Digital Rights: Feminist Activism of Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression Network (SAFEnet) in Online Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Advocacy

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	Globalization has brought significant changes in global social life, one of which is the presence of digital technology and online platforms. Technology facilitates transnational relations that are vulnerable to digital rights violations. This research discusses the role of SAFEnet or Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression Network in advocating online gender-based violence (GBV). This research uses the concept of digital activism by Vogt and Chen as an approach to analyze the advocacy of GBV cases by SAFEnet. This research found that SAFEnet conducts digital activism such as organizing collective identities, coordinating networks, producing knowledge, disseminating information, and mobilizing actors.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Globalization has brought significant changes to global social life, one of which is the emergence of digital technology and online platforms. While these technologies have the potential to serve as tools for collaboration, their presence also presents new challenges and opportunities in the realm of online gender-based violence (OBGV). Online gender-based violence refers to actions that make someone feel unsafe or even in danger. The causes of OGBV often stem from violations of privacy and/or actions that are not based on consent or mutual agreement between one or more parties.

OGBV is also a concern in International Relations. OGBV is defined by the International Centre for Research on Women as Technology Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV). Examples of actions that can be categorized as OBGV include stalking, harassment, sexual harassment, defamation, hate speech, exploitation, and gender trolling. In addition to the International Center for Research on Women, the Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression Network (SAFEnet), a regional non-profit organization, is also actively engaged in advocacy efforts advocacy efforts in GBV cases.

SAFEnet or the Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression Network is a regional organization focused on the fight for digital rights in Southeast Asia. SAFEnet is based in Bali and has obtained legal recognition from the Indonesian Ministry of Law and Human Rights, with Decision Letter Number AHU-

0000401.AH.01.07 dated January 11, 2019. However, SAFEnet was established as an organization on June 27, 2013, in response to the growing criminalization of freedom of expression in the digital realm. Previously SAFEnet focused solely on monitoring, advocacy, and solidarity for freedom of expression on the Internet before expanding its scope to advocate for digital rights such as access to the Internet and the right to feel safe in the digital realm. Some regional actions undertaken by SAFEnet include solidarity for Freedom of Expression in Southeast Asia through the #SavetheDaily Cambodia campaign, issuing a statement opposing the imprisonment of bloggers in Vietnam, and launching Awas OBGV through various activities such a s#SpeakYourself at the Army Day Conference, BTS's anniversary, Army, and SAFEnet, collaborating with FESTApora.

Based on SAFEnet's focus and its initiative to launch Awas OBGV, the author found that SAFEnet engages in digital feminist action. Through SAFEnet's social media platforms and its connection to the Awas OBGV platform, SAFEnet frequently conducts educational and advocacy actions. Regarding digital feminist activism, [1] argue that the internet has become a primary tool for feminists to empower themselves and develop resources, such as organizing collective identities, coordinating networks, producing knowledge, disseminating information, and mobilizing actors.4 Entering the early 21st century, the discourse of feminism on the internet has evolved with the emergence of various digital feminist platforms, such as SAFEnet, which launched Awas OBGV.

In this study, the author will analyze in depth the digital feminist activism carried out by SAFEnet in advocating for issues of Online Gender-Based Violence in Southeast Asia by examining how SAFEnet works to develop resources, such as organizing collective identity, coordinating networks, producing knowledge, disseminating information, and mobilizing actors. This research will produce an understanding of the OGBV advocacy carried out by SAFEnet from the perspective of digital feminist activism

and serve as a learning experience for feminist activists who focus on issues of gender-based violence.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Analyzing digital activism requires a review of previous literature. Three previous studies were found, divided into three categories: digital feminist activism, campaign strategy on digital activism, and online gender-based violence.

2.1 Digital Feminist Activism

[2] Digital Feminist Activism: Analysis Jakarta Feminist as a Collective Identity, Resource, Network, Information Dissemination, and Mobilization. This article discusses a case study of Jakarta Feminist by analyzing in depth how Jakarta Feminist works in digital feminist activism to organize collective identity, develop resources, coordinate networks, disseminate information, and mobilize social actors. This research uses qualitative methods and is compared with social network and textual analysis approaches. The results show that Jakarta Feminist engages in digital feminist activism and combines its work online and offline.

