



EMPOWERING VOICES: HOW DIGITAL MEDIA IS REVOLUTIONIZING FEMINIST WRITING

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Abstract

In the modern world, technology plays a vital role in shaping society. It has become an inseparable part of our lives, revolutionizing various aspects such as communication and entertainment. This article explores how digital media technology is transforming feminist writing and empowering women's voices. By utilizing platforms like websites, blogs, and eBooks, women can amplify their thoughts and bridge existing gaps within the literary world. The implementation of AI algorithms enables the analysis of vast literary works, bringing attention to previously overlooked patterns and biases. This contributes to a more inclusive and diverse literary landscape. The article applies the Neoliberal Feminism concept by Catherine Rottenberg, emphasizing individuals as active participants who can stimulate the economy by regulating government operations. The free and self-regulating market facilitated by digital media empowers women to change their marginal situations. In summary, this article promotes digital media as a potential technology for leveling the playing field for female writers. It enables women's voices to be heard and acknowledged and opens avenues for valuable feedback, guidance, and exposure. This empowerment paves the way for greater representation of women in literature.

Keywords: digital media, feminist writing, neoliberal feminism

INTRODUCTION

The literary world has been influenced by a history of male dominance over women, resulting in certain values and conventions that often prioritize men. As a result, women have found themselves in a constant struggle for gender equality within the literary sphere (Arizah, 2020). As more individuals and groups seek to challenge patriarchal norms and push for greater equality, digital media has emerged as an especially powerful platform for amplifying their voices and promoting their causes. The influence of technology on literature cannot be underestimated, especially in the realm of feminist writing. With the advent of various online platforms and communities, aspiring writers of all genders are now able to showcase their creativity and receive encouragement from like-minded individuals. The virtual world is where many young individuals come across feminism, and it provides them with more than just ideas. They are able to engage in politics, form friendships, and even find love (Phadke & Kanagasabai, 2021). Research has been conducted on the expression of feminism online, and it continues to grow. Such opportunities have undoubtedly contributed to the growth and diversity of literary voices as well, paving the way for a more inclusive and empowering literary landscape.

The purpose of this paper is to shed light on the importance of digital media in feminist writing and the significant changes it has brought about in the movement. It delves into the ways in which digital media has created opportunities for a fresh wave of empowerment, which has helped to revolutionize the feminist movement. As digital media continues to shape the landscape of feminist writing, it is crucial to examine the intersection between neoliberal feminism and its impact on the movement. Neoliberal feminism, characterized by its focus on individual empowerment and market-based solutions, has found an ally in digital media. In this era of digital communication, individuals are given the opportunity to freely express their thoughts and ideas, while the principles of neoliberalism are evident. Women, in particular, are able to utilize their own platforms to share their voices and even generate income from their content. The integration of digital media in feminist literature has been observed to provide a platform for personal empowerment among women. This enables them to effectively express themselves and exercise their fundamental right to control their writing. So, the use of digital media not only

enables feminist writers to work collaboratively but also has the potential to bring about a complete transformation within the individual writer.

There has been a debate among researchers regarding the involvement of women in the digital age, both negative and positive. The first contradiction comes from Cornwall (2018) who observed the idea of neoliberal feminism as only a 'dream' for women. According to him, the phrase "empowering women" suggests that power can be transferred and that women are simply vessels to receive it. The efforts to empower women through market engagement blur the lines between power and money. The pursuit of money is often viewed as having mystical abilities as if women could magically eliminate social norms, emotional connections, and established institutions once they have financial independence.

The second denial is proposed by Nugroho et al. (2013). They justified that the media prioritizes business motives over other considerations, leading to content uniformity and sensationalist reportage. This can hurt the audience and contribute to the banalization of citizens, with potentially serious consequences. Being equivalent to this opinion, Mulya & Sakhiyya (2021) argued that neoliberalism serves as a mechanism to control and monitor performance. This responsibility is more about controlling than following professional ethics.

