



# Discursive Strategies in Digital Arenas: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Contemporary Gender Activism

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**Abstract:** This study examines the linguistic construction of digital activism within three transnational gender-oriented movements: #MeToo, the World March of Women, and the LGBTQI+ rights movement. While prior research has largely focused on the sociological impacts and mobilization strategies of digital activism, the present study addresses a distinct gap by providing a systematic analysis of the discursive constructions through which movements synergistically construct resistance. Grounded in the Discourse-Historical Approach, the research analyzed 24 text-based documents from official movement websites from 2023 to 2025. By means of qualitative critical discourse analysis, 885 instances of discursive strategies were identified, revealing a balanced and integrative matrix wherein strategies of nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivization, and intensification function as a unified counter-hegemonic tool. Movements combine nomination and predication to revalorize marginalized actors while delegitimizing patriarchal and capitalist structures. Argumentation and perspectivization shift accountability onto systemic actors, thus fostering transnational solidarity. Notably, the analysis found a complete absence of linguistic mitigation; instead, movements rely on intensification to amplify moral urgency. The study concludes that these movements utilize discourse as a deliberate tool for counter-hegemonic resistance and systemic transformation. It recommends that advocates maintain structurally critical language to resist algorithmic dilution and encourages future research into multimodal and counter-movement strategies.

**Keywords:** Critical Discourse Analysis, Discourse-Historical Approach, Discursive Strategies, Gender-Oriented Movements, Digital Activism

## 1. Introduction

International political movements have emerged as potent catalyzers for reform that seeks to challenge institutional narratives through collective action and digital mobilization. Gender-oriented movements, in particular, serve as effective platforms for confronting structural inequalities related to sex, gender, and sexuality. Moving beyond individual rights advocacy, such movements protest the systemic legal, institutional, and cultural frameworks that perpetuate exclusion and violence, evolving from local resistances into transnational political actors capable of influencing international legal frameworks (Thoreson, 2014). This study focuses on three intersecting discursive contexts: #MeToo, which reframes survivor testimonies within the Global North; the World March of Women (WMW), a Global South grassroots network advocating for economic justice and anti-colonialism; and the LGBTQI+ rights movement, a transnational coalition advancing legal equality and social recognition.

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These movements anchor their struggle in recognition and representation, utilizing moral and political language to invoke legitimacy. As discourse is inherently implicated in the production of power (Foucault, 1980), movements must challenge dominant norms within the structures that dictate social meaning. Thus, language is not merely a neutral tool for the dissemination of information but a primary mechanism for formulating grievances and negotiating legitimacy amidst resistant systems of power. Within international activism, language serves both as a terrain for counter-hegemonic contestation and a strategic instrument for ideological struggle. Towards a production of alternative linguistic forms, gender-oriented movements employ counter-discursive strategies to subvert exclusionary ideologies embedded in institutional discourse. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) posits that language actively creates and sustains societal power (Fairclough, 2001; van Dijk, 1993), yet much of the existing scholarship on digital activism focuses on sociological impacts, such as mobilization strategies, rather than linguistic dimensions.

To address this gap, the present study affirms the centrality of language in understanding how movements negotiate power within digital arenas. Applying Reisigl and Wodak's (2017) Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), this research examines five core discursive strategies, *nomination*, *predication*, *argumentation*, *perspectivization*, and *intensification/mitigation*, employed by #MeToo, WMW, and the LGBTQI+ rights movement. Through an analysis of text-based content produced between 2023 and 2025, this paper investigates how activist discourse embeds ideologies, constructs collective identities, and delegitimizes hegemonic structures. At its core, this study aims to illuminate the linguistic mechanisms that frame societal claims, demonstrating how language acts as the architecture of gender justice.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Transnational Gender-Oriented Movements and Digital Activism

Gender-oriented movements have historically functioned as critical agents in terms of challenging systemic inequalities and reconfiguring public consciousness. As Moghadam (2005) and Tripp (2006) note, such movements have increasingly globalized, thereby forming transnational networks that advocate for human rights across geographical borders. With the advent of digital platforms, such mobilization has significantly transformed, often shifting activism from strictly localized physical spaces toward interconnected digital arenas. Mendes, Ringrose, and Keller (2018) emphasize the ways digital feminist activism, particularly through social media, has enabled marginalized groups to bypass traditional media gatekeepers to fight back against rape culture and institutionalized sexism.

