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### Digital Political Practices: *Speaking Out* on Gender-Based Violence Narratives in *Broken Strings*

*Praktik Politik Digital: Speaking Out atas Narasi Kekerasan Berbasis Gender dalam Buku Broken Strings*

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#### Abstract

This study aims to analyze how public responses to the narratives presented in the book *Broken Strings* shape digital political practices and generate emotional responses within digital spaces that later develop into speaking out practices related to gender-based violence. This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study method through documentation analysis of screenshots of public comments on social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and X. The data were analyzed using the perspective of *affective publics*, which emphasizes the role of emotions in shaping public connectedness within digital communication. The findings show that comment sections function not only as spaces for sharing personal experiences, but also as arenas for emotional resonance, digital solidarity, and support for survivors of gender-based violence. The study further reveals that the circulation of emotions such as empathy, trauma, and support within digital interactions enables personal experiences to develop into collective narratives that strengthen public awareness of gender issues.

**Keywords:** Affective Publics, Gender-Based Violence, Social Media, Speaking Out

#### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana respons publik terhadap narasi pengalaman dalam buku *Broken Strings* membentuk praktik politik digital dan memunculkan respons emosional di ruang digital yang berkembang menjadi praktik *speaking out* terkait isu kekerasan berbasis gender. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus melalui analisis dokumentasi berupa tangkapan layar komentar publik pada platform media sosial seperti TikTok, Instagram, dan X. Data dianalisis menggunakan perspektif *affective publics* yang menekankan peran emosi dalam membentuk keterhubungan publik dalam komunikasi digital. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kolom komentar tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai ruang berbagi pengalaman personal, tetapi juga sebagai arena terbentuknya resonansi emosional, solidaritas digital, dan dukungan terhadap penyintas kekerasan berbasis gender. Temuan penelitian juga menunjukkan bahwa sirkulasi emosi seperti empati, trauma, dan dukungan dalam interaksi digital memungkinkan pengalaman personal berkembang menjadi narasi kolektif yang memperkuat kesadaran publik terhadap isu gender.

**Kata Kunci:** *Affective Publics*, Kekerasan Berbasis Gender, Media Sosial, *Speaking Out*



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## INTRODUCTION

The development of digital media has transformed the way publics are formed, interact, and respond to various social issues within the contemporary public sphere. Whereas the public sphere was previously understood as an arena of rational deliberation, as proposed by Jürgen Habermas, the dynamics of public communication in today's digital context have undergone a significant shift. Public interaction is no longer driven solely by rational argumentation, but also by the circulation of emotions across digital platforms. Emotions have become an essential component of public communication because they foster engagement, solidarity, and experiential resonance among individuals connected through digital networks.<sup>1</sup> This condition demonstrates that the digital public sphere functions not only as a space for the exchange of opinions, but also as an arena in which collective emotions are produced and circulated.

Several studies have shown that social media provides a space for survivors to express experiences of violence that were previously difficult to disclose in the public sphere. Research on women's storytelling accounts on social media indicates that narratives of survivors' experiences often trigger diverse public responses, including support, empathy, and debate within comment sections.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, studies on narrative approaches to the experiences of survivors of gender-based violence emphasize that the articulation of personal experiences can broaden public understanding of the complexity of survivors' experiences while simultaneously opening spaces for empathy within society.<sup>3</sup> These studies suggest that the practice of speaking out through digital media plays an important role in generating public discourse on gender-based violence.

Within the study of politics and emotions, Barry Richards highlights the importance of placing emotion at the center of our understanding of political dynamics. Richards argues for the need to place "emotion at the heart of our understanding of politics" and advocates the creation of "a healthier emotional sphere" in public communication.<sup>4</sup> This perspective demonstrates that emotion is not merely a supplementary aspect of political communication, but rather an element that actively shapes public engagement. Further discussions on emotions within digital spaces have developed through the concept of *affective publics* introduced by Zizi Papacharissi. This concept explains that publics in the digital era can emerge through the circulation of emotions that connect individuals within online communication networks.

