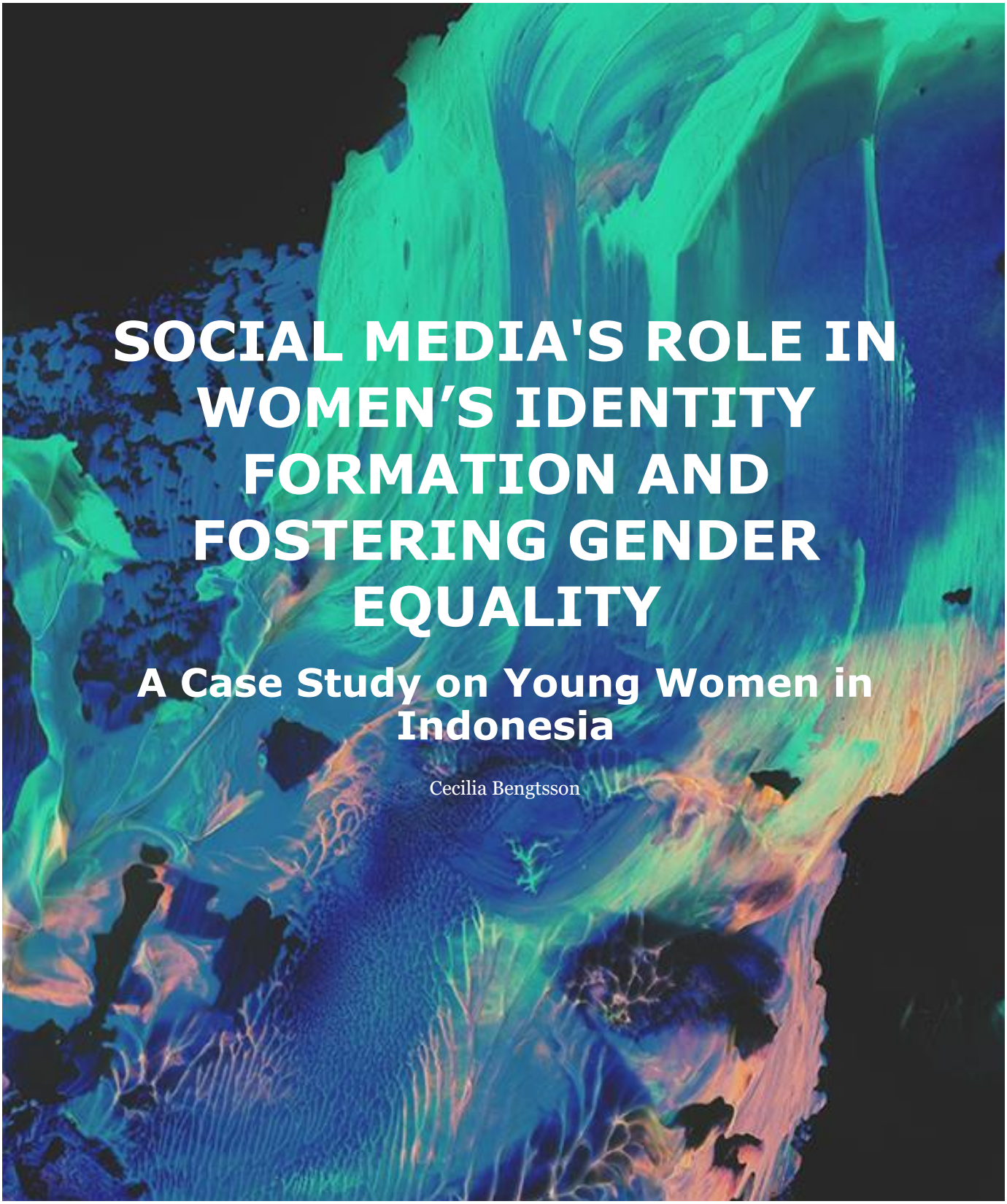
UMEÅ UNIVERSITY



SOCIAL MEDIA'S ROLE IN WOMEN'S IDENTITY FORMATION AND FOSTERING GENDER EQUALITY

A Case Study on Young Women in Indonesia

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Abstract

This study's purpose is to research how women in Indonesia are impacted by global influences from social media. It seeks to understand how Indonesian women experience social media as a tool to promote gender equality, if influences from social media conflict with gender norms, and social media's impact on women's identity formation.

Through a minor field study scholarship, a qualitative method was used, consisting of focus group discussions that were conducted in Jakarta with young female students as participants. The study's empirical material is presented through thematic analysis, with concepts operationalized from transnational feminist theory and previous literature as analytical tools.

The result showed that the women did not experience social media's promotion of gender equality as directly impacting gender norms or equality in their local society. Instead, it has an indirect structural change, by impacting younger generations' mindset on societal norms, such as gender equality. In addition, conflicts between global influences and traditional norms in women's local society can occur when the views do not align. However, the women are active participants in navigating through the influences of globalisation, as well as influences from their local societies. These influences coexist and both impact the women's identity formation.

Keywords: Identity formation, Women, Indonesia, Gender equality, social media, Transnational feminism.

"Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development and building good governance."
- Kofi Annan (Kofi Annan Foundation, n.d.)

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1. Introduction

On International Women's Day in March 2025, an Indonesian online publication raised concerns about the country's gender equality by holding a live discussion (Khudori & Rizky, 2025). Concerns were raised that Indonesia is following a global trend of lagging behind in its work on improving gender equality (The Jakarta Post, 2025). Veronica Tan, Deputy Minister of Women's Empowerment and Children's Protection, participated and said: "While some women can freely voice their thoughts in higher-education environments, many others still lack access to education, thus do not have the ability to advocate for their rights." (The Jakarta Post, 2025).

Since Indonesia transformed to a democratic system from an authoritarian New Order regime in 1998, the country has undergone many institutional changes from the previous system of governance, which had reinforced a patriarchal framework (Huda et. al., 2025, p. 146). Nevertheless, in recent years, scholars have pointed to a trend of democratic backsliding in Indonesia, which is attributed to both institutional weaknesses and societal dynamics (Huda et. al., 2025, p. 146).

While statistics from UN Women show that gender equality in Indonesia is improving, it also highlights a significant inequality in gender roles concerning responsibility for domestic work (UN Women, n.d). In addition, UN Women's data indicates that there remains considerable work to be done for Indonesia with the two UN Agenda 2030 goals: (1) gender equality, and (2) empowering girls and women (UN Women, n.d; United Nations, n.d. A)

Gender equality plays a crucial role in the development of inclusive and peaceful societies, which is essential for sustainable development in the global world (Regeringskansliet, n.d.). Gender equality is a component in a society's efforts to reduce poverty and boost economic development, as it promotes women's participation in the workforce and increases economic participation in society. Additionally, women must be provided with equal job opportunities and working conditions as men (United Nations, n.d. B). However, equality encompasses not only legal rights, but also a woman's perception of themselves as an equal actor (UNICEF regional office for South Asia, 2017, p. 1). Women's self-perception is a major factor in enabling women to participate in society as equal partners and pursue their rights. Furthermore, this highlights why women's identity formation plays a central role in the work to foster gender equality in a country.

With globalization, social media plays an increasingly bigger part in people's everyday lives. Through globalization, social media emerges with powerful platforms for women to

express themselves, reflect, navigate other people's societal mindsets, and find new insights about their values and possibilities as women. Social media has created a space that empowers women but can also contribute to tension within their local society, especially in societies where traditional values still influence women's roles.

Previous research has established that it exists a significant gender gap between Indonesian women and men regarding their usage of digital media. It has been proposed that by reducing the gap through improving women's opportunities to gain access to digital media, it will contribute to gender equality in Indonesia (Suwana & Lily, 2017, p. 214). Research suggests that social media can play a role in confronting and challenging patriarchal societal norms, and increasing women's independence and self-confidence by offering a wider range of opportunities in the public sphere (Suwana., Lily, 2017, p. 214). Purwaningtyas' (2021) research and several other studies have also identified that social media could play a major role in reducing patriarchal structures. Thus, social media can lead to increasing gender equality by functioning as a new arena for activism towards it (Purwaningtyas, 2021, p. 159). Most studies in the field have primarily focused on structural levels of social media promotion of gender equality, globalization's effects on society, and research on women in different parts of Indonesia (Abbasovna, 2024; Suyadnya, 2009; Kusujiarti, 2015; Hasan et.al, 2023).