Specific to the movements in this study, the #MeToo movement has been widely recognized as a watershed moment for 21st-century digital activism, utilizing the viral nature of survivor testimonies to reframe narratives of sexual violence and accountability (Williams, Singh, & Mezey, 2019; Fileborn & Loney-Howes, 2019). Similarly, transnational networks like the World March of Women (Díaz Alba & Olavarría, 2021) and LGBTQI+ rights advocates (Thoreson, 2014) utilize digital networks not just for community organizing, but for articulating their struggles for legal equality, anti-colonialism, and economic justice on a global scale. Be that as it may, while the sociological and mobilizing impacts of these movements are well-documented, the precise linguistic architecture that makes this digital activism effective requires deeper critical examination.

## 2.2. Discourse, Power, and Ideological Struggle

To understand the linguistic dimension of these movements, it is imperative to view language through the lens of power. Foucault (1980) established that discourse is inextricably linked to the production of power, dictating what can be said, by whom, and in what context. Language, as a consequence, is not to be considered a mere passive medium but rather a primary instrument for ideological struggle. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) builds upon this premise, positing that language actively shapes, sustains, and challenges social and political realities (Fairclough, 1992; van Dijk, 1993).

According to Fairclough (2001), media and institutional discourses frequently function as vehicles for dominant ideologies. Therefore, counter-hegemonic movements must actively employ counter-discursive strategies to dismantle entrenched norms and establish their own legitimacy. Recent studies have begun to explore this within digital spaces; for instance, Deng et al. (2024) analyzed how digital platforms are utilized for "sympathy invoking" and "evidence informing" in gender debates, while KhosraviNik and Esposito (2018) examined digitally mediated discursive practices in the context of gender-based hostility. Despite these contributions, a systematic linguistic analysis of how transnational movements synergistically construct resistance remains a distinct gap in the literature.

## 2.3. Discourse Strategies in Digital Activism

Within the growing body of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) studies, research has shown that the language employed by social movements, particularly within digital spaces, is marked by strategic uses of discourse strategies to both construct and negotiate power. For instance, KhosraviNik (2023) specifies the significance of platform logics, such as participation, visibility, and algorithmic curation, toward conditioning the strategy utilized and its subsequent uptake, thereby influencing which actors gain legitimacy. In a similar vein, Unger et al. (2016) argue that CDA has widened its scope to scrutinize digital activism discourse via platform-aware analyses. Feminist and LGBTQI+ mobilizations empirically demonstrate this through hashtag activism; as Jackson et al. (2020) highlight, activists publicly and digitally coordinate stance-taking and justificatory narratives to turn individual testimonies into collective claims. Likewise, Mendes et al. (2018) showcase how digital feminism discourse circulates across genres and media platforms and is frequently recontextualized by actors from various contexts.

Prior studies also provide evidence of specific linguistic strategies in action across these movements. In the studies of Mendes et al. (2018) and Stubbs-Richardson et al. (2023), #MeToo discourse nominations are apparent through a reclassification of subjects via labelling, such as "survivor" and "perpetrator". Predication features the attachment of moral attributes, such as honesty and courage, for the purpose of recalibrating credibility and assigning blame toward targeted institutions. Argumentation is commonly invoked through the use of the topoi of justice (e.g., "denied their rights") along with the use of prevalence statistics to warrant policy changes (Jackson et al., 2020). Perspectivization, on the other hand, appears in first-person plurals and evaluative markers (e.g., "we demand," "clearly"), as well as within embedded voices that serve to signal either alignment or distance (KhosraviNik, 2023). Finally, intensification and strategic mitigation are typically mobilized in coordination with moral force and the constraints of the discourse situation, a pattern observed in tightly regulated digital contexts and platformed gender debates (Deng et al., 2024).

A review of the aforementioned studies reveal that discursive strategies serve not only as descriptive linguistic choices but also as a way to configure how identities and issues are both constructed and

received. While these previous studies touch upon isolated linguistic devices, an analysis of the ways transnational movements synergistically construct meaning through both historical and contextual framework remains necessary.

#### **2.4. Critical Discourse Analysis and Discourse-Historical Approach**

The present study is anchored in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine how gender-oriented movements negotiate power and assert their legitimacy. Such a critical lens, given the non-neutral nature of language in discourse, underscores the inextricable relationship between text and context, all the while asserting that meaning-making processes cannot be divorced from the sociopolitical structures in which they are embedded.

