

# GENDER ENOUGH?: Cyber Identity and Gender Integrity in Cyberspace with Cyberfeminism Perspectives

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**Abstract:** This research explores the concept of cyber identity and gender in cyberspace, specifically on Twitter as a Social Media platform. The real social identity transformed into cyber identity in this era of globalization. Cyber identity is known with the anonymity that will give discretion of self-expression in cyberspace but also create cyber identity abuse that considered as something harmful for society's real social life. One of the most interesting discussions to show the example of the use of cyber persona is gender bias. The methodology used in this research is interpretive with the qualitative method, using literature studies from books, international news articles, and scientific journals. The researcher will show how cyber identity will affect gender bias in the cyber world with the theory of uses and gratification, also postmodernism theory as analysis reference. This research finds that cyber identity is affecting individuals and society on controlling individuals, especially in the scope of gender.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

In the current era of globalization, the strong encouragement of people to access information is a necessity. Access to this information is then used as the basis for the emergence of new phenomena that are considered unique in the eyes of the world community. The number of world internet users in 2017 has reached 3.58 billion (Statista.com, 2017) and is predicted to continue to grow every year. The increase occurred from 2016 to 2017, amounting to 500 million users (Statista.com, 2017).

This is no exception in Indonesia. Internet users in Indonesia have reached 105 million users in 2017 and are predicted to rise to 113 million in 2018 (Statista.com, 2017). The following are statistical data showing internet users in Indonesia:

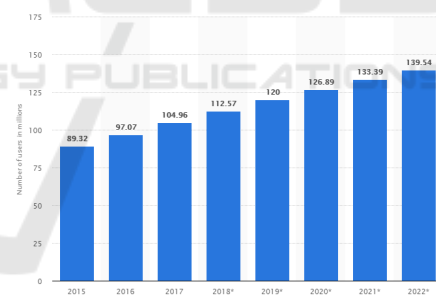


Figure 1: Number of internet users in Indonesia (2017)  
Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/254456/number-of-internet-users-in-indonesia/>. 2018.

The internet usage in Indonesia is the most to access information and use of social media, following data describing internet use in Indonesia:



Figure 2: Statistics of the Internet, Social Media and Mobile Subscriptions Users in Indonesia (2017)

Source: We Are Social. Snapshot of Country's Key Digital Statistical Indicators. 2017.

As researchers have said before that the use of the internet creates new phenomena that are considered unique in society, one of which is cyber identity. Cyber identity is a matter that is being widely discussed; the scope of cyberspace identity includes not only individuals but also groups, ethnic groups, even the scale of the country.

Historically, technology has become male domination, and even new technology still continues this tradition. In the past 20 years, the world has seen an explosion in the field of information and communication technology. In 1995, only 15 percent of Internet users were women, but by the beginning of 2000, women had reached 50 percent as internet users. However, patriarchal culture has never been absent, and men continue to control content and benefit from the increase in women using the internet. Likewise, in the segmentation of access to the focus of internet use, it is clear that there are gender gaps in how to access the internet between men and women. Men generally surf and navigate more often, even jumping from site to site, while women go directly to certain sites or seek information about a particular topic (Richard & Schnell, 2006).

As a more advanced society, access to information and communication technology becomes wider and more open. Women should become more liberated from the confines of traditional patriarchal power structures that have been surrounding and swallowing them. In gender roles, gender identity is experiencing a shift due to the advancement of information and communication technology. The public's understanding of feminine and masculine concepts in the present is in a transition period (Plant, 1996). The development of information and communication technology has given women the power to express their ideas in developing new business models, which are more rational, visionary, and practical to obtain information.

The above phenomena often form new identities in existing cyberspace. With the existence of cyberspace identities, issues such as feminism and gender are increasingly being discussed and warmer to be discussed, both among individuals and groups. All opinions and fruits of community thinking are expressed in all existing social media containers, both for the purpose of increasing gender equality or even vice versa, to show the dominance of a gender.

The debate over the emergence of gender bias because cyberspace identity also gave rise to reactions to feminist idealists or also adherents to gender equality, this paper will discuss the three as research that the authors see capable of representing what has happened in cyberspace over the past few years.

