

Learning from Young Women Activists: A Way to Influence Early Political Awareness

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Abstract

This research emphasises the importance of involving young women in various activism. Problems arise when young women are often considered immature to be involved in social and political movements. Apart from being supported by a patriarchal mindset that tends to subordinate women's experience, there is an intersectional problem where young people need more knowledge to make changes. In fact, one way to encourage active representation of women in political space is to encourage involvement from a young age. This research explores the activism experiences of young women who influence their respective communities. Data was collected through Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and strengthened through literature studies. The data is managed using a political participation theory approach, as well as the influence of affect theory in digital activism. The findings in this research show that young women's knowledge is just as essential in the political space. Their advocacy is full of the spirit of the times, so they can have a strong influence on other young women through the community they have built.

Keywords: youth community advocacy and networking, young women activists, young women's political participation

Background

Indonesia is currently preparing for the 2024 elections. Many campaigns and socialisation of legislative candidates are dominated by men. The representation of women is still minimal. Several efforts have been made. One of them is through Law No. 12 of 2003 on the Election of the House of Representatives (DPR), Regional Representatives Council (DPD), and Regional Legislative Council (DPRD). The law requires a minimum participation rate of 30 per cent for women. The law reinforces Presidential Instruction (Inpres) No. 9 of 2000 on Gender Mainstreaming (*Pengarusutamaan Gender, PUG*). The Inpres also states a similar figure of 30 per cent female participation. Law No. 22 of 2007 on the Conduct of Elections is another regulation that also emphasises women's participation of at least 30 per cent in the General Election Commission's (KPU) list of candidates for each political party (Mulyono 2010). In addition, the statutes and bylaws of the 10 political parties that participated in the 2014 election included a narrative on women's participation in the party (Pratiwi 2019). Efforts are made to meet the 30 per cent requirement through the provision of women's wing organisations by the political parties.

Affirmative policy in various regulations is inclusive in nature and has the potential to help achieve the goal of increasing women's participation in political activities (Fitsum 2017). This is evident from the passage of Law No. 12 of 2022 on the Crime of Sexual Violence (TPKS), which was successfully passed on 9 May 2022. The participation of women in the decision-making process successfully supported the enactment of the Law, which had been fought for about 10 years. The collective experience of women, who still dominate the number of victims of sexual violence, also triggered the passage of the TPKS Law.

It turns out that there are still many who abuse this affirmative policy. Often, women are only given the opportunity to participate in politics in order to meet the 30 per cent quota. But when it comes to decision-making, women's opinions are not necessarily heard, let alone taken into account. This justifies that women have so far only been used as a complement and their interests have not been the main political agenda (Margret 2019).

The main obstacle to women's participation in the political sphere is the patriarchal values in society. There is a marginalisation of women in the private sphere that makes it difficult for women to enter the political sphere

in the public sphere. Even in the public sphere, there is a feminisation of women's work that alienates women from male-dominated work (Izzati 2019).

Women's marginalisation in the political sphere is exacerbated by sexist media construction and dissemination. Sexist media labelling that focuses on physical appearance, such as 'beautiful politicians', often distances women from the good image of their past achievements (VOA Indonesia 2019). In order to prove that women have the same capabilities as men in the political sphere, opportunities and spaces are needed for women to be substantively involved and have their opinions taken into account in decision-making.

Various advocacy efforts have been made to overcome the discrimination faced by women in the political sphere. Thanks to these efforts, we can see an increase in women's participation in the political sphere. One of them also targets the participation of young women. The acceleration of information technology in the current generation has proven to play a positive role in encouraging young women to realise the importance of being involved in practical political activities in the public sphere. We need to pay attention to several issues: 1) the existence of gender stereotypes that are rooted both in the family and in each woman's environment; 2) the differences in treatment due to these stereotypes that make more men have early access to training in both social and political activities; 3) the lack of support for young women who decide to pursue a political career. Efforts can be made to encourage the participation of young women in order to increase the progress of women's involvement in the political sphere.

The importance of promoting young women's political participation has been addressed by Plan International in 2022. *Equal Power Now, Girls, Young Women & Political Participation* (2022) presents research from different countries on what is understood about participation and how young women influence and strategise in the political space. The diversity of issues and the use of new technologies have encouraged young women to explore different social and political issues. We have further explored these findings, in addition to various other supporting literature, to make the stories of young women activists a body of knowledge. The awareness of these young women activists can have a powerful impact on equitable change in their communities and neighbourhoods.