Another rejection comes from Kalpana Wilson. Wilson (2015) said that neoliberal practice comes from a culture of suspicion rather than trust. Gendered neoliberal practices create selfless female entrepreneurs, portrayed alongside other depictions. Gender and development discourses construct "third world women" in uniformity and as a "powerless" group, often portrayed as implicit victims of certain socio-economic systems (Mohanty, 2003, as seen in Wilson (2015)). It has been noted that women are often taken advantage of by both the state and the market. The state has shifted certain responsibilities onto women that were previously their own (Eisenstein, 2017, as seen in Setyaka (2022)). Meanwhile, the market frequently utilizes women as both consumers and a source of inexpensive labour, as highlighted in the research conducted by Benería, Berik, and Floro in 2016 (Setyaka, 2022).

However, the researchers above focus more on gender equality rather than on how women can exercise their freedom of expression while utilizing digital media to manage their finances. For the positivity of neoliberal feminism in a digital era, digital media has played a significant role in shaping the feminist writing perspective. Riera (2015) depicted the concept of online feminism, which refers to the creation of communities that offer validation, support, education, and empowerment. These communities can also serve as spaces for radicalization and contention, underlining the primary goal of feminist writing in the digital age is to promote collective action. To link this collective movement issue, Marini et al. (2020) justified digital literacy as an ability to share among women. The promotion of digital literacy is essential in overcoming the digital divide that currently exists within Indonesian society. It is vital to make sure that Indonesian women have access to the digital age. This will allow them to achieve greater success in crucial areas like education and the economy.

When discussing the economy, other researchers have already examined the role of digital media in promoting women's empowerment. Boserup (1970, as seen in Hyunanda et al., 2021) argued that the reason for the lack of women's involvement in the economy is due to their exclusion from the economic system, as they are often limited to reproductive responsibilities and unpaid labour. To address this issue, efforts should be made to integrate women into the existing development mechanisms and involve them in the process of growth. By doing so, women can be included in the development process and have a greater impact on the economy.

Moreover, the concept of the free market, as advocated by neoliberalism, has enabled individuals to gain an advantage in establishing their businesses. The way Labor Market Flexibility (LMF) is evolving has a significant impact on the roles women take on within it (Standing, 1999, as seen in Fildzah Izzati, 2020). The globalization trend in the economy has led women to become responsible entrepreneurs, without neglecting their domestic responsibilities (Tyas et al., 2021). There is no denying that women are making strides in the working world. Many women are now the primary breadwinners for their families. That's why digital media is such a great tool for women who want to earn money through writing. It's an excellent way to showcase their abilities and generate income.

Therefore, Quah & Ridgway (2022) are against the advantages. They confirmed that the feminist writing pattern is subject to the demands of an unyielding neoliberal system, which places pressure on women's bodies to continually produce. Therefore, this argument, however, offers a new idea of the importance of individual empowerment in feminist writing proposed in this paper. According to Quah & Ridgway (2022), it is crucial to stand up against domination and mistreatment and to pay attention to our physical well-being. This assertion is recognized in that women have the flexibility to write and generate meaningful writing without being confined by place or time through the usage of personal websites and platforms. We contend that the algorithms utilized in

digital media have the potential to ease the writing process for women, allowing them to write more quickly and productively while also caring for their physical well-being.

After all, digital media is empowering women in the literary world, providing a platform for feminist voices and personal transformation. There is an ongoing discussion about the significance of collective movements and digital literacy in empowering women in the digital era. However, the free market presents women with opportunities to explore entrepreneurship through digital media, which also allows them to prioritize their well-being.

Neoliberal feminism

Feminist writing in the modern era has evolved significantly, transcending traditional boundaries and gaining widespread recognition. As a progressive movement advocating for gender equality, it encompasses various forms such as books, articles, poetry, and blogs, all of which serve as vehicles to express experiences, critiques, and visions within the context of female empowerment. In this digital age, feminist writers can connect with a broader audience, effectively challenging societal norms and inspiring conversations that were once restricted or silenced. Women need to have the freedom to express themselves in whatever way they see fit. Furthermore, the topics that women choose to write about are becoming more intricate and nuanced. Women are now writing with a greater sense of self-awareness, which is reflected in their work. They have realized that they are not simply domestic caretakers but instead must strive for their liberation (Arizah, 2020). With the help of digital media, accessing and spreading writing has become more convenient for women. Thus, it is crucial to examine the role and impact of media on current political identities and actions due to their pervasive presence, normalization, and influence on our daily lives (Fotopoulou, 2016).

