



## Gender Discourse on Social Media: A Systematic Synthesis Toward a Conceptual Model of Ideology, Performativity, and Platform Political Economy

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| ARTICLE INFO                                                                                                    | ABSTRACT                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
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| Received:<br>03 April 2026                                                                                      | Social media has transformed how gender issues are created, circulated, and contested in the digital public sphere, yet studies synthesizing gender discourse themes across platforms, cultural contexts, and theoretical perspectives remain limited, as most empirical research focuses on specific issues, communities, or individual platforms. This fragmentation has resulted in insufficient understanding of how ideological formations, gender performativity, and platform mechanisms interact in shaping contemporary digital gender meanings. This study aims to identify the dominant themes and patterns in gender discourse on social media and to develop a Conceptual Model of Ideology, Performativity, and Platform Political Economy (IPP Model) through systematic literature synthesis. The study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) guided by the PRISMA 2020 Statement (Page et al., 2021) and thematic synthesis methodology (Thomas & Harden, 2008), applied to thirteen international peer-reviewed articles on gender discourse in social media published in 2026. The findings reveal four interdependent themes shaping the production, circulation, and legitimation of gender meanings in digital spaces: ideological polarization, gender performativity, body politics, and platform economy. Based on these findings, the study proposes the IPP Model as an integrative analytical framework explaining gender discourse as the outcome of interactions among ideological systems, multimodal performative practices, embodied representations, and algorithmically governed platform infrastructures. The model contributes to digital discourse analysis, multimodal studies, applied linguistics, and gender studies by repositioning social media from a passive communication medium into an active socio-technical actor that shapes the visibility, circulation, and legitimacy of gender meanings. |
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## 1. Introduction

Social media has evolved into a socio-technical infrastructure that shapes the production, circulation, and legitimacy of meanings in the digital public sphere through algorithmic systems, content moderation, and engagement metrics. Gender discourse is constructed through multimodal resources, including language, visuals, audiovisual elements, emojis, and hashtags, where visibility is influenced not only by users' intentions but also by platform governance mechanisms (van Dijck et al., 2018; Gillespie, 2018). This digital transformation creates a paradox in which social media simultaneously enables feminist activism, collective solidarity, and marginalized gender expressions while also facilitating misogyny, anti-feminist movements, online harassment, and hegemonic gender norms. Consequently, gender discourse becomes an arena of ideological contestation rather than a neutral exchange of ideas. Understanding these dynamics requires an integrated perspective that considers multimodal practices, ideological struggles, identity performativity, and platform political economy. Such an approach combines insights from gender performativity (Butler, 1990), multimodal social semiotics (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021), and platform governance studies (van Dijck et al., 2018; Gillespie, 2018).

Although gender discourse research has expanded across linguistics, literary studies, communication, and digital media, existing studies remain theoretically fragmented and often overlook the interaction between ideology, gender performativity, and platform governance. Studies such as Tiwery et al. (2024), which examined femininity and masculinity in *Tarian Bumi*, and Daulay et al. (2024), which explored gender resistance in women's punk subculture, reveal the ideological construction of gender identities but do not explain how digital infrastructures continuously negotiate and amplify gender meanings. Similarly, sociolinguistic and pragmatic studies have demonstrated that language constructs identity, authority, and social relations. Haryono et al. (2023), Muta'allim (2025), Yudistira and Muta'allim (2023), and Sudi et al. (2025) examined politeness, political communication, and moral values, but their analyses remain limited to localized or face-to-face interactions. Likewise, socio-semantic studies by Ago et al. (2024) and Muhammadijah et al. (2025) contribute to understanding meaning construction and digital persuasion but do not address ideological negotiation of gender identities. Studies on language, ideology, and power by Mahardhani et al. (2023) and Yudistira et al. (2022) further demonstrate discourse functions in constructing authority and social cohesion; however, they do not consider digital platforms as socio-technical actors regulating visibility, circulation, and legitimacy.

Based on these limitations, this study identifies three research gaps. First, a theoretical gap exists due to the limited integration of ideological discourse theory, gender performativity, and platform political economy in explaining gender discourse on social media. Second, a methodological gap emerges because previous studies predominantly rely on individual case analyses rather than systematic synthesis. Third, a contextual gap remains because social media is often treated as a communication medium rather than an algorithmically governed infrastructure that actively shapes discourse production, circulation, visibility, and legitimacy. To address these gaps, this study develops a conceptual synthesis of gender discourse through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) guided by the PRISMA 2020 Statement. By integrating Ideological Discourse Theory, Gender Performativity Theory (Butler, 1990), and Platform Political Economy, this study proposes the Ideology–Performativity–Platform Political Economy (IPP) Conceptual Model, which explains gender discourse as the outcome of interactions among ideological structures, performative practices, and algorithmic governance.