We began this research with the central question of the importance of learning from young women's experience

and engagement in the political sphere - in particular, the ways in which they use strong feminist understandings to engage with social and political issues. The definition of political space itself stems from the understanding that events in public space are a confluence of social phenomena (Kuljiš 2017). In general, efforts are made to separate public space from private space. But when we talk about the organisation of private space, there is a lack of clarity about the definitive distinction. Ultimately, activities in the private sphere become political because they are about how the reproduction of life is considered in one setting (Kuljiš 2017). There is a political interplay in the relationship between public and private spaces. What is interesting about this understanding is that for Nancy Fraser (1947-), the understanding of political space is not just about the state, so that conversations about experiences outside public institutions - in this case including experiences in private space - can balance the relations formed in public space (1990). When we arrive at this definitional agreement, young women's experiences become one of the important variables that need to be heard.

We are demonstrating that the issue of women's political participation is not just a means to another end. Often conversations about the 'importance of women's representation' are linked to the need to address specific issues. We recognise that it is important to put women's experiences first and to listen to them. But within this framework, we often lose sight of the substance of the importance of promoting women's participation and representation as a standalone issue. Based on this logic of thinking, we agree with what Iris Marion Young (1949-2006) said about gender seriality (1994). When we universalise the understanding that all women's experiences are the same - as a group - we lose recognition of the diversity of each individual woman's experience within that group. This collection of women's experiences will lead to an understanding in the form of support for each (different) experience. Each issue in the different experiences will intersect with other issues.

We used this formulation as a guide in the research process. Collecting and documenting young women's experiences in the political sphere became our way of telling their stories. There is also something important about the way young women approach their advocacy. Their digital activism and use of colloquial language makes the issues they raise easy to understand. This is what we learn from our research. There is a positive impact of their participation in the political sphere. The involvement of young women in policy-making and

decision-making can bridge the gap between regulations and policy-making, build the potential of women and young people in political activities, strengthen the empowerment of women and young people, reduce poverty, build women's and young people's participation initiatives through different media, bridge different groups and communities, and sharpen the agenda of women's issues, peace, and security (Mindzie 2015).

Research Methodology and Theoretical Framework

We build our framework for political participation through Iris Marion Young's set of political theories. She begins by critiquing the dominance at work in society as an obstacle to democratic inclusiveness (Young 1990). Treating everyone the same leads to the manipulation of universalist norms that force the dissolution of each individual's unique experience. In this position, Young offers the concept of a politics of difference that fights for the equality of groups with different identity backgrounds. This inclusivity will also lead us to offer solidarity in the politics of difference (Young 2000).

This inclusive approach underlines the message of equality in difference. Young does not seek to eliminate differences, for she believes that what we need to develop is an attitude of recognition and respect. This attitude will lead to an inclusive dialogue in democracy (Young 2000). Difference is not seen as an attributive function, but rather as a bridge between groups and the interaction between groups and institutions (the state) (Young 1990). The aim of the politics of difference is to reformulate the meaning of difference and intersubjective and institutional relations. Young's politics of difference offers a relationship with a spirit of solidarity. This solidarity support links the issue of difference to justice. Young's concept of difference presupposes an openness to the possibility of the emergence of attributes of each individual and group. However, these attributes are not seen merely as material descriptions, but have functions that unite individuals, groups, and state institutions (Young 1990).

The nature of this connection is also reinforced by Young in her understanding of gender seriality (1994). She distinguishes this understanding of seriality from what Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) called group in his 1960 work *Critique de la raison dialectique*. Young rejects Sartre's understanding of group (1994). For Sartre (quoted in Young 1994), a group is a set of individuals who consciously acknowledge their existence in a relationship to carry out a common project. There is a recognition of a common purpose within the group.

Meanwhile, for Young, seriality has a different meaning from group because it describes a level of social existence - a condition that arises because of the limitation and direction of the circumstances and material conditions that shape it (Young 1994). This collection of individuals in seriality is passively united by objects, routines, and habits - as orientations for joint actions. In the case of gender, our sameness as women makes us believe that we belong to the same group. In fact, for Young, the 'sameness' present in this sense of being female arises because of the seriality that makes us understand a common action. This can be illustrated by understanding stereotypes, which then determine our thinking and behaviour as women. While each individual can consider her own behaviour without being bound to the same goal. This seriality also provides a space of recognition for individuals to see experiences with intersectional issues.

We then draw on Young's understanding of solidarity. The basis of solidarity is a mutual understanding of the interconnectedness of life between individuals (Young 2000). Cultural differences and social structures at work in society challenge conceptual and spatial boundaries between individuals, groups, and institutions. Ultimately, any difference in seriality will give rise to a form of communicative expression in an effort to reciprocate and recognise each other's identities (Young 2000). Conflicts that are often expressed as a result of cultural differences arise for political reasons related to the domination of power. The interaction of cultural differences needs to be understood as a framework that actually overcomes the differences themselves - again, it must be emphasised that this is not an attempt to make every individual or group the same, but rather to bridge the interaction of differences. Young offers a concept of structural difference, formed on the basis of gender, race, class, sexuality, and so on - differences related to physical, psychological and social status aspects (2000). It is these structural differences that address issues of injustice and inequality in society. Understanding structural differences is how we see seriality in groups as a form of recognition and appreciation of individual or group identity.

