comparatively across CSOs to identify narrative patterns and differences in communication strategies, as well as structural factors such as state pressure, donor dependency and platform algorithmic logic that shape the dynamics of feminist digital activism.

In line with the intersectional framework used in the analysis (MacKinnon 2013), this study treats differences in identity, location, and social position as analytical variables rather than merely background factors. This allows for a more nuanced understanding of how state violence and the risk of criminalisation are experienced differently by women's CSOs operating within diverse contexts, including urban, rural, coastal, disability, religious and sexual identity contexts.

Nine women's CSOs were involved in the FGDs: Jakarta Feminist; Halmahera Women's Coastal School; Puspita Bahari; the Centre for Inclusion and Disability Advocacy (SIGAB); Perempuan Mahardhika; Arus Pelangi Foundation; the Indonesian Women Ulama Congress (KUPI); Lingkar Studi Feminis; and the Indonesian Young Women's Activists Forum (FAMM-I). For analytical purposes, these organisations were grouped into categories based on identity and advocacy work: urban feminists; progressive religious groups; disability groups; LGBTIQ+ groups; youth groups; and regional groups. This classification was used to examine differences in the experiences, bargaining power, and strategies of CSOs when confronting digital repression and state violence.

Table 1.
Grouping into the respective categories

Organisation Category	Organisation Name	Organisation's Location
Feminist Urban	Jakarta Feminist	Jakarta, Indonesia
	Perempuan Mahardhika	Jakarta, Indonesia
Progressive Religion	KUPI	Nationwide (Jakarta, Indonesia)
LGBTIQ+	Arus Pelangi Foundation	Jakarta, Indonesia
Youth Group	Lingkar Studi Feminis	Tangerang, Indonesia
	Indonesian Young Women's Activists Forum (FAMM-I).	Nationwide Jakarta, Indonesia)
	Halmahera Women's Coastal School (Sekolah Pesisir Perempuan Halmahera)	Halmahera, Maluku, Indonesia
Community-Based Groups	Halmahera Women's Coastal School (Sekolah Pesisir Perempuan Halmahera)	Halmahera, Maluku, Indonesia
	Puspita Bahari	Demak Regency, Central Java, Indonesia

Source: Compiled by the authors from FGD 2025 data

A Feminist Lens: State Violence and Contemporary Digital Activism

To understand how state violence operates and evolves in the digital sphere, and how feminist activism responds to, negotiates with, and challenges it, this paper takes a critical feminist approach. It combines feminist legal theory, human rights-based digital feminism, and an intersectional perspective. Rather than viewing the digital space as neutral, this framework considers it a space of law, technology, and power, in which the state, platform corporations, and patriarchal norms determine who can speak and be seen in public, and who can survive there.

In feminist legal theory, state violence is not merely understood as physical repression; it is also understood as the legal operations and state institutions that systematically enforce gender hierarchies. Catharine MacKinnon (2020) shows that inequality is not a matter of difference, but of the institutionalised relations of domination and subordination that underpin the law. Under the logic of formal equality, women can be raped, stigmatised, or impoverished, yet still be considered equal under the law, as it treats them as equal to the dominant group in theory. According to Jackson (1992), law and legal methods are gendered tools of social organisation. Thus, claims of legal neutrality mask

the fact that the state favours masculine perspectives and interests. Consequently, the criminalisation, silencing and delegitimisation of women and women's organisations are not anomalies, but rather forms of state violence institutionalised within the law.

This approach is further developed through 'intersectionality as method' (MacKinnon 2013), which asserts that the law should be interpreted from the perspective of individuals situated at the intersection of racial, gender, class and locational hierarchies. The state and the law not only fail to protect marginalised groups, but also actively produce categories that determine who is recognised as a legitimate victim and who may be criminalised or ignored. In the context of women's sexual and reproductive health, legal and political repression operates differently, placing a heavier burden on women in specific locations and with specific identities and social positions.

In the digital sphere, these legal mechanisms are extended through platform infrastructures. de Alwis (2024) notes that online gender-based violence (OGBV) and other forms of technology-mediated violence occur within a structural continuum of gender-based violence linking online and offline spaces. Data, algorithms, reporting systems, and content moderation are not neutral technical tools; rather, they are forms of power that determine who remains visible and who can be erased from the public sphere. Doxxing, mass reporting, account blocking, and criminalisation based on online posts are expressions of this continuum of violence in the context of women's activism and civil society organisations (CSOs). Therefore, state violence in the digital sphere must be recognised as more than just a misuse of technology; it is a legal and political project that enforces patriarchal norms and moral order through platform-based mechanisms. The state uses cyber laws, law enforcement agencies, and regulatory frameworks to discipline, silence, and delegitimise women's CSOs. Meanwhile, platform companies provide the infrastructure that enables this power to be exercised more quickly, more widely and more effectively.

In this context, digital feminism is met with ambivalence. Networks of connective action (Bennett & Segerberg 2013) enable women to raise their profile, awareness, and solidarity without the need for formal organisational structures, as evidenced by the #MeToo movement. However, this connectivity also leaves women's activism vulnerable to surveillance, criminalisation, and digital attacks. While criticism of 'slacktivism' remains relevant, the issue in the context of state violence is not merely the superficiality of participation, but the significant legal and political risks faced by women who speak out.

An intersectional approach allows for a sharper analysis of these non-uniform vulnerabilities. The challenges experienced by women and women's organisations in relation to activism depend on location, class, race, religion, sexual identity and access to technology. Within this framework, feminist solidarity is based not on sameness, but on a political commitment that recognises differences and structural inequalities.