The existence of a digital community and the rise of digital literacy assist women not only to work collectively but also individually. In the modern world, the concept of digital community is deeply intertwined with the neoliberalism era. The central principles of this era are centred around promoting self-management, self-monitoring, empowerment, and individualism (Fotopoulou, 2016), which all become fundamental aspects of our daily lives. Digital media is crucial for advancing both group and individual movements. According to Fotopoulou (2016), women are still perceived as "workers" in the digital media world, playing a role in a movement without a clear leader. Specifically, women engage in "connective labour" on social media to support this movement, as described by Boler et al. (2014). Engaging in politics and feminism through digital media, however, involves more than just creating and sharing content, messages, images, data, and metadata. It also involves utilizing digital media practices to facilitate the formation of communities and the transformation of individual subjectivity (Stephansen, 2016). Neoliberalism is founded on the principles of 'individual freedom' and 'personal responsibility' (Aston et al., 2017). This statement suggests that digital media can serve as a means of neoliberalism by offering women individual empowerment.

Catherine Rottenberg explores the connection between neoliberalism and feminism in her book, *The Rise of Neoliberal Feminism* (2017). She examines the mutual entanglement of neoliberalism with feminism. The author argues that neoliberalism is a mindset that views individuals as active participants capable of stimulating the economy by regulating government operations. It can be observed that individuals possess the potential to embark on entrepreneurial ventures and assume responsibility for their prosperity. Rottenberg added that the media has transformed liberal feminism into choice feminism, paving the way for postfeminism and the emergence of neoliberal feminism. There are two notions in which the media gives a path to neoliberal feminism. The first notion is how media constructs a happy work-family balance. Here, Rottenberg (2017) proposed a new model of emancipated womanhood in which a professional woman can balance a successful career with a satisfying family life. Secondly, the number of high-potential, powerful women is increasing, but it is still challenging for them to balance career demands and active family lives. Thus, the second notion links to the issue of the urgency of digital media in assisting women both to work and to spend time with family. It is crucial to highlight the increasing number and diversity of female writers, as a mother's writing style may differ from that of a novelist. It's crucial to emphasize in this paper that feminist writing is undergoing a complete transformation.

Writing can be a powerful tool for promoting positivity and optimism, especially for feminists in today's society. It allows individuals to work through negative emotions and insecurities, leading to a more positive outlook on life. According to Rottenberg (2017), this is particularly important in the context of neoliberalism, which has shaped our understanding of happiness and autonomy. By embracing the "happiness turn," we can cultivate a mindset that is both entrepreneurial and responsible, empowering us to take control of our own lives. Writing can play a crucial role in this process, allowing women to express their opinions, share their experiences, and connect with others. It is also supported by Chester & Nielsen (2013) that writing is essential for women's

liberation from second-class status, poverty, and enforced silence. Ultimately, writing can be a therapeutic tool for women, helping them find relief and build a more positive sense of self.

A revolution in feminist writing during the neoliberal era is evident in the recognition of minority voices in the literary world. Chester and Nielsen (2013) describe a situation where women are rejected by their community for communicating through writing with others. However, neoliberal feminists argue that the success of individual women is also a success for feminism (Rottenberg, 2017). Rottenberg clarified neoliberalism as a dominant political ideology that emphasizes entrepreneurship and capital enhancement in individuals, both in the management of the state and on a personal level. As a result, it creates a new political subjectivity, one that is entrepreneurial. The transformation, according to Rottenberg, encourages people to see themselves as individualized and active subjects responsible for enhancing their well-being. For that reason, minority writers have the chance to be recognized and add to the literary world.

Essentially, neoliberal feminism creates a new type of feminist individual who focuses on personal initiative and innovation. It promotes the idea of finding individual solutions and balancing work and family but paradoxically denies the existence of inequality. Social justice is now being redefined in terms of individual needs.