1.1 Problem statement

Since Indonesia´s democratic transition, there has still been a big problem of gender inequality in the country. The increased usage and availability of social media provide insights into how women live and participate in various societies globally. This can contribute to a broader understanding of how gender equality and societal norms are differently exercised across cultures (Hasan et.al, 2023, p. 111). Moreover, women are the ones affected by gender inequalities, and when looking at the impact social media has on promoting gender equality, it is the women who have first-hand experience of it. Secondly, if social media provides new insights on societal norms, how women perceive that the traditional and cultural values interact with them is significant. In addition, with all these new insights, as well as the influence from their local society, are women's experiences their identity formation influenced by social media?

New insights about how this dynamic influence plays out in Jakarta offer a better understanding of how globalisation and social media shape gender equality globally. In

addition, it contributes to a broader understanding of how strong traditional societies interact with new views on societal norms from globalization.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of the study is to examine how women's identity formation in unequal societies with strong traditional values is shaped by social media use. Furthermore, it investigates how social media can empower women, but also which kinds of tension or conflict may emerge as a result of the global influences.

1.2.2 Research questions

- What are the experiences of young women in Indonesia regarding the use of social media to promote gender equality?
- Do female students in Indonesia experience conflicts between global influences from social media and traditional societal norms, and if so, in what ways?
- What influence has social media had on the identity formation of young female university students in Indonesia, a society with strong traditions, and how can this be understood from a transnational feminism perspective?

1.3 Delimitations

Delimitations have been made geographically, and the empirical focus is limited to Jakarta, the capital city, based on previous research that highlights that university students in urban cities are the group most active on social media (Suwana and Lily). Moreover, this study is unable to encompass both urban cities and rural areas, highlighting that the study findings are unable to generalize to the rural population since access to social media could be more limited. Although Indonesia is the largest Muslim majority country in the world, religious aspects will not be the primary focus, since it is beyond the scope of this study and would require a distinct theoretical and methodological framework. Moreover, religion is thereby viewed as one of many components that shape the society’s cultural norms.

1.4 Definitions of central concepts

In this section, I will present brief definitions of central concepts that will be used throughout this study, this is to clarify what the concepts include when being used, such as in the introduction and the purpose.

Identity formation.

Throughout this study, the term Identity formation will refer to one's identity being connected to a certain place and time, and interactions with different social identities, which can influence one's identity to evolve and change (Tambe & Thayer, 2021, p. 16).

Traditional values and norms.

It is necessary here to clarify what is meant by traditional values and norms, which refer to society's locally constructed societal norms and dominant views, as well as its traditions, shaped by a long and deeply rooted history (Purwaningtyas, 2021, pp. 144, 155).

Globalization.

According to Mason (2017), globalization can be defined as follows: "the increased movement and flows of peoples, information, and consumer culture across borders" (Mason, 2016, p. 63)

Social media.

In this study, social media will be used in its broadest sense to refer to all user-generated content through different online platforms, which allows users to consume, share, exchange, and create information and spread it globally (Lee et.al, 2020, p. 8).

Gender equality.

Gender equality as a term in this study refers to the promotion of equal rights so everyone can fulfil their full potential. This requires equal opportunities, equal treatment, and equal conditions regardless of age and sex. (UNICEF regional office for South Asia, 2017, p. 3).

Unequal societies.

The term unequal societies in this study refers to a society characterized by gender inequalities. Furthermore, these inequalities express themselves through gender disparities in

household assets, labour and distribution, education, health, and other basic needs. (Agence Française de Développement, 2024)

Empowerment of women.

While a variety of definitions of empowering women have been suggested, this study will use the UNICEF (2017) definition of Empowerment of women and girls. Empowering women in this study means changes in structures that withhold gender discrimination and inequality and thereby providing women and girls the ability to control their own lives, as well as increasing their self-confidence. Moreover, women and girls need equal preconditions, resources, opportunities, but also the agency to use these (UNICEF regional office for South Asia, 2017, p. 1).

1.5 Disposition

The overall structure of this study consists of six sections: (1) introduction, (2) theoretical framework, (3) method, (4) results and analysis, (5) discussion, and lastly (6) conclusion.

The second section outlines both this study's literature review, which is based on previous literature concerning social media's impact on women in Southeast Asia, as well as theoretical concepts from transnational feminism theory. This is followed by a presentation of the study's method and material. Section four presents the empirical material, including analyses of the results of the focus group discussions based on the theoretical framework. In section five, a discussion of the results and analysis with the research questions is presented. The final section presents the results of this study in contrast to the purpose and research question and provides suggestions for future research.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Literature review

This study's literature review is divided into three sections, each of which provides insight into previous research that has examined either how social media promotes gender equality in Indonesia, how global influences impact local societies in Southeast Asia, or the globalization effects on women's identity formation in Indonesia. A concluding summary will be presented at the end of this section.

The articles have been collected through different search strings using Google Scholar and the Umeå University library. The selected articles have an empirical focus on Southeast Asia, and an overall selection criterion was to include articles that focus on Indonesia, globalisation, identity formation, and gender equality. The ambition has been to use articles written by Indonesian authors or articles that have empirically focused on Indonesia. This has been important to develop a broad understanding from an Indonesian cultural viewpoint and contribute to a deeper understanding in relation to the Indonesian society. This includes existing traditional values, patriarchal structures, and how social media is being used. The articles have been collected from multiple journals, including International Women's Studies, Journal of Asian Women, Sustainability Journal of Communication, Social Science, and Humanities studies.

2.1.1 Social media for promoting gender equality in Indonesia

Previous research on social media for promoting gender equality in Southeast Asia has focused on activism accounts that work to foster gender equality on social media. Purwaningtyas (2021) researched how different Indonesian feminist accounts on social media are trying to transform the view of the meaning of women's empowerment in Indonesian society (Purwaningtyas, 2021, p. 159). The feminist social media accounts aim to deconstruct the current views on what women's empowerment and gender equality mean, where the current views are formed by a historically patriarchal structure and frame empowerment as women's participation and work in the domestic and household area (Purwaningtyas, 2021, p. 155). Furthermore, the activism accounts aim to influence the women in Indonesia to see empowerment as their power over their bodies and sexuality, as well as agency over their own decisions and actions (Purwaningtyas, 2021, p. 155).

Moreover, the article suggests that further research should examine the impact of women's activism through social media from the followers' experiences (Purwaningtyas, 2021, p. 160). This is since the findings in the research demonstrated that social media possesses the power to work as a new arena for activism towards gender equality, by reaching a wider audience and creating a space for discussion of sensitive subjects. Furthermore, the findings that social media can work as a platform for activism to promote gender equality are supported by Maryani et.al. (2018), who conducted a case study of the digital movement Aliansi Laki-Laki Baru. Their research found that social media serves as a platform to encourage men's participation in gender equality in Indonesia, since social media offers broad access and is not restricted by a society's patriarchal structures (Maryani et.al, 2018, p. 120). Moreover,

findings pointed out that social media is more efficient at countering the dominance of patriarchal values and thereby provides a platform to foster gender equality (Maryani et.al, 2018, p. 120).

Some authors have been more concerned with the negative consequences of social media, such as how women become victims of sexual harassment online. Mas'udah et.al (2024) conducted in-depth interviews with young women living in Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia, to understand how gender-based violence can transform from the real world into the digital world, and the impact it has on women (Mas'udah et.al, 2024, p. 4). The findings show that social media can contribute to a space where women can become victims of gender-based violence, such as being asked to send images of their bodies, engage in sexual conversations, or engage in pornographic material (Mas'udah et.al, 2024, p. 9). The study's findings highlight that digital gender-based violence has several impacts on women and observes that it reflects the real world, since the participating women also had encountered gender-based violence in their society (Mas'udah et.al, 2024, p. 9).

