

# Analysis of the Role of Single Mothers in Promoting Gender Equality in the Women's Community on Instagram

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## ABSTRACT

Social media, particularly Instagram, has evolved into a strategic digital public space for social advocacy and the formation of critical awareness regarding gender equality. Amidst these dynamics, single mothers have emerged as social actors who not only face the structural burdens of patriarchy but also actively produce alternative narratives about women, family, and gender justice. This article aims to analyze the role of single mothers in promoting gender equality through women's communities on Instagram using a text analysis approach. This study integrates critical discourse analysis, visual representation, and audience interaction analysis of Instagram content produced by the single mother community. Theoretically, this research is grounded in Uses and Gratifications Theory, representation theory, digital feminism, and virtual community theory. The results of the literature review indicate that although studies on gender and Instagram have developed significantly, research specifically positioning single mothers as agents of gender equality advocacy is still limited. This article offers an integrative conceptual model that explains how single mothers' digital narratives contribute to the formation of public awareness and attitudes regarding gender equality. These findings are expected to enrich the academic discourse on communication, gender, and digital media and serve as a reference for further empirically based research.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has shifted social communication patterns from physical spaces to more fluid, interactive, and participatory virtual spaces. Instagram, as a visual-based platform, serves not only as a medium for personal expression but also as an arena for articulating social issues, including gender equality. Various women's communities utilize Instagram to raise public

awareness, educate audiences, and challenge biased and patriarchal gender representations [1].

In this context, single mothers constitute a social group experiencing multiple levels of marginalization. In addition to facing social stigma related to family status, single mothers are often positioned subordinately within dominant gender constructs. However, the development of social media has opened up new spaces for

single mothers to represent themselves, build solidarity, and collectively voice their lived experiences. Several studies have shown that community accounts such as @SingleMomsIndonesia, @spinmotion.indonesia, @savejanda @komunitasperempuanungu dan @perempuanberkisah not only functions as a space for sharing experiences, but also as a medium for advocating for women's rights and gender equality.

However, most previous research has focused on general representations of feminism or gender campaigns on Instagram, without specifically examining the role of single mothers as key actors in these processes. Therefore, this article seeks to fill this gap by developing a comprehensive, text-based analysis of digital narratives of single mothers on Instagram.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A single mother is defined as a woman who carries out the role of childcare without a partner, whether due to divorce, death, or personal choice [2],[3]. From a gender studies perspective, single mothers are often positioned as subjects who deviate from the patriarchal ideal family norm [4],[5]. However, in the context of digital media, single mothers can be understood as reflective subjects who actively construct identity and social meaning through personal and collective narratives. This construction is not natural, but rather the result of social and cultural processes that reproduce patriarchal values through the institutions of family, religion, and media [5]. Thus, the status of single mothers is not only demographic but also political, intertwined with power relations and social legitimacy.

In the context of digital media, single mothers can be understood as political subjects, actors capable of producing counter-discourse to social stigma through practices of self-representation and narratives of lived experience. This position provides an important foundation for understanding the role of single mothers as agents of gender equality advocacy on social media.

Gender equality refers to the state of relational justice between men and women in access, participation, and control over social resources. In the digital space, gender equality is not only interpreted as a structural issue, but also as a discursive practice produced through content, interactions, and symbolic representations on social media [6].

Instagram is positioned as a digital public sphere that enables individuals and communities to collectively produce, distribute, and interpret social messages. Unlike mainstream media, Instagram provides opportunities for marginalized groups, including single mothers, to build visibility and articulate issues independently [7]. Social media, especially Instagram, enables the production of visual-based messages that have high affective and persuasive power. Through a combination of images, videos, and captions, messages about gender equality can be constructed narratively and emotionally, making them more easily accepted by a wider audience. As a visual-based platform, Instagram has significant affective power in shaping audience perceptions and attitudes. Visual representations of women, personal narratives, and interaction practices such as commenting and re-sharing content function as symbolic advocacy mechanisms capable of influencing public awareness. Thus, Instagram in this study is understood not only as a communication medium, but as an arena for the production of meaning and cultural resistance. Therefore, gender equality in this study is understood as a communication practice that is both symbolic and political.

Gender Advocacy in the Digital Space. Digital gender advocacy refers to communication practices that utilize digital technology and social media to advocate for gender justice and equality. Within the framework of digital feminism, this advocacy is characterized by the use of personal narratives, online solidarity, and symbolic mobilization as a form of resistance against patriarchal structures [8].

In the context of single mothers, digital gender advocacy does not always manifest itself in explicit political campaigns,

but rather through consistent practices of self-representation, framing lived experiences as structural issues, and the formation of supportive virtual communities. This concept is key to understanding how the Instagram accounts studied function as a medium for organic and sustainable gender equality advocacy [9].

