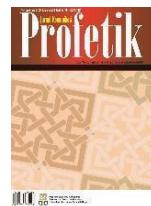




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Constructing Peace, Negotiating Gender: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Women-Led Websites in Indonesia and Malaysia

¹Athik Hidayatul Ummah, ²Muhammadaree Waeno

¹Universitas Islam Negeri Mataram, Indonesia

²Fatoni University, Thailand

Corresponding author, e-mail: athika_hidayah@uinmataram.ac.id

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A B S T R A C T

The role of women in peacebuilding has often been overshadowed by male-dominated discourse, particularly in contexts of extremist violence. Despite growing recognition of women's contributions, their visibility and agency in digital peace initiatives remain underexplored. This research examines how women are constructed as active and reflective agents in peace discourse within cyberspace, negotiating socio-cultural and religious constraints. Data from this research were collected from two websites, Shebuildspeace.id (Indonesia) and Sistersinislam.org (Malaysia). Using a qualitative design, this research employed Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyze online narratives across textual, discursive, and socio-cultural dimensions. The findings reveal that both platforms foreground women's agency in peacebuilding, emphasizing justice-oriented and inclusive practices while reflecting local norms and power structures. Shebuildspeace.id highlights women participation and practical grassroots peacebuilding initiatives, whereas Sistersinislam.org emphasizes women's rights, equality, and social justice within a faith-based advocacy framework. These differences illustrate how women-led digital platforms construct peace and negotiate gender roles in line with their social, cultural, and contextual values. This research highlights the potential of digital media to expand women's participation in peacebuilding and counter-extremism initiatives. Implications of this research include theoretical insights on public space and digital media, practical strategies for online peace initiatives, and policy

Keywords:

Constructing; Peace;
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recommendations supporting women-led peace and security agendas. Then, its limitations include the focus on only two platforms, which may not capture the full diversity of women-led digital peace discourse.

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INTRODUCTION

The involvement of women in radicalism, extremism, and terrorism is increasingly becoming a concern for researchers. Extremist networks, which were previously dominated by men, are now changing, with women taking on strategic roles at various stages of radicalization, both online and offline. The development of digital media has accelerated this process, as it enables the spread of exclusive religious narratives and the creation of closed patterns of online interaction (Mupida, 2020).

Women play roles across various aspects of the extremism ecosystem. They can be supporters, recruiters, facilitators, or direct perpetrators, and in some cases, they also act as agents of counter-extremism (Campion, 2020; Widyaningsih & Kuntarto, 2020; Yarrow, 2021). Understanding the ideological, psychological, and social factors, drive women's participation, such as the search for belonging, personal injustice, and ideological compatibility are crucial for designing effective counter-extremism strategies,

especially in the digital space (Rakhshandehroo et al., 2023; Zuhri et al., 2023).

Digital media not only accelerates radicalization but also provides opportunities for counter-extremism. Online platforms facilitate the rapid dissemination of extremist narratives while enabling moderation practices, peacebuilding initiatives, and the production of gender-sensitive counter-narratives (Ummah, 2020). Issues of extremism, violence, and disinformation are closely intertwined with gender dynamics, highlighting the importance of understanding women's roles in promoting positive narratives and countering violent extremism online (Couture, 2014; Molas, 2024).

Based on a survey by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association, 49.1% of women in Indonesia access the internet. Meanwhile, in Malaysia, the number of women accessing the internet is 44.3% (APJII, 2024). These two countries, Indonesia and Malaysia, will be the focus of this research because they share



many similarities across aspects such as history, geography, culture, religion, and diversity.

Globally, women occupy a paradoxical position. On one side, campaigns for gender equality in both offline and online spaces provide greater opportunities for movement and participation. Cultural and traditional norms continue to restrict women's agency, resulting in social subordination and exclusion from decision-making processes. Women are vulnerable not only to physical violence but also to online harassment, including in media reporting (Setyorini, 2017). This underscores the need for initiatives that empower women both offline and online.

The Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, formalized by UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000, which recognized both the impact of conflict on women and their essential contributions to peace and security. The resolution highlights key pillars, which are participation, prevention, protection, and relief and recovery, aimed at ensuring women's meaningful involvement in peacebuilding and conflict prevention. The critical question is why women and gender justice are included in the UN peace and security agenda?

Men, who mostly take a role in public decision-making, have long been considered the only relevant actors in conflicts and their resolution. However, women are often involved in conflict in

various roles, whether as peacemakers, combatants, politicians, or activists, and are also disproportionately affected by it. Women have a fundamental human right to participate in decision making processes that affect them. Still, women's involvement in peace processes is also a strategic imperative, as it can lead to more sustainable peace. This justifies the UN's commitment to including women in peace and security issues.

Addressing gender inequality is fundamental for sustainable peace, as gender intersects with other forms of discrimination such as socioeconomic status, ethnicity, religion, disability, age, and sexual orientation, leading to marginalization (Azca & Putri, 2023). Women's inclusion in conflict resolution is both a human rights imperative and a strategic necessity, as it broadens perspectives and enhances the sustainability of peace initiatives (Badran, 2006; Hasan & Putra, 2020).

A digital approach to peace and security issues can create a broader, higher-quality peace. Moreover, the current trend of digital media is becoming a new data-driven approach to conflict prevention, peacekeeping, and humanitarian assistance, although the approach also seems unreal. Websites such as Shebuildspeace.id (Indonesia) and SistersinIslam.org (Malaysia) demonstrate how women-led websites articulate peace and security objectives, including education, advocacy, and counter-radicalization efforts.



Women's roles as peacebuilders are increasingly relevant in digital spaces. They serve as social navigators, breaking cycles of extremism and promoting gender-sensitive peace (George & Shepherd, 2016; Maula, 2022). While previous research has highlighted women's involvement in international peace missions and normative frameworks (Anika, 2023; Husna & Zulkarnain, 2024), studies on their active role in digital peace initiatives remain scarce.

To address this gap, this research analyses Shebuildspeace.id and Sistersinislam.org to examine how digital discourse shapes gender-sensitive narratives of peace, security, and counter-violent extremism. Guided by Fairclough's three-dimensional model, this research argues that the selected websites discursively construct women as full peace agents by simultaneously reproducing and resisting patriarchal and state-centric security discourses.

1.2. Theoretical Framework: Fairclough's CDA, Women, Peace and Security, and Feminist Security Studies

This research draws on an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that combines Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, and key insights from Feminist Security Studies to examine how women-led digital platforms construct meanings of peace, gender, and security in cyberspace.

Fairclough's CDA conceptualizes discourse as a form of social practice that both reflects and shapes power relations embedded in language, institutions, and socio-cultural contexts (Fairclough, 2013a). Its three-dimensional framework: textual analysis, discursive practice, and socio-cultural practice, enables the critique of how texts and communicative practices reproduce or contest dominant ideologies, including gendered inequities and hierarchical security narratives. CDA has been widely applied in recent gender-related media studies to analyze how online platforms construct and resist gender norms in digital discourse.

Complementing this critical lens, the WPS agenda, established through United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and subsequent resolutions, provides a normative and global policy framework recognizing women as essential actors in peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and security processes. Recent scholarship emphasizes the continuing relevance of WPS, while also highlighting persistent gaps between normative commitments and the deeper transformation of structural gender inequalities within security paradigms (Hudson, 2025).

Feminist security studies challenge traditional, state-centric approaches to security by emphasizing that security is inherently gendered and often marginalizes women's experiences and agency (Santos & Donovan, 2025).



This perspective highlights the need to address systemic inequalities and power asymmetries, rather than focusing solely on women's formal inclusion. Feminist interventions broaden understanding of the gendered impacts of conflict, disasters, and extremism (Lee-Koo, 2020). While feminist approaches to terrorism and violent extremism provide critical insights for digital peace discourse (Gasztold, 2020). In the context of digital media, this perspective helps explain how women-led online platforms construct peace narratives, challenge patriarchal norms, and negotiate women's agency through discursive and social practices in cyberspace.