This framework draws on feminist legal theory to explore domination and hierarchy (MacKinnon 2020), uses intersectionality to interpret law from a grassroots perspective (MacKinnon 2013), and analyses OGBV as part of the broader spectrum of gender-based violence (de Alwis 2024). It positions state violence in the digital sphere as legal, technological, gendered and social. This analytical framework ties together all the empirical findings on the repression, criminalisation, and silencing of women's CSOs as part of a single regime of state violence mediated by platforms.

Narrative as a Tool of State Control: Digital Repression, Law, and Women's CSOs

The digital space, once considered a platform for political expression and participation, has evolved into a domain of surveillance and control. Instead of promoting 'digital security' and 'moral protection', the law has become a means of expanding repression, operating as an instrument of state power that enforces a patriarchal social order. According to feminist legal theory (MacKinnon 2020), this digital space cannot be viewed as neutral; rather, it is an arena of law and technology in which the state decides who can speak and who can be silenced. In this context, the digital space operates as a mechanism of state power. Laws and platform infrastructures are used to monitor, discipline and delegitimise women activists within civil society organisations (CSOs).

The patterns of repression experienced by CSOs demonstrate the continuity of violence in both the offline and online worlds, which de Alwis (2025) refers to as a 'continuum of structural violence'. Within this continuum, the state, platforms, algorithms and social actors collaborate to create new forms of violence, including doxxing, surveillance, trolling, data extortion and the criminalisation of women who speak out. All of these constitute forms of online gender-based violence

(OGBV). de Alwis emphasises that, just like other forms of gender-based violence, violence facilitated by technology is rooted in power imbalances and control. Within the state context, these power dynamics manifest through legislation, digital policies and state–platform collaborations that enable such violence to be perpetrated and normalised without punishment.

In this context, technology acts as a double-edged sword. While it opens up new spaces for advocacy and solidarity, it also poses the risk of systemic violence. According to focus group discussions with representatives of several women's NGOs, at least two forms of OGBV are commonly encountered: legal measures and digital repression. From a legal standpoint, a JakFem spokesperson recounted how one of their members had been deported and denied a visa by the Indonesian government. The JakFem member was accused of being affiliated with Intelligence Australia and Human Rights Watch. This incident had implications for other members and reinforced the government's stigma against Indonesian women, portraying them as unable to resist and merely following 'foreign influence'.

The use of legal instruments as tools of repression has become increasingly evident in the context of the criminalisation of activists in August 2025. According to AR, the state employs these instruments when activists, including women, express political opinions on social media. This suggests that the state is inclined to prioritise criminalisation without a clear legal basis. This practice targets not only activists but also civilians who express their views in the digital sphere.

> "We are now seeing a pattern emerge whereby the government is becoming increasingly comfortable with criminalisation in the absence of a clear legal basis. This is evident from the arrests of several women between 25 August and early September. Most of those arrested were ordinary citizens who were simply voicing their opinions on social media; they were not activists. In these cases, the state has employed various legal instruments, including the ITE Law and the incitement clause in the Criminal Code. As the new Criminal Code is implemented, I anticipate that such practices will lead to an increase in self-censorship, particularly among women, due to the fear they experience" (AR, Jakarta Feminis 2025, FGD, September).

The criminalisation of activists demonstrates how the law functions as a patriarchal mechanism of state power. According to feminist legal theorist Catharine A. MacKinnon (2020), neither the state nor the law is neutral; rather, they operate from and for the perspective of male domination. Through the law, the state organises social relations based on a hierarchy of domination and subordination. Consequently, violence against women is not recognised as a systemic violation, but rather as an individual aberration that can be overlooked or even justified. Jackson (1992) argues that the law and legal methods are gendered tools of social organisation, actively shaping and reproducing masculinity while disguising it as 'neutrality'. In other words, legal objectivity actually conceals the fact that the state sides with dominant groups' perspectives and interests.

In the Indonesian context, the ITE Law and the Criminal Code are used as instruments of state power to intimidate, discipline, and silence critical voices, particularly those of women and groups challenging patriarchal norms and moral order. Rather than simply failing to protect, the law actively engenders fear and self-censorship, forming part of the state's means of controlling who is permitted to speak and who must remain silent. In line with this, Smart (1989) demonstrates that the law is not a neutral normative apparatus, but rather a mechanism that determines who is worthy of protection and who can be sacrificed. Within Indonesia's ambiguous and repressive legal regime, women activists and CSOs who challenge authority are more readily perceived as a threat to order than as citizens entitled to protection.

The experience of repression becomes even more complex when faced by CSOs advocating for groups with dual vulnerabilities. EW, from the Arus Pelangi community, highlights how power structures determine who is worthy of protection and who is to be sacrificed. These mechanisms have exacerbated vulnerabilities and legitimised violence against groups whose sexual orientations are considered deviant in the digital sphere. This experience of repression is further compounded when it is faced by CSOs advocating for groups with multiple vulnerabilities. As a community advocating for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) issues, Arus Pelangi continues to be subjected to control primarily due to its members' sexual identities.

> "Three photos of Arus Pelangi staff members were posted online, after which they became the target of doxxing, accompanied by truly horrifying comments. They were subjected to a huge amount of abuse, including degrading caricatures and hate speech such as 'LGBT people are deviants' and 'just die'. It was absolutely horrifying; I couldn't bring myself to read the comments section. There is now a sense of fear and trauma" (EW, Arus Pelangi, 2025, FGD, September).

This experience shows that law and technology do not work in the same way. Rather than providing protection, legal instruments actually create vulnerability, particularly for marginalised groups. From an intersectional feminist perspective, digital repression demonstrates how state violence operates in a situated manner, influenced by sexual identity, social position and the moral stigma attached to certain groups.