METHOD

This study is a qualitative description of how digital media empowers women's voices and transforms feminist writing. The focus is on the description and explanation of digital media's role in improving feminist writing by giving example data of feminist writers, bloggers, feminist community websites, and platforms. Data collection took place in August 2023 and involved textual or content analysis, a technique used to investigate group or individuals' experiences and perspectives (Paradis et al., 2016). The primary data source for the study was the scientific paper aimed at the research object, that is digital media and feminist writing. Research articles and reference books provided supporting data for the analysis.

Qualitative data analysis was conducted on the collected data. Bailey (2008, as cited in Harding & Whitehead, 2013) noted that data interpretation and judgment are necessary. Thus, the writer analyzed and interpreted data from relevant journals and books to examine feminist writing in the digital age. A social approach was employed to analyze digital media's role in empowering women's voices and revolutionizing feminist writing. The data analysis involved three stages: analyzing the problem and formulating the research question, identifying a theory to support the issue or problem, and analyzing the data using the theory and presenting the result descriptively.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The theme of "writing as a dangerous profession" was introduced in the Feminist Book Affair, highlighting the struggles faced by women in Spain, Kenya, South Africa, Northern Ireland, and Uruguay. These women have been ostracized by their communities for speaking out about being imprisoned by authorities. However, this adversity has fueled a reaction among women to improve their lives through writing, leading to a rebellion against societal norms. Women are fighting against illiteracy and seeking digital awareness to leverage technology for their benefit. This paper focuses on the role of digital media in empowering female voices and revolutionizing feminist writing. Digital media provides a range of tools and opportunities for writers to disseminate their work, gain visibility, and impact change. Three key findings related to the correlation between digital media and feminist writing will be explained in the following sections.

1. Global Reach and Accessibility

Digital platforms have no boundaries like traditional print media. The rise of digital media has enabled feminist writers to surpass the limitations of traditional publishing channels, including in Indonesia. The internet's vast reach and accessibility, even in remote areas, has empowered marginalized voices to gain prominence and challenge dominant narratives that perpetuate sexism. Works by famous Indonesian writers like Dee Lestari, Reda Gaudiamo, Laksmi Pamuntjak, Intan Paramaditha, Leila S. Chudori, and Clara Ng are easily accessible and distributed locally and globally. Empowering the voices of women and children is the primary focus of their writing. Online publishers, through e-books, allow for easy global distribution and access, making it possible for writers to connect with readers worldwide. The phrase "a world is now at your fingertips" illustrates how close

writers are to their global readers. Newcomers, including indie writers and bloggers, are also gaining popularity. Digital media's role in assisting the emergence of feminist writing works for women from any background, knowledge, and genre to speak their minds and share their stories. This paper eliminates society's judgment of new women's writing quality and focuses on the role of digital media in enabling feminist writing, challenging deeply ingrained cultural norms, and democratizing knowledge. The accessibility of digital media ensures that feminist writing is available to a wider audience, encouraging participation from diverse perspectives.

2. Multimedia Possibilities: Expanding Creative Expression

Feminist writers can use digital media to expand beyond traditional written works and explore various multimedia forms such as visual art, podcasts, video essays, and interactive content. These forms allow for immersive experiences that engage readers and stimulate critical thinking. This paper highlights the potential of multimedia to empower women's voices and challenge societal prejudices towards women's works.

Behind every successful multimedia piece, there is a hidden gem writer who designs the concept and writes the script. AI algorithms can assist in expanding creative expression by providing options to add to the writing. Most feminist writers in this era have inserted visual art into their content. In this era, feminist writers often incorporate visual art into their content to engage their readers. For instance, on Instagram, writers like Kalis Mardiasih (@kalis.mardiasih) and Nadhifa Allya Tsana (@rintiksedu) are not limited to a monotonous writing style but continuously update their writing with fascinating visual art to capture their readers' attention. This means that women's writing is not limited to traditional style, but anyone can share their ideas and opinions creatively through digital media.