According to Papacharissi, *affective publics* refer to networks of individuals connected through emotional expressions circulating within digital media. In this context, emotions are understood as dynamic capacities formed through interactions among actors, technologies, and social practices across different spatial and temporal contexts. Publics are therefore constituted not only through shared interests or rational argumentation, but also through shared feelings that arise when individuals respond to a particular issue. The characteristics of *affective publics* include

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- 1 Margreth Lünenborg, "Affective Publics," in *Affective Societies* (Routledge, 2019), 319–29, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351039260-28>; Yogi Friando, Hanna Aditya Pradini, and Irwa Rochimah, "Virtual Public Sphere Sebagai Strategi Brand Engagement: Quantitative Content Analysis #kahfeveryday Di Platform TikTok," *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Pemberdayaan Masyarakat (SENDAMAS)* 5, no. 1 (January 23, 2026): 24, <https://doi.org/10.36722/psn.v5i1.4898>.
  - 2 Lasmary Girsang and Tesalonika Hasugian, "Examining Digital Activism through Sentiments for Feminism Issues on Instagram (Case Study @perempuanberkisah)," *Communicatus: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi* 9, no. 1 (2025): 57–72, <https://doi.org/10.15575/cjik.v9i1.45041>.
  - 3 Fabrizio Santoniccolo et al., "Gender and Media Representations: A Review of the Literature on Gender Stereotypes, Objectification and Sexualization," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 20, no. 10 (May 2023): 5770, <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20105770>.
  - 4 B Richards, "NEWS AND THE EMOTIONAL PUBLIC SPHERE," in *The Routledge Companion to News and Journalism* (Routledge, 2009), 345–55, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203869468-37>.

emotional expression in digital communication, the circulation of emotions through various forms of online interaction, emotional connectedness among individuals who may not personally know one another, and the blurring boundaries between personal experiences and public discourse. Within this dynamic, personal experiences shared in digital spaces may evolve into collective narratives that shape how the public understands a particular issue.<sup>5</sup>

Previous studies on gender-based violence in digital media have shown that social media functions as an important space for survivors to share traumatic experiences and gain public attention regarding issues of violence against women. Other studies have highlighted that public responses in online discussions often emerge in the form of empathy, support, debate, and even victim-blaming within comment sections.<sup>6</sup> In addition, research on digital activism has demonstrated that speaking out practices through social media contribute to raising public awareness and challenging patriarchal norms in contemporary society.<sup>7</sup> However, these studies still tend to focus primarily on survivors' narratives, online discourse patterns, or sentiment categorization of public responses as either supportive or dismissive. As a result, they provide limited explanation of how emotions expressed in digital interactions circulate and create emotional connectedness among individuals in online communication networks. Furthermore, previous research has rarely examined how personal experiences of gender-based violence can develop into collective narratives through emotional resonance, solidarity, and shared experiences in digital spaces.

Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap by analyzing public responses to the narratives presented in *Broken Strings* through the perspective of *affective publics*. Within digital communication spaces, responses to speaking out narratives often trigger the circulation of emotions such as empathy, anger, and solidarity, which can connect individuals within broader communication networks. These emotional interactions demonstrate that digital publics are formed not only through rational discussion, but also through shared affective experiences that shape collective engagement in online spaces. By employing the concept of *affective publics* introduced by Zizi Papacharissi, this study aims to understand how emotional expressions in digital responses contribute to the formation of emotional connectedness, collective meaning-making, and speaking out practices surrounding issues of gender-based violence in the digital public sphere.

## Method

This study employs a qualitative research method to explore and understand how individuals or groups interpret and assign meaning to social issues within society.<sup>8</sup> A qualitative approach was chosen because this study seeks to understand how the public interprets narratives of gender-based violence represented in the book *Broken Strings* and how these interpretations are expressed through speaking out practices in digital spaces. Qualitative research emphasizes the description and interpretation of subjective meanings within their natural contexts, viewing social phenomena as inseparable from the experiences, perspectives, and interactions of the

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5 Zizi Papacharissi, *Affective Publics* (Oxford University Press, 2014), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199999736.001.0001>.

6 Nikki Olszewski and Tiffany Lavis, "Victim Blaming on Social Media: How User Comments Impact Perceptions," *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law*, November 23, 2025, 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13218719.2025.2570383>.

7 Fouzia Younas, Mustafa Naseem, and Maryam Mustafa, "Patriarchy and Social Media," in *Proceedings of the 2020 International Conference on Information and Communication Technologies and Development* (New York, NY, USA: ACM, 2020), 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.1145/3392561.3394639>.

8 John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches (4th Ed.)*, Sage Publications, 2014.

individuals involved.<sup>9</sup> Through this approach, the study aims to capture the complexity of emotional responses and public interactions surrounding the issue of gender-based violence in online environments.