Progressive faith-based women's organisations also experience digital repression. The Indonesian Congress of Women Ulama (KUPI), the Rahima Association and the Qirā'ah Mubādalah movement are under pressure in the digital sphere for challenging patriarchal interpretive authority through their counter-narrative initiatives. The stigmatisation of feminism as both 'Western' and 'un-Islamic' leaves activists and alternative media managers vulnerable to new threats. ZA from Mubādalah explains how progressive religious content often triggers mass reporting, accusations of heresy, and attempts to close social media accounts.

Mubādalah has also been stigmatised by a charismatic female cleric in East Java who labelled it a secular, non-Muslim platform. This prompted the female cleric's supporters to report Mubādalah's Instagram account in an attempt to have it closed. ZA said that several major Islamic boarding schools in East Java often consider the fatwas or views of the KUPI religious consultative body to be at odds with their own interpretations. ZA explained further:

> "It is not only the followers of a charismatic cleric who react when we disseminate KUPI's fatwas or religious deliberations that conflict with their beliefs. Several major Islamic boarding schools in East Java do too. For example, they have reacted to the P2GP issue. We are up against authorities such as the MUI, as well as Islamic boarding schools that are perceived as having a deeper understanding of classical Islamic texts and legal arguments. Therefore, whenever we intend to produce or disseminate potentially sensitive or controversial content, we consult the MMKUPI and the Mubādalah founders to assess its strategic value" (ZA, Mubādalah 2025, FGD, September).

In this case, the struggle occurs on two levels: religious interpretation and control over women's bodies and experiences. The latter includes female genital mutilation (FGM) and attacks on media management teams. Digital violence is an extension of the social and religious power that regulates women's bodies, and it also serves to legitimise symbolic and psychological violence. In the context of OGBV, Mubādalah's experience exemplifies the merging of the online and offline realms that women's CSOs encounter, as outlined by de Alwis (2024).

Furthermore, technology-enabled violence is an increasingly prevalent form of both interpersonal and structural violence. For instance, KUPI has been involved in digital advocacy for the Sexual Violence Crimes Law since 2019, continuing until 2021. These efforts culminated in a counter-narrative against those who opposed the Law. PS, a representative of Swara Rahima, noted that a piece of content published by Swara Rahima — an engaging infographic based on KUPI's religious fatwa — also garnered significant public attention. The post was widely shared, including by influencers, leading to Swara Rahima facing attacks from groups opposed to KUPI's religious fatwa. Consequently, Swara Rahima was subjected to various stigmas and accusations, including being labelled a 'Western media outlet', 'pro-LGBT+ media', and 'media inconsistent with Islam'. Unfortunately, the same pattern recurred, with attacks being directed not only at the media but also at individuals.

Stigmatisation, accusations, and attacks show that bias is rife on the internet and social media platforms, leading to symbolic violence. The presence of alternative media disrupts the 'echo chamber' referred to by de Alwis. Previously, individuals or groups would interact within patriarchal discourse, reproducing misogynistic content to reinforce their existing views through repetition within isolated bubbles (de Alwis 2024). In a state-mediated regime of violence, these echo chambers function as social mechanisms that determine who is protected and who can be attacked without facing legal consequences. These echo chambers exacerbate vulnerability, particularly among groups deemed expendable, who challenge the status quo by presenting counter-narratives from civil society organisations.

These experiences highlight the fact that technology-facilitated violence has not yet been widely recognised as a form of systemic and structural violence. Digital violence is not separate from the law and social norms; rather, it forms part of a broader architecture of power. Therefore, as de Alwis argues, the response to OGBV cannot stop at punishing individual perpetrators. Rather, it demands a revision of the legal framework and policies capable of dismantling the structures of power inequality that produce violence against women in the digital sphere.

Omnipresence, Chilling Effect, and the Experiences of Women's CSOs

In a regime of state violence mediated by digital technology, surveillance does not necessarily result in direct arrest or prosecution. Instead, it creates a constant sense of being watched. In the digital space, this logic operates more subtly yet pervasively, shaping what many women's CSOs perceive as latent fear and self-restraint. To analyse this experience in a more contextualised and gender-sensitive manner, this paper draws on the intersectional feminist framework developed by de Alwis.

To interpret this experience from a feminist and contextual perspective, the paper employs the concept of 'omnipresence' (de Alwis 2024), which demonstrates that technology-based violence is shape-shifting and transcends the boundaries between online and offline spaces. In a datafied and digitally connected world, perpetrators of violence, stalkers and the authorities do not need to be physically present to exert control. Instead, their presence is felt through notifications, mass reporting, anonymous threats, data trails and the ever-present possibility of surveillance that can never be definitively confirmed or denied.

In these conditions, technology-based violence does not operate as an isolated event, but as an atmosphere that pervades women's lives and political work. Women's organisations face actual attacks and live with the constant fear of potential attacks. This has a chilling effect, whereby individuals and organisations proactively self-censor, erase their digital footprints or alter their advocacy strategies to survive.

This was the experience of Swara Rahima, whose office was visited by a group of women in 2020. In addition to facing surveillance, social punishment, stigmatisation, accusations, and digital attacks, women's organisations are vulnerable to other forms of violence in the real world. PS recounted Rahima's experience during the FGD:

> "Towards the end of 2019, strangers visited our office in South Jakarta. Most of the people around us were supporters of a certain religious party, and the women who visited us were strangers. They wanted to come in… asked us questions, and took photos. We took steps to remove all addresses and contact details posted on social media. For security reasons, we do not include Rahima's addresses or contact details" (PS, Swara Rahima 2025, FGD September).

This response is not merely a technical choice, but a form of adaptation to perceived ever-present violence. Women's CSOs have learned that public visibility, which has long been the primary asset of digital advocacy, can also be a source of serious vulnerability.