2.1.2. Global influences' impact on local societies in Southeast Asia

Previous research on how local societies' Southeast Asia is impacted by global influences has focused on cultural hybridity. Lee et. al.'s (2020) research focused on the Korean wave influence, and which factors either promote the acceptance of cultural hybridity in Muslim culture or resist it (Lee et.al, 2020, p. 22). The articles define cultural hybridity in an international setting as an active exchange between cultures over national borders. This allows a nation's own culture to build on others and change (Lee et.al, 2020, p. 3). Through a semantic network analysis on Malaysia and Indonesia, the findings observed that two elements prevent the influence from the Korean wave, which were (1) religions of a conservative nature, and (2) strong group identity of ethnic groups and their view of themselves compared to other groups (Lee et.al, 2020, p. 22). The results noted that factors which contributed to cultural hybridity were: "*Asian identity', policies emphasizing 'unity in ethnic diversity', and 'local consumer xenocentrism"* (Lee et.al, 2020, p. 22).

Like Lee et.al. (2020), Abbasovna (2024) highlighted that when the global influences interact with local societies in Southeast Asia, the region has managed to learn how to adapt to the global influences and transform them into its own culture (Abbasovna, 2024, p. 65). Culture hybridity is a normal response that comes from the complex dynamic globalization provides, and societies in Southeast Asia let them enrich instead of being consumed (Abbasovna, 2024, p. 65). However, it is still important to preserve local culture as

globalisation still brings challenges such as cultural homogenisation. When global cultures become dominant in the local culture, there is a risk of losing their cultural identity (Abbasovna, 2024, p. 64). Furthermore, Abbasovna noted that future research should investigate how cultural identity is affected by globalization. Both on the individual and society level to gain a deeper understanding of how globalization affects individuals and communities (Abbasovna, 2024, p. 65).

2.1.3 Globalization's effect on women's identity formation in Indonesia

Previous research on how global influences impact women's identity formations has focused on understanding women's experiences in how these influences engage with as well as resonate within local matrifocal traditions and Islamic veiling practices (Kusujiarti, 2015, p. 186). Findings by Kusujiarti (2015) indicate that multiple influences can enrich women's identities instead of isolating them or creating conflicts. This is because women are seen as active participants and negotiate with the global influences, where they embrace the ones that are suitable in their local culture, and resist the others (Kusujiarti, 2015, p. 199). This suggests that global influences coexist with local traditions and norms within the women, which can lead to contradictions between the women's beliefs and behaviour. However, these contradictions are natural consequences of the women's ongoing negotiation with these influences concerning their identity (Kusujiarti, 2015, p. 199).

Similarly, Suyadnya (2009) found that globalization was regarded as something positive by women in Bali, since it could provide new perspectives that could be adapted into the Balinese women's daily lives. The Balinese women expressed that they could either reject or adopt global influences depending on whether they align with their religious and traditional norms (Suyadnya, 2009, p. 103). Moreover, the study highlighted how globalization has been a positive influence in changing the view of Southeast Asia women's social position. By the global influences, they normalize the view that women can participate in either double or triple roles (Suyadnya, 2009, p. 95). This refers to women participating in a domestic role, while also in a working role, and a social role (Suyadnya, 2009, p. 95). The result showed that the triple roles carried out by Balinese women strengthen their identity when approaching the global influences and thereby help them navigate.

In addition, some research has suggested that the global influences can impact people's views of societal norms. Hasan et.al (2023) researched how global influences of popular culture interact with traditional cultural norms and their impact on adolescent beliefs, norms, values, and attitudes in Indonesia (Hasan et.al, 2023, p. 107). For instance, the participating

adolescents shared a view that popular culture influenced their values, beliefs, and societal norms such as gender roles (Hasan et.al, 2023, p. 111). These findings suggest that globalization's interaction with the local Indonesian culture situates the adolescents in a context where digital media can shape their cultural identity. Since it provides adolescents with new perspectives from other cultures when navigating their identity (Hasan et.al, 2023, p. 112).

2.1.4 Summary of previous research

Based on the review of previous research, which has focused on Indonesian studies, the current state of knowledge can be summarized as follows: With the increased usage of social media by both women and men, Indonesian women have found a platform to present themselves online and explore their identities. Despite their significant presence on social media, this does not necessarily imply a weakened presence of patriarchy in Indonesian society. Furthermore, structural violence, such as sexual harassment, continues to affect Indonesian women both in society and in the global online world. Social media can be a powerful tool for promoting gender equality for women in Indonesia. It also serves as a platform where global influences can contribute to cultural hybridity within Indonesian society. Women are capable of navigating and incorporating different influences that they find beneficial and that often align with their local culture. However, social media can introduce perspectives that differ from those traditionally held by these women, such as new interpretations of what empowerment means. This raises the question of how Indonesian women navigate their identities between their local culture and global influences, and what impact this has on them.

2.2 Theory

This section introduces the analytical framework of the study, which is transnational feminist theory. First, an overview of the theory is presented, followed by an explanation of why it will be used for the thematic analysis of the empirical material. Lastly, to understand how the theory will guide the interpretation in the thematic analysis, the key concepts are described.

2.2.1 Transnational Feminism

This study will apply transnational feminist theory as an analytical framework since the theory pays attention to global social challenges that are arising in the present day because of globalization. Moreover, transnational feminism focuses on how increasing flows from globalisation shape women in different ways globally, where the differences in how women are experiencing it are the major analytical focus. By using transnational feminism, the theory will help the study to understand the deficiencies and opportunities of globalization effects for women. In addition, also letting the voices that are normally not heard enrich our understanding of the complex questions concerning how modern influences intersect with traditional culture (Enns et.al, 2021, p. 11). This is the main reason for applying this theory to the study: to understand the women's experiences of the impact social media has on their identity formation. As well as the impact social media has on fostering gender equality, and how these influences align with women's traditional and cultural surroundings.

2.2.2 Concept and usage of transnational feminism in this study

This study uses transnational feminism as a perspective for understanding the impact social media has on women concerning their local norms and traditions. Furthermore, four central concepts in transnational feminist theory provide an analytical lens for the interpretation of the narratives from the empirical material: (1) globalization, (2) identity formation, (3) intersectionality, and (4) scattered hegemonies. The reasons behind the usage of these four concepts are their connection to the global effects on societies, and in this study, they are significant for describing the women's experiences. Globalization, Intersectionality, and scattered hegemonies are three well-known and used concepts in transnational feminist theory and are thereby suitable. Since identity formation is a part of this study's research focus, it is central to have the concept.

Globalization

Globalization is used to gain an understanding of how the increased flows across borders are shaping women both consciously and unconsciously. In the analysis, this concept will be used to understand how the global influences interact and affect their local society's influences that arise from traditions and norms (Mason, 2016, p. 63). In this study, globalization is used to interpret how women describe their experiences of whether they feel like they can apply societal views from global influences within their society.

Identity formation

From a transnational feminist perspective, identity is viewed as a state belonging to a certain time and place, where one's identity formation is shaped through multiple social identities' interactions, where these social identities could include nationality, sexuality, age, and religion (Tambe & Thayer, 2021, p. 16). Moreover, this means that women who are both part of their local culture and the global world could have their identity shaped from both outlooks. Identity formation is seen as a dynamic process and will be used to understand how women´s identities are continually shaped by the different influences from the individuals' social surroundings. In the analysis, identity formation is used to interpret how the women express that social media has an impact on their identity, as well as their experiences with how the global influences interact with their cultural identity.

Intersectionality

The concept Intersectionality describes the relationship between different social identities and how the individual experiences the multiple social identities (Enns et.al, 2021, p. 14). An individual can have both the social identity as a woman but also her race, age, religion, and nationality (Enns et.al, 2021, p. 14). In the analysis, intersectionality will be used to describe how the women are experiencing belonging to multiple "social" belongings, especially in their relation to social media and gender equality. Also, how these "social" belongings interact with each other. In the study, the concept will be used to interpret and describe the women's experiences of how the current power structure either promotes or hinders social media's ability to further foster gender equality, both from a local perspective and a global perspective (Enns et.al, 2021, p. 15).

Scattered hegemonies

Scattered hegemonies are a concept from Grewal and Kaplan (1994) that highlights the need to understand how today's global influences of cultural flows create multiple and different power structures that coexist. Scattered hegemonies are often visible in gender relations, which makes it important to understand the component of gender in relation to other power structures, such as local structures of domination, patriarchal nationalism, legal-juridical oppression on multiple levels, authentic forms of traditions and global economic structures (Grewal and Kaplan, 1994, p. 17). The concepts occurred from the importance of acknowledging the understanding of women in different historical contexts and their relationship to patriarchal structures from their local society history (Grewal and Kaplan,

1994, p. 17). In this study, scattered hegemonies are used to interpret how women describe their experiences with the relationship between global influences and their local societies' traditions and norms.