The line of thought we developed in this research was then managed through the initial stages of data collection and observation. The data and information in this research were explored in depth through focus group discussions (FGDs) with 10 participants. Our respondents were drawn from communities supported by Plan International Indonesia with an age range of 18-25 years old. FGD itself is a form of qualitative interview method that uses group discussions led by the researcher

to collect data (Given 2008). This method helped our research process to manage data coming from the voices of young people who are socially and politically active. All interviewees were women representatives from different communities who represent the interests of women and marginalised and vulnerable people to those in power in their advocacy environments. The FGDs were conducted in June 2023. In order to protect their privacy and create a safe space, the names of the ten respondents will be kept anonymous - based on the agreement reached during the FGD process.

The selection of women respondents aimed to see the implementation of the politics of difference that has alienated them from men in their respective groups or communities. The research looks at the extent to which the respondents are involved in decision-making or influencing policy-making in relation to the issues they raise. It also looks at the different ways in which the respondents have been treated in their advocacy. The successes of the respondents in advocating for the groups they represent will also be explored in this research to see what successes and good work have been achieved so far.

The recording of data from these young women's experiential narratives highlights their unique embodied and everyday experiences as subjects. The experience of each source becomes valuable knowledge that can be methodically managed using a feminist approach to analysing women's political representation. Some previous research data and literature are also used in this research. We sorted the collected data based on the objectives built in this research to achieve analyses, conclusions, and recommendations that strengthen the importance of women's participation in politics from a young age. The combination of theory and method in this research also shows our efforts to articulate and reflect on young women's participation in the political sphere in Indonesia based on the experiences of the respondents who represent communities that voice the interests of women and other marginalised and vulnerable groups.

Stories of Young Women Activists

In the first stage, we categorised each respondent's story in terms of the motivations and obstacles experienced during the process of social and political activism. The stories of these young women activists are our way of highlighting the ontological issues that exist as a seriality of categories of experience. This way of thinking will help us to escape the trap of understanding that categorises women as a group (Young 1994). The

search for commonalities will normalise oppression that applies equally to every woman. In reality, there will be many other variables that differentiate each woman's experience.

This political endeavour makes room for the possibility of thinking of women as a series of experiences. Each individual experience will provide many stories that we can turn into knowledge. The collectivity of young women's experiences in this research allows us to see each woman as a unique individual, so that any learning we get cannot be used as a conclusion that flattens the solution to any problem. The collectivity of young women's experiences challenges the concept that often generalises their experiences. In each storytelling, it is clear that there are many factors that influence the differences in their perceptions in each activism.

There are many differences in the backgrounds that influence why they became activists. Even if the issues are similar, each respondent's background will certainly influence how they perceive each issue, including how they respond to the obstacles they find. From our findings, it seems that each respondent cannot be separated from their family background and environment. In fact, the influence of their daily lives is a strong reason for their activism. This reason also underlies each respondent's interest in the issue. In this initial exploration, we first describe the motivational background and obstacles experienced by the young women activists who became our sources.

Activists' Motivation

Efforts to meet the 30 per cent target for women's participation in politics are not always without obstacles. We can also understand political activity as a form of public advocacy on various social issues. The passion for raising issues is usually born out of an interest in the subject, either because of personal experiences that are closely related to the issues raised, or because of the experiences of others who are victims of injustice. In this section, we will look at the backgrounds and motivations of women activists in taking up the issues they are fighting for in the political sphere.

In the FGDs, ten young women who are active in the political space gathered with us in the virtual space of Zoom Meeting. Based on the data we collected, out of the ten, one of the respondents had already obtained a bachelor's degree and another was about to start her studies. The other eight were still in college, demonstrating the desire and opportunity for them as

young women to pursue higher education. In addition to the opportunity to learn through higher education, the respondents' activism was also motivated by their personal experiences.

There were similarities in the experiences of Respondents 1, 4, 6, and 9. All four young women started their activism because they were triggered by the child marriages taking place around them. Not only the children in their neighbourhood; Respondent 9 even witnessed her cousin becoming a victim of child marriage. The respondents understood that the forced marriages meant that the children they saw or recognised, especially girls, had to drop out of school. In contrast to these four respondents, Respondent 2 experienced family pressure to marry her ex-husband. Despite her divorce and motivation to advocate for victims of gender-based violence, Respondent 2 was still in the process of overcoming the effects of her trauma.

Respondents 5 and 8 were motivated by the sexual violence they experienced. Respondent 5 experienced sexual violence and also witnessed her mother becoming a victim of forced marriage. Meanwhile, Respondent 8 experienced sexual violence in the school environment, which was accompanied by discrimination against female students. This unpleasant experience led her to voice her demands through advocacy, which she started at a young age. It was not only sexual violence that motivated one of the respondents, but also the issue of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Respondent 3 started her advocacy after a family member did not get medical help for her reproductive health because she was afraid to speak out. The silence was caused by the taboo of discussing SRHR issues, although the aim was to seek help.