Within this paradigm, the study specifically adopts the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) proposed by Reisigl and Wodak (2017). DHA is particularly suited for the study of political movement discourse given its emphasis on how discourse is historically conditioned and institutionally situated (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). According to Reisigl and Wodak (2017), DHA follows a socio-philosophical orientation rooted in three interrelated dimensions of critique: 1) text critique (identifying textual consistencies, inconsistencies, and paradoxes); 2) socio-diagnostic critique (demystifying the persuasive or manipulative character of discursive practices against broader social structures); and 3) prospective critique (seeking to improve communication practices).

Central to DHA is the understanding of ideology and power. Drawing from Thompson (1990, as cited in Reisigl & Wodak, 2017), DHA views ideology not merely as a set of beliefs, but as a socially shared worldview that circulates via hegemonic symbolic forms to either stabilize or disrupt unequal power relations. Power itself is conceptualized as an asymmetrical relationship mediated by language (van Dijk, 2015; Al-Zubaidi, 2022), exercised through access to communicative resources and the regulation of entry into public discourse (Popitz, 1992, as cited in Reisigl & Wodak, 2017; Weber, 1980). Consequently, DHA utilizes a triangulatory model that analyzes context across four interrelated levels: (1) the immediate co-text, (2) intertextual and interdiscursive relations, (3) institutional and situational frames, and (4) the broader sociopolitical and historical environment (Reisigl & Wodak, 2017).

#### **2.5. Discursive Strategies as Analytical Tools**

To operationalize such critique, the present study relies on the analytical taxonomy of discursive strategies outlined by Reisigl and Wodak (2017). Discursive strategies refer to intentional linguistic practices that speakers or writers employ to achieve specific political, social, or rhetorical goals. While other traditions, such as rhetorical appeals (logos, pathos, ethos) or textual legitimization models, often isolate textual features, DHA's taxonomy offers a holistic lens that situates strategies within broader ideological and historical trajectories. Five core discursive strategies are examined in this study:

Nomination refers to the construction of social actors, events, objects, or processes through acts of naming and reference. This strategy classifies who or what is being talked about using proper nouns, role labels (e.g., “survivor,” “perpetrator”), group identifiers, and rhetorical tropes like metaphors and synecdoche (Reisigl & Wodak, 2017). It forms the foundation of identity construction in political texts. Predication points to the evaluative attributes (positive, negative, or ambivalent) to nominated actors or ideas. Realized through adjectives, appositions, predicative constructions, and allusions, this strategy positions ideologies morally and evaluates actors to affect the audience's perception of alignment (Reisigl & Wodak, 2017). Argumentation involves the justification or contestation of claims of truth or political necessity. DHA examines this primarily through *topoi* (rhetorical warrants

that connect premises to conclusions) such as the topos of danger, justice, or history, as well as through fallacies that appear persuasive but lack logical rigor (Reisigl & Wodak, 2017). **Perspectivization:** The ways speakers or writers position themselves in relation to their discourse. This is realized through deictics (e.g., we, they, here, now), pronouns, reporting verbs, and discourse markers, allowing movements to establish spatial, temporal, and social proximity or distance, signaling ideological alignment and affective solidarity (Reisigl & Wodak, 2017). **Intensification and Mitigation:** The adjustment of the illocutionary force of an utterance. Intensification amplifies claims using hyperbole, augmentatives, and emphatic adverbs for the purpose of asserting moral urgency of the discourse (Fairclough, 2001; Kranert, 2017). Conversely, mitigation softens claims using hedges, vague terms, or modal particles to deflect blame or navigate discourse constraints (Reisigl & Wodak, 2017).

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Research Design

The study utilized a qualitative and non-experimental research approach anchored in the tradition of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Given that the research involves no experimental treatment or statistical modeling, it is non experimental in nature (Torres & Alieto, 2019, as cited in Somblingo & Alieto, 2020). Instead, aligning with the principles of qualitative content analysis (Schreier, 2012; Mayring, 2014), the study sought to derive contextualized and theory-driven insights through a detailed textual examination of activist discourse. The research environment was exclusively digital, acknowledging that online spaces, specifically official movement websites, now serve as primary communicative arenas where movement discourse is disseminated and legitimacy is constructed.