Anyone can creatively share their ideas and opinions through digital media, and feminist bloggers can incorporate visual art into their writing as well, which offers a new type of writing that allows for greater creativity. These bloggers target various topics such as beauty and travel blogs (Stella Lee), brain beauty belief (Dian Pelangi), and fashion beauty (Evita Nuh), among others. The attractive display of pictures in their writing room indicates the multimedia possibilities that give feminist writers the freedom to speak in a 'new language' and break free from traditional forms. This boosts women's confidence, and they can include personal photos in their work.

As feminist writers, utilizing multimedia options can help them connect with the audience on a deeper level. This approach promotes empathy and a more comprehensive understanding of intersectional feminism. The use of digital media provides an opportunity for women of all backgrounds and social statuses to express themselves freely. Furthermore, it offers an exciting platform to showcase creativity, connect with a wider audience, and prioritize personal well-being.

3. Engaging with Feedback and Conversation

Feminist writers and their readers can communicate directly and engage in stimulating conversations through digital media. Social media platforms like blogs, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter provide opportunities for women to share their writing and enhance their skills. With AI-powered features like commenting, liking, and sharing, digital media becomes more accessible to society. Feminist writers often express their perspectives on women's oppression through social media posts, advocating for women's well-being. Websites like *Magdalene.to* provide information about marginalized feminist writers and enable them to share their struggles. Through comment sections, social media interactions, and online forums, readers can actively participate in the discourse by adding their perspectives, raising questions, and challenging existing narratives.

Moreover, digital media, such as websites, offers an easily accessible platform for feminist writers to communicate with their readers. *Sociobuzz.com*, for example, takes the concept of neoliberalism and helps women's communities develop. It allows women to productively write and improve their economic status. This dynamic exchange empowers both writers and readers, fostering a sense of community and nurturing a more inclusive movement that continues to evolve and adapt to the changing contours of feminism.

Discussions

In today's world, where neoliberalism and feminism are prevalent, digital media has become a powerful tool for feminist writers to express their ideas, spark conversations, and advocate for gender equality. It has positively transformed the sphere of feminist writing by empowering previously marginalized voices. This sub-chapter will further discuss the above findings.

One of the ways digital media empowers women's voices is by reaching a wider audience. Digital media has made feminist writing more accessible by offering a platform that transcends geographical boundaries. Through various online platforms such as blogs, websites, and social media, feminist writers can share their work with a global audience, allowing their thoughts to reach individuals who may not have had access to feminist literature otherwise.

The advancement of AI in digital media has been significant compared to the 1990s. Despite this, e-books have not been able to replace Codex book sales entirely. Even the most highly praised hypertext fiction has not gained widespread recognition in the literary world due to issues with software and hardware becoming outdated (Montfort and Wardrip-Fruin, 2004; Ensslin 2006; and Moulthrop and Grigar, 2017; as cited in Murray, 2018). In recognition of advancements in technology, AI has become more sophisticated and is now capable of promoting feminist writing on a global scale. Compared to printed books, digital media provides more advantages for writers. Murray suggested that a writer's popularity and impact on readers are influenced by their sales and marketing techniques in the digital media landscape. Digital media enables writers to promote their work globally, engage in live conversations, and incorporate visual art and multimedia elements. This accessibility to a global audience expands their digital network and allows authors to consistently offer their insights on how readers should interpret their work. This prevents them from fading into obscurity within the text.

The concept of democratized publishing has emerged from the perspective of accessibility. Digital publishing platforms have revolutionized the process of publishing feminist writing, breaking down the barriers that traditional publishing houses have upheld in the past. These houses often favored established authors, perpetuating existing power dynamics. In contrast, digital media has allowed anyone to publish their feminist writing, promoting diverse perspectives and challenging the dominance of mainstream narratives. Some digital experts have adopted a neo-liberal approach to management, similar to that of start-ups, resulting in collectives taking over advertising strategies and displaying a "brand" identity (Jouët, 2018). This approach is more systematized, moving beyond the aesthetic or cultural-political considerations of individual texts (Piper, 2015, as seen in Murray, 2018). Women no longer have to be submissive to publishers or other women when selling millions of copies of their books. They can choose a publisher that suits their convenience and distribute their writing in digital media to their friends and community, becoming famous among them. Although people in certain areas may not be familiar with the best writer such as N.H Dini or Dewi (Dee) Lestari, Nunuk Y Kusmiana's novel, *Lengking Burung Kasuari* (the winner of the novel competition award, the Jakarta Arts Council in 2016), has finally gained society's recognition. Her writing, including her debut novel, can be found not only in e-books but in other supportive writing from other women, such as researchers who study her work. AI technology that saves all keywords can show many results related to Kusmiana's works, attracting readers' attention.