2.2 Campaign Strategy on Digital Activism

[3] The Use of Message Appeals in Online Gender-Based Violence Prevention Campaign Strategies. With the increase in cases of gender-based violence, the Digital At-Risk Division of SAFEnet launched the Awas OBGV campaign as a form of public awareness, but the message strategy used has not yet succeeded in increasing interest. Therefore, the research conducted by [4] focuses on analyzing the strengths and challenges of using message appeals as a strategy for the Beware of GBV campaign. This research uses interview, observation, and literature review techniques. The results of this research suggest that SAFEnet's Digital At-Risk Division evaluate their campaign strategy and also suggest doing so with a more humanistic approach.

2.3 Online Gender Based Violence

[5] From the Streets to the Web: Looking at Feminist Activism on social media. This research is based on the researcher's interests and experiences. This study aims to explore conversations on the topic of rape on certain platforms. This study uses the interview method with 13 informants. The results show that although reports of OBGV can be facilitated well with the presence of digital technology, this still faces challenges from law enforcement agencies that are unfriendly to marginalized communities.

Based on the three previous literature reviews, the author selected them based on indicators that align with the theory, topic, and research objectives. However, these three literature reviews differ from this study. In the article written by [2], the theory and conceptual framework will contribute to this research, but the difference in research objects will be the distinguishing factor, and Annisa does not specifically mention cases involving digital feminist activism carried out by Feminist Jakarta. Meanwhile, this research specifically selects the case of OBGV advocacy carried out by SAFEnet using a digital feminist activism approach.

The second article, written by Ratnasari et al. (2020), provides new information regarding the campaign strategies implemented by SAFEnet's At-Risk Division, which have not yet attracted public attention. This article contributes to the understanding of SAFEnet in this study and further explores whether the digital feminist activism strategies implemented by SAFEnet can empower and bring about social change. Although both studies use SAFEnet as the research object, the theories used are different, so the novelty of this research remains.

[5], like the second article, contributes to deepening this research by presenting arguments about the challenges faced by digital feminist activism, namely the lack of supportive regulatory integration. Subramanian's article also discusses OBGV, but does not specifically mention the actors involved in advocating and conducting digital feminist activism regarding OBGV. Meanwhile, this research specifically mentions the actors involved in this matter, so this research will contribute to the knowledge of actors about digital feminist activism.

After identifying the gaps in the three articles, the author boldly raises the topic of Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression Network (SAFEnet) Digital Feminist Activism in Online Gender-Based Violence (OBGV) Advocacy as a new form of digital feminist activism and contributes to online advocacy activities for OBGV cases.

3. METHODS

This study uses qualitative research methods with a descriptive explanatory approach. Data collection techniques include document and literature studies of the official SAFEnet and Awas OBGV platforms, as well as other literature, namely books, journals, articles, reports from SAFEnet, and other official sources deemed relevant to the research problem.

4. CONCEPT OF DIGITAL FEMINIS ACTIVISM

Online activism can be divided into three categories. First, advocacy/awareness. On the internet, awareness is raised by disseminating information related to events that do not receive attention from the mainstream media. Second, organization/mobilization. The internet can be used to gather public opinion and mobilize the masses. This is done by spreading calls for offline action, calls for online action (e.g., the use of hashtags), and online actions that are generally carried out online. Third, action/reaction. This action refers to hacktivism activities.

Previous research on digital activism has focused on human rights movements.10 In addition, digital activism also focuses on participation in protest campaigns. The main concept of digital activism was presented by [6]. Cammaerts argues that social media supports active communicative practices using social media platforms. In its contribution to movements, social media functions and operates both internally and externally. Externally, social media acts and functions as a communication medium for organizations to coordinate. Externally, social media acts and functions to form an independent alternative communication channel and as a strategy of resistance. In addition, social media can be used to distribute content uploaded by activists that has the potential to go viral and be discussed by the media.

Cyberfeminism is an idea derived from feminism as an initial effort to empirically examine the development of contemporary technology to explore the disparities between gender identity, culture, and technology. Initially, cyberfeminism sought to change the situation where there was a dichotomy between women and men in digital discourse. This discourse can be countered by using digital media to encourage women's participation in the fields of technology and information. In relation to this research, the feminist movement in the digital realm can contribute to combating gender inequality in the digital realm, including online gender-based violence.