#### 3.2. Research Data

The study employed purposive sampling to deliberately select materials containing relevant discursive content directly aligned with the DHA framework (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). The dataset comprises publicly available and text-based content produced by three prominent, globally networked gender-oriented movements: #MeToo, the World March of Women (WMW), and the LGBTQI+ rights movement.

Data were sourced directly from the movements' official websites to ensure the discourse represented the movements' vetted institutional voices as opposed to reactive or platform-constrained user-generated content. The final corpus for this analysis consists of 24 publicly available texts (eight texts from each movement) published between January 2023 and December 2025. This temporal scope was set to foreground recent mobilizations and discursive shifts in response to contemporary global developments. The texts encompass three categories: (1) core texts outlining the movements' backgrounds and foundational rationales; (2) advocacy or position texts responding to specific social or political issues; and (3) interviews or public statements from verified movement leaders. To maintain data relevance, strict exclusion criteria were applied: user-generated content from unofficial accounts, multimedia without verbal transcripts, and third-party journalistic coverage not authored by the movements were all excluded.

#### 3.3. Research Procedure

The gathering began with a purposeful selection of public-facing digital materials from the official websites of the selected movements (e.g., metoomvmt.org, marchmondiale.org, ilga.org). Only text-based materials, such as mission and vision statements, "About Us" pages, manifestos, advocacy

essays, and organizational open letters, were included. For interviews or public addresses available on these platforms, transcripts were generated using assistive AI tools (e.g., *Whisper OpenAI* and *Notta.ai*) and were subsequently verified by the researcher for accuracy. All collected data were downloaded, collated, and organized into labeled digital folders according to the movement and year of publication to ensure traceability.

After the data were established and organized, they were subjected to a sequential analysis grounded in Reisigl and Wodak's (2017) Discourse-Historical Approach. First, qualitative content analysis was employed to examine each textual unit and manually code the presence of the five discursive strategies: nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivization, and intensification/mitigation. These instances were catalogued using a standardized labeling system to maintain a clear audit trail. The coded instances were then tallied to determine their frequency and proportional distribution. These numerical counts were not intended for statistical generalization, but solely to illustrate relative rhetorical prominence and guide the subsequent qualitative interpretation.

Following the coding phase, an interpretive analysis was conducted. In keeping with DHA's mandate regarding historical embeddedness, the analysis engaged in textual and socio-diagnostic critique to identify recurring lexical patterns and explain how these linguistic elements function synergistically within the broader ideological contexts of the movements. To prevent over-interpretation, the analytical findings were triangulated through comparisons with prior critical discourse studies on gender and digital activism (e.g., Mendes et al., 2018; KhosraviNik & Unger, 2015). Lastly, given the ideological dimensions of the study, reflexivity (Holmes, 2020) and researcher positionality were actively maintained to ensure that the interpretations did not inadvertently distort or sensationalize the movements' claims and survivor experiences.

## 4. Results and Discussion

Across the 24 texts in the corpus, a total of 885 instances of discursive strategy use were identified. As shown in Table 1, the distribution reveals that no single strategy overwhelmingly dominates; instead, the movements employ a relatively balanced/integrative matrix of linguistic mechanisms. Perspectivization appears most frequently (184 instances, 21%), closely followed by argumentation (178 instances, 20%), intensification (177 instances, 20%), nomination (175 instances, 20%), and predication (171 instances, 19%). While the volume of instances varied by movement, the proportional utilization of the strategies remained highly consistent, thereby pointing to a shared repertoire among the three transnational gender-oriented advocacies featured within the corpus.

Table 1. Discursive Strategies Utilized by the Movements.

Discursive Strategy	#MeToo f (%)	WMW f (%)	LGBTQI+ f (%)	$\Sigma$ f (%)
1.1. Nomination	86 (22%)	46 (19%)	43 (17%)	<b>175 (20%)</b>
1.2. Predication	79 (20%)	49 (20%)	43 (17%)	<b>171 (19%)</b>
1.3. Argumentation	71 (18%)	42 (18%)	65 (26%)	<b>178 (20%)</b>
1.4. Perspectivization	83 (21%)	63 (26%)	38 (15%)	<b>184 (21%)</b>
1.5. Intensification/Mitigation	75 (19%)	40 (17%)	62(25%)	<b>177 (20%)</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>885 (100%)</b>

### 4.1. Nomination

Accounting for 175 instances (20% of the corpus), the discursive strategy of nomination is fundamental to all three movements, utilizing proper nouns, role labels, and membership categories to perform ideological work by organizing actors into meaningful social hierarchies. Within the

Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), these indicators are not merely referential; they function to institutionalize movements and politicize the identities of those they represent.