In this study, researchers found a hypothesis that refers to the use of social media as two blades, where cyberspace identity can arouse the soul of adherents of gender equality and feminism to be able to see a problem and fight for women's rights which are considered oppressed, but in the other side of the use of social media also contributes to the condition of gender bias that has existed so far with the existence of all forms of opinion that uphold the superiority of a gender to another gender.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The discovery of technology in the field of communication and information has brought us into a new era of cultural history. Some experts even say that new media has really changed our lives (see Andoni Alonso and Pedro J. Oiarzabal, 2010). Robert Samuel, in his book *New Media, Cultural Studies, and Critical Theory after Postmodernism* (2010: 3), states that today, we are in a paradoxical condition in a combination of social automation and individual autonomy. This, according to Samuel, is one of them, a result of the discovery of new media that have an impact on the formation of "auto modernity" - to describe the stages of the new culture. Samuel further argues that modernity, which is a reaction to postmodern, places emphasis on the social and cultural conflict by celebrating the ability of individual autonomy to exploit unregulated and automatic social systems. Thus, new media provides a frame of mind for every human who wants to free himself from all kinds of rules that limit his space for movement and wants to be free from all kinds of rules, which are often unavoidable. Although negatively, the growth of this new media can produce libertarian and antisocial views.

In the new media era, every individual and social, cultural, economic and political groups must require themselves to interact actively with new media, not just to express individual or group identities, but more importantly how then each group uses new media as communication container for empowerment or liberation, or borrowing the term Robert Samuel (2010) for "celebrating the autonomous individual's ability". In this perspective, according to Samuel, the organized power of women, ethnic minorities, workers, colonial identities, and subjects all demand inclusion in a modern sense of equality. Unfortunately, most academic and critical theories ignore the important role of new media in fostering social movements that have been played in rethinking modernity and the formation of contemporary society.

"Cyberfeminism" actually refers to how feminists (cyber-feminists) use new media as a vehicle to empower and free themselves from male-dominated discourses. Cyberfeminism can also be an alternative for how women should optimally use new media for empowerment, so that big dreams about liberation are not just utopia, which refers to a proposal that is good but (physically, socially, economically or politically) is impossible happen.

Cyberfeminism, according to the Dictionary of Media Studies (2006: 58), is a study of new technologies and their influence on women's issues. The emergence of cyberfeminism, according to Sarah Kember (2003: 177), can be defined with regard to its origins in feminist theory and practice in the late 1980s and early 1990s, which are related to the emergence of technology regarding the information revolution. That was part of the response to cyberpunk anarchist politics. Cyberfeminism later became an important school of cyberculture and feminism studies and has developed a series of major concerns, including issues of separation of body/mind, a vision of the community that focuses on issues such as identity and social community. Cyberfeminism later became the most active political strategy and artistic method in the 1990s.

Cyberfeminism arises from the use of digital media and new communication technologies. This technology is considered to have both promises and threats, with the potential for simultaneous empowerment and oppression. They offer ways to open up space and communicative communities, to be involved in play and politics, and to access information and make networks.

Cyberfeminism was a term coined in 1994 by Sadie Plant, director of the Cybernetic Culture Research Unit at Warwick University, England, to

describe feminist work that was interested in theorizing, criticizing, and exploiting the internet, cyberspace, and new media technology in general. The term and movement evolved from third-wave feminism, a contemporary feminist movement that followed feminism in the second wave in 1970, which focused on equal rights for women, and which naturally followed the first wave of feminism in the early 20th century, which concentrated on women's suffrage. Cyberfeminism tends to include the majority of young women, technologically savvy women and Western, white, and middle-class people (Encyclopedia of New Media, Sage Reference).

Sadie Plant (in Gamble, 2010: 270-271) defines Cyberfeminism as a rebellion of parts of goods and materials from patriarchal emergence consisting of links between women, women and computers, computers and communication networks, liaison and connecting machines. This opinion, according to Gamble, marks the existence of utopianism cyberfeminism, which says that technology is not harmful to women and that women should seize control of the new information system. However, according to Gamble, today, cyberfeminism has many issues to compete with, not just needs to balance a political agenda that is coherent with the utopian vision of the dream of cyberspace. The multiplicity of feminist resources and networks on the website, according to Gamble, has shown that there is a presence of women in cyberspace, although it is also seen whether this will lead to beneficial coalitions.

The postmodernist theory adopted by Jean Baudrillard, where the concept of hyperreality is formed. Baudrillard states that what is happening in the real world today is a form of hyperreality, and the media is one of the mediums that makes people immersed in it. (Ritzer, R., & Goodman, 2009). This relates to what the author examined in this paper, where the media that make people eventually formed with all the conditions of hyperreality places themselves in imaginative and not real situations. This creates a lot of polemic or resistance between one individual to another individual or group one and the other. The community is lulled by events that occur in cyberspace so that they seem to forget the right things happening in the community.