The study applies a case study approach, focusing specifically on public responses to the narratives of gender-based violence in *Broken Strings* as a form of digital political practice. A case study approach enables an in-depth analysis of a bounded system in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the context and dynamics surrounding the phenomenon. Through this approach, the researcher is able to identify patterns of interaction, forms of public responses, and the construction of discourse related to speaking out practices in digital spaces. The case study method also allows for a deeper understanding of how public responses are formed, negotiated, and given meaning within the digital public sphere.

Data collection was conducted through online observation and documentation of comments and public conversations discussing *Broken Strings* across digital platforms. The data were obtained from public comments on TikTok, X, and Instagram posts related to the book by Aurelie Moeremans during January 2026. Data collection also involved documentation techniques using keywords relevant to the research focus, such as “Broken Strings,” “speaking out,” “gender-based violence,” “public response,” and “digital discourse.” The collected data were analyzed using content analysis with a descriptive-interpretative approach to identify dominant themes, interaction patterns among users, evolving discourses, and representations of gender within digital spaces.<sup>10</sup> The data selection process was conducted gradually by considering relevance to the research focus, discussion context, interaction intensity, and direct connection to issues of gender-based violence.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Representation of Gender-Based Violence Narratives in *Broken Strings*

The literary and social discourse landscape in Indonesia in early 2026 was marked by the publication of the memoir *Broken Strings: Fragments of a Stolen Youth* by Aurelie Moeremans. The release of this book quickly attracted public attention and became widely discussed across various digital platforms, generating debates and conversations within society.<sup>11</sup> The popularity of the memoir is closely related to the author’s courage in revealing personal experiences of gender-based violence, an issue that has long been surrounded by stigma and a culture of silence. The narrative presented in the book offers intimate and emotionally compelling testimony, encouraging readers not only to empathize with the survivor but also to reflect critically on the social position of victims within patriarchal structures.

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9 Dewi Purnama Tri Wulandari and Aida Rahmi Nasution Sari, “Deskripsi Mendalam Untuk Memastikan Keteralihan Temuan Penelitian Kualitatif,” *Jurnal Literasiologi* 11, no. 2 (2024), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.47783/literasiologi.v11i2.674>.

10 Nur Khoirun Nisa, Nurul Kamilatul Khoironi, and Siti Mutholingah, “Digital Transformation: The Role Of Social Media In Strengthening Gender Inclusion In Contemporary Public Spaces,” *Equality: Journal of Gender, Child and Humanity* 01, no. 2 (2023): 57–63, <https://ejournal.iai-tabah.ac.id/equality/id/article/view/3509>.

11 Sri Asfirawati Halik and Firkawati Firkawati, “Analisis Relasi Kuasa Abusif Terhadap Profesionalisme: Tinjauan Manajemen SDM Atas Buku Broken Strings,” *RIGGS: Journal of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Business* 5, no. 1 (February 13, 2026): 3030–37, <https://doi.org/10.31004/riggs.v5i1.6152>.



**Figure 1.** Cover of *Broken Strings*

*Source: Moeremans*

Conceptually, sexual harassment is understood as any form of sexually oriented behavior or action that is unwanted by the victim. Such actions may include verbal remarks, gestures, physical contact, or other forms of treatment that create discomfort, humiliation, intimidation, or feelings of degradation. More broadly, sexual harassment also encompasses unwanted sexual attention in verbal, nonverbal, and physical forms.<sup>12</sup> These actions often reflect unequal power relations in which perpetrators attempt to assert dominance and control over victims (Narto & Rizky, 2023). In *Broken Strings* (see Figure 1), sexual harassment is explicitly represented through the author's personal experiences, particularly through verbal comments directed at the victim's body, such as:<sup>13</sup>

*"You tricked me with your bra. I thought they'd be bigger. You're lucky I like small ones," he smirked.*

*"You should really take care of your skin, it's dry."*

*"Your lips down there, they're shaped kind of weird."*

These statements illustrate forms of verbal sexual harassment that position the female body as an object of sexual evaluation. Expressions such as "You tricked me with your bra" and "You're lucky I like small ones" demonstrate how women's bodies are framed according to male preferences and standards. Such remarks not only contain sexual connotations but also demean the victim's physical condition, causing discomfort and humiliation. Furthermore, comments targeting intimate body parts, such as "your lips down there," reveal the objectification of women's bodies, where the victim is treated as an object open to judgment and criticism by the perpetrator. Within the context of gender-based violence, these forms of interaction can be categorized as unwanted sexual attention that may lead to psychological distress. The narrative also reflects unequal power relations, where the perpetrator assumes legitimacy in making sexually degrading comments toward the victim.