*Function 1: Construction of movements as collective political actors.* Movements establish agency and interventionist capacity through proper nouns and collective pronouns. The World March of Women (WMW) consistently utilizes its institutional name to stabilize its identity as a legitimate participant in political dialogue, thereby linking its present discourse to a historical "march" that began in the late 1990s.

*We, the **World March of Women**, declare our unwavering solidarity with the feminist, popular uprising taking place across Kenya.*

(Code: WMW-2024-AdvPosText-S5-NMN-01)

*...we are a **movement of survivors** focused on healing and action.*

(Code: MT-2023-CoreText-S2-NMN-02)

Conversely, the #MeToo corpus constructs identity through role labels rather than formal institutional naming. The movement converts individual testimonies into a collective form of political expression by utilizing the category "survivors". This process, described by Jackson et al. (2020) as the politicization of lived experiences, recontextualizes personal trauma as a resource for public advocacy.

*Function 2: Constructing communities and constituencies.* This function defines the social groups whose protection and recognition the movement seeks to advance. For instance, the LGBTQI+ movement utilizes group identifiers that align with international human rights frameworks to expand its discourse to explicitly incorporate "trans and gender-diverse" identities.

*...trans and gender-diverse **people** continue to face stigma, medical violence, and denial of care...*

(Code: LGBTQI-2025-AdvPosText-S3-NMN-04)

Similarly, WMW situates gender oppression within intersecting structures of economic and colonial marginalization, identifying women impoverished by the system as the primary collective affected by hegemonic violence. In these contexts, naming serves to delineate the collective point of rights for eclectic identity-based communities.

*Function 3: Construction of adversarial actors and systemic structures.* Nomination is also employed to hallmark institutions and ideological systems as agents of oppression and targets for resistance. WMW articulates adversarial forces as interlocking structures of domination, often depersonalizing the oppressor by reducing complex hegemonic forces into singular metonymic concepts.

*...driven by the **colonialist, patriarchal, racist, authoritarian logic of capitalism...***

(Code: WMW-2024-AdvPosText-S4-NMN-03)

*This includes insisting upon accountability on the part of **perpetrators**...*

(Code: MT-2023-CoreText-S1-NMN-8)

In contrast, #MeToo nominates "perpetrators" as identifiable actors while simultaneously linking them to wider formations of domination. As Jackson et al. (2020) note, naming perpetrators in digital feminism functions to expose structural patterns of abuse and mobilize collective accountability across cultures of impunity. Under the DHA framework, these movements often depersonalize the oppressor by framing the adversary as a system of overlapping control, metonymically reducing complex hegemonic forces into singular, actionable concepts like 'colonialism' or 'the system.'" Finally, the use of hashtags as symbolic references allows for the construction of "affective publics". This allows disparate individuals to nominate themselves into a collective identity based

on shared emotional experiences, bypassing the need for formal ties to traditional institutions (Papacharissi, 2016).

#### 4.2. Predication

While predication is the least frequent strategy within the corpus (171 instances, 19%), its utilization remained consistent across MeToo (20%), WMW (20%), and the LGBTQI+ movement (17%), indicating that evaluative characterization is a stable discursive resource for the transnational advocacy purported by the three movement in focus. Across the dataset, predication operates through two dominant functions: the positive valuation of movements and the negative construction of adversarial systems.

*Function 1: Positive valuation of movements and represented communities.* Movements utilize predication to position themselves and their constituencies as morally grounded, capable, and authoritative political actors. This strategy extends beyond mere identification; it attaches evaluative weight that aligns the movement's identity with its specific socio-political goals. The discourse, thus, reclaims agency from traditional narratives of passive victimhood by assigning affirmative value to marginalized actors.

*Survivors, you are the **center of our work**.*

(Code: MT-2023-CoreText-S2-PRD-01)

*We reaffirm the **internationalist** nature of our struggle and the **grassroots, communitarian, working class** basis of our feminism.*

(Code: WMW-2024-AdvPosText-S7-PRD-07)

In these instances, descriptors such as "internationalist" or "center of our work" function as normative anchors. As Wodak (2021) suggests, such branding marks the movement as a legitimate and prepared participant in global political dialogue.