### 3 METHODOLOGY

The theme of this study is about cyber identity and its relationship to gender bias in cyberspace, to the current dynamics of communication, there has been a shift in terms of the medium used by society to be able

to participate in the social world. This will then be linked to how the shifts shape cyber identity and gender bias in cyberspace

The methodology used in this study is an interpretive methodology, because research is an attempt to find an explanation of social or cultural events based on the perspectives and experiences of the person being studied. The interpretive methodology also sees that facts are unique and have specific contexts and meanings as the essence of understanding the social meaning. This study uses descriptive-analytical methods. Where in this study will produce descriptive data through words, both oral or written, and also observed behavior of the phenomenon under study? Qualitative research serves to understand complex issues, examine social phenomena that cannot be studied with quantitative methods, and to explore a study to be more detailed. In this study, the data collection technique used is to use secondary data collection such as books, scientific journals, including electronic journals, and international news articles related to the problems in this study.

#### 4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In looking at the phenomenon that occurs in society today, where technology becomes a thing that cannot be separated from each individual, internet, mobile phones, applications, and all facilities obtained from social media. With the rapid technological advancements, the use and function of the media, which previously only included the dissemination of messages and information, became the arena for the community to compete in displaying their opinions and thoughts.

Every individual has what is called identity; identity is used to identify someone in the social world. The identification of a human will determine how they live, their mobility, their pattern of life, and is considered a process of diversity. This is no exception or limitation to identity in cyberspace. Cyber identity or cyber identity is an understanding of the identity of an individual in the virtual world. Virtual world identity is also interpreted as an identity formed by someone to be displayed in cyberspace, whether honestly or not. This is then associated with the concept of anonymity, where one can become someone else in the virtual world.

The cyber identity will determine a person's reputation in cyberspace, and as we know that cyber coverage is unlimited, what is meant here is crossing

national borders and crossing the boundaries of all lines of society (Nabeth, 2006).

From this cyber identity, all phenomena can occur, such as two things that are very contrasting with each other - gender bias and feminism. In cyberspace, everyone can express their opinions. The contribution of society in cyberspace is then interpreted as a form of democracy in Indonesia. Theoretically, the cyber world does not see the limitations of age, gender, ethnicity, or race. Everyone has egalitarian rights in cyberspace.

In cyberspace, there are often discussions about gender, one of which is gender discrimination. Gender discrimination or gender bias that occurs in cyberspace is a form of lifting issues that occur in people's daily lives, about how women and men should carry out life according to their gender. This is then revealed and written on several platforms social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and so on. Freedom of expression in this virtual world can be done anonymously, or with the original account of the owner, this then stimulates the public to discuss this topic to be an interesting thing. Even on some social media, gender bias is still widely reported not only by individuals but also by news channels. Here is an example of a tweet taken from twitter that shows public opinion about men:

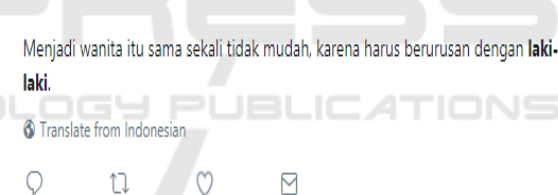


Figure 3: Tweet Community Opinion Regarding Men  
Source: www.twitter.com. 2018.

When seen in the picture shown, tweets suggest that men are gender difficult and dangerous creatures.

If associated with the theory uses and gratification, the use of social media in Indonesia is a form of monitoring function, where people can access information needed to achieve their individual goals, social media in Indonesia is still a medium for the community to be able to convey how the patriarchal system must stand still in Indonesia, for cultural or religious reasons.

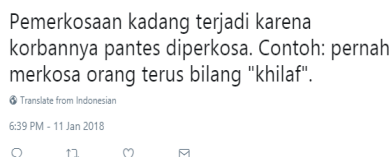
The presence of women in the contemporary gender identity of the virtual world is portraying stereotypes and positioning of women in this modern era. New Media can either support or biased the idea of gender inequality by confirming, spreading, and socializing. The result can be intriguing, which can be considered correct or seen as normal, but also, it can



be seen as an error gender system that needs to be changed.

The average account on social media today can be anonymous when expressing their opinions and raises conditions in cyberspace that seem exaggerated from what is seen in the real world. This is also called the formation of hyperreality, as happened in the theory of postmodernism. Often time's people create posts on social media using invalid data, and this then raises the pros and cons of other social media users.

Things that are uploaded on social media can easily affect other users, with an example when there are rampant rape cases in Indonesia, developing and viral tweets are attacking among netizens in Indonesia about whether the rape is caused by wrongful victims or perpetrators of rape. One example of a tweet that the researchers found was as follows:



Pemeriksaan kadang terjadi karena korbannya pantas diperkosa. Contoh: pernah merkosa orang terus bilang "khilaf".