Based on the previous explanation and what the researcher observed in the advocacy carried out by SAFEnet through the Awar OBGV platform, SAFEnet engages in digital feminist activism, which is a combination of digital activism and cyberfeminism. This is because the discourse raised by SAFEnet is not only generally about human rights but also specifically combats gender inequality, which results in online gender-based violence.

Therefore, the researcher considers that the concept of digital feminist activism by Vogt & Chen as a form of resource development—organizing collective identities, coordinating networks, producing knowledge, disseminating information, and mobilizing actors—is the most appropriate for analyzing this topic, as previously explained.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Online Gender Based Violence

Analyzing their collective identity is a concept created by [7] which is defined from their social movements.14 Meanwhile, the context of collective identity in activism on social media, [8] identified using iconography or lexicon such as hashtags or slogans, icons, and names on group or individual accounts in certain activism. Meanwhile, feminism is a collective identity shared by individuals or groups with common interests, experiences, beliefs, and solidarity among them.

SAFEnet or Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression Network is a regional organization focused on the struggle for digital rights in the Southeast Asian region. SAFEnet is based in Bali and has been legally recognized by the Indonesian Minister of Law and Human Rights, with Decision Letter Number AHU-0000401.AH.01.07 dated January 11, 2019. However, SAFEnet was officially established on June 27, 2013, amid increasing criminalization of freedom of expression in the digital realm. Previously, SAFEnet focused on monitoring, advocacy, and solidarity for freedom of expression on the Internet, and later expanded its efforts to include advocating for digital rights such as internet access and the right to feel safe in the digital realm. SAFEnet's resources consist of Supervisors, Administrators, and Members. Its members work independently in various cities across Indonesia, such as Palembang, Pekanbaru, Jakarta, Bogor, Semarang, Yogyakarta, Banyuwangi, Surabaya, Samarinda, Pontianak, Makassar, Denpasar, Ambon, and Papua.17 Therefore, the national identity of SAFEnet's resources is Indonesia.

Based on data obtained from SAFEnet's social media accounts, the collective identity used can be seen from the slogans and hashtags created by SAFEnet. "DIGITAL RIGHTS are human rights that guarantee every citizen the right to access, use, create, and distribute digital media." This data highlights SAFEnet's vision, emphasizing "DIGITAL RIGHTS" as the collective identity of SAFEnet. When visiting SAFEnet's homepage, whether on its website or social media, one will find the slogan "Defending digital rights in Southeast Asia." Additionally, SAFEnet consistently provides a link to join as a volunteer, requiring those interested to demonstrate a commitment to human rights issues. Therefore, based on SAFEnet's Vision and Slogan, it can be concluded that SAFEnet's collective identity is to advocate for human rights in the digital realm.

Figure 1. About SAFEnet
Source: SAFEnet Website

SAFEnet's collective identity can be seen from the series of hashtags it has created on Twitter. The hashtags created by SAFEnet on Twitter reveal the identity of human resources who support freedom of expression.

Table 1. Hashtag SAFEnet on Twitter

#RevisiTotalUUITE #SemuaBisaKena #KitaBerhakKritis #KamiBersamaFatiaHaris #ReformasiDikorupsi #PapuaBukanTanahKosong #KriminalisasiMenghantui #SocialMedia4Peace #KoalisiDAMAI #SaveVOD #IYDRC #DataPrivacyDay #TibaTibaDipenjara #TolakPengesahanRKUHP #SavetheDaily #BeraniLawanGH #BokirKominfo #ProtesNetizen #digitalrights

Source: SAFEnet Twitter

In addition to SAFEnet's social media accounts, SAFEnet has also created a special social media account called Awas OBGV, which specifically discusses online gender-based violence. The hashtags created are also diverse and reflect SAFEnet's feminist identity.