By synthesizing CDA's analytical tools, WPS's normative focus, and feminist security studies' critique of hegemonic security discourses, this framework positions women-led digital platforms as discursive spaces where peace is actively constructed, negotiated, and contested. In these platforms, women's narratives intersect with gendered power relations, religious interpretations, and dominant security frameworks, revealing how digital discourse can both challenge and reproduce existing structures of power. This integrative theoretical approach thus provides the tools to examine how language and discourse on women-led websites articulate alternative visions of peace shaped by global policy norms and local socio-cultural dynamics.

METHODOLOGY

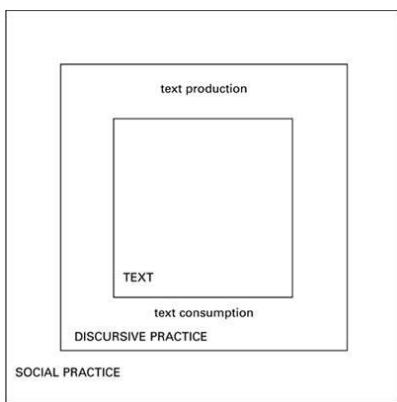
The research method used in this study is critical discourse analysis, with a qualitative approach. This research aims to examine how women-led digital platforms construct discourses of peace, gender, and security. CDA foregrounds the relationship between language, power, and social context, particularly how discourse functions to reproduce, negotiate, or challenge relations of dominance (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002; Van Dijk, 2001). Critical Discourse Analysis has developed into a dynamic interdisciplinary field that increasingly engages with digital and mediated texts (KhosraviNik, 2023; Machin & Mayr, 2023).

This research adopts Norman Fairclough's model because it explicitly integrates textual analysis with discursive and socio-social practices, enabling a systematic examination of how linguistic constructions are linked to broader ideological and socio-political power structures. This framework is particularly suitable for analyzing digital peace discourse and gendered power relations, compared to van Dijk's cognitively oriented approach or Wodak's historically focused discourse-historical method.

Guided by Fairclough's three-dimensional framework, the analysis proceeds in an integrated sequence from micro to macro levels. At the textual (micro) level, the research analyses lexical choices, metaphors, modality, evaluative expressions, and



representational patterns that frame women, peace, and security. At the discursive practice (meso) level, the research examines text production, circulation, intertextuality, and audience positioning within women-led digital platforms. At the social practice (macro) level, findings are contextualized within broader socio-political structures. This includes gender relations, religious authority, and dominant security paradigms, highlighting how discourse both reproduces and contests power relations. (Fairclough, 2013a). The explanation can be described below:



Picture 1: Critical Discourse Analysis Model by Norman Fairclough (Jorgensen & Philips, 2002)

The analysis is informed by a gender-ideological perspective, drawing on Oakley's conceptualization of gender as a socially constructed category that shapes structural inequalities and power relations within peace and security discourses (Oakley, 2016).

The data consist of four articles published on SheBuildsPeace.id and SistersinIslam.org between 2022

and 2024, selected through purposive sampling to allow for in-depth and contextualized CDA. The selection criteria included: (1) explicit engagement with peace, security, or gender justice issues; (2) articulation of women's agency; and (3) alignment with women-led platforms advocating women as peace actors.

The unit of analysis encompasses lexical items, sentences, paragraphs, and narrative structures that represent women, peace, and gendered security relations. Linguistic analysis at the lexical and sentence levels focuses on how agency and peace values are discursively constructed. Paragraph-level and narrative analysis examines how women's experiences, leadership, and advocacy are framed as peacebuilding practices. These practices may challenge or reproduce dominant security and religious discourses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Women's Critical Discourse in Digital Media

Norman Fairclough's approach emphasizes language as a form of social practice, as well as the media's role in representing information through texts, including websites (Fairclough, 2013b). This research focuses on two websites, SheBuildsPeace.id and SistersinIslam.org, which address themes related to women, peace, and justice. Four texts were selected for in-



depth analysis using Fairclough's critical discourse analysis method.