2.3 Operationalization of central concepts

To interpret the empirical material, theoretical concepts have been operationalised into operational indicators, which serve as analytical tools for the women's narratives in the analysis. The operational indicators have been based on the theoretical frameworks and their definition in the study. This is significant so the operational indicators translate suitably, to ensure the study investigates what it aims to (Esaiasson et.al., 2024, p. 125).

Table 1. Operationalization of central concepts

Concept:	**Definition in study:**	**Operationalizing:**
Identity formation	A state of belonging to a certain time and place, where the identity is shaped by multiple social identities such as nationality, sexuality, age, and religion. (Tambe & Thayer, year, p. 16).	Participants describe their identity and how it has been shaped by different influences, views of changes over time, and self-image.
Social Media	A platform where user-generated content can be made and spread through the different online platforms, which allows users to share, exchange and create information and spread it globally (Lee et.al, 2020, p. 8)	How participants describe their experiences of the digital landscape, how it impacts them. In addition, their usage and interaction with different social media platforms, such as: consuming, creating or sharing content.
Traditional norms and values	A society's local construction and dominant norms and views that have been constructed through history (Purwaningtyas, 2021, p. 144).	Participants' experiences with how global influences from social media interact with their traditional norms and values.
Patriarchal structures	A structure in society where women are seen as subordinate to men (Purwaningtyas, 2021, p. 159).	How participants experience of the environment maintain patriarchal structures and opposing feminist ideas. Such as, where women are not seen as equal as men.

Empowerment	Structures that provide women's ability to control their own lives, contribute to self-confidence, and the feeling of agency to use their rights (UNICEF regional office for South Asia, 2017, p. 1).	Expressions of the participants with feelings as equal actors in society, with free will over decisions, ambitions, and rights, both on social media and in their local society.
Gender equality	Gender equality is the promotion of equal rights so everyone can fulfil their full potential, which requires equal opportunities. (UNICEF regional office for South Asia, 2017, p. 3).	How participants describe women's and men´s positions and rights. As well as ambition, rights, and opportunities.
Globalisation/global influences	"The increased movement and flows of peoples, information, and consumer culture across borders" (Mason, 2017, p. 63)	Participants describing their experiences with views and norms in their society.
Intersectionality	Multiple social identities connections, and how these impact individuals (Enns et.al, 2021, p. 14).	Description of the participants where multiple social identities shapes their experience
Scattered hegemonies	Different power system that coexists and sometimes conflicts (Grewal and Kaplan, 1994, p. 17).	How participants describing their experiences with digital and traditional influences. Such as outlooks on gender norms.

Table 1 presents the concepts with their theoretical origin, and how they are applied as operational indicators in the analysis.

5. Method

In this section, the study's methodological approach is presented, including research design, data collection, and analytical approach. The section will start by presenting the chosen method and the reasons behind it. Lastly, a discussion about the study's quality criteria is presented.

5.1 Research design and selection criteria

A case study approach was applied to gain a deeper insight into how women experience social media impacts. Furthermore, to allow for the conclusion to say something about the general case, delimitations were made from age, occupation, and geographical point. The case study focus was on young women between the ages of 18-30, who were university students and living in Jakarta, Indonesia. The benefit of this delimitation is that it provides focus on a group who is dominant in the use of social media, which serves the purpose of the study (Esaiasson et.al., 2024, p. 60; Suwana & Lily, 2017, p. 216). Indonesia provides an interesting choice to focus on, partly because it is a relatively new democracy, but also the country's increased social media usage, as well as its struggle with gender equality. By focusing on Indonesia, it provided a substrate for how globalisation through social media impacts women. Furthermore, focusing on Indonesia's capital Jakarta is based on research that has shown that university students in big cities are using social media the most (Esaiasson et.al., 2024, p. 64; Suwana & Lily, 2017, p. 216).

Behind the choice of case study, a strategic selection was made behind the delimitations to reach women who were active participants of social media, through which the result will not be generalisable to everyone in Indonesia due to socioeconomic factors, for example rural areas due to the possibility of limited access to social media or education.

5.2 Method: focus group discussions

A qualitative method was used, since it is a widely used method among feminist research when focusing on women's experiences (Bryman, 2018, p. 587). Moreover, a quantitative method would include a larger number of participants, however, not contribute to the same depth and understanding of the topic. Furthermore, with a qualitative method, there were fewer sources analysed but more deeply. This followed the purpose of the study, to understand the young women's experiences in their own words.

The method used descriptive and illustrative cases through focus group discussions, which were semi-structured questions with a focus on creating a coherent discussion. This is a common method in feminist research since it fosters trust between the researcher and participants, and often contributes to a non-hierarchy approach (Bryman, 2018, p. 587). Instead of conducting individual respondent interviews, focus group discussions allow the

women to discuss and develop their experiences together, where the focus is on the content of the discussions (Bernard et al, 2017, p. 87).

5.2.2. Interview guide

An interview guide was used to ensure the focus group discussions had relevance to the study´s purpose, which is essential to ensure the study's validity. When creating the themes for the interview guide, the focus was on including flexibility for the participants while still ensuring connection to the study's research question. This enabled the women to enrich the discussions with their ideas as well as their experiences, and minimizes the influence of the researcher (Bryman, 2018, p. 565). The interview guide contained an introduction followed by four main themes that included a few questions each. Moreover, some sub-questions were prepared for respective, and lastly, closing reflections to conclude.

The introduction included information about the purpose of the study and what the discussions were going to be about. Also, this study's ethical principles, such as information requirements, consent requirements, confidentiality requirements, and the utilisation requirement, were explained. The first theme was background and their own identity, where the purpose was to ask some warm-up questions for starting discussions, such as "*How has your day been"* and *"What does identity mean for you?".* The second theme was "Social media and identity formation," which concerns the women's social media habits and how they experience that social media impacts them. Questions that were asked during that theme was *"Which is your main interest of using social media?",* and *"Do you feel that social media affects how you see yourself and your identity?".* The third theme was "Cultural identity and global influences," which related to the women's experiences of global influences from social media being accepted in their society. The theme contained questions such as *"How do you see your identity connected to your culture and society?"*, and *"Which influence on your life would you say global influence had, if any?".* The fourth theme was *"Social media for increasing gender equality"* and included questions such as *"Do you feel that social media is a platform that enables more freedom and opportunity for expression of oneself or is your experience that it's the opposite?"*, and *"Is the values and view of gender equality online the same as in the local society, in terms of gender roles"*. Which were based on understanding how women experiences that social media promotes gender equality and which type of impact it has. Lastly, closing reflections took place, where participants were asked if they thought there was anything more, they wanted to add, and how they thought their life would have been without social media.

5.2.3 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations have been addressed, since it is important that the participants feel safe and included when participating, both in the discussion and afterwards. To ensure that ethical principles were followed throughout the study concerning the participants, the study has been based on four principles: (1) information requirements, (2) consent requirement, (3) confidentiality requirement, and (4) the utilisation requirement (Bryman, 2018, p. 170).

To ensure the information requirement is being followed, there was transparency towards the participants about the study's aim and purpose by providing a summary through an intermediary when they were asked if they wanted to participate. Furthermore, before the start of the discussion, an introduction to the study's purpose was orally presented, as well as what the discussions were going to be about. This was to make sure that the participants understood the meaning of the study and the content of the focus group discussion. Also, it was important to highlight that participating was voluntary and not an obligation (Bryman, 2018, p. 170). Moreover, if they choose to participate but later regret it, they can withdraw their consent, and their discussion would be removed from the study. For the utilisation requirement, it was presented that the use of the discussions is for this study's purpose only, and the notes and the recorded sound will be deleted after the study is finished (Bryman, 2018, pp. 170-171). The information above was orally presented before the focus group discussions and summarised on a consent form that was provided through Umeå University. The participants had to sign the consent form before participating in the focus-group discussions. Lastly, due to the sensitive nature of the subject, there was a need to limit the risk of tracing information from this study back to the participants. Thereby, all names will be anonymous, and the collected information will be stored properly (Bryman, 2018, pp. 170-171). This is due to the confidentiality principle, the participant's integrity, and the fact that there is no use of the names.