In the context of gender representation in media, Peracullo, as cited in Asis, argues that regardless of how women are portrayed in digital media spaces, they are often still positioned as

12 Arislawati Lintang Azhari et al., "Persepsi Masyarakat Terhadap Pelecehan Seksual Di Media Sosial (Studi Kasus: Komentar Negatif Pada Akun Azizah Shalsa)," *JOSH: Journal of Sharia* 4, no. 02 (June 21, 2025): 244–58, <https://doi.org/10.55352/josh.v4i02.1928>.

13 Aurélie Moeremans, *Broken Strings: Kepingan Masa Muda Yang Patah*, 1st ed. (Yogyakarta: Ohara Books, 2026).

objects of male sexual fantasy.<sup>14</sup> This perspective suggests that representations of women are frequently embedded within patriarchal constructions that objectify women's bodies and experiences. In this regard, the narrative presented in *Broken Strings* can be understood as an attempt to shift women's positions from objects of representation to subjects with agency and voice. The experiences of violence disclosed in the memoir are therefore not merely presented as personal stories, but also as reflections on broader social structures that enable violence and perpetuate the silencing of survivors.

### Public Responses in Digital Spaces: Patterns and Dynamics of Discourse

Digital technology functions as a communication medium that enables individuals to interact and share various aspects of life, ranging from professional activities and entertainment to personal relationships with family and broader social environments. Through digital technology, communication no longer operates solely within private spheres, but also creates public spaces where diverse experiences and perspectives intersect. Technological development therefore serves not only as a practical tool, but also as a space in which individuals construct and interpret social realities. Consequently, there is a need for a politics of technology grounded in democratic principles, where technology is understood not merely as an instrument, but as part of discursive practices that shape the ways individuals speak, think, and act. This perspective aligns with Michel Foucault's view that technology, knowledge, power, and the body are interconnected within a broader discourse system.<sup>15</sup> In this sense, digital spaces can be understood as arenas in which power relations are both produced and contested through practices of public communication.

Social media platforms facilitate social interaction among users through participatory and interactive forms of communication that transform traditional one-way communication patterns into dialogic exchanges.<sup>16</sup> Public perception therefore becomes a crucial factor in shaping new social norms in the digital era. Public attitudes toward both survivors and perpetrators influence how cases are addressed and how prevention strategies are formulated. These dynamics illustrate the complexity of achieving justice and protection within digital spaces, particularly in contexts shaped by patriarchal culture, the normalization of gender-based violence, and regulatory limitations that have not fully provided effective sanctions against perpetrators. Within this context, public responses to the narratives presented in *Broken Strings* did not merely appear in the form of appreciative comments, but also evolved into spaces for sharing personal experiences related to gender-based violence. Across several social media posts discussing the book, users expressed traumatic experiences similar to those narrated by the author.

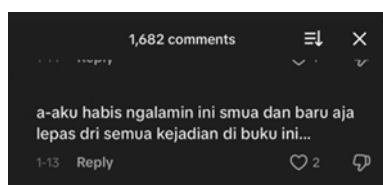


Figure 2. Comments on TikTok

Source: @TikTok

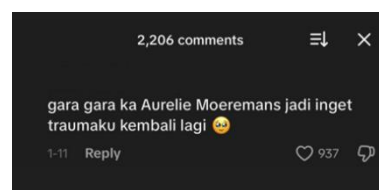


Figure 3. Comments on TikTok

Source: @TikTok

14 Inasio Loyola Asis, "Perempuan Dan Media Digital," *Divinitas Jurnal Filsafat Dan Teologi Kontekstual* 1, no. 1 (2023): 107–11, <https://doi.org/10.24071/div.v1i1.6610>.

15 Dedi Wahyudi and Novita Kurniasih, "Cyberfeminism Dan Isu Gender Dalam Arus Teknopolitik Modern," *SETARA: Jurnal Studi Gender Dan Anak* 4, no. 01 (2022): 25, <https://doi.org/10.32332/jsga.v4i01.4523>.