Findings from the FGDs indicate that almost all women's CSOs involved reported experiences or perceptions of exposure to various forms of technology-mediated violence (OGBV). These include doxxing, sexual threats, account hacking and mass content reporting, as well as concerns and suspicions about potential digital surveillance by state authorities. This violence and pressure have a direct impact on the mental health of activists, causing trauma, emotional exhaustion, paranoia and insecurity. It also has structural impacts on organisations, including the cessation of campaigns, reduced visibility and a narrowing of advocacy space.

Table 2.
Women's CSOs' Experiences and Perceptions of Technology-Based Violence and Its Impacts (based on FGD 2025)[1]

CSOs	Key Issues	Forms of Digital Violence	Effects on Individuals	Effects on Organisations and Advocacy	CSO Adaptation Strategies
Arus Pelangi (AP)	LGBTIQ+ and issues of identity and equality in Indonesia.	Doxxing of personal details and sexual orientation, threats to delete Instagram accounts, extreme trolling, and concerns about the tracking of digital activity.	Trauma, fear, the urge to withdraw, prolonged stress.	Public campaigns halted, Instagram set to private.	Strict screening, body system, changing phone numbers, separating work and personal phones.
FAMM Indonesia	Women and Indigenous communities.	Suspected digital surveillance and tracking, sexting and symbolic intimidation (e.g., threatening GoFood deliveries).	Paranoia, physical exhaustion, hyper-vigilance.	Fieldwork disrupted, office address changed.	Digital security training, digital teams, solidarity funds, and relocation.

CSOs	Key Issues	Forms of Digital Violence	Effects on Individuals	Effects on Organisations and Advocacy	CSO Adaptation Strategies
Jakarta Feminists	Feminist movement, democracy, freedom of expression.	Threats of sexual violence and rape on social media, misogynistic trolling, attacks on conservative accounts, the stigma of being labelled a "foreign stooge", and concerns about state surveillance of interviews and dealings with foreign media.	Personal fear, emotional exhaustion, a sense of insecurity when speaking in digital public spaces.	Institutional self-censorship, extreme caution in media interviews (particularly with foreign media), narrowing of public participation.	Strict selection of issues and platforms for discussion, division of speaking roles (giving space to grassroots voices), avoidance of risky exposure.
Feminist Study Circle (Lingkar Studi Feminis) (LSF)	Feminism and diversity.	Hate speech, ideological stigma, account reporting.	Emotional burnout, the normalisation of stress.	The discussion was adjourned; sensitive issues were postponed.	Narrative adjustments, phased strategy.
SIGAB Indonesia	Disability and legal justice.	Repeated website hacking, threats via social media, allegations of defamation.	Fear amongst support workers and families, psychological pressure.	Case advocacy not publicised.	Minimising digital footprints, focus on litigation.
Mubādalah	Islam and gender justice.	Mass account reporting, *doxxing*, stigmatisation as "kafir/ secular", attacks by online trolls.	Administrators under attack, emotional crisis, burnout.	Accounts are temporarily suspended, and content is strictly moderated.	Administrative restrictions, email and organisation number checks, multi-tiered consultation.
Swara Rahima	Feminist Islamic Media.	Digital and offline harassment, ideological stigma, reporting.	Sense of security under threat, high alert.	Addresses & contact details removed, content taken down.	Reduced visibility, security mitigation.
Halmahera Coastal Women's School (Sekolah Perempuan Pesisir Halmahera)	Environment and mining.	Anonymous TikTok attacks, digital and offline intimidation, tracking.	Acute fear, disruption of activities, going into hiding.	Campaigns continue but networking is limited.	Collaboration with national NGOs, strengthening of local bases.
Puspita Bahari	Women fisherfolks and climate crisis.	Suspected surveillance by state authorities.	Exhaustion, fear, the desire to stop.	Self-censorship.	Economic self-reliance, cooperatives, community solidarity.

Source: Compiled by the authors from FGD 2025 data

As summarised in Tables 1 and 2, experiences of violence are not uniform. CSOs focusing on LGBT issues, disability issues, Indigenous communities, and progressive Islamic feminism face layered vulnerabilities influenced by their identities, locations, and social positions. The 'politics of location' approach is useful for analysing how state violence operates in a situated, non-neutral and uneven manner in digital spaces.

The omnipresent nature of online gender-based violence demonstrates that technology is not merely a medium but an integral component of the power infrastructure. Through laws, social norms, and the architecture of digital platforms, technology becomes the arena in which control, restriction, and discipline are enforced. In this context, the freedom of expression and political participation of women's CSOs in

Indonesia is restricted not only by explicit bans, but also by the creation of fear, excessive vigilance and constant exhaustion. Thus, OGBV (also known as KBGO) undermines women's advocacy work by impacting the individuals involved and the organisation's sustainability and capacity.

Repression in the Digital Platform Ecology: Algorithms, Visibility, and the Disciplining of Feminist Activism

The development of social media has transformed patterns of interaction and political participation, including those within digital feminist activism. While it initially relied on the virality of hashtags, characteristic of fourth-wave feminism, in recent years, it has shifted towards solidarity-based activism across CSOs that utilise account collaboration and platform algorithms strategically to broaden the reach of issues. In the context of digital media consumption in Indonesia, where short, light-hearted content dominates, feminist narratives have evolved into easily shareable content that goes viral. However, alongside the state's adoption of surveillance capitalism, discipline is now enforced not only through legislation and the state institutions, but also through algorithms, mass reporting, and a network of paid influencers that restrict the circulation of certain political issues in the digital sphere.