Table 1: Title of the Narrative about Women, Peace and Justice*

ata	Heading
<i>Shebuildpeace.id</i>	
1)	The Story of Yohana Lobo Coming Out of Minority Syndrome
2)	Maintaining Peace, Strengthening Equality: The Story of Ardiana, Head of Lajnah Imaillah in South Sulawesi
<i>SisterinIslam.org</i>	
3)	Stoning women the way forward for Malaysia?
4)	Reimagining the Narrative: Upholding Equality for Malaysian Women

* Author's analysis based on *Shebuildspeace.id* and *Sistersinislam.org* websites

Dimensions 1: Micro-structural Analysis

The linguistic features employed by the two websites to report on women's issues related to peace and justice reveal two main elements: vocabulary and grammar. Vocabulary includes word choice, formality, and euphemistic expressions, while grammar refers to syntactic structures and overall text organization.

Data (1): "*The Story of Yohana Lobo Coming Out of Minority Syndrome*". The title emphasizes a personal journey, with the word "Story"

suggesting an inspiring and motivating narrative. The phrase "Coming Out of Minority Syndrome" portrays Yohana Lobo as overcoming challenges and prejudices associated with being a minority. It conveys an analogy that minority status can negatively affect individuals, but resilience and courage can help them resist and speak against injustice.

Textually, the text uses dictionaries related to the struggle of a woman from a minority group in majority spaces. As a minority Christian woman, she has multiple impacts, namely as a woman and as a religious minority group. However, Yohana Lobo is also narrated to feel "comfortable" when she is in the majority group, in the land of Toraja. This means that the diction of the majority and minority is very determined in the context where the religion has more followers.

The choice of diction used is euphemism. Euphemistic language is employed to describe acts of discrimination and intimidation, such as: "Solidarity with the Muslim community is carried out by intimidating followers of other religions or beliefs." The narrative functions as a counter-narrative to intolerance, presenting Yohana Lobo's personal journey from living as a majority to a minority in a different community.

Data (2): "*Maintaining Peace, Strengthening Equality: The Story of Ardiana, leader of Lajnah Imaillah in South Sulawesi*". The words



“maintaining” and “strengthening” implies that peace and equality exist but require ongoing effort. Ardiana is depicted as an active agent who protects these values within her community, exemplifying individual agency in promoting peace and equality. The term “story” frames her experience as unique and inspiring, demonstrating how women can lead social change, even in male-dominated religious and regional contexts.

Ardiana’s role as the leader of Lajnah Imaillah, a women’s organization within the Ahmadiyah community in South Sulawesi, highlights that leadership positions can be held by women, including in marginalized religious groups that often face discrimination in Indonesia. The narrative conveys that peace involves both interfaith harmony and equality for all societal groups.

The text portrays Ahmadiyah women as unafraid to reveal their religious identity, emphasizing the community’s motto: *“Love for All, Hate for None.”* It also highlights gender equality within religious practices, such as women’s participation in Friday prayers and sermons, and references the Prophet Muhammad SAW’s hadith: *“The believer most perfect in faith is best in character; the best among you is the best to his wife.”*

Overall, the text functions as a counter-narrative, illustrating how Ardiana and Ahmadiyah women actively participate in social, economic, and

religious activities without discrimination. It emphasizes that women’s empowerment is achievable when structural barriers and biases are removed.

Data (3) “*Stoning women the way forward for Malaysia?*”. The word “stoning” has a harsh and violent connotation, referring to a death penalty by throwing stones, particularly against women. By pairing it with “*women*”, the title emphasizes that women are disproportionately affected, highlighting gender injustice. The phrase “*The Way Forward for Malaysia?*” prompts readers to critically question whether such a punishment should be accepted or incorporated into official policy.

The text discusses Nurfifi Amira Nawi, the first woman in Terengganu sentenced to stoning or whipping for ‘*khalwat*’ (adultery). It expresses concern about the unfair application of Sharia law, revealing inconsistencies between religious decrees and universal human rights. The text cites Article 8 of the Malaysian Federal Constitution, which guarantees equality, and Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which prohibits cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, highlighting the legal and ethical contradictions in caning and stoning punishments.