5.2.4 Field Study

For this study, I got a minor field study scholarship. This made it possible for me to travel to Jakarta, Indonesia for two months to collect the empirical material and to gain a central understanding of the Indonesian culture. Going to Jakarta provided me with first-hand knowledge and understanding of parts of the Indonesian culture. When conducting interviews as well as focus-group discussions, it is important to get familiar with the participants' environment since it produces a greater understanding of the discussions (Bryman, 2018, p. 566). Moreover, I also gained an understanding of the significant role that social media plays

in young Indonesian women's lives. For example, I witnessed how social media platforms like Instagram are widely used, and it is common for people to exchange social media profiles in new meetings with people. Another thing that stood out was the social gatherings around food. Half of my time spent there was during Ramadan, but even outside that period, I observed that the social gatherings around shared meals were a common part of daily life. This influenced the choice of location for the discussions.

5.3 Data collections

For the empirical material, a field study was conducted to gain knowledge about the Indonesian culture and their traditions and norms. Semi-structured focus group discussions were used to collect the study's empirical material. There were two focus group discussions with 11 participants altogether. The focus group discussions took place in a Café in Jakarta, where a private room was used during the focus group discussions. This was to ensure the participants would not be concerned with anybody listening to their discussions, as well as the recording sound would not have background noises (Bryman, 2018, p. 566). The focus group discussions were conducted in English, which was not the women's native language. The participating women had good English knowledge, and when stumbling upon words, the discussion format enabled the women to help each other.

Firstly, an introduction was held about the day, then group A started with the focus group discussions, meanwhile group B was provided with tea, soup, and some snacks. After an hour, the groups switched, and afterwards we all had lunch together.

Through a contact person in Jakarta, who was a requirement to conduct a field study, I was introduced to a person who helped me reach out to the participating women through their contact network. This person also helped in locally anchoring the focus group discussions in Jakarta, Indonesia, as meals are a big part of their culture. This made it natural to do the focus group discussions in relation to this part of the Indonesian culture of sharing meals.

5.3.1 Transcription process

During the focus group discussions, notes were taken, and the sound was recorded in line with Umeå University's guidelines through Microsoft Teams. The recorded sound was uploaded to a Microsoft Teams group to which only the researcher and the supervisor had access. The notes and recording sound were used together for the transcription, which took place without any help device. The focus group discussions were transcribed word by word to ensure

nothing would be left out for the thematic analysis. By both taking notes and recording sound, it helped with being more active and focusing on what was being said (Bryman, 2018, pp. 577, 578).

5.3.2 Quality criteria

The study's data collection is from its collected primary source, thereby requiring transparency in all steps from the empirical material to the conclusion, to ensure authenticity. For the study to have a high level of result validity, one component is a high level of conceptual validity (Esaiasson et.al., 2024, p. 131). To increase the conceptual validity, one tool is reasoning validity, where it is researched how other similar studies have used central concepts which were implied in this study (Esaiasson et.al., 2024, p. 128). Another component for increasing the level of result validity is to have a high level of reliability, which means the absence of unsystematic or random errors (Esaiasson et.al., 2024, p. 131). Moreover, one way to tackle the possibility of errors is transparency regarding all the steps made in the study, so readers could identify unsystematic or random errors. The study's internal validity is high since it is the women's statements which is the data collection (Esaiasson et.al., 2024, p. 126). Regarding the level of external validity, meaning that the case which is being researched is valid, it can be argued that its method contributes to high external validity (Esaiasson et.al., 2024, p. 126). This is because previous research has pointed to young university students as a group who use social media the most.

During the process of the study, source-critical thinking has been considered. However, since the empirical material has been a primary source in the form of focus group discussions, and the purpose of the study is to raise women's experiences, the most relevant way to be source-critical is the level of independence. That is, if the women's stories are independent or if they could have been unknowingly influenced (Esaiasson et.al., 2024, p. 140). In addition, since the focus group discussions were conducted in English without an interpreter, it is important to acknowledge that some expressions may not have reached the same depth as the women could have in their native language. As well as some meanings could have been lost in the usage of the English language, both by the researcher and the participants. However, the women helped each other express themselves through the discussion format, and it created a more flowing discussion than serving as an obstacle.

Furthermore, the tendency is not viewed as a problem but is recognized and aware of, since there is always a possibility for the participants to have an interest in reproducing a distorted image, both aware and unaware of this. In addition, since it is a sensitive topic, there

is a possibility that some things have been distorted due to cultural norms or perhaps by the dynamic of the focus group (Esaiasson et.al., 2024, p. 141)

5.4 Analyse method

The study applies a qualitative analysis of the empirical material, more specifically, Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis will be used. This is a well-known thematic analysis and has previously been used in studies from a transnational feminism outlook (Abbas & Elhosary, 2025, p. 129). Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis is useful with qualitative data since it focuses on finding the empirical material's meaning through analysis of patterns and can generate more detailed and complex data (Braun & Clarke, 2021, p. 70; Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 5).

Braun & Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis includes six steps, which were followed during the study's thematic analysis from the transcriptions of the focus group discussions. In the first step, familiarity with the data was done through repeated reading of the transcription in combination with taking notes, which provided an overview of patterns and ideas (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 16). In the second step, segments of the data were transformed into initial codes, where selection was made due to relevance for the study, and both latent and semantic content were included (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 18). When the initial codes were complete, the third step was carried out, where themes were created based on how different codes could combine. This was created by organizing and colouring the codes in a table to see eventual connections, and gain ideas about main and sub themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 19,20). In step four, the potential themes were reviewed to see if they were suitable, where some needed to be refined. Afterwards, the entire data set was reviewed to make sure the thematic map reflects the data collection (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 20,21). Here, the validity of the themes was reviewed to see if the themes would correlate to the meanings of the dataset, which required a re-read of the dataset to make sure the thematic map works (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 21). With step five, the thematic map was finished, and the essence of the themes was assessed to understand what they captured, naming them, as well as deciding the sub-themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 22). For the last step, the themes were used in the section (6) "result and analysis", where citation was applied for a more comprehensive understanding.

6. Results and analysis

This section presents the empirical material, which is divided into three main themes with complementing subthemes. Furthermore, the analysis is also divided and will be presented under each theme. The themes are based on the research questions and were made through Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, where the themes reflect upon the most recurring statements or their importance for the research questions.

Table 1: Themes from thematic analysis

Research question	**Main theme**	**Subtheme**
What are the experiences of young women in Indonesia regarding the use of social media to promote gender equality?	Social media's effect on gender equality in Indonesia.	The gap between social media and their local society. Social media's empowerment of gender roles
Do female students in Indonesia experience conflicts between global influences from social media and traditional societal norms, and if so, in what ways?	Women's navigation through global influences from social media and the Indonesian local society.	Selective acceptance with global norms. Generational divide.
What influence has social media had on the identity formation of young female university students in Indonesia, a society with strong traditions, and how can this be understood from	Social medias influence on women in a society with strong traditions.	Social media's double role in women's identity formation. Social media's impact on themselves as women.

a transnational feminism perspective?		

Table 2 presents each research question in relation to their main and sub-themes that resulted from the study's thematic analysis, with Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework.

6.1 Social media's effect on gender equality in Indonesia

When the participants were discussing their experiences of social media promoting gender equality, it indicated that the women's experiences were divided. Some had a positive attitude and pointed out how social media empowers them, while others raised concerns about how they experienced its effects as being limiting.

6.1.1 The gap between social media and their local society.

When the women discussed the impact social media has on promoting gender equality, some experienced a gap between social media and reality. On social media, there are discourses about empowering women and gender equality, but that does not necessarily follow or reflect their experiences in the real world. For instance, one woman said that: "(…) and for Indonesia it is quite hard because of patriarchy and norms" (Fgd A, 2025). Furthermore, when continuing the discussion, some women also acknowledge that patriarchal attitudes also exist on social media, where men tend to put their gender in focus. The women highlighted that when something bad has happened to women, men tend to shift the focus to make themselves part of the discussion instead of acknowledging the suffering women, as one women said: "Sometimes when we are talking about sexual harassment, we talk about certain things that have happened to women, men on social media will be like what if it happens to men?"(Fgd A, 2025). However, when the women were discussing whether social media promotes gender equality, there was a mutual agreement that it can contribute to the promotion of empowerment of women, but it might not contribute to any real change. Moreover, one woman said: "Social media in Indonesia can be used to raise awareness about how women empower other women, but in real life it is kind of hard" (Fgd A, 2025). Even if social media is not directly working as a tool to create real change for gender equality right now in Indonesia, there was a mutual positivity between some women for future of gender equality in Indonesia, as one said: "It can still be more equal, but I think it is starting to be equal in our generation and maybe because were exposed to media, conversation and raising awareness on

social media. But for the actual stuff, it does not work, social media is raising awareness but does not make any real change" (Fgd A, 2025).