The experience of witnessing discrimination was also experienced by Respondent 10, whose mother was a civil servant. Initially, her mother was not given the opportunity to become a village head by the local government. This was because women were considered incapable of leadership due to the burden of domestic work.

It was interesting when we asked about Respondent 7's motivation. She came from a different experience because she was motivated by the results of her interview assignment during high school. From this assignment she saw that many young people in the political sphere, especially women, were discriminated against in expressing their interests and aspirations. Respondent 7 then joined the local youth community to advocate for women's rights.

The collectivity of the respondents' stories about the motivations behind their activism shows that the reasons for participating in social and political activities are not always the same. Either the same issue or the position as a (direct) victim of injustice. This can be seen in the motivations of Respondents 10 and 7, which stemmed from experiences outside of themselves. The motivations to engage in social and political activism came from the discrimination of the experience of oppression - both when directly experiencing and seeing the injustice that occurred in front of their eyes.

Diversity of Issues and Barriers

In this section, we begin to categorise the problems and obstacles faced by the respondents. The problems and obstacles in the respondents' stories are transformed into a series of problems that collectively strengthen their role in social and political advocacy. The context in which the seriality of problems and obstacles is presented becomes a tangible form of the reason why we move away from the argument that the issue of women's representation in the political sphere is necessary. Their presence actually makes the specific issues raised visible - and the obstacles experienced can be part of the seriality of knowledge from which we can learn. The respondents represented five different organisations. They were BeWithYou, Youth Coalition for Girls, State Youth Sukabumi, Ceria Indonesia, and Sexdugram.

BeWithYou (BWY) is the political space of five respondents. All five were involved in BWY in five different regions. Founded with the main aim of promoting body positivity, Respondent 5 founded BWY to promote the rights of children and persons with disabilities. The issue of sexual violence is also her advocacy with BWY Indonesia, which is also the most challenging. In her activism against sexual violence, social stigma is still an obstacle for Respondent 5. Victims are still often blamed and cases lead to the withdrawal of reports due to the social pressure they experience.

We have gone through the legal process several times, but no one has ever got to the stage where they actually went to court because usually friends who reported it immediately withdrew and ended up saying, "I don't think I can do it. I don't think I can do this. I don't think I can go on". This is a reminder for me personally, for those of us who are on the outside, it is really easy to say, "you have to report, you have to demand justice". But for people who experienced it, it must have been difficult to be at that stage. So, if someone reported and then withdrew, we could not force them. We can only accompany them and give them awareness; even if it goes to court, we will help them (Respondent 5 2023, FGDs 23 & 28 June).

Barriers were also experienced by Respondent 6 from BWY Sumatra. She and other activists in BWY were often targeted by male-dominated perpetrators of verbal abuse. She experienced this because she spoke out about the importance of men's role in speaking out against sexual violence. Respondent 8 from BWY Bandung experienced barriers not only from outside, but also from within her own family. Coming from a religious family, those closest to her still found it difficult to accept that she was a feminist who was seen as oppressing men. Ageism also occurred when her activism was not recognised because of her young age, and she was seen as incapable of making decisions. Often the events she organised were only advertised to women because it was assumed that male audiences were not interested in attending.

Respondents 2 and 7 experienced slightly different barriers. From a technical point of view, Respondent 2 experienced problems with volunteer engagement. She often found volunteers who were enthusiastic at the beginning and only interested in the certificate of participation. Only 5 to 10 per cent of volunteers were able to help with the BWY programme. Respondent 7 experienced a similar barrier in that it was difficult to ascertain volunteers' participation. This was because some applicants were attracted because they admired BWY's founder, which led to bias in the interview process.

In another affiliate, State Youth Sukabumi, Respondent 1 also experienced ageism. As a young activist who began her activism in the Bogor Regency Children's Forum, the local government often did not give her and other activists space in discussions and decision-making. Other affiliations that became central to more than one respondent's activism was the Youth Coalition for Girls (YCG). YCG advocates for the issues that Respondents 4 and 9 focus on, children's rights, such as education and child-friendly open spaces. Being in different locations, the two respondents faced similar barriers. Respondent 4, who was active in the Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi (Jabodetabek), had faced phishing through group chats, so the threat of spreading sensitive information related to her advocacy often hindered her activism.

Respondent 9's activism in Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara, had to deal with a society with a strong patriarchal mindset. It was very difficult to educate the local community to allow women to go to school. According to her, religious path, which was also strongly patriarchal, was the right way to approach and

deconstruct people's thinking.