16 Adisya Putri Hasanah and Zuhriah Zuhriah, "Gaya Komunikasi Pengguna Media Sosial Tiktok Dalam Berpendapat Mengenai Kasus Pelecehan Seksual," *EScience Humanity Journal* 4, no. 2 (July 8, 2024): 220–33, <https://doi.org/10.37296/esci.v4i2.114>.

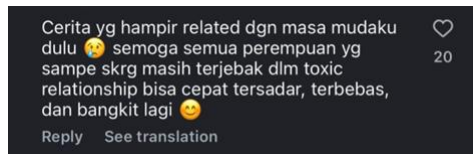


Figure 4. Comments on Instagram

Source: @Instagram



Figure 5. Comments on X

Source: @X

Based on observations conducted across social media platforms, numerous comments demonstrated readers' emotional connectedness to the narratives presented in *Broken Strings* by Aurelie Moeremans. Public responses within comment sections indicated that the personal narratives conveyed in the memoir were not interpreted merely as individual stories, but also generated emotional resonance among readers who had experienced similar situations. As illustrated in Figures 2 and 3, several users associated the narratives in the book with traumatic experiences they had personally endured. Beyond generating experiential resonance, public responses also revealed how the narratives reactivated traumatic memories that had previously remained unspoken. This can be seen in Figure 4, where users stated that the stories in the memoir resonated with unhealthy relationships they had experienced during their youth. In this context, speaking out practices on social media enable survivors of sexual violence to transform private experiences into public issues.<sup>17</sup>

At the same time, interactions within comment sections also demonstrated the emergence of emotional support and solidarity among users. As shown in Figure 5, other users responded with empathy and encouragement toward individuals sharing traumatic experiences. Comments such as “thank you for surviving this far” and expressions regarding the process of reconciling with trauma indicate that digital spaces also function as arenas of emotional solidarity. Through these interactions, personal experiences disclosed by individuals not only receive recognition, but are also met with empathetic responses from others who may share similar experiences. The circulation of emotions such as empathy, support, and trauma illustrates how social media interactions create emotionally driven public connectedness, which constitutes a central characteristic of *affective publics* within digital communication spaces.<sup>18</sup> These responses demonstrate what can be understood as experiential resonance, where readers connect textual narratives with traumatic experiences they have previously encountered or continue to experience.<sup>19</sup> Such comments can therefore be interpreted as initial forms of speaking out, in which individual experiences gain legitimacy through interaction and validation from other users.<sup>20</sup>

### Digital Space as an Arena of Gender Politics

The emergence of diverse public responses on social media toward the narratives of sexual harassment disclosed in *Broken Strings* demonstrates how personal experiences of violence can

17 Rini Sulastri and Marsha Qolby Walidah, “Utilizing Social Media to Combat Sexual Violence: A Study of the Speak Up Movement on Instagram,” *TEMALI: Jurnal Pembangunan Sosial* 7, no. 2 (2024): 208–19, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jt.v7i2.38334>.

18 Papacharissi, *Affective Publics*.

19 Derry Ahmad Rizal et al., “ANALISIS FRAMING GERAKAN SOSIAL AKSI CEPAT TANGGAP (ACT) DI MEDIA SOSIAL,” *KOMUNIKASIA: Journal of Islamic Communication and Broadcasting* 2, no. 1 (July 28, 2022): 18–36, <https://doi.org/10.32923/kpi.v2i1.2469>.

20 Zulia Khikmatul Maulidia, Diah Ariani Arimbi, and Nunuk Endah Srimulyani, “Institution, Unholy Reality: Analisis Wacana Kritis Terhadap Sudut Pandang Vice Indonesia Tentang Kekerasan Seksual Pesantren,” *Ilmiah Bidang Sosial* 4, no. 10 (2025): 3079–96, <https://publish.ojs-indonesia.com/index.php/SIBATIK/article/view/3082>.

be reproduced and circulated within digital environments.<sup>21</sup> Through the memoir, experiences that were once confined to private spheres become part of broader public conversations mediated by digital platforms. Public responses did not merely appear in the form of support or empathy, but also evolved into spaces where readers articulated their own personal experiences related to gender-based violence. In this study, digital space is therefore understood not simply as a communication medium, but as an arena of gender politics where meanings, experiences, identities, and power relations are continuously negotiated through online interactions.