The text also functions as a counter-narrative to statements by Malaysian officials, reported by *Foreign Policy Magazine* on April 12, 2024, who justified stoning as divine law. It challenges these claims through



reinterpretations of religious texts and modern legal frameworks, showing that punishments such as stoning and whipping are highly contested and controversial.

Data (4): “*Reimagining the Narrative: Upholding Equality for Malaysian Women*”. The phrase “*Reimagining the Narrative*” indicates an attempt to reshape the old narrative to provide readers with an understanding of the importance of women’s equality, reveal hidden biases, and promote inclusive perspectives and values. “*Upholding Equality for Malaysian Women*” clarifies that the focus is specifically on achieving equality for women in Malaysia. The text highlights that, despite Malaysia being a developing and diverse country, women still face systemic discrimination and limited opportunities.

Malaysian women are often expected to perform multiple roles expected to be polite, soft-spoken, submissive, successful career women, and active contributors to household and national income yet they remain vulnerable to inequality, abuse, or neglect. Women may face challenges in marital rights, including polygamy without consent, child support, inheritance, or recognition of marital rape. In contrast, men enjoy privileges in this patriarchal system, maintaining authority and avoiding accountability, often reinforced by legal, religious, and cultural norms.

The text depicts a patriarchal society where women are treated as second-class citizens and men exercise control and power. It emphasizes both domestic and public discrimination, aiming to raise awareness and encourage readers to challenge these inequities by reframing the narrative toward equality.

Dimensions 2: Meso-structural Analysis

In the analysis of the meso-structural dimension, interpretation focuses on the processing of discourse, including the dissemination and use of discourse, media profiles, editorial procedures, and the ways media workers produce texts. Shebuildspeace.id is a peace campaign media that documents and promotes women's good practices in peacebuilding and strengthens a broader space for women's participation. As part of the global #shebuildspeace campaign, AMAN (The Asian Muslim Action Network) Indonesia, one of the Non-Governmental Organizations that works on women's issues and peace, has created a program called @shebuildspeace.id to popularize women's issues, peace, security, and justice to the public, especially the younger generation, with various stories of women of peace from different regions in Indonesia.

The women's movement and peace in cyberspace is also based on the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, which aims to increase women's participation in conflict resolution and at the decision-making level. On October 31, 2000, the



UN Security Council, by mutual agreement, adopted Resolution 1325, which focuses on the role of women in the maintenance of international peace and security. Based on this policy, Shebuildspeace.id is a medium to document the good practices of grassroots women in weaving peace and to strengthen a broader space for women's participation.

The purpose of the website Shebuildspeace.id is: (1) to document the good practices related to women, peace, and security in Indonesia; (2) to popularize women's issues and discourse on peace and security to a broader audience, and to involve more young people in getting to know the work of peacebuilding in post-conflict areas where women lead; and (3) to provide a positive narrative about women's leadership in peacebuilding efforts, in order to increase trust and acceptance of women in the peace process.

SistersinIslam.org (SIS) Malaysia is a non-governmental organization that works to advance women's rights, particularly those of Muslim women in Malaysia. SIS was founded in 1988 by a group of Muslim women who came together to address the injustices faced by women under the Sharia (Islamic law) system. SIS's critical reading of the Qur'an through a hermeneutical approach lens opens up a recognizable Islamic world, namely one of women full of love and affection, as well as equality and justice.

By the end of the 1990s, SIS activities had expanded beyond specific issues of women's rights to encompass broader concerns about upholding democratic principles and fundamental freedoms, as guaranteed by the Federal Constitution and human rights treaties and conventions. Therefore, SIS began to take a public position on religious freedom and freedom of expression.

SIS occupies a significant position within both local and global women's movements. It contributes to advancing rights-based interpretations of Islam, offers strategic guidance and advocacy support, and serves as a leading force in the expanding network of Muslim women pushing for reform. Through these efforts, SIS seeks to shape Islamic discourse as well as influence legal frameworks and policy decisions established by governments or Muslim minority communities.