To understand how this mechanism works, a content analysis was conducted on Instagram posts from ten women's CSOs between 2021 and 2025. This period was chosen because, since the onset of the global pandemic, social media has become the primary arena for advocacy, public education and organising, and this coincides with the crucial phase of enacting and monitoring the Law on Sexual Violence Crimes (UU TPKS). Instagram's collaboration features, such as reels and joint posts, enable CSOs to build solidarity networks across issues and extend the reach of their messages.

Three posts from each account were purposively selected to represent the CSO's identity, advocacy focus, and communication strategy. The relevance of the issue and the level of public engagement were also considered. The posts were analysed based on their text, visuals, and calls to action. Thematic categories such as repression, adaptation and solidarity were considered to be expressions of power relations rather than merely communication choices. This approach enables us to analyse how CSOs navigate a digital platform ecology rife with surveillance, while also revealing the structural limitations of feminist solidarity in a space shaped by algorithms and state control.

Table 3.
Communication Patterns and Digital Feminism in the Framing of Women's CSOs

Main Themes	Thematic Indicators	Women's CSOs in Indicators	Communication Patterns and Digital Strategies
Framing of legal and policy advocacy	1. Focus on legal issues using argumentative language grounded in moral and constitutional legitimacy: the PKS Bill, the KIA Bill, Women Workers' Rights. 2. Prioritising the principles of victim justice and feminist legal theory.	Perempuan Mahardhika, KUPI/ Mubādalah, Akara Perempuan.	Using evidence-based framing and the reproductive justice framework. Legal narratives are combined with critiques of gender bias in regulation. Visuals range from formal to semi-popular; the language is argumentative, calling for structural change.
Cross-issue digital solidarity.	1. Collaboration between CSOs and cross-sectoral movements (labour, environment, human rights, and others). 2. Calls for public solidarity through digital visual campaigns or collaborative posts with other CSOs.	Jakarta Feminist, Arus Pelangi, FAMM-Indonesia, Lingkar Studi Feminis (LSF).	Using affective solidarity framing — empathetic language, collaborative visuals, and Instagram's "collab" feature. Prioritising public participation and cross-issue empathy.

Main Themes	Thematic Indicators	Women's CSOs in Indicators	Communication Patterns and Digital Strategies
Public education and knowledge production.	1. Simplifying feminist theory into popular language. 2. Use of microblogs and educational Reels.	LSF, SIGAB Indonesia, FAMM-Indonesia, KUPI.	Knowledge activism strategy: disseminating feminist theory and public policy through non-academic language and inclusive visuals. The primary aim is to expand digital feminist literacy.
Resistance to digital repression and the state.	1. Criticism of the ITE Law, state repression, and patriarchal policies. 2. Rejection of state control over women's bodies and vulnerable groups.	Perempuan Mahardhika, LSF, Arus Pelangi, Jakarta Feminist.	Counter-discourse and gendered resistance framing. Content rejecting criminalisation and state control over women's bodies (including abortion rights). Strong visuals, political language, and collaboration with human rights movements.
Adaptation to platforms and algorithms.	1. Utilisation of collaboration features, live discussions, and Reels. 2. Shift from one-way publishing to digital interaction.	SIGAB Indonesia, Jakarta Feminist, FAMM Indonesia.	Adaptive digital strategy: leveraging trends and algorithms (short videos, Reels, collaborative posts). A participatory approach that adapts to digital user behaviour.
Inclusive and discursive language and style.	1. A shift from legal/academic language to popular language. 2. Use of humour, empathy, and personal narratives to challenge gender bias.	Arus Pelangi, Jakarta Feminist, LSF.	Conversational advocacy: combining popular styles with serious issues such as reproductive rights, gender identity, and body justice. Light-hearted language is used to open up political conversations.
The 4th wave of digital feminism (Structural transformation and collective care).	1. Integration of education, solidarity, and critique of the patriarchal system. 2. An emphasis on sustainability, support networks and body justice.	All CSOs (particularly post-2022).	Fourth-wave digital feminism: combining mutual care, reproductive justice, and solidarity across differences. Digital activism is directed towards social transformation and the liberation of women's bodies.

Source: Adapted from an analysis of social media data from women's CSOs

The cross-CSO analysis in the table above shows that feminist digital communication strategies are not autonomous but are intertwined with socio-political and cultural structural contexts. These communication dynamics are primarily influenced by three key factors: 1) state pressure through digital regulation; 2) dependence on donors and external resources; and 3) the algorithmic logic of digital platforms, which determines the reach and form of messages.

Firstly, state pressure mediated by regulations such as the ITE Law, the Criminal Code, and the broadcasting regime creates a climate of vigilance and self-restraint in digital advocacy work (de Alwis 2024). Several CSOs, including Arus Pelangi and Perempuan Mahardhika, have reported that content relating to sexuality, the body, and criticism of moral norms is often considered to carry a risk of triggering digital attacks, reporting, or legal pressure. Consequently, the use of symbolic language, humour, or educational formats serves as a strategy for negotiating restrictive digital power structures that limit feminist discourse.

Secondly, resource inequalities and dependence on donors affect the visibility of organisations within the digital movement. CSOs with limited capacity, such as Sekolah Perempuan Pesisir Halmahera and Puspita Bahari, tend to collaborate extensively with

larger organisations to engage the public. This creates a hierarchy of representation in the digital space.

Thirdly, the algorithmic logic of platforms such as Instagram encourages the oversimplification of structural issues to fit the brief, visual format of digital media consumption. However, some CSOs have developed adaptive strategies involving account collaborations, live discussions, and educational content. This enables them to maintain political substance without losing reach.