*Function 2: Negative construction of adversarial systems and ideologies.* Movements rely on predication to frame injustice as a structural product of wider hegemony rather than isolated or incidental prejudice. By attaching highly evaluative and negative attributes to institutional bodies, the discourse engages in the deliberate delegitimation of dominant power structures.

*Violence against women is **structural** – it is **an inherent feature of the patriarchal and capitalist systems**.*

(Code: WMW-2023-CoreText-S2-PRD-02)

*Addressing human rights violations... have a common cause: the **cis-endosex-heteronormative, ableist... model**.*

(Code: LGBTQI-2023-CoreText-S2-PRD-05)

This structuralization shifts the focus from the private sphere to public institutional accountability. As noted by Mendes et al. (2018), this rearticulation is essential for challenging depoliticized framings of inequality. The strategic use of predication enables the movements to not merely describe their realities for they also actively reconstruct the moral landscape of the discourse. The delegitimation of hegemonic structures is therefore achieved by attaching attributes, such as "structural," "inherent," or "cis-endosex-heteronormative," to institutional bodies and patriarchal norms. As KhosraviNik and Esposito (2018) note, this evaluative labeling is crucial for challenging the "naturalized" power dynamics of dominant out-groups in digital gender discourse. Furthermore, by coupling this negative structural critique with the resilient attributes assigned to their own marginalized communities, the predicative strategy transforms normalized gendered violence into an explicit site of systemic critique. This serves to actively shift the narrative focus from individual victimhood to collective survivor agency, providing the socio-political leverage necessary to demand systemic transformation.

### 4.3. Argumentation

The strategy of argumentation is evident across 178 instances (20% of the corpus), particularly attributed across #MeToo (18%), WMW (18%), and the LGBTQI+ movement (26%). Throughout the dataset, argumentation operates through two primary functions: grounding movement claims via rights-based reasoning and constructing oppression as a structural condition necessitating intervention.

*Function 1: Grounding movement claims and actions.* Movements justify their ideologies by appealing to normative principles such as responsibility, equality, and justice. This utilizes *topoi* or rhetorical warrants that connect premises to conclusions.

***Institutions and cultures must take responsibility. Not survivors.***

(Code: MT-2023-CoreText-S2-ARG-08)

This justificatory reasoning functions as a crucial rhetorical counter-weight to bureaucratic inertia. As Weldon et al. (2023) observe, modern transnational feminist movements must construct explicit argumentative frameworks to successfully challenge deeply embedded gender violence regimes. The utilization of the *topoi* of responsibility and justice allows the movements to deploy causal reasoning to actively shift the burden of accountability away from individual survivors and onto state and societal structures. Framing discrimination as the logical outcome of systemic negligence, rather than isolated personal tragedy, constructs an irrefutable imperative for the overhaul of institutions. At its core, this strategic argumentation neutralizes the neoliberal tendency to individualize social issues, demanding instead a collective and structural reckoning.

*Function 2: Construction of oppression as a systemic condition.* Argumentation is utilized to treat injustice as an effect of deeper structures rather than episodic instances.

***We know that sexual violence thrives in environments where power, privilege, and secrecy collide.***

(Code: MT-2025-AdvPosText-S7-ARG-02)

Movements shift attention from isolated acts to broader systems of power by linking harm to the social conditions that allow abuse to flourish. This turns a diagnosis of systemic harm into a political warrant: if harm is inherent to the structure, resistance becomes a reasoned necessity. This strategy is particularly salient in contemporary gender politics where struggles are increasingly shaped by interlocking forms of backlash. As Moisander et al. (2016) suggest, political discourse gains significant force when it frames specific responses as both reasonable and morally required.

### 4.4. Perspectivization

Perspectivization, as the most frequent strategy in the dataset (184 instances; 21%), functions primarily through two main channels: constructing a collective movement standpoint and positioning injustice through solidarity and intervention.

*Function 1: Construction of a collective and committed standpoint.* Movements reject neutral or detached positions, instead projecting themselves as invested actors in their respective struggles. Through the first-person plural "we" and "our," they construct an orientation toward the collective.