The theoretical foundation used as a framework for thinking is as follows:

**a. Uses and Gratification Theory**

Uses and Gratifications Theory views audiences as active subjects who use media to fulfill specific needs, such as the need for identity, social integration, and information [10]. In the context of the single mother community, this theory helps explain the motivations for using Instagram from both the content producers and their followers.

**b. Representasi Theory**

Representation theory emphasizes that social meaning is constructed through symbolic practices. Representations of single mothers on Instagram not only reflect reality, but also shape new understandings of women's roles, families, and gender relations [11],[12].

**c. Feminisme Digital**

Digital feminism views social media as a new space for feminist struggle. The practice of sharing personal experiences, hashtag campaigns, and online solidarity are forms of resistance to established patriarchal structures [13].

**d. Komunitas Virtual**

Virtual community theory explains how digital interactions shape a sense of community, collective identity, and new social norms. The single mother community on Instagram can be understood as a virtual community that collectively produces gender equality values [14], [15].

Previous research on social media and gender equality over the past decade has shown significant growth, particularly those that position Instagram as a medium for social campaigns and public education. However,

the position of single mothers as digital advocacy actors remains relatively marginal in the international literature.

In general, previous research can be grouped into three main clusters. First, research that focuses on Instagram as a medium for gender equality campaigns, such as the study by Pellu et al., which shows how feminist accounts produce critical discourse through visual representations and personal narratives [1]. Second, research that examines women's communities on social media as spaces for solidarity and the formation of collective identity [16], [17].

Third, the limited research that addresses single mothers on Instagram generally focuses on sharenting practices or emotional support, rather than on explicit gender advocacy functions [16], [18].

A major limitation of previous research is the absence of approaches that position single mothers as digital gender advocates—that is, actors who consciously utilize social media to challenge gender inequality and raise public awareness. Therefore, this study goes further by integrating the identity dimensions of single mothers, digital narrative strategies, and gender equality advocacy goals within a single analytical framework.

### 3. METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a textual analysis method with a critical-conceptual orientation. This approach was chosen to examine the meaning, representation, and practices of gender advocacy constructed through text, visuals, and audience interactions on Instagram. This methodology is relevant to explaining how social media functions as a symbolic and political advocacy space in the context of gender equality [19], [20], [21], [22].

The research objects include five Instagram accounts actively producing women's narratives and visuals: @singlemomindonesia, @savejanda @kpungu, @perempuanberkisah, and @spinmotion. The units of analysis include post captions, visual elements (photos, videos, graphic designs), and audience interactions (comments and

responses). Account selection was based on the consistency of gender issues, intensity of content production, and significant audience engagement.

Data collection and analysis techniques used were non-participatory digital observation of account posts over a specific period. The analysis was conducted through triangulation of three approaches: critical discourse analysis, visual representation analysis, and audience interaction analysis. These three approaches complement each other to increase the validity of interpretations and avoid reductionism of meaning [20], [21], [22].

This study positions the researcher as the primary analytical instrument, with critical reflexivity regarding her social and academic position. Qualitative validity is maintained through the consistency of the theoretical framework, the traceability of text-visual data, and the coherence between the findings and the theoretical discourse of digital feminism.

The research subjects included five Instagram accounts actively producing women's narratives related to single motherhood and gender equality:

- 1) @singlemomindonesia – a community account that explicitly represents the experiences, challenges, and struggles of single mothers in Indonesia.
- 2) @komunitasperempuanungu – a women's community account based on solidarity and empowerment, with a strong narrative about women's independence and protection.
- 3) @perempuanberkisah – a storytelling-based account showcasing women's personal experiences, including experiences of gender inequality and symbolic violence.
- 4) @spinmotion – a creative account that utilizes visuals and social campaigns to raise issues of equality.

- 5) @savejanda – a dedicated account that regularly advocates for single mothers.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the context of Stuart Hall's theory of representation, the Instagram community accounts above function as a circuit of culture that constructs, reproduces, and challenges the meaning of gender through process *constructionist approach*, where the representation of single mothers shifts from patriarchal stereotypes to symbols of emancipatory agency [23],[24]. Conventional vs. Counter-Hegemonic Representations These accounts deconstruct the traditional representation of women as passive/vulnerable.