On average, patterns of feminist digital activism transformed across the ten CSOs after 2022, particularly following the enactment of the Sexual Violence Crimes Law (UU TPKS). Since 2021, the campaign to monitor the Sexual Violence Bill (RUU PKS) has seen increased collaboration among CSOs, both offline and online. Updates to Instagram's collaborative features have reinforced this. By creating joint posts, CSOs with fewer resources can enhance their legitimacy and public trust whilst raising the profile of feminist issues in the long term. This shift marks a transition from fourth-wave digital feminism, which relies on short-term virality, to fifth-wave feminism, which emphasises cross-issue solidarity and sustaining public attention.

However, the greatest obstacle to feminist digital activism today is the intensification of intense algorithmic and platform discipline, whether through state intervention or the direct repression of individuals within CSOs. This situation restricts the scope of activism in raising broader collective awareness. The caution that CSOs exercise when selecting narratives, managing content visibility and locking social media accounts constitutes a form of collective vigilance that highlights how digital solidarity can also function as a mechanism for collective protection.

Digital Solidarity under a Regime of State Surveillance and Repression

Digital activism is a defining feature of 21st-century social movements. Social media timelines are filled with posts about various issues, each functioning as a strategic tool to raise awareness, shape collective opinion and mobilise public support. In this ecosystem, visibility is the currency of politics, with competing narratives vying for recognition, amplification and dissemination.

Tong and Botts (2024) demonstrate that since the third wave of feminism, technology has prompted feminists to consider the connections among the body, subjectivity, and machinery. Meanwhile, in the fourth and fifth waves, the internet has become the primary infrastructure for political mobilisation. Feminist hashtag movements such as #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter, as well as the 2017 Women's March, which involved millions of people worldwide, demonstrate the capacity of digital spaces to foster solidarity and inspire collective action (Tong & Botts 2020). However, these spaces also serve as battlegrounds for digital violence against women. The GamerGate case (2014-2015) and the emergence of misogynistic online subcultures such as incels, the alt-right and anti-women trolls reveal that digital spaces have become venues for organised attacks against women and minorities (Tong & Botts 2024).

These dynamics are reinforced by the way in which the platforms operate. Algorithms prioritise content that drives engagement, including narratives targeting women and vulnerable groups. In the context of digital governance, mechanisms such as mass reporting, monitoring, and law enforcement — including under the ITE Law — create conditions in which feminist activism is vulnerable to moral delegitimisation and suppression. Consequently, digital feminist praxis and solidarity must continually be negotiated within spaces conditioned by algorithmic logic and surveillance. Conversely, digital feminist activism is often criticised as 'slacktivism', or as online practices considered to have little structural impact (Tong & Botts 2024). Examples include posting hashtags, 'likes', or online petitions, which are often considered merely symbolic. However, this criticism is not entirely adequate. Digital spaces remain capable of raising awareness, broadening the reach of issues, and shifting public opinion. Therefore, viewing digital politics solely as superficial participation risks overlooking how movements have evolved in the platform era (Mirani 2016; Tong & Botts 2024).

Bennett and Segerberg (2013) explain this shift through the concept of 'connective action'. Unlike traditional collective action, which relies on formal organisations, shared ideologies, and hierarchical leadership structures, connective action operates within fluid networks of digitally connected individuals (Bennett & Segerberg 2013, p. 35; Loader & Dutton 2012; Stohl 2014). These networks are formed through the sharing of personalised content, such as stories, testimonials, and emotional responses. This creates affective resonance and opens up possibilities for mobilisation, eliminating the need for rigid organisational structures. In other words, it creates opportunities for forming new solidarity.

In Indonesia, this pattern is evident in the #SahkanRUUPKS campaign. Developing through digital connections across regions and social classes, this movement combined survivors' testimonies, online petitions, hashtag monitoring, and offline actions. Ultimately, this led to the enactment of UU TPKS (Law No. 12 of 2022). In this process, personal experiences of the body and trauma become a shared political resource when these experiences are politicised as structural issues rather than merely as individual stories (Mohanty et al. 1995; BBC News Indonesia 2019; Dewi 2025).

Findings from the FGDs organised by Jurnal Perempuan reinforce the idea that digital activism cannot automatically be equated with political apathy. For CSOs working on queer issues and with vulnerable groups, the digital space often serves as the primary medium for expanding the reach of advocacy when physical spaces are restricted by stigma, persecution, and threats. It is therefore more useful to view online and offline campaigns as complementary practices than as two mutually exclusive modes. E from Arus Pelangi rejects the idea that digital campaigning is a lazy form of activism.

> "In my view, any social media campaign is a form of support, no matter how small. We must understand why people choose not to join protests. Everyone has their own reasons... and I believe social media campaigns are effective at conveying messages. Especially now, when it's 'no viral, no justice'. No matter how small, people's support deserves appreciation. Through social media campaigns, people in other regions can learn about the cause we are fighting for. Online and offline activism are therefore interconnected and complement one another" (EW, Arus Pelangi 2025, FGD 19 September).

This perspective suggests that 'slacktivism' does not adequately reflect the complexity of the digital feminist movement in Indonesia. The digital space acts as an amplifier, strengthening links between real-world activism and bridging the gap among awareness, visibility, and sustainability.

However, as Zuboff (2019) warns, this digital space is also embedded within the surveillance infrastructure of the state and corporations. The digitalisation of solidarity is inextricably linked to the emergence of new forms of vulnerability. When personal experiences are shared online, the resulting data and digital traces can be exploited for surveillance, control, and potential criminalisation within the digital governance regime. In this regime, visibility becomes both a political resource and a source of risk. The FGDs revealed that doxxing, threats, and the dissemination of personal data have compelled CSOs such as Arus Pelangi to privatise their accounts. Digital solidarity thus creates a paradox between the need for visibility and the need for security.