SIS consistently develops narratives that emphasize women's active participation in advocating for key issues that affect their lives. These narratives are produced and circulated through digital platforms, such as the SIS website and its social media channels, which address topics including violence against women, Islamic family law and legal frameworks, the impact of violent extremism on women, and broader universal human rights principles. This shows that the discourse conveyed by the media aligns with its profile, which focuses on women's issues and peace. The way the media works also



emphasizes the principles of fairness and inclusivity

Dimensions 3: Macro-structural Analysis

The third-dimension concerns macro level analysis, which rests on the idea that broader social contexts shape how discourse is produced and appears in the media. Socio-cultural practices, including situational, institutional, and societal factors inform media institutions and the narratives they generate. The situational level involves the immediate conditions surrounding the creation of content. The institutional level reflects the internal and external influences exerted by organizations. Meanwhile, the social level encompasses wider structural forces, such as political, economic, and cultural systems operating within society.

Shebuildpeace.id was founded by AMAN Indonesia, an organization that is a progressive Muslim network in Asia. The power of this network is interconnected so that the production of discourse never stops. AMAN's grand vision is to build understanding and solidarity among Muslims and other religious communities. Her work focuses on empowerment, women's and human rights, gender equality, justice, and peace. AMAN is led by Muslim feminist women so the perspective built is a gender-justice feminist perspective.

Socio-politically, AMAN Indonesia has carried out an institutional

transformation from an NGO model approach to a 'movement' based on the values of progressivity in Islam. Therefore, the AMAN Indonesia progressive Muslim Movement is understood as a set of actions and attitudes that foster religiosity, reflecting inclusive values that prioritize gender justice, non-violence, and peacebuilding, while continuing to increase the leadership capacity of women and youth. AMAN also received support from various parties including the government, community organizations, religious institutions, higher education institutions, scholarly networks, and grassroots communities.

Meanwhile, Sisters in Islam (SIS) is in the condition of the majority of people who have a patriarchal culture and have a conventional understanding of Islam. There is a conventional Islamic view about women, that is, women are considered not equal to men, and women's voices and opinions are not considered. This conventional understanding needs to be shifted toward a progressive Islamic view that emphasizes a more contextual interpretation of Islam relevant to the challenges of modern times. Progressive Islamic groups are supporters of SIS who also voice issues of gender equality, social justice and the human rights of the elderly. They tend to criticize textual interpretations that are considered rigid and not in accordance with the universal values of Islam in a harsh way in digital media.



In addition, Malaysia, as a country with a pluralistic society, also faces complex challenges related to religious freedom issues. The Malaysian constitution guarantees freedom of religion but Islam is the state religion listed in the constitution. Malaysia has also made efforts to promote dialogue and understanding among religions, but tensions can arise between religious groups if not properly managed. Efforts to promote tolerance and justice through digital media are very important.

The above discussion illustrates the social context of why both media outlets use new media, such as websites, to spread issues of peace and justice carried out by women. It is important for women that cyber media is a space that strengthens the roles of women as actors who deliberately intervene to find solutions to the problems they face, especially those related to conflicts between religious communities and the injustices received by women.

In the era of media disruption, digital media has become a public space that opens up a new dimension for the experience of social and religious life for every religious believer, especially women. Digital media platforms are an important space to promote, discuss and debate crucial issues (Bunt, 2003; Whyte, 2022). Muslim women, for example, have leveraged digital media to challenge dominant narratives and reclaim their agency (Nisa, 2019; Zulfikar & Apriyanti, 2023). This approach has proven effective in

promoting women's agency and public engagement.

Practically, women's social spaces used to discuss peace, justice, and conflict resolution have proven to be able to unravel the tensions between religious communities that have been going on for a long time and break the sense of nationality and unity. The typical woman's experience is then narrated in digital media so that it becomes a good practice that can be enjoyed by the public widely, allowing their struggles to be heard and widely supported.

The above explanation points out two important aspects, related to the role of women, in seeing efforts to protect the country from the danger of violence in the name of religion in new ways through the use of digital media, namely websites. On one hand, women's vulnerability must be an important foundation in seeing that the issue of justice cannot be separated from the context of women's groups that are at risk as a vulnerable, exposed, affected, and perpetrator group. Meanwhile, on the other side, women's humanitarian and peace work has become concrete evidence that women's knowledge, strength, experience, skills, and approaches are resources.