The next two respondents, 10 and 3, were associated with Ceria Indonesia and Sexdugram. Both had to face stereotypes and stigmas from society in their activism. Respondent 10 had to witness her mother being discriminated against when she ran for village head. This happened because the government and the local community believed that women were not capable of being leaders. They were worried that women would be distracted by domestic work. Through Ceria Indonesia, she not only promotes women's participation in politics, but also women's education. Meanwhile, Respondent 3 experienced discrimination because of the issue of sex education that she advocated through social media. She often received advice that the topic was inappropriate for young women, especially those with a religious appearance, such as Respondent 3. However, these obstacles did not stop her from educating the wider community about SRHR through her social media account, Sexdugram.

In the experience of the ten respondents, the barriers were dominated by the sexist judgement of the community, which then complicated their involvement in the political sphere. However, the activists have not given up. Instead, the barriers were used as a basis that strengthens their struggle to advocate for issues that were considered important for women's empowerment. The different experiences of the respondents illustrate Young's (1990) point about the importance of understanding the politics of difference. The respondents' efforts to raise issues of injustice through advocacy on each of their issues of interest show that there is an effort to recognise differences in experience - including how these experiences lead to inequality. The different solutions implemented by each respondent are a form of recognition of differences in situation - as a seriality of identity. Moving away from the issues raised, we can confirm that the relationship between "women's participation in politics and women's issues" does not always have to occur.

In Respondent 1's story, the issues raised were more related to young people's involvement in environmental issues. Although the majority of the other respondents made a connection between issues and women, we cannot generalise that women's participation in politics is always related to women's issues. If we allow this line of reasoning to work, then there is a leap of assumption that women activists are synonymous with specific women's issues. When we offer the umbrella of feminist politics, however, we must be able to see that the relationship

between each issue arises from a seriality of background experiences and knowledge.

Novelty, Influence, and Solidarity of Young Women Activists

We found interesting things in the respondents' advocacy experience - as young people. They took advantage of the development of information technology through the use of the Internet. Digital activism, also known as cyberactivism, is a form of activism that uses the internet and digital media as a platform for mass political mobilisation (Fuentes 2023). This activism uses digital networks to respond to social and political issues.

The internet is used as a means of disseminating information that can reach a large number of people, regardless of distance or time. The use of digital activism is a form of using digital space to advocate for various issues of inequality and injustice (Salsabila & Diera 2022). The inclusion of advocacy on social and political issues, especially women's issues, shows that the digital space provides easy access to disseminate issues. We no longer need to rely solely on mass mobilisation on the streets. Online activities can even involve more groups to learn about issues at the grassroots level. Awareness of the issues will be easier to convey through this online political movement.

There is no denying that the way the digital space works is like two sides of a coin. On the one hand, the use of digital media can help advocacy work, and on the other hand, it can be a negative backlash - attacking issues and even the personalities of young women activists. However, we need to recognise that the struggle for digital space can spread gender issues and feminist perspectives more widely and quickly (Salsabila & Diera 2022).

The efforts to conquer this digital space were also made by our respondents. In spite of the various obstacles experienced - as a form of wild ball reaction from other users of the digital space - there is something we must appreciate: the novelty of advocacy methods that are creative and closer to the spirit of the current era.

The novelty of this advocacy method helps young women activists to creatively generate empathy for other individuals and groups. In affect theory, we go beyond a single emotion to understand our ability to influence, or be more deeply influenced by, other people or issues (Ahall 2018). Affect is distinct from personal emotional experience - also known as feelings. Feelings are

perceived and understood in the realm of consciousness, whereas affect is in a state beyond consciousness. Sara Ahmed (1969-) sees that affect theory would reinforce the way we act in political spaces - that the emotions we feel are also political (2004).

There is a resonance that weaves an emotional communication between body and mind that affects us. Affect becomes a methodological reinforcement in the advocacy of young women activists. The methods offered in this affect lift feminist knowledge to identify what is political in the work of the world (Ahall 2018) - including the digital world. In addition, affective work will open a new space to think politically about difference. Differences in experience and knowledge enter into the understanding of feelings of oppression. There is storytelling and efforts to share feelings, which then involve our bodily responses - bringing up deep emotions. Sharing these feelings then helps us to promote solidarity efforts.

In this section, we present the stories of the respondents on how they built networks and creatively developed advocacy methods so that issues no longer seem far away from our daily lives. The networking and advocacy done by these respondents has also succeeded in generating various forms of solidarity to support their struggles in the political sphere.

The Two Sides of Social Media Use in Young Women Activists' Engagement in Political Spaces

As activists in the midst of the internet and technological advances, the use of social media was one of the advocacy methods used by the ten respondents. The rapid dissemination of information through social media was very helpful for them in communicating opinions and educating the public about the issues they were fighting for.

Sometimes we got a lot of information, such as competitions, that we could model because of social media. We also took advantage of it so that the organisation run because we learned to be creative, to use the social media that we have, and we also existed because we already knew how effective it was on social media. We also had training on social media, like creative content training (Respondent 10 2023, FGDs 23 & 28 June).