When expressing "men on social media will be like what if it happens to men?" (Fgd A, 2025). It reveals that patriarchal structures from the Indonesian society also follow and occur to the women on social media. That experience aligns with Siti Mas'udah's et. al (2024) study that showed how structural violence follows from the real world into the online world. Furthermore, that indicates that even though social media can promote gender equality, it is not a place where women will be free from patriarchal structures. From a transnational feminist perspective, the meaning "….and for Indonesia its quite hard because of patriarchy and norms" (Fgd A, 2025), shows how historical patriarchal norms still are strong in the Indonesian society, which shapes the current level of gender equality in Indonesia (Mason, 2017, p. 62). In addition, it also aligns with Purwaningtyas (2021) study about how the feminist Instagram accounts were trying to change the current meaning of gender equality (Purwaningtyas, 2021, p. 159).

Transnational feminism highlights the importance of focusing on globalisation, and here it indicates that globalisation does not have a direct impact on local society. However, the increased flow from social media seems to have impacted women's mindset, as the whole younger generation, concerning societal norms. From an intersectional perspective, the reason why the current promotion of gender equality does not transform from social media into the women's society is not only due to patriarchal structure, but rather, it emphasizes multiple societal belongings. When the women spoke about patriarchy, they referred to Indonesia, which indicates that there is also a national context, but also a generational component by believing that it will be more equal with their generation. This indicates that the current promotion of gender equality through social media does not fully translate into women's local society, and this is due to multiple social factors such as patriarchal nationalism, national context, and a generational divide. Through the concept of scattered hegemonies, it shows how both social media as a power system, and patriarchal views stemming from the local society's norms and traditions, affect the women at the same time. Furthermore, the online discourse of gender equality does not have the same impact as patriarchal norms because of the historical and national context (Grewal and Kaplan, 1994, p. 17). In addition, even though there exists promotion for increasing gender equality on social media and empowering women, the local society´s views and norms are still strong and have the main impact.

6.1.2 Social media's empowerment of gender roles

Some of the women's experiences regarding social media's ability to promote gender equality were that it enabled more gender equality since sensitive topics were easier to speak about on social media. Focus was especially on empowering women, where some women discussed the role models' influence. For example, role models as well as different forums helped the women become more confident, where one woman said: "Social media helped us as women to improve ourselves and to get into the woman community and that really helps us get more confident than before, it is a supportive environment, it really helps us." (Fgd B, 2025). Furthermore, another topic that was brought up in the discussion by the women was the conflict between the stay-at-home mom and the working mom. The women shared the idea that social media could contribute to a more open approach towards women´s role in society than in the local society. One woman said: "And social media can show more about a stay-at-home dad, which can change our feelings about women and men like that. If we talk about gender, it is not only about men but also about women's rights. (Fgd B, 2025).

Purwaningtyas (2021) illustrated that social media is a new tool to work towards gender equality in Indonesia, since it opens the conversation for more sensitive subjects, which some of the women's experiences align with (Purwaningtyas, 2021, p. 159). Moreover, activism on social media seems to work for the cause of digital activism in the form of empowering women and highlighting gender equality online. This indicates that the increased flow of globalisation works in an influential way by empowering women and raising their self-confidence, as well as promoting gender equality in societal norms, even alongside historically rooted local norms and traditions (Enns et.al, 2021, p. 11). With the expression of: "And social media can show more about stay-at-home dad, that can change our feel about women and men like that." It shows that by also including men's part of the household work, a role that has traditionally been carried out by women in Indonesian society, social media can work as a platform to counter the dominance of patriarchal values (Maryani, 2018, p. 120). This shows how globalization can transform women's view of gender roles and equality, even alongside historically rooted local norms and traditions.

6.2. Women's navigation through global influences from social media and the Indonesian local society

When the participants discussed how their identity is linked to their culture, and how global influences interact with their local society's norms and expectations, the focus was on the challenges due to patriarchal norms and a generational divide. Some of the women were positive about how the global influence of other cultures could enrich them, meanwhile others pointed towards a selective accepting due to what society thinks is suitable.

6.2.1 Selective acceptance with global norms

When discussing how global influences impact women, one woman said: "I think our culture influence our identity but because social media is globally used by people around the world, maybe other culture can influence us to beside just our culture in Indonesia. So, we can take what we think is better for us." (Fgd B, 2025). However, when discussing how influence from social media interacts with their culture, there was not only a positive outlook on it. Some of the women's experiences were that it is hard to apply social media norms in real life since there is so many different mindsets circulating, and not all of them are accepted in the local society. One woman expressed: "Maybe I think the conflict can be happened when we agree with culture from the other country, but the culture is not the same with the culture of Indonesia and our environment does not agree with that culture. Our environment affects much about our community in this world, so even if we have other perspectives and other opinions that are related or connected with other culture. But if our environment doesn't have to respect and not respect the other cultures it can be conflict. So, there will be many effects about our belief and our culture and hopefully we have freedom to give opinion and perspective". (Fgd B, 2025). The women were also discussing what happens when they see people on social media with opinions they disagree with. For example, when a role model or somebody they followed had an opinion that the women disagreed with, the women would unfollow them. They choose to only follow people with opinions that suit their beliefs. In that way, social media would not influence their opinions:" Role model that we see every time about her and her or them, and then we see their opinion about something, it's not for me, it's not shaping my opinion, or maybe if I don't or disagree, I will unfollow them." (Fgd B 2025).

The results highlight that social media could contribute to clashes between global influences and their local culture. When some global influences do not align with the local traditions and norms, the influence will probably not be accepted. This creates understanding

for how the global influences of culture flows create scattered hegemonies (Grewal and Kaplan, 1994, p. 17). Furthermore, since the women must navigate between the global power structure with ideals that do not align with the power structure of patriarchal nationalism and the local societies' traditions. This shows that if the global influence aligns with the local societies' traditions and norms, they are accepted. However, in contrast, if they are challenging or opposing views, in relation to views in the local societies, they are dismissed. However, the women view themselves as active participants in adopting global influences they find suitable, which aligns with Suyadnya (2009) and Kusujiarti (2015) researchers. It cannot be determined if the women adopt global influences they believe suit the local society, or only through their personal beliefs. This illustrates how women navigate through multiple power systems, such as social media as a powerful force, and patriarchal structures embedded in the local society.

6.2.2 Conflicts from generational differences

When the women spoke about why conflict between global influences and the women´s local culture could occur, one reason the women had experienced was the older generations' mindset. One woman said that: "… our people, especially the boomers, think in a patriarchal way so they do not come from the same page as we are on social media, so they don't know what equality on gender roles is" (Fgd, A, 2025). The women believe that everyone wants to improve society, but that not everyone is ready to change themself for it to be a reality. Furthermore, the women experience that it could depend on the older generations' view of the world, or that they already have a fixed mindset, which the women did not blame them for. The women experienced that this could lead to a conflict when the generations' views and ideas do not align. The women believed that everyone wants to create a better place, but the issue lies in getting it to match everyone's perspective, as one woman expressed:" It is quite hard also since not everybody accepting social media in norms or maybe in local terms, it is just different type of way people share on different type, how people will tell each other. But at the same time maybe both parts want to listen and discuss maybe there will be a good way to understand each other's" (Fgd, A, 2025). The women experienced that there are a lot of opinions of women, since the patriarchy in Indonesia is still very strong. In addition, patriarchal structures show in the Indonesian women's daily life, as one woman said: "We still have to face all the patriarchal challenge in our daily life. Maybe if we are lucky enough in our family, they will support us as women. Maybe it doesn't really matter but sometimes you also face it in our environment in our like, some of the teachers, maybe it's not in the

campus, but like senior high school. I think maybe most of us, the girls have faced the same problem, because the patriarchy is rough, it's really shaped our environment" (Fgd B, 2025).