Table 1. Conventional Representation vs. New Representation

Account	Conventional (Patriarchal) Representation	New Representations (Counter-Narratives)
@perempuanberkisah	Victims of violence whose "struggle is not over"	Systemically conscious structural agents. <a href="#">instagram</a>
@singlemomsindonesia	Weak mothers need "support"	Multidimensional: strong, gentle, brave (reframing Kartini) <a href="#">instagram</a>
@kpungu	Marginalized widows	Global feminist solidarity via the purple symbol. <a href="#">instagram</a>
@save_janda	"Patriarchal land is not easy"	Anti-stigma architect (#ProudToBeAWidow) <a href="#">instagram</a>
@spinmotion.indonesia	Single parent isolated.	Global SDG's inclusion. ("no one left behind") <a href="#">instagram</a>

Source: Instagram @perempuanberkisah, @savejanda, @kpungu, @singlemomindonesia, @spinmotion (2025)

The meaning-making process of these accounts is analyzed through Stuart Hall's perspective, namely:

- a. Encoding/Decoding: Encoding the content of the single mother's identity as a resistant subject who rejects the dominant patriarchal reading. Followers are encouraged to engage in a negotiated/oppositional reading through hashtags and symbols (purple, Kartini, and the SDGs).
  - 1) Patriarchal framework → subaltern counter - Encoding → new dominant reading.
  - 2) Widow = social burden → "widow in a patriarchal world" → #ProudToBeAWidget

The @savejanda account encodes existing patriarchal knowledge frameworks ("patriarchal land"), but twists them into new, preferred meanings.

The organic content from the lived experiences of single mothers (who are not

elite journalists) creates a premium authenticity that mainstream media cannot produce.

- b. Identity Dimension: Single mothers represent an epistemological standpoint, namely knowledge from a marginalized position that reveals invisible power structures, creating digital counter-hegemony.

The identity of single mothers as advocacy capital appears to utilize their marginalized experiences as a unique narrative force.

The diverse narrative strategies of @singlemomsindonesia assert that "Kartini's spirit is strong, gentle, and brave," highlighting historical symbols.

The theoretical implications of Instagram as a discursive battleground (hall) where single mothers are not only represented but also represent themselves as sovereign subjects. The transformation from object (victim of stigma) to subject (digital advocate) demonstrates the platform's

potential as a cultural production space for gender equality.

The construction of meaning by the community as a resistant subject that challenges patriarchal hegemony on the @perempuanberkisah account; the encoded message is "the struggle is not over", while the cultural code used is a structural narrative of systemic violence.

In @singlemomindonesia, the encoded message is "strong, gentle, and brave," with the cultural code used being the reframing of Kartini as a dimensional code. In the @kpungu account (purple women's community), the encoded message is the purple symbol, which means feminism, and the implied cultural code is the solidarity of the global movement. The @savejanda account emphasizes the #banggajadijanda encode, with the cultural code of countering patriarchal stigma. Meanwhile, @spinmotion.indonesia emphasizes the cultural code of global legitimacy for local issues.

The integration of representation with gender studies is carried out using the concept of a constructionist approach that reveals that social media constructs the meaning of gender as an ideological process of power, where single mothers, through their Instagram accounts, counter-represent patriarchal hegemony. Single mothers as subaltern speakers are revealed in the invisible power structures from marginal positions. The encoding @savejanda ("widow in the patriarchal land") reflects epistemic privilege—authentic knowledge from lived experiences that is lost in the dominant discourse.

The process of gender construction in the digital arena can be seen:

- 1) Production: Organic content based on the lived experiences of single mothers to show authentic representation
- 2) Representation: Transformation of "victims of stigma" to show what digital gender advocate
- 3) Identity: Followers adopt feminist identification through hashtag participation.

- 4) Consumption: Oppositional decoding of traditional patriarchy.
- 5) Regulation: Algorithmic amplification creates viral feminist consciousness.

The Instagram accounts mentioned are networked counter publics that fight against misogynistic publics.

The representation of the single mother community Instagram accounts @save\_janda and @spinmotion.indonesia not only reconstructs gender meaning through counter-narratives (Hall), but also fulfills the psychological and social needs of the audience, according to Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch's (1974) Uses and Gratifications (U&G) theory [25], where users actively choose platforms for gratification.

The integrated narrative from representation to gratification can be imagined, a single mother in Jakarta scrolling through Instagram at night. She doesn't just passively receive content—she actively seeks representation that fills the void in her identity. When @save\_janda encodes the message "being a widow in a patriarchal world isn't easy," the audience receives both personal identity gratification (self-esteem from seeing widows portrayed as fighters, not victims) and personal relationship gratification (virtual sisterhood through comments of solidarity).

Meanwhile, @singlemomsindonesia, with its reframing of Kartini as "strong, gentle, brave," fulfills the gratification of monitoring information about alternative gender roles and the gratification of expressing opinions (followers repost with the personal caption: "This is so me!"). Meanwhile, @spinmotion.indonesia links the SDGs' gender equality to the gratification of credible information—global legitimacy for their local struggle.

Single mothers, through the Instagram accounts @save\_janda and @singlemomsindonesia, demonstrate their transformative role as digital gender advocates, challenging patriarchal hegemony.