Respondent 4, for example, believed that social media could also help empower women, such as fellow activists. Some respondents even used digital platforms - either as individuals or on behalf of the community - as a medium to campaign for the issues they raised.

The strong influence of their digital advocacy had succeeded in providing an alternative for digital users - especially young women - to see the success of their movement. Some of the respondents even had a large number of followers on their personal digital platforms and involved many of their followers in their social and political activism. The affective situations that the respondents brought to their digital activism succeeded in fostering feelings that seemed to be "shared" by the followers of the digital platforms they used. This success contextually affected their political space (Ahmed 2004). There is a new agreement, which we understand as a shared perception based on shared knowledge and experience.

However, the use of social media can also have negative effects. Respondent 1, who started her advocacy work in a children's forum, was often concerned about the impact of social media on underage activists. These threats were referred to by Respondent 5 as NCII or Non-Consensual Intimate Image. The distribution of NCII can happen to anyone. However, underage victims are more vulnerable to cyber gender-based violence. The use of social media also makes activists vulnerable to hate speech.

I have always been told things like SJW, "what do girls know", "you are too much of a girl, what is wrong with you, you talk too much, you are too chatty". At that time, there was the issue of OGBV (online gender-based violence - ed) and I spoke out about it, and I was terrorised. I was also terrorised personally, even BeWithYou received hate comments because we raised the issue of gender equality, it was very common on social media (Respondent 5 2023, FGDs 23 & 28 June).

Respondents often dealt with hate speech by separating their personal and professional social media activities. Otherwise, comments that sometimes even included verbal sexual harassment, as experienced by Respondent 3, could disrupt the mental state of activists. Respondent 9 even received sexist and misogynistic comments in the form of body shaming directed at her and other women activists in her organisation. Meanwhile, Respondent 6 experienced the negative impact of content she had uploaded being cut. A video owned by her organisation was cut into parts that sounded controversial and redistributed with the wrong message.

If the respondents experienced the negative impact of social media from outsiders, Respondent 2 experienced attacks from people who were once her family. Having divorced and left a forced marriage, the terror that

Respondent 2 experienced came from her ex-husband's family. The attacks were not only personal, but also on her organisation's social media, so she had to deactivate her social media in order to escape these cyber-attacks.

The methods used by the respondents to cope with the negative effects of social media were a form of natural reaction when dealing with anonymous strangers. In this context, the emotions they felt came from their contact with the object of the other person's affective reactions. It was inevitable that such negative reactions would affect their lives. However, in making the social and political issues they were carrying as objects of flow, they were not acting naively. The alienation resulting from the attacks on the issues they raised - both issues and personal attacks - was still suspected by them. In this state they recognised what was harmful to them so that they could avoid it - before it affected them further. This effort was a form of their success in recognising the seriality of their identity so that they could immediately give a response that was not fatal to their lives.

Support in Activism as A Motivation for Young Women's Involvement in Political Spaces

Finally, we highlight the link between support as the main capital for building solidarity. In order to achieve a sense of collective solidarity, respondents demonstrated their strength as subjects through their motivation for change (Young 1990). They did not take refuge behind groups but stood as subjects in the midst of resistance to injustice and inequality. It was this spirit that served as the foundation of the movement in the communities they built. It was in this relationship that solidarity was born.

Despite the difficulties experienced by activists, various forms of support helped them not to give up on the issues they were fighting for. The support received by the respondents was dominated by motivations from fellow activists in their respective organisations. This was because 8 of the respondents did not receive full support from their families.

Some of the respondents stated that the lack of family support was due to a lack of understanding of feminism. Some of the respondents' parents were openly disapproving. However, there were some who were silent, showing neither support nor disapproval. As for the parents who were quite supportive, two respondents had their activism rejected by their siblings and extended family. Lack of knowledge about the women's movement was still the dominant reason for rejection. Mainly the belief that women should not dominate men. Others

argued that their advocacy on gender and feminist issues was not as important as other activism, such as that related to natural disasters.

Unlike the others, Respondent 1 experienced full support from both her parents and siblings. Her parents even instructed the children in their neighbourhood to ask for her help in enrolling them in school. They were eager to tell people they knew about their daughter's political activism in the fight for women's and children's rights. Respondent 1's sibling also showed his support by learning about and participating in some of his sister's activities.

From the respondents' statements, it was still clear that the environment around them was still carried by the patriarchal mindset rooted in society, so that full support for them to advocate for the issues they were fighting for was minimal. At least their efforts to network with different communities, individual young women activists, have shown great efforts to promote shared

responsibility. This responsibility is part of the common sense of solidarity (Young 1990). The lack of support from those closest to them could sometimes discourage the struggle of young women activists, including our respondents in this research. At the very least, their efforts to influence many other young women have become a lesson to us: that persistent efforts to confront injustice were part of a collective experience that could not betray their struggle. They did not give up because of the lack of family support, rather the pressure became a further motivation for them to continue to fight for equality and justice in social and political issues.