This situation reflects the exercise of disciplinary power within the ecology of digital platforms. Surveillance practices employed by the state, law enforcement agencies, and intolerant social actors intertwine to create digital authoritarianism. In response to this, digital solidarity evolves from symbolic expression into collective care and protection. Activists such as myself from FAMM-Indonesia emphasise the importance of digital defensive and preventive mechanisms. Having experienced symbolic terror via food deliveries ordered through online ride-hailing services, FAMM-I removed its office address from its website, formed an internal digital security team, organised training sessions, and compiled security guidelines for activist networks. These measures demonstrate that transformative digital solidarity requires ongoing efforts to protect individuals and organisations.

Nevertheless, digital solidarity also has structural limitations that must be critically acknowledged. In Indonesia, for example, online feminist campaigns often perpetuate urban and middle-class biases, inadequately representing the experiences of rural women, migrant workers, Indigenous communities, the elderly, and women with limited digital access. The dominant visual and discursive language on social media often reflects an urban, middle-class aesthetic that is not always inclusive.

This finding is supported by EV of the Feminist Studies Circle (Lingkar Studi Feminis/LSF), who explained that many women in Banten, particularly housewives, lack adequate digital access due to limitations in infrastructure or digital literacy. She explained that many women in Banten, particularly housewives, lack adequate digital access due to limitations in infrastructure or digital literacy. "Sometimes, the language of our campaigns is not easily understood by housewives," she said. In response to this issue, the LSF balances online campaigns with offline organising on campuses and within communities. In this way, digital solidarity acts as an amplifier that must be linked to grassroots organising work to avoid perpetuating urban bias.

Furthermore, the logic of virality and algorithms prioritises sensational content, causing public solidarity to dissipate quickly and marginalising the voices of affected groups. As noted by Tong & Botts (2024), stigma against women and queer activists further narrows the

safe space within digital politics. Within the framework of critical feminism, transformative digital solidarity requires three things: awareness of the politics of location, accountability for privilege, and concrete action. All three are necessary to ensure that digital connectivity extends beyond visibility and becomes a sustainable collective endeavour.

Within this framework, transformative digital solidarity requires an awareness of the politics of location, accountability regarding privilege, and concrete action. Awareness of the politics of location involves a reflective understanding of one's position within unequal social and digital structures. Accountability regarding privilege means using visibility and access to create space for those marginalised by algorithmic logic and social hierarchies, not merely to amplify one's own voice. Concrete praxis involves translating online connectivity into forms of mobilisation and collective work that extend beyond the screen.

Within this framework, digital feminist activism must utilise online platforms in a conscious, reflective, and strategic manner. This is not merely to enhance visibility but also to expand the space to be heard and to exercise political influence. As emphasised in the theory of disciplinary power, digital surveillance is not only repressive, but also productive in shaping subjects and the scope for action (Hass 1996). Recognising this productive dimension allows the digital feminist movement to engage with and utilise algorithmic logic to create alternative subjectivities and discourses. This enables women and minority groups to collectively increase their visibility, build solidarity, and develop the capacity to resist within the surveillance ecology itself.

From Solidarity to Sustainability: Adaptation Strategies of Women's CSOs

Digital solidarity should not be viewed merely as a 'campaign mode', but rather as ongoing political work that involves continual negotiation with risk. In a surveillance regime, visibility serves a dual purpose: it facilitates mobilisation while simultaneously opening the door to doxxing, criminalisation, and censorship. As virality is fleeting and digital spaces are not always safe, external funding is also dwindling. Women's CSOs must therefore develop political survival strategies, such as managing exposure, building collective protection, and maintaining the infrastructure of solidarity, to ensure that advocacy work can continue.

In situations involving multi-layered pressure through law, moral stigma, and platform infrastructure, repression does not always take the form of direct prohibition, but rather the 'risk of punishment' fosters vigilance and self-restraint. These conditions have prompted CSOs to renegotiate their modes of operation, including communication strategies and organisational governance. Findings from the FGDs reveal four prominent clusters of adaptation strategies: funding diversification, strengthening digital security, adopting a low-profile approach, and strengthening networks and cross-organisational solidarity.

Firstly, regarding funding. Research by Boangmanalu and Aprilia (2022) suggests that the reduction in funding for feminist CSOs is not only linked to shifts in global donor priorities, but also to the way in which certain issues, such as sexuality, reproductive rights and freedom of expression, are situated within policy and regulatory frameworks that are considered politically sensitive. In this context, feminist funding is not neutral; it is intertwined with power dynamics that influence the scope of action, security, and sustainability of feminist work at the grassroots level.

For example, Jakarta Feminis withdrew from a funding programme after being asked to submit documents to a state security agency and clarify their work on gender and sexuality, as they believed this would endanger community safety. They also ceased cooperating with another donor when their regional partner was restricted and censored for strongly criticising government policy. These decisions demonstrate that an organisation's sustainability is inextricably linked to political security and independence in advocacy. Other CSOs build financial independence through community-based mechanisms, such as membership fees, cooperatives, and productive enterprises that support safe houses, as practised by Puspita Bahari. FAMM Indonesia has also developed a members' savings scheme to provide solidarity funding and support for members facing threats.

Secondly, public fundraising becomes a vital survival strategy when the state is absent or inadequate. For instance, during the pandemic, Arus Pelangi relied on solidarity campaigns to help meet the community's basic needs when many trans women lost their livelihoods. Similar practices are evident in the LSF Banten art exhibition initiative, which was set up to raise solidarity funds. However, rising political risks have also prompted some organisations to exercise caution in their fundraising, using more neutral programme terminology to avoid scrutiny from the authorities or online trolls. This pattern of resilience is consistent with

the findings of LBH APIK Jakarta during the pandemic. Cuts in foreign donor funding directly impacted services for victims, while administrative requirements often made things more difficult for victims and their support workers (Kurnia 2022, pp. 146–147). This demonstrates how CSOs continue to support victims despite minimal funding.