Hasan et.al (2023) research showed that social media works as a lens for adolescents in Indonesia to be influenced by other cultural societal norms, and the empirical material shows that women experience a generational divide in societal norms. Furthermore, the generational divide indicates that the younger generation is exposed to social media and different societal norms, such as gender equality. Meanwhile, the older generations may not have the opportunity to interact with the same global influences, since there is a possibility that they do not have the same usage of social media. In addition, the older generation has lived longer in Indonesia's current societal norms, which are influenced by a patriarchal view (Purwaningtyas, 2021, p. 159). This could have influenced their mindset, such as their view on women's position and gender equality. So, the conflict arises from different types of mindsets due to different exposure to influences on societal norms. This shows how globalisation reaches women with new perspectives, but creates tension when challenging already existing societal norms, which can be maintained through older generations.

6.3 Social media influence on women in a society with strong traditions

When discussing social media's influence, there was a mutual agreeing that it could both be negative and positive. The influence could make them feel pressure or affect their self-esteem when seeing other people's lives and achievements.

6.3.1 Social media's double role in women's identity formation.

When discussing social media's influence, it was a mutual agreement that it could both be negative and positive. The influence could make them feel pressured or affect their self-esteem when seeing other people's life and achievements, one woman said: "if it's positive they can boost your self-esteem, like I can be like this. But once it gave you negative it can make you feel so drowned like you don't have any purpose to live, something like that." (Fgd B, 2025). When discussing social media's impact on their identity, a recurring theme was identity crises, which seemed to be a broad common experience. The identity crises did occur due to different types of influences, all from being exposed to trends, and interacting with influences from all around the world, as one women expressed: "I have identity crises, because somehow we feel dislocate because so much happening in the world and we see a lot of different social media that do that and that, that's where identity crises coming from." (Fgd

A, 2025). Furthermore, by experiencing the social media world, it contributed to pressure and doubt about their self. Since the global influence could affect the women's thoughts about how they should act, their appearance, and their life choices and individual achievements, one woman said: "Like if my friends are, or someone I know achieve something, I say why can't I be like them, so it is slippery and pressuring" (Fgd, A, 2025).

There was a mutual experience that even though social media could contribute to negative influences, there would have been a negative impact on their identity and themselves without social media. When discussing how it would be if social media did not exist, one woman said: "I would never have discovered myself and who I am" (Fgd A, 2025). Moreover, focus was also on social media's contribution of perspectives from other parts of the world, which the women saw as enriching: "…. Because if we don't get exposure from other worlds, I wouldn't be so open minded if I hadn't gotten exposure from social media (Fgd A, 2025). Social media can contribute with bigger knowledge, about themselves and the world, but also about being a woman, one woman said:" social media helps us to shape our opinion better than before and make a better supportive environment for us women. I think it's really meaning a lot in this world" (Fgd A, 2025).

Social media can have both a positive and a negative outlook, as it can empower women but also contribute to identity crises. The identity crises did not come from clashes between globalization and their local society, instead, they occurred due to influences from social media. By experiencing other people's lives as well as multiple impressions from all around the world, globalization can impact women so that they get overwhelmed. By using a transnational feminist lens, it shows that through social media, women can get negative feelings about themselves by gaining too many outlooks on both beauty ideals and on their achievements. Furthermore, even though globalization could overwhelm women with identity crises, social media could also affect women's identity formation positively. Moreover, social media can also allow women being able to explore themselves through views from multiple societies, as well as inspire them with new ambitions. In this way, social media helps women express their identity by being connected to the global world. Without social media, women would not have been able to explore themselves, which indicates that the global influences have been able to interact with the local society. So, with social media, women can both feel empowered and pressured, which makes women contradict themselves in their expressions about social media. However, it is since those influences coexist together, and are part of the dynamic process of their identity formation, that the women's identity is continually shaped by different influences from the women's social surroundings. Furthermore, with the women

expressing themselves and acknowledging that globalisation have had a big impact on their identities, through an intersectional lens it illustrates that the women have taken part of multiple "social" belongings (Enns et.al, 2021, p. 14). In addition, their identity is not only formatted through their society or nationality, but also by the global world.

6.3.2 Social media's impact on themselves as women.

The women's identity and their role as women were also discussed, and a recurring subject. The women did experience that social media did empower them in understanding their full rights as women and influence their self-image and ambitions. One woman said that: "it has impacted how I see myself as a woman because like at the time I grew up in elementary school, most of my friends mothers did not work, but my mom had worked even since I was under five years old. So ever since I was a kid, I have a mindset that I'm going to work as soon as I graduate. But most of my friend's moms didn't back then. But since I have social media, I know that women can also work for themselves to like make money for ourselves. And I think it reflects on how I see myself." (Fgd B, 2025). This aligns with how other women saw social media contributing to her identity as a woman: "So, my mom taught me something like that when I was little and social media helped me to validate that women can work, women are not only about being pregnant or about having child, but about that we must work and do what we love, something like that. I think social media validate what my mom taught me" (Fgd B, 2025). Furthermore, social media has influenced them to be more confident as it allows them to get into the women community that they experience is a supportive environment:" So, for a woman that living in Indonesia it is good if we have a good role model that can influence our opinion about our position or our position as women especially in Indonesia" (Fgd B, 2025).

Social media validates ideas that some of the women have grown up with, even though the ideas might not have been part of the leading norms in society. Social media also impacted them to feel better as women, and influences them to follow their path, regardless of whether it is to be a stay-at-home mom or working mom. From a transnational feminist perspective, globalization shapes women's view of their identity as women, while not necessarily changing it. Instead, globalization can confirm values that the women might have grown up with but have not been part of the dominant view or norms in their local society. Furthermore, from a scattered hegemonies lens, this shows that traditional values and global influences are linked. Since views that have been marginalized in society due to historical structures and

patriarchal norms can be influenced and strengthened through globalization. Furthermore, it shows that the women's experiences are shaped by historical and local power structures, but that social media can influence their component as women in their identity. This is achieved by either changing or confirming values that have not been the leading values in society, which shows the identity as a dynamic process. By an intersectional lens, it also shows how different components interact, for example, the fact that a woman's mom is working and not her friends. It shows that components are historical structures, class, and the local as well as the national context.

7. Discussion

In this section, the results and analysis will be discussed in relation to the study's research questions and theoretical framework. It will be divided into three sections based on the research questions, and discuss the findings presented in section six.

7.1 What are the experiences of young women in Indonesia regarding the use of social media to promote gender equality?

The first research question was based on previous research on Indonesia, where it had been argued that social media can help to increase gender equality in Indonesia. The empirical results in this study showed that the women included in my study did experience social media as a tool for raising awareness about gender inequality. However, social media does not seem to have the same potential to bring about fundamental change in real life. The current gender inequality in Indonesia is still rooted in the society's historical patriarchal norms. The global promotion and activism of gender equality is a competing power system, but both power systems can coexist and affect women. However, this does not mean that social media has no effect at all. An interesting finding in the results was about generations and norms, one woman said: "think it is starting to be equal in our generation and maybe because were exposed to media, conversation and raising awareness on social media". This indicates that one component that prevents the promotion of gender equality from social media impacting the women's local society is not only due to patriarchal structures, but also because of a generational divide. The influence from social media might not have a direct impact, but it impacts the women's mindset, and, in the women's experiences, their generation's mindset on

societal norms such as gender equality. Furthermore, that aligns with the Hasan et.al (2023) research that social media can influence adolescents in Indonesia mindset on societal norms, through exposure to other cultures' views. This indicates that social media can work as a tool for increasing gender equality in Indonesia, not directly, but over time. Since it is impacting the newer generations' mindset on gender equality's definition and meaning. This aligns with Purwaningtyas (2021) study on how feminist activists on social media tried to change the meaning of gender equality in Indonesia by their digital activism. Additionally, some women in the study did view social media as a tool that contributed to discussions about sensitive subjects and perspectives that changed the current gender roles. The discussions on social media about the stay-at-home dad did the women experience contributed to normalizing men's role in society. Furthermore, by normalizing men's participation in responsibilities that have traditionally been seen as women's assignments, this demonstrates that social media can work toward encountering patriarchal values, as Purwaningtyas (2021) and Maryani (2018) pointed out. Furthermore, patriarchal structures still exist on social media, which indicates that even though social media can influence people's mindset, there are still other influences on social media that can also influence people's views.