Several users explicitly emphasized the importance of increasing public awareness regarding the dangers of violence against women. One comment posted on the X platform stated, “Hopefully more people will understand the dangers and be able to protect the children around us. Respect to Aurelie for her courage.” This response indicates that discussions surrounding *Broken Strings* extended beyond individual experiences and contributed to the formation of collective awareness regarding the protection of women and children. The circulation of such comments reflects how digital discourse can transform personal narratives into social concerns that encourage broader public reflection on gender-based violence. Through these interactions, emotional responses become intertwined with moral and political awareness, allowing online discussions to function as forms of informal public education regarding gender issues.

In addition, interactions within comment sections reveal the emergence of emotional solidarity among users. This dynamic can be observed in discussions on Instagram, where one user commented, “same story, but I choose to remain silent,” and was subsequently met with responses such as “sending hugs,” “hug,” and other expressions of emotional support. These interactions demonstrate that digital spaces enable individuals to disclose experiences that were previously kept private while simultaneously receiving recognition and validation from others. Emotional support expressed through simple responses or symbolic gestures contributes to the formation of affective connections among users who may never meet in offline settings. Such interactions illustrate that social media platforms do not merely facilitate information exchange, but also create emotional communities built upon shared experiences of vulnerability and trauma.

The responses also demonstrate how digital communication enables the transformation of individual trauma into collective narratives. Experiences shared by users become interconnected through emotional resonance, where one individual’s story triggers memories and reflections among others who have undergone similar experiences. This process aligns with the concept of *affective publics*, in which emotional expressions circulating within digital networks foster collective engagement around particular social issues. The comment sections surrounding discussions of *Broken Strings* therefore function not only as spaces for reaction, but also as arenas where emotional experiences are legitimized and collectively interpreted. Through these interactions, survivors’ voices gain visibility and social acknowledgment, challenging the culture of silence that often surrounds gender-based violence.<sup>22</sup>

Furthermore, several users expressed explicit normative positions rejecting violence and discrimination against women. One Instagram comment stated, “No matter a woman’s skin

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21 Mira Natalia Pellu, Budi Cahyo Hermanto, and Katty Anggraini, “Feminisme Digital Di Era Media Sosial: Studi Representasi Gender Pada Akun Instagram @Magdaleneid,” *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi* 12, no. 2 (2025): 78–84, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31294/jika.v12i2.11680>.

22 Muhammad Umar Mayaputra, Muhammad Ramadhan, and Muhammad Yafiz, “Islamic Economic Ontology and the Respiritualization of Human Development: A North Sumatra Case within the SDG Framework: Ontologi Ekonomi Islam Dan Respiritualisasi Pembangunan Manusia: Studi Kasus Sumatera Utara Dalam Kerangka SDG,” *Theosynesis: Journal of Integrative Understanding and Ethical Praxis* 1, no. 2 (2025): 17–28, <https://doi.org/10.20625/theosyn.v1i2.018>.

color or the way she dresses, she never deserves to have her dignity degraded.” Such statements indicate that discussions generated by the memoir developed beyond emotional support into assertions of moral values concerning women’s dignity and rights. Public responses in digital spaces thus become forms of discursive resistance against patriarchal norms that frequently normalize victim-blaming and the objectification of women. In this context, digital communication spaces serve not only as platforms for emotional expression but also as sites where social values are debated and reconstructed.<sup>23</sup> The circulation of these perspectives contributes to the emergence of counter-discourses that challenge dominant patriarchal assumptions within society.

At the same time, digital spaces remain contested arenas shaped by unequal power relations. Social media may provide opportunities for solidarity and empowerment, yet it can also reproduce moral policing and patriarchal biases.<sup>24</sup> Public perceptions expressed in comment sections are not always supportive of survivors; some interactions may question survivors’ credibility, minimize their experiences, or reinforce harmful gender stereotypes. This demonstrates that gender politics within digital spaces are dynamic and multidimensional rather than singular or uniformly progressive. The coexistence of supportive and delegitimizing responses reveals that online spaces simultaneously function as arenas of empowerment and control, where competing interpretations of gender, morality, and victimhood continue to be negotiated.