Table 2: Women's Digital Peace Discourse through Fairclough's CDA:



Micro-level (textual analysis):

Lexical choices & metaphors used to frame peace and conflict.
Modality & evaluative language positioning women's agency.
Narrative framing of women as peace actors.

Meso-level (discursive practice):

Women-led websites: as sites of discourse production.
Intertextuality to religion, human rights, and legal discourse.
Modes of production, circulation and audience positioning.

Macro-level (social practice):

Patriarchal religious authority and gendered norms.
Dominant security paradigms and state-religion relations.
Legal and socio-political structures shaping women's participation.
Contestation with anti-gender and extremist narratives.

These findings stand in contrast to dominant representations in mainstream media, where women's presence is often marginalized or confined to passive roles (Roromari, 2023). The analysis suggests that women-led digital platforms such as Shebuildpeace.id and SistersinIslam.org create alternative discursive spaces that foreground women's agency and peace-oriented narratives. While previous research has emphasized digital media literacy as a strategy for preventing online gender-based violence

demonstrating that women can reliably access and utilize digital technologies to counter digital inequality and violence (Mahanani et al., 2024). This research extends the discussion by showing how women led platforms construct peace-oriented discourses that negotiate gender, religion, and security simultaneously. However, this resistance to symbolic annihilation does not operate outside power structures; rather, it is articulated through ongoing negotiations with religious, legal, and gendered frameworks that continue to shape the boundaries of women's voice in digital peace discourse.

Women's Peace Communication in Cyberspace

The ASEAN countries' political and security blueprint for 2015–2025 sets out a vision to build communities that respect religious, ethnic, racial, cultural, and linguistic differences, that uphold the values of togetherness in the spirit of unity in diversity, and that address the threat of violent extremism. To realize this vision, it is important for women to be involved in promoting moderation and tolerance to prevent radicalization and violent extremism. This aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda, particularly Goal 16, which aims to support peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and provide access to justice for all.

The program for the prevention and countering of violent extremism



strongly supports the development of counter-narratives, prioritizing women's voices and experiences to challenge both violent extremist and misogynistic narratives. This approach aligns with the Manila Declaration in 2017 and the ASEAN Gender Outlook in 2021, which emphasize mainstreaming gender and women in peace and security initiatives.

So far, a significant amount of online misinformation and propaganda contains violent messages. These messages are used to radicalize, recruit, and mobilize group members. Violent extremist groups exploit online platforms to incite hostility and hatred against groups that differ from them. No extremist group, however, supports gender equality ideology (Phelan et al., 2022). Therefore, anti-gender ideology and violent extremism are closely related. Sexist and misogynistic narratives spread online can influence offline communities, creating insecurity for women.

The media plays a crucial role in any social and cultural change. When society is considered the target of media, the concept of media-centricity illustrates how media becomes a center of cultural and societal change, influencing the perception and understanding of reality (Hepp et al., 2015; Livingstone, 2011). In societies with strong patriarchal cultures, mainstream media often reinforces these norms.

In Indonesia, there are 47,000 media outlets, with 43,000 being online

platforms, and 1,700 media companies registered with the Press Council (DewanPers, 2020). Similarly, Malaysia has numerous print, broadcast, and online media outlets, including blogs and active social media platforms. However, there is limited information about the categorization of media readership and themes, making it difficult to determine how many outlets address women's issues. There are several women's media, especially magazines, that still focus primarily on lifestyle and domestic topics, such as cooking, home care, fashion, and beauty (Nurhajati et al., 2023).

Websites, however, provide a powerful alternative medium platform for challenging the dominance of conventional media narratives. They offer a space for marginalized or underrepresented voices, allowing diverse perspectives to be accessed widely and in depth. Women's media platforms can support women in gaining control over their lives, work, economic power, independence, freedom, and self-fulfillment (Kim, 2012). Media that addresses women's issues is an effective means of resisting gender inequality and religious radicalism.