It is important to balance global reach and accessibility with the content shared by feminist writers. According to golife.id, Indonesia has at least 15 inspiring female bloggers who represent the empowering voices and revolution of feminist writing. These bloggers, including Reyne Raea, Siti Nurjanah, and Ririe Khayan, have published essential writing on topics such as experimental writing, product and movie reviews, and lifestyle. Some have even won awards for their work. It is crucial for feminist writers to create new knowledge (Marini et al., 2020), and keep up with trends in multimedia choices from digital media platforms. Instagram and YouTube, for example, provide opportunities for these writers to engage and educate through visual storytelling that combines written narratives with images, videos, and artwork. This multimedia approach not only captures the attention of a wider audience but also enables a deeper understanding and emotional connection with feminist ideas. It is important to support and elevate the voices of these feminist writers without being judgmental towards others.

Feminist writing in digital media has the power to challenge and dismantle misogynistic narratives through multiple possibilities. One specific issue in this regard is the use of hyperlinks and hypertexts. According to Brodsky (2022), hyperlinks and hypertexts can be compared to a woman's real body as they disrupt the epistemological structures of the patriarchy by avoiding linear expository prose. This innovative writing style breaks hierarchical boundaries, allowing for a more fluid and imaginative approach to writing. There is no denying that AI engines provide sophisticated tools that enable female writers to utilize features like hyperlinks and hypertext. These tools make it simpler to access their writing and increase its aesthetic value. Feminist writing in the digital era has shattered the patriarchy, offering freedom in both topics and styles. Its influence can be seen in the structures of all feminist narratives on websites and search engines.

Digital media has provided an avenue for intersectionality and inclusivity within feminist writing. In the current neoliberal feminism era, where individuals are free to produce different types of writing and prioritize their well-being, marginalized voices are amplified through digital media. Intersectionality is a vital aspect of digital feminist discourse, recognizing that oppression can be experienced differently based on various social identities.

Online platforms, such as *Magdalene.co*, *Puan Menulis*, and *Blogger Perempuan Network* allow for the sharing of unique experiences, highlighting voices that were previously unheard or marginalized. Writing can empower both communities and individuals. For instance, Raisa Kamila and Erni Aladjai, two marginalized writers from Aceh and Kepulauan Banggai respectively, faced challenges in exposing their voices through writing. Kamila shared her experience of male dominance among writers in Aceh, while Aladjai was prejudiced for writing about her experience teaching at a church. Society is anti-critique and does not recognize writing as a profession. By joining a community, these women strengthen their voices and encourage others to speak out against oppression in their communities. Digital media has created safe spaces for feminist writers to connect and collaborate with like-minded individuals (Clark-Parsons, 2018; Parahita, 2019; as seen in Jinan et al., 2022). Online communities offer a supportive environment for sharing ideas, engaging in intellectual discussions, and collectively challenging patriarchal structures. Through collaborations, feminist writers can push the boundaries of traditional feminist discourse and advocate for more inclusive and diverse perspectives

CONCLUSION

Digital media has also revolutionized feminist writing by fostering a sense of community among writers and readers alike. Social networking platforms and online forums provide spaces for individuals to connect, share ideas, and engage in meaningful dialogues. This digital community catalyzes collaboration, support, and solidarity, amplifying the impact of feminist writing and encouraging further exploration of intersectional perspectives. Through this network, feminists can find solace, inspiration, and empowerment, driving the movement forward.

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