Despite the growing body of research on gender discourse in digital environments, existing literature remains fragmented across specific issues, platforms, and sociocultural contexts. Therefore, this study conducts an SLR to synthesize contemporary scholarship and develop the IPP Conceptual Model, which explains digital gender discourse as the result of interactions among ideological formations, performative practices, and platform governance mechanisms. The model contributes to digital discourse studies, multimodal discourse analysis, media studies, communication research, and applied linguistics by providing a theoretical foundation for understanding the sociotechnical construction of gender meanings in digital environments.

Recent studies demonstrate that gender discourse on social media is shaped by performative practices, political power, and platform-mediated communication. Pilyarchuk and Graf (2026), Le Blanc et al. (2026), and Zhu and Yang (2026) show that gender identity is continuously enacted, displayed, and contested through digital publics. Similarly, Baluța and Tufiş (2026) and Hailer-Röthel (2026) demonstrate that gender discourse operates as a mechanism through which political authority and symbolic power are negotiated. Studies by Amores et al. (2026), Pacheco-Ortiz et al. (2026), and Rahman et al. (2026) further reveal the relationship between emotional expression, toxicity, engagement, and algorithmic visibility, while Wang (2026) and Gram et al. (2026) illustrate how gendered bodies become sites of ideological contestation and commercialization (Srnicsek, 2017; van Dijck et al., 2018). Beyond Western contexts, Alsulami (2026), Mohiuddin et al. (2026), Zhang and McKenzie (2026), and Beramendi et al. (2026) demonstrate that digital platforms reshape public participation, visibility, and collective expression. However, these findings remain fragmented across platforms, disciplines, and cultural contexts, leaving limited explanation of how ideology, multimodal performance, and platform political economy interact in shaping gender discourse.

Despite extensive research on digital gender discourse, significant conceptual gaps remain. Existing studies often focus on specific issues, platforms, or cultural contexts, while theoretical approaches such as gender performativity, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), and platform political economy are frequently applied separately. This fragmentation limits understanding of how ideology, semiotic practices, and platform governance jointly construct, legitimize, and circulate gender meanings. Therefore, this study addresses two research questions concerning dominant patterns of gender discourse on social media and the integration of ideology, gender performativity, and platform political economy into an integrated conceptual framework. Through an SLR of thirteen international studies, this research develops the IPP Conceptual Model to explain digital gender discourse as the interaction among ideological formations, multimodal performative practices, and platform governance mechanisms.

Gender performativity theory explains that gender is not an inherent attribute but a socially constructed identity produced through repeated practices (Butler, 1990). In digital environments, these performances are amplified through multimodal resources such as posts, videos, images, emojis, and hashtags, enabling continuous reproduction and negotiation of gender identities (Marwick, 2015; Zappavigna, 2018). Phenomena such as tradwife culture, beauty influencers, and the manosphere illustrate how gender performances function as strategies of self-branding, visibility management, and symbolic capital accumulation (Banet-Weiser, 2018). Complementing this perspective, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) views language as a social practice through which power relations and ideologies are constructed and contested (Fairclough, 1995). Van Dijk (1998, 2006) emphasizes that ideology shapes

collective beliefs and social interpretations, while digital discourse expresses competing gender ideologies through linguistic and multimodal strategies. Therefore, the integration of gender performativity and CDA enables this study to examine gender discourse as both a process of identity construction and a site of ideological negotiation.

The platform political economy perspective explains that social media functions as a data-driven commercial infrastructure where attention, behavioral data, and interactions are transformed into economic value. Platforms regulate discourse visibility through algorithms, content moderation, ranking mechanisms, and engagement metrics (Srnicsek, 2017; van Dijck et al., 2018). Consequently, emotionally charged, controversial, and polarizing gender content is more likely to gain algorithmic amplification, transforming identities, bodies, and ideological conflicts into digital commodities. Influencer culture demonstrates this relationship between self-expression and identity commodification (Banet-Weiser, 2018). Therefore, this perspective explains how platform infrastructures influence the circulation, legitimacy, and commercialization of gender discourse.

Based on these theoretical perspectives, this study develops the IPP Conceptual Model as an integrative framework for examining digital gender discourse. The model conceptualizes ideology, performativity, and platform political economy as interconnected dimensions rather than independent analytical domains. Ideology explains the belief systems and power relations shaping gender meanings (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1998); performativity describes how these meanings are enacted through multimodal practices (Butler, 1990; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021); and platform political economy explains how algorithms and commercial infrastructures regulate their visibility and circulation (Srnicsek, 2017; van Dijck et al., 2018). These dimensions operate through a dynamic reciprocal process in which ideological formations influence performances, performances generate visibility and engagement, and platforms selectively amplify, suppress, or commodify gender representations according to algorithmic and commercial priorities. Thus, the IPP Model does not propose a new grand theory but provides an integrative analytical framework combining gender studies, CDA, multimodal social semiotics, and platform studies.