Translate from Indonesian

6:39 PM · 11 Jan 2018

Figure 4: Tweets Regarding Rape  
Source: twitter.com. 2018.

From the tweet, it was seen how the owner of the account explained that rape occurred because the victim deserved to be raped. This then led to other opinions from netizens, opinions that emerged from netizens also varied, there were pros and cons about who should be blamed in rape cases. The social media platform is no longer just for information, but also for communication - both positively and negatively. The war between account users also often occurs in social media which indicates that there has been a shift in human communication culture in this era of globalization to become a form of cyberculture (Chandra, 2016)

Indirectly, when making a decision to participate in cyberspace, people are faced with choices to become themselves or not, the public is given the freedom to register their personal account and provide their private information. On the other hand, the community is also given a choice to be another persona on social media, and other people never know whether a person on this social media is real or not. The reality seen in cyberspace does not necessarily have something in common with what happens in the social world of the individual.

On this basis, the use of social media in terms of gender discrimination can be more easily done. In this era of globalization, gender is not a new thing to discuss. Proponents of gender equality and feminism

are competing to convince people that women's and men's rights are the same. According to the feminism approach, these feminist fighters make efforts to connect the principles of feminism to social life, which are full of women's concerns about stereotypes, gender bias, gender discrimination so that women feel more equal to men (Hesse-Biber, Nagy, & Leavy, 2007).

The reality that happens on social media is not the real reality. According to Yusuf Amir Piliang, this cyber identity can eventually be called the development of what happened in the real world. The development of social space that moves into cyberspace can affect three levels, namely individuals, groups, and society (Piliang, 2004).

At the individual level, the boundaries of personal identity shift and become chaotic. Cyber identity will influence one's way of thinking, perception, personality, and lifestyle. At the group level, social, territorial boundaries have shifted, group communication no longer requires conventional space and territories, so there is a shift in social values within which the concept of being close and close can feel far away. The last level is society, where the creation of an imaginary community where communities no longer need real place and communication, but only forms of imaginary communication through technology (Piliang, 2004).

This cyber identity is feared to be misused by certain parties in launching its action to achieve its objectives. We never know who they are behind chatter on social media; in this case, the researcher raised gender bias. The gender bias that occurs in social media is a representation of individuals or even groups who feel that their gender is superior to another gender. Indirectly, we can see how this community effort to influence the thinking of other internet users to agree to the concept of superiority in a gender. In the end, not all people in cyberspace understand that they can have a very broad effect on influencing others on social media to agree with the concept of gender superiority.

All feminism theories in cyberfeminism are active efforts to change gender inequality through information and communication technology (Handy, 2001). According to Wilding (1998), cyberfeminism is seen not only as an opportunity to create a new formulation of the theory and practice of feminism, but cyberfeminism is also a new way to overcome the complexity of the social conditions created by global information technology.

Cyberfeminism is presented as a space where digital information can be freely accessed and transmitted electronically, without any theoretical,

emotional, existential, and traditional cultural preconditions. This is an arena where knowledge is decentralized and has authority as a result of the development of science. The virtual world, as a decentralized communication system, has changed the construction of gender inequality. There is no room for claims of authority in a patriarchal framework, which usually serves to subvert women's potential when speaking on their behalf. The virtual world, according to the view of cyber feminists, has opened up new possibilities and freed women from traditional violence, which they experienced before in many aspects such as in religious, intellectual, theoretical, and philosophical discourses. Cyber feminists feel that information and communication technology is a new e-media for women. They got the opportunity to start from the beginning, such as making languages, programs, platforms, images, identities, and various multi-subject definitions. Through e-media, they can also redesign programs that aim to meet women's needs. Various variations in cyberspace also become a means to change the condition of femininity as intended from the concept of cyberfeminism, which is to eliminate gender inequality.

## 5 CONCLUSION

The cyber identity, which is the identity of individuals or groups in the cyber world, can have a very broad influence on all fronts. This cyber identity is done to achieve the goals of each individual differently. Cyber identity influences the mindset of society about gender, where the formation of hyper-reality about gender is prevalent in the cyber world, and the individuals involved see that the use of cyberspace will easily help them achieve their goals of spreading ideas about gender superiority to another gender.

Misuse of cyber identity also happens in cyberspace, and this is because people are given the freedom to be what they are in cyberspace, they can be themselves or be someone else. The boundaries of identity also seem gray and can affect the real social life of the community.

In the end, cyber identity writers consider having a negative effect on society's social life. If cyber identity can be used to achieve community goals, cyber identity can also be used to achieve good things such as gender equality and acceptance of sexual orientation, which is still considered taboo in Indonesia.

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