Ultimately, digital spaces function not only as platforms for sharing personal experiences, but also as discursive arenas where individuals articulate moral and political positions regarding gender-based violence.<sup>25</sup> Public responses to *Broken Strings* illustrate how emotional interactions in social media contribute to the construction of collective awareness, solidarity, and resistance against patriarchal violence. Through the circulation of empathy, trauma, support, and criticism, digital communication enables private experiences to evolve into collective political discourse. In this sense, the digital public sphere becomes a significant site for understanding how affective connections shape contemporary discussions of gender, power, and social justice.

## Conclusion

This study demonstrates that public responses to the narratives presented in *Broken Strings* extend beyond simple reactions or expressions of sympathy, evolving instead into emotionally connected interactions that shape collective engagement within digital spaces. The circulation of emotions such as empathy, trauma, anger, and solidarity in social media comment sections illustrates the formation of *affective publics*, where individuals become connected through shared emotional experiences surrounding gender-based violence. The findings reveal that digital platforms function not only as communication media, but also as arenas of gender politics in which personal experiences are transformed into collective narratives and public discourse. Furthermore, the study shows that speaking out practices in digital environments contribute to the legitimization of survivors’ experiences, the strengthening of emotional solidarity, and the emergence of collective awareness regarding the importance of protecting women from violence and discrimination in contemporary society.

23 Ardhes Blandhivay Leuanan, “Distorted Devotion: Cult of Personality in Indonesia,” *Theosinesis: Journal of Integrative Understanding and Ethical Praxis* 2, no. 1 (2026): 62–71, <https://doi.org/10.20625/theosyn.v2i1.137>.

24 Istiqomah Istiqomah et al., “The Language of Shame in Cyber Discourse: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Gendered Moral Policing on X Media,” *Titian: Jurnal Ilmu Humaniora* 9, no. 2 (2025): 382–97, <https://online-journal.unja.ac.id/titian/article/view/48850>.

25 Slamet Subekti, Ulung Muamar Suni, and Gunawan Aji, “Assessing the Implementation of SAK EMKM in the Accounting Practices of Tahu Bulat Baraya MSME in Pemalang: (Evaluasi Pelaksanaan SAK EMKM Dalam Praktik Akuntansi UMKM Tahu Bulat Baraya Di Pemalang),” *Theosinesis: Journal of Integrative Understanding and Ethical Praxis* 1, no. 3 (2025): 78–87, <https://doi.org/10.20625/theosyn.v1i3.073>.

Based on these findings, this study recommends the development of safer and more inclusive digital environments that support survivors of gender-based violence in expressing their experiences without fear of stigma or delegitimization. Social media platforms, policymakers, and digital communities should strengthen mechanisms for emotional support, digital literacy, and protection against victim-blaming and online harassment. In addition, educational initiatives concerning gender sensitivity and digital ethics are necessary to encourage more empathetic and responsible public interactions in online spaces. For future research, broader investigations involving larger datasets and multiple digital platforms are recommended to better understand the dynamics of emotional circulation and public engagement surrounding gender-based violence. Future studies may also explore comparative analyses across cultural contexts or examine the long-term impact of speaking out practices on social awareness, advocacy, and digital activism.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that public responses to the narratives presented in *Broken Strings* extend beyond simple reactions or expressions of sympathy, evolving instead into emotionally connected interactions that shape collective engagement within digital spaces. The circulation of emotions such as empathy, trauma, anger, and solidarity in social media comment sections illustrates the formation of *affective publics*, where individuals become connected through shared emotional experiences surrounding gender-based violence. The findings reveal that digital platforms function not only as communication media, but also as arenas of gender politics in which personal experiences are transformed into collective narratives and public discourse. Furthermore, the study shows that speaking out practices in digital environments contribute to the legitimization of survivors' experiences, the strengthening of emotional solidarity, and the emergence of collective awareness regarding the importance of protecting women from violence and discrimination in contemporary society.

Based on these findings, this study recommends the development of safer and more inclusive digital environments that support survivors of gender-based violence in expressing their experiences without fear of stigma or delegitimization. Social media platforms, policymakers, and digital communities should strengthen mechanisms for emotional support, digital literacy, and protection against victim-blaming and online harassment. In addition, educational initiatives concerning gender sensitivity and digital ethics are necessary to encourage more empathetic and responsible public interactions in online spaces. For future research, broader investigations involving larger datasets and multiple digital platforms are recommended to better understand the dynamics of emotional circulation and public engagement surrounding gender-based violence. Future studies may also explore comparative analyses across cultural contexts or examine the long-term impact of speaking out practices on social awareness, advocacy, and digital activism.

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