The strategic role of single mothers is evident in the five accounts mentioned above:

- 1) As Counter-Hegemonic Narrative Agents (Gramsci via Hall), where they seize the power of discursive hegemony from dominant groups through the production of alternative narratives that change the cultural common sense and define the identity of "victims of stigma" to "empowered warriors" (@save\_janda: "widows in the patriarchal land"), filling the void of authentic representation that is absent in mainstream media, where this is a systematic digital war of position.
- 2) As architects of virtual sisterhood, @kpungu (purple symbol) and @singlemomsindonesia show the implied Kartini symbol (which is multidimensional) to create affective solidarity, transforming the experience of isolation into a digital collectivity that fulfills identity needs (Uses & Gratification).

The micro impact of gender power demonstrates individual self-empowerment through validation of experiences. Meso-level, it demonstrates counter-publics eroding patriarchal common sense through algorithmic amplification. Macro-level, it's demonstrated by global legitimacy (@spinmotion.indonesia with its SDG framing) that emphasizes inclusive policy responses.

From a position of epistemic privilege, single mothers on Instagram are not just sources of feminism, but platformed feminists who are redesigning gender structures in Indonesia's digital space.

And the overall results of this study demonstrate that single mothers are not merely sources but also digital strategists shaping the public sphere of gender equality in Indonesia.

This research demonstrates that single mothers, through their Instagram communities@save\_janda,@singlemomsindonesia, @kpungu, @spinmotion.indonesia, @perempuanberkisah), are not passive actors in gender discourse, but rather agents of counter-hegemonic narratives, seizing symbolic power from patriarchal structures.

Synthesis of Contributions:

- a. Theoretical: Integrating the circuit of culture (Hall) with feminist and Uses & Gratifications standpoints, resulting in a platformed counter-hegemony framework.
- b. Empirical: Transforming the representation of "victims of stigma" into "empowered warriors" through authentic strategies (personal narratives, purple symbols, SDG framing, multidimensional Kartini).
- c. Practical: An inclusive digital advocacy model for marginalized groups, with implications for mainstreaming gender policies.

Recommendations:

- 1) Academics: Replicate longitudinal netnographic studies to track long-term discursive shifts.
- 2) Activists: Scale up hashtag strategies and live sessions for national mobilization.
- 3) Platforms: Collaborate with Instagram communities for algorithmic equity.

Thus, in a patriarchal digital age, single mothers prove that marginalized experiences plus platform affordances equal transformative narrative power. They aren't just surviving—they're redesigning Indonesia's gender landscape, one post at a time.

The following table summarizes the names of the Instagram accounts of the women's communities that have been discussed, along with examples of the text

content related to gender equality campaigns/advocacy from their posts instagram+4.

Table 2. Text on Single Mother Instagram Accounts about Promoting Gender Equality.

Account Instagram	Gender Equality Advocacy Text Content
@perempuanberkisah	"Dear friends of @perempuanberkisah, you already know that Indonesia has indeed made progress in gender equality. However, the facts on the ground show that the struggle is not over. Violence..." [instagram]
@singlemomsindonesia	"The spirit that Kartini echoed was not only about equality, but also about the strength, gentleness, and courage of a woman..." [instagram]
@kpungu	"The color purple has been used by feminist movements throughout history and continues to be a powerful symbol of the struggle for gender equality. By using purple to celebrate IWD, we honor the struggles of women who came before us."... [instagram]
@save_janda	"Being a widow in a patriarchal society isn't easy. Based on personal experience, #SaveJanda emerged to combat the stigma surrounding widowhood in society." [instagram]
@spinmotion.indonesia	"Gender equality is one of the 17 SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) set by the UN. The principle of 'no one left behind' demands the inclusion of all genders." [instagram]

Source: Instagram @perempuanberkisah, @kpungu, @savejanda, @singlemomindonesia, @spinmotion (2025)

## 5. CONCLUSION

The role of the women's community, especially single mothers, in promoting gender equality through the accounts @save\_janda, @singlemomsindonesia, @kpungu, @spinmotion.indonesia, and @perempuanberkisah demonstrates the transformation of patriarchal subaltern objects into digital gender architects through counter-hegemonic representations (Hall) that fulfill the audience's needs for identity and solidarity (Uses & Gratifications).

Theoretical Contribution: Integrating the epistemological standpoint of single mothers with the digital circuit of culture, constructing a platformed feminism that seizes narrative power from patriarchal

structures toward inclusive networked counterpublics.

Practical Implications: Authentic narrative strategies (anti-stigma, purple symbol, SDG's framing, multidimensional Kartini) demonstrate the potential of single mothers as key agents of gender power redistribution in Indonesia, filling a research gap that neglects their position as emancipatory digital strategists.

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