Thirdly, cyberattacks and physical threats have prompted women's CSOs to design digital security protocols as part of their survival strategy. Experiences of hacking, doxxing, and symbolic terror have forced organisations to develop multi-layered protection mechanisms, ranging from drafting digital security standard operating procedures (SOPs) and providing security literacy training to separating work and personal communication infrastructures. Some CSOs have moved internal coordination to more secure platforms, while others have developed innovative strategies, such as masking websites, to enable survivors to access services without leaving a digital footprint. These practices demonstrate that digital security is not only a technical issue, but also part of collective care work in repressive conditions.

This step is taken as an alternative, informal protection mechanism when civil society organisations face difficulties carrying out advocacy (Kurnia 2024). Kurnia (2024) also observed this in her research on formal and informal protection mechanisms for women human rights defenders (WHRDs). Online violence (OV) can affect the sense of safety and performance of service providers working within these CSOs (Kurnia 2022).

Physical, social, and political threats have also prompted CSOs to adopt a low-profile strategy. Some organisations have reduced the publication of sensitive cases, removed office addresses from digital platforms and scaled back the frequency of social media posts. Others have changed the format of their advocacy to discussions and seminars in order to avoid political stigmatisation and dissolution. This strategy reflects efforts to selectively manage visibility to protect members and the communities they support.

Amidst this pressure, collaboration and network solidarity have become the main pillars sustaining the movement. CSOs share resources, funding support and security information through cross-organisational consolidation and psychosocial networks for young activists. This solidarity enables CSOs to continue their advocacy work despite facing funding crises and multi-layered repression.

These findings suggest that the sustainability of women's CSOs depends not only on access to funding but also on their ability to build collective protection, manage political visibility, and strengthen solidarity networks. A resilience ecosystem comprising financial strategies, digital security measures, a low-profile approach, and intercommunity cooperation enables the women's movement to survive and thrive amid state pressure and the logic of digital platforms.

Conclusion

The findings in this paper demonstrate that state violence in the digital sphere does not operate in isolation. Rather, it operates through a convergence of law, technology, moral stigma and the logic of digital platforms, all of which reinforce one another. Women's CSOs experience repression in the form of direct criminalisation, as well as through surveillance, layered threats and the reduction of safe spaces. This leads to self-censorship and collective exhaustion. In this context, digital solidarity cannot be viewed as a neutral practice or merely as a campaigning tool. Instead, it must be recognised as a constantly negotiated political arena with inherent risks. Therefore, the sustainability of the feminist movement cannot depend on fleeting virality, but rather on the capacity to establish a protective, caring, and supportive infrastructure that transcends differences.

This article also shows that digital spaces are a fraught feminist battlefield that simultaneously opens up new political possibilities. Women's organisations in Indonesia are not only confronting legal pressures, algorithmic bias and a global funding crisis, but are also actively developing their resilience through collective work, strategic innovation and solidarity networks.

For women's CSOs, this reflection highlights the importance of strengthening collective, sustainable adaptation strategies. Digital security must be recognised as an integral part of feminist care work rather than merely a technical issue. This can be achieved by establishing shared protocols, disseminating knowledge on risk mitigation, and strategically managing visibility. In the face of shrinking international funding, political steps to safeguard independence and advocacy include diversifying resources through community-based schemes, fostering solidarity between organisations, and strengthening the collective economy. Building alliances across issues, such as feminism, labour, the environment, disability, Indigenous peoples, and the

queer community, is also crucial in challenging the fragmentation of movements, which is often reinforced by algorithmic logic and donor funding.

The findings of this research require policymakers to fundamentally change their approach to freedom of expression and the protection of citizens in the digital sphere. Legal instruments such as the ITE Law and the Criminal Code have proven more effective as tools of discipline than of protection, particularly for women and vulnerable groups. Revising problematic regulations, limiting vague interpretations and recognising the diversity of civil society movements are prerequisites for preventing layered political criminalisation. The state must acknowledge that technology-based violence is structural violence, not merely an individual issue, and therefore policy responses must be oriented towards gender justice and human rights.

For donors and global partners, these findings highlight the urgent need for sustainable, equitable and context-sensitive feminist funding. Reliance on short-term project logic, quantitative indicators and urban biases risks undermining the work of grassroots women's CSOs operating in the most vulnerable conditions. Donors must therefore provide long-term, flexible and trust-based funding while respecting the political autonomy of CSOs and avoiding the imposition of security agendas or bureaucratic structures that endanger communities. Feminist funding should strengthen the movement's critical capacity and sustainability, rather than merely acting as a stabilisation tool.

Amidst these pressures, women's CSOs respond not merely defensively, but through creative and politically adaptive strategies. These include managing visibility, establishing collective protection mechanisms, fostering solidarity networks and developing community-based sustainability initiatives. These practices demonstrate that digital solidarity is more than just a form of symbolic expression; it provides a tangible space for resistance against state and platform discipline.

However, transformative digital solidarity — not just clicks, hashtags or virality — requires connectivity combined with collective care, political courage and a commitment to continually challenging unequal power structures. Adopting a feminist perspective, this essay affirms the strength and resilience of these women's CSOs. It asserts that the future of the women's movement depends on our capacity to cultivate solidarity as an ongoing, reflective political endeavour.

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Footnote

1 The data in this table represent the experiences and interpretations of FGD participants regarding the situations they face in the digital space. These data form part of the qualitative findings of this research and do not constitute legal claims against any specific party.