Table 2. Hashtag Against GBV on Twitter

#SemuaBisaKena #CabutPasalBermasalahRKUHP #ratifyC190 #ratifikasiKILO190 #SecondaryTrauma #bystandertukruangaman #WFH #activebystander #TolakJRPermendikbudPPKS #PemulihanUntukKorban #DatingApps #LGBTIQ #IWD2022 #PerempuanMasaKini $StopOBGV #30TahunBersuara #BreakTheBias #Permendikbudristekno30 #Impersonating #RelasiKuasa #Consent #FRIES #LoveScam #PenipuCinta #TinderSwindler #ThereIsHelp #UUITE #SpillThetea #KamiBersamaKorban #AwasKBG #GerakBersama #LawanKekerasanSeksual #OBGV #PahamiOBGV

Source: SAFEnet Twitter

The feminist identity carried by SAFEnet can be seen from the accounts it follows, as follows: @magdaleneid @jurnalperempuan @womencoalition @jakartafeminist @equals @GenderITorg @BlackFemFund @numunfund @askhelpnona @LenteraID @laki-lakibaru.

Based on data compiled from resources, vision, slogans, hashtags, and accounts followed by SAFEnet, it can be concluded that the collective identity built by SAFEnet is Southeast Asia, Indonesia, Freedom of Expression, Human Rights, and Feminism.

5.2 SAFEnet Network Coordination

Networks according to [9] are a form of "social sense" as a natural process that emerges from the development of a movement. [10] also define social networks as relationships built between social actors. Networks are not only formed from interactions between social movements and certain media or authorities or movement organizations and related parties, but network ties can also be one of the determining factors for successful mobilization.

Based on data on the SAFEnet website, the SAFEnet network is formed starting from Indonesia consisting of NGOs and communities, the Private Sector, and Campus. SAFEnet also opens networks with organizations and institutions in the Philippines, Cambodia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. In addition, it also opens networks with other regional organizations. The following data is available at https://safenet.or.id/id/jaringan/.

Based on the information and network data available on the SAFEnet website, SAFEnet has established networks not only in Southeast Asia but also globally. The accounts linked to SAFEnet's social media accounts illustrate that SAFEnet is active and well-known in the field of freedom and safety of expression in the digital realm.

5.3 Spreading Feminist Information and Content

Efforts to spread ideas and information are based on understanding and the type of movement (feminist movements with feminist ideas) through interactions with friends, family, and in the context of social media, ideas can be spread by influential accounts.

On SAFEnet's Twitter account, SAFEnet interacts with friends by mentioning accounts relevant to the content. In addition to mentioning relevant accounts on social media, SAFEnet also uses videos on YouTube to convey its information. Furthermore, through online information dissemination, SAFEnet also uses a hybrid approach.

5.4 Mobilization

The effectiveness of social media as a mobilization tool, supported by established networks and collective identity, is a determining factor in the mobilization process. Mobilization, according to [11], is the process of distributing resources to support protest actions. The subjects determining the occurrence of mobilization can be individual activists, groups, or movement organizations.

SAFEnet has conducted numerous mobilization actions built on the bonds of a network of friends by using hashtags such as

#SaveTheDailyCambodia, releasing statements opposing the imprisonment of bloggers in Vietnam, #SpeakYourself at the Army Day Conference, BTS, Army, and SAFEnet anniversaries, collaborating with FESTApora, #KitaBerhakKritis, and supporting victims of sexual violence with the hashtag #BeraniLawanGH alongside LBH APIK Jakarta, among other tactical and theoretical mobilizations.
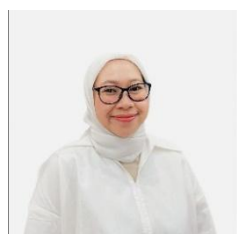
6. CONCLUSION

So far, what I can conclude is that the concept of digital feminist activism by Vogt &—organizing collective identities, coordinating networks, producing knowledge, disseminating information, and mobilizing actors—is how SAFEnet operates. This research has a place in International Relations studies: First, because SAFEnet is a regional organization that builds networks in Southeast Asian countries and intervenes in human rights violations occurring in Southeast Asian countries. Second, OBGV caused by globalization can connect perpetrators and victims in different countries. Third, the relationship in point two can change the views of the global community through a country with online interaction, making it public consumption and allowing it to become one of the indicators in foreign relations.

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