***We are bonded... because there is no movement, no organization, and no hashtag without you.***

(Code: MT-2023-CoreText-S2-PSV-03)

*Our values and actions are aimed at political, economic and social change for a radical transformation of the world.*

(Code: WMW-2023-CoreText-S1-PSV-04)

Through signaling point of view and commitment, perspectivization allows movements to present themselves as active participants rather than observers. For #MeToo, this involves an institutional voice focused on survivor healing, while for the LGBTQI+ movement, it links standpoint to "global voice" and leadership in transnational advocacy.

*Function 2: Positioning injustice through solidarity and intervention.* Movements utilize perspective to align with ongoing struggles, frequently framing observation as a mandate for response.

*We are witnessing a growing wave of militarization and war...*

(Code: WMW-2024-AdvPosText-S4-PSV-02)

*...we join forces with organisations worldwide to advocate for healthcare systems rooted in consent, not control*

(Code: LGBTQI-2025-AdvPosText-S3-PSV-01)

This strategy moves from mere witnessing, as seen in WMW's observation of militarization, to interventionist demands, such as #MeToo's urgent call for a ceasefire. This use of the first-person plural synthesizes disparate experiences of marginalization into a unified transnational identity. Perspectivization in these texts extends beyond mere pronoun usage to function as a prominent mechanism of both affective and political solidarity. Through what Cap (2022) identifies as "proximization," the movements utilize spatial, temporal, and social positioning to establish a form of epistemic authority while simultaneously distancing, at a conceptual level, their ideological opponents. Such a collective voicing serves to collapse geographical boundaries, thus establishing a shared standpoint that assumes a moral high ground over the distanced institutional "other," such as the state or the patriarchy. Such an alignment is critical in contemporary digital activism, wherein affective and shared positioning are considered the primary drivers of global mobilization. Further, Cap (2022) notes that such positioning allows speakers to establish authority while conceptually distancing ideological opponents. At its core, this collective alignment serves as a primary driver for global mobilization in digital arenas, particularly movement websites.

#### **4.5. Intensification/Mitigation**

In terms of intensification/mitigation, the corpus recorded 177 instances of intensification and zero instances of mitigation, thereby comprising 20% of the overall dataset. The absolute absence of mitigation is argued to be analytically significant for it suggests a patterned refusal to dilute judgments or qualify the severity of contested conditions. While historical studies often associated marginalized voices with hedged and deferential language, contemporary digital activism thrives on unmitigated assertions. This abandonment of mitigation signals a linguistic departure from polite petitioning, through reliance on hyperbole, augmentatives, and absolute terms, as a form of intensification of affect which signals an uncompromising refusal to negotiate fundamental rights (Zappavigna, 2018). At its core, this unmitigated rhetorical force is emblematic of modern activism, particularly for movements that favor moral clarification over institutional appeasement. Such observable shift suggests that intensification is not merely an emotional reaction but a strategic choice to resist "algorithmic dilution" and maintain the radicality of the movement's claims. Throughout the corpus, the strategy of intensification can be understood via two prevalent discursive function: 1) the amplification of urgency/severity, and 2) the amplification of scale and the force of the collective.

*Function 1: Amplification of urgency and severity.* Movements intensify representations of harm through absolute phrasing and descriptions of permanence to ensure injustice appears intolerable rather than commonplace.

*Since the collapse of Rana Plaza, killing more than 1,000 women working in utterly inhumane, hazardous conditions in Bangladesh...*

(Code: WMW-2024-AdvPosText-S4-INT-01 )

This cumulative moral description moves the account beyond mere reporting into condemnation. Similarly, phrases like "forever changed" or "no longer any safe place" establish harm as irreversible and total. As Fairclough and Fairclough (2012) argue, such intensified language aids in constructing an urgency that presents specific responses as both morally and politically required.

*Function 2: Amplification of scale and collective force.* Intensification is further utilized to enlarge claims beyond isolated events, remodeling movements into massive, transnational phenomena.

*Suddenly there were millions of people from all walks of life saying "me too".*

(Code: MT-2023-CoreText-S1-INT-05 )

While #MeToo and WMW utilize emotive and universalizing language to synthesize geographic range with political solidarity, the LGBTQI+ movement often employs numerical accumulation to intensify perceived institutional reach. This enlargement of scale affirms that injustice is widespread but remediable through the force of the collective. This aligns with the argument that movements gain force by constructing a larger collective subject capable of transnational action.