This shows that social media can work as a platform for increasing gender equality in Indonesia, not directly but indirectly over time, by challenging traditional gender roles and changing new generations' mindset on societal norms.

7.2 Do female students in Indonesia experience conflicts between global influences from social media and traditional societal norms, and if so, in what ways?

The second research question revolves around how globalisation contributes to other perspectives that might challenge the current societal norms in Indonesia. The findings indicate that global influences from social media, such as the views on societal norms, can lead to conflicts with current traditional norms in Indonesian society. Some women experienced that they could navigate between global influences and traditional norms, which shows that they view themselves as active participants. This aligns with the results from Wayan Suyadnya's (2009) and Kusujiarti, (2015) studies, that women can choose which influences to enrich them and reject the others. Furthermore, this supports how global influences through social media can enrich women, instead of isolating them or creating conflicts with their local society. Moreover, when the women experienced influence or opinions that they did not agree with, for example, a role model's views, the women would

unfollow them. This emphasizes their role as active participants in navigating between the global influences. However, some women experienced that not all global influences from other cultures were allowed in the Indonesian society, and when trying to implement those influences in the Indonesian society, it could create conflicts. The conflict and tension can come from the global influences not aligning with the Indonesian society's values, especially in global discourses on societal norms such as gender equality. The women had experienced patriarchal norms in their environment, for example, by teachers in their school. Another reason why global discourses could create conflict within the women's society's traditional norms where that the women had encountered there was a generational difference in people's mindset. The women had experiences that different generations have different mindsets when it came to societal norms and new thoughts, this could be due to a generational divide in using social media, one woman described: "… our people, especially the boomers, think in a patriarchal way so" (Fgd A, 2025).

This implies that in Indonesia, there is unequal access to globalization flows, where the influence that aligns with the society's views and norms is accepted, and otherwise dismissed. This indicates that the women have experienced conflicts between global influences from social media and traditional norms in Indonesian society. However, at the same time, the women are active agents who influence what enriches them.

7.3 What influence has social media had on the identity formation of young female university students in Indonesia, a society with strong traditions, and how can this be understood from a transnational feminism perspective?

This section discusses the results and analysis compared to the third research question, which concerns how women in Indonesia's identity formation is shaped by social media, especially with a focus on them living in a society with strong traditions. How does the increased usage and availability of social media interact with women in Indonesia's traditional society, and how do women experience influences from social media on shaping the women's identities and their self-sense?

From a transnational feminism perspective, the results show that through globalisation and the usage of social media, the increased flows can both contribute positively and negatively impact women's identities due to increased multiple surroundings. This aligns with previous research, such as Abbasovna (2024). In addition, the women described how they could get overwhelmed due to the increased flows, but also how social media helps them explore their

identity. Furthermore, even though women could experience that globalisation created both positive and negative effects, they do not contradict themselves. Instead, these influences coexist from multiple social surroundings, and it is part of the dynamic process of women's identity formation, which aligns with findings by Kusujiarti (2015). Furthermore, social media provides for dominant norms to be challenged and encounter patriarchal structures. This can strengthen one component of women's identity, their experience of what it means to be a woman.

Transnational feminism shows that women's identity is not only shaped through their society or nationality but also the global world. Globalisation sheds light on the current historical and patriarchal power structures that affect women when navigating their identity, while also highlighting how social media shapes women's identity formation. As well as, how women are active participants in accepting or resisting different global influences.

8. Conclusion

For Indonesia and its democracy to have a sustainable development and be part of creating peaceful societies, there is a need for increased gender equality. Furthermore, gender equality is not only about legal rights, but also about how women see themselves as equal actors to men. In addition, with the increased globalisation and usage of social media, it contributes to multiple social surroundings on how different societal norms are exercised. This can contribute to influencing women who are active participants on social media with new perspectives on societal norms, such as gender equality, that may differ from their society's traditional norms.

The new perspectives on gender equality do not have a direct transformative impact on women's local societies, however, the perspectives influence women by providing insights about their rights as women and thus empowering them. In addition, influence on gender equality from social media also leads to an indirect structural change, which leads to changing the newer generations' mindset on societal norms. This is since the younger generations are growing up with multiple societal surroundings and cultural norms, which is due to globalization. However, while this shows that gender equality in Indonesia can increase in the future, this is not completely ensured. This is due to the patriarchal structures that can follow women from their local society to social media, and considering the size of social media, not everyone is influenced by the same perspectives.

The result and discussion also showed that the women have experienced conflicts with global influences and traditional norms and views. From the women's experiences, Indonesia has unequal access to globalization's flows, where the influence that aligns with the society's views and norms is accepted, and other influence is dismissed. However, the women's experiences and thoughts also showed that the women are active agents in being enriched by other cultures' influences and resisting others.

Lastly, social media does impact women's identity formation, which can be understood from a transnational feminist perspective. Due to scattered hegemonies, globalization as a power system can coexist with others, such as patriarchal nationalism, local structures of domination, and the traditions of local societies. The women do navigate between these different power systems when forming their identity, which can empower them, especially regarding their identity as women, and sometimes it leads to tensions with their local society.

However, future research should focus on how women are actively accepting or rejecting influences from social media due to what they believe suits their local society, or because of their thoughts. This is important to understand, so that the promotion of societal norms that challenge the prevailing patriarchal norms can have a chance to have a direct impact on Indonesian society. Social media can work as a tool to improve gender equality in Indonesia and foster sustainable development.

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Appendix 1:

Interview form:

Introduction:

- **Names and questions about how they are.**
- **Presentation about this study and today's discussion.**
- **Information about the ethical principles**

Themes:

1. **Background and their own identity**

- Opening the conversation with warm-up questions: how has your day been, has anyone been to this café before?
- What does identity mean to you, and how would you describe your own identity today? (ex. who you are, your ambitions in life, interests)
- Could you think of any factors that have had the biggest influence on your identity?

2. **Social media and identity formation:**

- Are you using social media consistently?
- *In that case, which platforms are you most active on and why? (If not, why not?)*
- What is your main interest in using social media?
- *Are there any special accounts, influencers, news sources, or communities that inspire you?*
- Where is the social media influence mostly from? Is it content from all around the world, or more specifically, geographic areas such as Europe, Asia, the USA, or maybe just Indonesia?
- *Have you noticed any differences in how people present themself 33on social media platforms (in terms of country differences, gender, community)?*
- Do you feel that social media affects how you see yourself and your identity?
- *Have you felt that social media has helped you explore new perspectives on your identity?*
- *Would you say social media influences are more positive or negative?*
- *Have you ever had the feeling that your values have been challenged or questioned on social media?*

3. **Cultural identity and global influences:**

- What does your cultural identity mean to you? / How do you see your identity connected to your culture and society?
- *Are the same values and norms in your society that you meet online? For example, concerning gender questions/roles?*
- *How does social media affect you and your view of your cultural identity?*
- *Do you experience any conflicts between traditional values and social media? (in the form of ideals or expectations)*

- Which influence on your life would you say global influences have had, if any?
- *In terms of discussions, do you feel it's the same subjects are discussed on social media as in your society?*
- *Why do you think they are the same/ or if they are different?*

4. Social media for increasing gender equality? (1)

- Do you feel that social media is a platform that enables more freedom and opportunity for expression of oneself, or is your experience that it's the opposite?
- Have you felt that social media is promoting gender equality, and if so, to what extent?
- *Have you experienced activism on social media for gender equality? If so, how has the activism been met?*
- What do you think about social media as a tool to empower women? In terms of both economic empowerment and empowerment in the form of how you see your role in society?
- *Have you experienced any groups using social media to promote equality?*
- *Are there situations where you feel social media can create pressure or expectations?*
- *What do you think social media platforms can do to be more inclusive and supportive of women in Indonesia?*

5. Closing reflections:

- Do you think your life and your identity would have looked different if you didn't have access to social media?
- Is there anything else you think I have missed or would like to share? / Is there anything else you think is important to share about your identity or social media's influence?