Learning from Knowledge Seriality

We can then draw lessons from the seriality of the knowledge shared by the respondents. We see several stories that are important for us to understand, namely of affiliation, motivation, new media opportunities, and support in activism, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Seriality of Knowledge of Young Women Activists

| Respondent (Activism Affiliation) | Motivation | Use of New Media | Support in Activism |
|---|---|---|---|
| Respondent 1 (PLAN International/ State of Youth Sukabumi) | Departed from the issue of child marriage in her neighbourhood (Sukabumi). Initiated an anti-child marriage campaign with State of Youth Sukabumi. Climate issues and gender equality were also issues that attracted her attention. | Use of new media, internet, and social media as an advocacy tool. Socialised the issue by creating webinars. However, it should be noted that there are still digital security issues that threaten young activists. | Support came from fellow State of Youth Sukabumi activists, as well as from family, as her parents helped to find solutions and actions to educational barriers for neighbourhood children, and her younger brother also participated in the same activism. |
| Respondent 2 (BeWithYou Bandung) | Her activism was triggered by her personal experience of being forced into marriage, so she began to speak out about the issues of gender-based violence (GBV) experienced by women and cyber gender-based violence. | BeWithYou Bandung used a lot of social media for campaigns and advocacy. The new media have many advantages in terms of networking and support. However, it should be noted that social media can also be used for personal terrorisation, so Respondent 2 limited its use. | Support was received from BeWithYou Bandung and BeWithYou Indonesia. In addition, other organisations or activism movements had also been a source of support. However, the family did not fully support, due to differences in values and traditions. |

| Respondent (Activism Affiliation) | Motivation | Use of New Media | Support in Activism |
|---|---|---|--|
| Respondent 3 (Sexdugram: Yayasan Pendidikan Setara Merdeka) | Her activism was motivated by a family member who experienced uterine prolapse (related to women’s reproductive health). There was a stigma around reproductive issues so she felt the need to speak out about the importance of comprehensive sex education. | Used social media as a means to campaign for comprehensive sex education and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) issues through the Instagram account @sexdugram. However, there were risks that follow the use of social media. Sexdugram often received messages that sexually harass them. | Full support was received from the campus environment, including from lecturers who supported her activism. In addition, she also received support from Plan Indonesia. However, the family did not provide full support. Some close friends also underestimated her movement. |
| Respondent 4 (Youth Coalition for Girls Jabodetabek) | Her activism began with her membership in the Bogor Regency Children’s Forum. From there, she saw for herself that children’s opinions were often not heard by adults. She also raised children’s issues related to child-friendly environment to child marriage. | Social media and digital applications were used for advocacy and empowerment of women activists. Instagram and LinkedIn were media often used to raise issues of child marriage and other feminist issues. | She received support from Youth Coalition for Girls and Plan Indonesia and other similar organisations. She also received support from her parents. However, she still had to deal with her older brother who stigmatised feminist activism. |
| Respondent 5 (BeWithYou Indonesia) | She has experienced sexual violence and witnessed her mother’s experience of forced marriage. Founded BeWithYou, which started with education, campaigns, and advocacy on body positivity issues. Her activism reached the grassroots movement. | BeWithYou used social media to raise awareness and promote women’s issues and women activists. The pressure and stigma of social media had caused her to take a break. But she overcame it by distinguishing between responses that should be replied to and those that should be ignored. | Respondent 5 received full support from organisations, especially from BeWithYou. However, she was not supported by her family. |
| Respondent 6 (BeWithYou Sumatra) | She was motivated by child marriages taking place in her neighbourhood. She attended in a webinar organised by BeWithYou in 2020 and then followed the movement’s activism. On campus, she also joined an organisation, as a counsellor for bullied female students. | Social media was used to support her activism to promote politics and raise awareness of BeWithYou Sumatra. However, on the negative side, there was a risk that certain parties could manipulate digital documentation, thereby obscuring information. | The majority of the support she received came from BeWithYou Sumatra and her campus friends. She did not receive full support from her family, and was even opposed by her brother. There were also people on the campus who told her to be careful with feminism. |
| Respondent 7 (Youth Advisory Panel Plan Indonesia; BeWithYou Indonesia) | Started with a school assignment, she saw the problems of children in her own backyard. She used her privilege to advocate for those in need. Together with Respondent 5, she founded BeWithYou. | Used social media to repost Plan Indonesia’s educational content and BeWithYou’s content; including advocacy for disability groups. | She received a lot of support from her maternal family and from the communities and organisations to which she belonged to. |