Religious radicalism is a key one concern for the states and an important issue for women to address in cyberspace. Women's involvement is facilitated by technological advancements. In online spaces, moderate groups face the challenge of reclaiming narratives to be women-



friendly and gender-neutral. Meanwhile, conservative and extremist groups continue spreading narratives about hijra, righteous wives, niqab, and child marriage, which tend to denigrate women.

On the other side, a new trend has emerged, in which some religious authorities frame religion with a language of anger, exerting domination and control over women. This illustrates that violent extremist narratives are still widely disseminated. Conversely, peace communication emphasizes individual ownership of peace, demonstrated through behavior and interaction, ranging from personal to global levels. Meanwhile, peaceful communication emphasizes the concept of peace owned by each individual, as shown in behavior and interaction, from the personal to the global level. Peace communication is a comprehensive process needed to transform sustainable peace values.

Strategies for building peace include non-violent actions through language, texts, and images, often using discourse analysis approaches (Oxford, 2013). Communication and media are widely recognized as powerful tools in conflict resolution and peacebuilding (Hoffmann & Hawkins, 2015). Peace communication through alternative media encourages civil society participation in shaping discourse in digital spaces, emphasizing collective values and culture to reduce tension, violence, and conflict (Kumar & Semetko, 2018).

Methods of peace communication to prevent the spread of extremist narratives include counter-narratives and the dissemination of peace messages to the public. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) can help develop counter-narratives by providing accurate, factual information based on data and experience to counter disinformation. Counter-narratives use inclusive and tolerant language to build bridges between diverse groups. Effective counter-narratives can challenge radical discourse on both ideological and emotional levels.

Cyberspace holds great potential as a medium for peace communication, enabling women to disseminate positive narratives, foster cross-border dialogue, and facilitate constructive exchanges of ideas. Digital platforms also serve as spaces for parties involved in conflicts to seek peaceful solutions. Moreover, cyberspace is effective for disseminating counter-narratives and data-based information that challenge extremist ideologies and anti-gender narratives, while simultaneously reinforcing women's roles as peace agents in digital spaces.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that women-led digital platforms in Indonesia and Malaysia actively construct and negotiate meanings of peace through discourse, rather than merely transmitting normative peace messages. Drawing on Fairclough's CDA, the



analysis demonstrates that peace is articulated through gendered narratives that foreground lived experience, moral critique, and reinterpretations of religious and legal authority. Linguistic choices and narrative structures position peace as inseparable from justice, equality, and recognition of women's agency.

Empirically, the findings indicate that the analyzed texts position women as knowing and reflective agents of peace, particularly through personal storytelling, leadership narratives, and critical engagement with dominant religious and security discourses. At the same time, this agency remains discursively mediated by institutional, religious, and socio-political registers that both enable and delimit what can be articulated as legitimate peace discourse. Women's voices are therefore not outside power, but operate through strategic negotiation within existing structures.

Comparatively, SheBuildsPeace.id emphasizes grassroots peacebuilding and women's leadership in socio-religious conflict contexts in Indonesia, while Sisters in Islam foregrounds legal critique and feminist reinterpretations of Islam within Malaysia's Islamic and constitutional framework. Together, these platforms illustrate how women-led digital media function as sites of discursive intervention, challenging patriarchal and security-centered narratives while

redefining peace as a gender-just and inclusive project.

This research is limited by its focus on a small corpus of texts from two platforms within a defined time frame. Future research could extend this analysis to social media interactions, audience reception, or cross-country comparisons to examine how women's peace discourses circulate, resonate, or encounter resistance in broader digital publics. Overall, the findings suggest that women's digital peace communication thrives where alternative media spaces exist, interpretive flexibility is possible, and sustained narrative production occurs. These conditions enable peace to be continuously constructed and contested in cyberspace.

CREDIT AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Athik Hidayatul Ummah: writing compilation and manuscript articles.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The author certifies that there is no conflict of interest with any financial, personal, or other relationships with other people or organizations related to the material discussed in the manuscript.

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