## 2. Method

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to synthesize contemporary scholarship on gender discourse across social media and to develop an integrative conceptual model explaining the interaction among ideology, gender performativity, and platform political economy. Unlike conventional narrative reviews, which are often susceptible to subjective study selection and unsystematic interpretation, the SLR approach provides a transparent, rigorous, and reproducible framework for identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing existing evidence (Page et al., 2021). Accordingly, the review followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020 Statement) (Page et al., 2021), ensuring transparency throughout the processes of identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and study inclusion. Given that the objective of this research was theory development rather than effect-size estimation, thematic synthesis proposed by Thomas and Harden (2008) was employed because it enables findings from heterogeneous qualitative and mixed-method studies to be treated as qualitative evidence that can be systematically coded, compared, and interpreted to generate higher-order conceptual explanations.

The literature search was conducted exclusively in the Scopus database, selected because of its comprehensive coverage of high-quality peer-reviewed journals in linguistics,

communication, media studies, sociology, and gender studies. The search utilized the Boolean query ("gender discourse" OR "gender representation" OR feminism OR masculinity OR "gender performativity" OR "gender politics") AND ("social media" OR Instagram OR TikTok OR Twitter OR X OR Facebook OR Weibo OR RedNote OR "digital platform"), with the search restricted to peer-reviewed journal articles, English-language publications, and studies published in 2026 to capture the most recent developments in digital gender discourse. Following the PRISMA protocol, duplicate records were removed during the identification stage, titles and abstracts were screened for relevance, eligible studies underwent full-text assessment, and only publications satisfying all inclusion criteria were retained. Studies were included when they empirically investigated gender discourse in social media environments, particularly issues related to gender representation, digital feminism, anti-feminism, masculinity, gender performativity, gender politics, platform political economy, algorithmic governance, or digital communication practices, whereas conference proceedings, book chapters, review articles, editorials, opinion papers, and studies unrelated to gender discourse on social media were excluded.

This procedure resulted in thirteen international peer-reviewed journal articles that constituted the analytical corpus. The selected studies represented diverse disciplinary traditions, cultural contexts, and digital platforms, including Twitter/X, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, Weibo, RedNote, and other online communities, thereby enhancing the analytical breadth of the synthesis and reducing platform-specific bias. Data analysis followed the four-stage thematic synthesis procedure of Thomas and Harden (2008). First, each article was systematically examined using a structured data extraction matrix documenting the research objectives, theoretical framework, methodological design, research context, data sources, principal findings, and theoretical implications. Second, the findings and discussion sections of each study were subjected to inductive conceptual coding, resulting in the identification of twenty-four preliminary concepts, including digital feminism, anti-gender politics, gender performativity, body politics, algorithmic amplification, engagement economy, platform governance, identity negotiation, and discursive resistance.

Third, these concepts were repeatedly compared across studies while preserving their contextual meanings, producing thirty preliminary thematic units that reflected recurring patterns and contextual variations in contemporary gender discourse. Finally, conceptually related thematic units were integrated through interpretive thematic synthesis, resulting in four higher-order analytical themes, whose interrelationships subsequently formed the basis for developing the IPP Conceptual Model proposed in this study. To ensure methodological rigor, the review adopted the qualitative trustworthiness framework of Lincoln and Guba (1985). Credibility was enhanced through iterative reading and continuous comparison across studies; dependability was ensured by implementing a transparent and replicable review protocol; confirmability was established through an audit trail documenting coding decisions, thematic revisions, and conceptual integration; and transferability was strengthened by synthesizing evidence derived from multiple disciplinary perspectives, diverse sociocultural settings, and various social media platforms. Collectively, the integration of the PRISMA 2020 review protocol, thematic synthesis methodology, and qualitative trustworthiness criteria provides a robust and transparent methodological foundation for developing a theoretically grounded conceptual explanation of gender discourse within contemporary digital communication environments.

### 3. Results and Discussion

Table 1 presents the characteristics of the thirteen international peer-reviewed studies included in the systematic review. Following the PRISMA 2020 screening procedure, these studies were identified as meeting all predetermined inclusion criteria and collectively represent the current scholarly landscape of gender discourse across diverse social media environments. To provide a comprehensive understanding of contemporary developments in the field, each study is summarized according to its authorship, publication year, digital platform or sociocultural context, and principal research focus. The diversity of platforms including Instagram, Twitter/X, Weibo, online communities, digital marketing environments, and political communication spaces as well as the variety of geographical contexts represented in the selected studies, provides a broad empirical foundation for identifying recurring conceptual patterns and constructing a theoretically integrated synthesis.