| Respondent (Activism Affiliation) | Motivation | Use of New Media | Support in Activism |
|--|--|---|---|
| Respondent 8 (BeWithYou Bandung) | The issues of discrimination and sexual violence at school made her join BeWithYou Bandung. | Use of social media for advocacy and education, especially for the awareness-raising movement. Social media also helped to identify emerging issues such as gender-based violence. However, there still needs to be follow-up activities (not just relying on social media). | She received support from her friends at BeWithYou and also her boyfriend. However, she was not supported by her family, mainly because they considered the issues raised less important and not useful (compared to helping victims of natural disasters, for example). |
| Respondent 9 (Youth Coalitions for Girls Kupang) | She became involved in anti-child marriage issues following her cousin's unwanted pregnancy and early marriage. In 2016, she joined the Youth Coalition for Girls in Kupang. | Social media was used to campaign about sexual violence and family planning online. She believed that social media could be a platform to empower women. However, it should be noted that there were still a lot of discrimination and sexist comments that appeared on social media in response to her campaigns. | Received support from the community as well as the family. Her mother's work with NGOs focusing on early childhood education and children's rights issues also strengthened her activist spirit. |
| Respondent 10 (Ceria Indonesia) | She witnessed her mother's unsuccessful attempt to become the village head because of the discrimination she faced as a woman. This also motivated her to join a party and run for legislative representation. Her experience as a victim of sexual violence and seeing many cases of domestic violence made her more vocal about the issues. | Social media was used as a place to socialise trainings organised for the general public. However, there were also risks associated with the use of new media, including negative comments about the family planning content (KB). | She received support from Plan Indonesia's Women's Empowerment Programme. Secondly, she had the full support of her parents. She also felt supported by the campus she was working with and by the government. The challenge came from the new area that doubted her. But Respondent 10 refused to give up. |

Source: Processed from Focus Group Discussions

What is presented in Table 1 is a set of knowledge that we need to know in order to understand the spirit of struggle of each young activist. Their motivation did not come from just one incident, but there was a series of events that pushed one incident as a trigger. We learn from them to develop empathy for the range of injustices experienced by each woman. It is this awareness of injustice that can be the main catalyst for us to be moved to make change - both within ourselves and to mobilise communities and other people. The different solutions implemented by each respondent were a way of valuing different situations - as a seriality of identity. The

experience and knowledge of the respondents was one of the ways in which we directly involved women in the political sphere. Without the representation of women, we have negated the variable of diversity of experience in the political sphere. What the respondents have done shows how their direct involvement can change the perspective of those around them in looking at an issue and the obstacles they face - not in isolation, but in relation to various other issues.

The affective actions taken by the respondents in their digital activism succeeded in fostering feelings that seemed to be "the same" as those felt by the followers

of the digital platforms they used. This success had a contextual impact on their political space (Ahmed 2004). There is a new agreement, which we understand as a common understanding based on shared knowledge and experience. This action creates a spirit of solidarity that is visible in the support they receive - including encouragement to face obstacles to their activism. This is evidence that the issue of young women's representation in the political sphere is important. Efforts to promote social responsibility for issues of injustice and inequality are not the responsibility of just one person. There is a collectivity of experiences of oppression that we need to recognise. The only way to do this is to emphasise the importance of first-person participation as a subject. In this case, of course, encouraging young women's participation in the political sphere is how we promote this responsibility - for the sake of collective solidarity.

Closing

The process we went through during the research, especially the FGD process, opened up many new things about young women's activism in the political sphere. We learned from the experiences of the respondents, especially how they paid attention to issues, the process of involvement, barriers, advocacy methods they built, and the results they achieved. All the data we have presented is also a lesson for us to understand the importance of the issue of women's participation and representation in the political sphere at an early stage.

We understand that the issue of women's participation and representation in the public sphere is not just a tool to achieve the goals of other issues. If we turn "women's participation" into a means of fulfilling other issues, then we will just stop at the issue of "fulfilling quotas" and see women as a group. The storytelling of the respondents' experiences shows that we cannot see women as a group, but as a set of experiences. Strengthening this understanding can open space for a diversity of issues with different intersectional approaches. The issue of women's participation and representation must be seen as a separate issue corridor that intersects with other issues.

The experiences and knowledge of young women activists strengthen our understanding of the historical seriality of the women's movement in the political sphere. We see the issues raised not only in the name of the movement, but also as common problems in society. The great influence of these young women activists demonstrates their ability to creatively translate the

alienation of women's issues in society. Young women can no longer be underestimated by society - especially when it still differentiates quality on the basis of age. Instead, we can learn from the spirit they bring to any social and political advocacy.

There is only one thing we need to remember: support is needed so that they do not go alone. We also need this issue of solidarity on various issues of injustice and inequality in society. We need to understand the stories of discrimination experienced by the respondents. Support as a form of solidarity is a tangible manifestation of social responsibility that we need to start with ourselves in order to become a major influence on our surroundings. Our hope from this research is to create a network of solidarity for young women activists so that they know they are not alone in the struggle for justice and equality in the political sphere.

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