#### 4.6. Limitations of the Study

Notwithstanding the insights gained from the study regarding the linguistic construction of gender movements, a number of limitations must be acknowledged. First, the corpus is relatively compact, consisting of 24 purposively selected documents within a narrow temporal window (2023-2025), thus capturing only a specific snapshot of contemporary mobilization. Second, while the study examines digital arenas, the analysis was restricted to official movement websites to prioritize vetted institutional voices; as a result, traditionally dynamic and reactive platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok were excluded. Third, the observed absence of linguistic mitigation may be attributed to a function of the specific genres analyzed, in particular manifestos, position papers, and official statements, which inherently require high illocutionary force; thus, the findings of the study should not be interpreted as a universal feature of all digital gender activism. Lastly, the study focused exclusively on text-based content and verbal transcripts, which leaves multimodal dimensions of the websites (e.g., images, videos, and platform-specific visual affordances) unexplored in the analysis.

#### 5. Conclusions and Recommendation

The findings of the study demonstrate that transnational gender-oriented movements construct their language not merely as a vehicle to express grievances, but as a deliberate tool for counter-hegemonic resistance. The analysis reveals that the five discursive strategies, namely nomination, predication, argumentation, perspectivization, and intensification, do not operate in isolation. In reality, they function synergistically to overturn the established patriarchal and capitalist power structures. The movements reclaim agency for their constituents and strip hegemonic institutions of their perceived neutrality via a strategic definition of identities and the assignment of evaluative attributes. Further, the movements' discourse shifts the burden of accountability away from

individual survivors onto systemic structures by way of targeted argumentation and collective perspectivization. The absence of linguistic mitigation, replaced by rigorous intensification, signals an uncompromising rhetorical posture that serves to provide the necessary socio-political leverage to move beyond polite requests for inclusion, thereby empowering marginalized constituencies to demand transformation on their own terms.

Based on the discursive patterns identified, the study proposes the following recommendations for advocacy practitioners and future researchers:

1. For Social Movement Advocates: Despite the rapid potential for mobilization offered by connective action and personalized politics, social movement advocates, particularly those that heavily utilize digital means, must remain vigilant against the visibility constraints of the digital economy. To prevent radical messages from being obfuscated or commodified by platform algorithms, activists should consistently anchor their digital campaigns within the core ideological principles subscribed by the movements (e.g., anti-capitalism and intersectionality), as opposed to solely relying on emotional spectacles or purely affective activism. Advocates must sustain a systemic critique within their public messaging to ensure that their core political demands are not softened as a consequence of using a digital medium.

2. For Future Researchers: Scholars of critical discourse are encouraged to utilize the present study's framework as a methodological foundation for examining how marginalized voices negotiate rhetorical space. Future iterations of this research should expand on the corpus, not only in terms of quantity, but to also conduct comparative analyses of conservative and transnational anti-gender coalitions that seek to investigate the ways such coalitions engage in "backlash advocacy" to halt progressive policies. Moreover, there is a pressing need to investigate the discursive mechanism of delegitimization as a way of uncovering the ways hegemonic institutions actively silence feminist and LGBTQI+ advocates within the digital sphere. Finally, in recognition of the evolving nature of online platforms, subsequent studies should explore multimodality or the examination of how images, videos, and platform-specific affordances in terms of their interactions with textual discourse to contest or construct movement legitimacy.

## 6. Supplementary Materials

**Full Coding Sheet for DISCURSIVE STRATEGIES | MeToo:**



**Full Coding Sheet for DISCURSIVE STRATEGIES | World March of Women:**



**Full Coding Sheet for DISCURSIVE STRATEGIES | LGBTQI+:****Metadata for each Document Analyzed:**

MeToo Metadata



WMW Metadata



LGBTQI+ Metadata

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**8. Declaration of Originality and Sole Authorship**

I, Jose Antonio C. Dasig Jr., declare that this manuscript titled "Discursive Strategies in Digital Arenas: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Contemporary Gender Activism" is my original work. I confirm that I am the sole author of this work and that all resources, citations, and external ideas used herein have been properly acknowledged and documented in accordance with APA 7th edition standards. I further declare that this material has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree or any other publication at this or any other institution.

**9. Conflicts of Interest**

I, Jose Antonio C. Dasig Jr., declare no conflict of interest. This research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest. As this work received no external funding, no funding sponsors had a role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript; or in the decision to publish the results.

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