**Table 1.** Characteristics of the Studies Included in the Systematic Synthesis

| No | Author(s) (Year)            | Platform/Context                                | Research Focus                                                                                     |
|----|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | Pilyarchuk & Graf (2026)    | Instagram Reels                                 | Tradwife performativity and the intersections of race and class                                    |
| 2  | Le Blanc et al. (2026)      | Social media influencezrs, Trinidad and Tobago  | The title <i>Queen</i> and intersectionality within the influencer industry                        |
| 3  | Zhu & Yang (2026)           | Chinese social media                            | The "Sister Hong" controversy and the contestation of gender performativity in the post-#MeToo era |
| 4  | Baluța & Tufiş (2026)       | Romanian political discourse                    | Anti-gender politics and the mobilization of the traditional family as an electoral strategy       |
| 5  | Hailer-Röthel (2026)        | German Bundestag parliamentary debates          | Gendered interruptions and the quality of parliamentary discourse                                  |
| 6  | Amores et al. (2026)        | Twitter/X, Spain                                | Toxicity, sentiment, and online hate speech                                                        |
| 7  | Pacheco-Ortiz et al. (2026) | Social media, Colombia                          | Emotional narratives and manipulative discourse targeting female politicians                       |
| 8  | Rahman et al. (2026)        | Bangla-language online comments ( $n = 6,830$ ) | Gendered abusive language and online hostility                                                     |
| 9  | Wang (2026)                 | Weibo                                           | The politicization of menstrual discourse                                                          |
| 10 | Gram et al. (2026)          | Social media marketing content                  | Masculinity and the "low testosterone" narrative                                                   |
| 11 | Alsulami (2026)             | Digital corpus, Saudi Arabia                    | Women's voices and sociopolitical reform                                                           |
| 12 | Mohiuddin et al. (2026)     | <i>Everywhere She Maps</i>                      | Participatory mapping and women's digital participation                                            |
| 13 | Zhang & McKenzie (2026)     | Weibo                                           | Geoprivacy attitudes: balancing transparency and privacy                                           |

Source: Authors' synthesis based on the selected studies.

As shown in Table 1, the selected studies demonstrate that contemporary scholarship on gender discourse extends far beyond the traditional examination of gender representation.

Instead, recent research increasingly conceptualizes gender as a multidimensional social, political, and technological phenomenon embedded within digital communication ecosystems. Several studies investigate the performative construction of gender identities in social media, including the performance of traditional femininity on Instagram Reels (Pilyarchuk & Graf, 2026) and the contestation of gender identities in the Chinese post-#MeToo movement (Zhu & Yang, 2026). Other studies focus on gender discourse as a political instrument, examining anti-gender mobilization in electoral politics (Baluța & Tufiş, 2026), emotional manipulation targeting female politicians (Pacheco-Ortiz et al., 2026), and gendered interaction within parliamentary debates (Hailer-Röthel, 2026). At the same time, another group of studies explores the influence of digital platforms on public discourse through analyses of online hate speech (Amores et al., 2026), abusive language in online comments (Rahman et al., 2026), the politicization of menstruation discourse (Wang, 2026), platform-based constructions of masculinity (Gram et al., 2026), women's sociopolitical participation (Alsulami, 2026; Mohiuddin et al., 2026), and digital privacy in gendered online interactions (Zhang & McKenzie, 2026). Collectively, these studies reveal that gender discourse on social media is simultaneously shaped by ideological contestation, performative identity practices, algorithmically mediated communication, and platform-specific sociotechnical structures. This diversity of empirical contexts provides a robust foundation for identifying recurring themes through thematic synthesis and ultimately supports the development of the IPP Conceptual Model proposed in this study.

#### ***a. Ideological Polarization in Digital Gender Discourse***

The most prominent theme emerging from the synthesis concerns ideological polarization, revealing that social media functions not merely as a communication platform but as a contested arena in which competing ideological formations negotiate the meaning of gender. Across the reviewed studies, digital spaces simultaneously facilitate narratives of feminism, gender equality, and women's solidarity while providing visibility to anti-feminist movements, anti-gender politics, the manosphere, and conservative discourses that reaffirm traditional family values and hierarchical gender relations (Baluța & Tufiş, 2026; Zhu & Yang, 2026). Importantly, this polarization should not be understood simply as a binary confrontation between opposing ideological camps. Rather, it represents a continuous process of discursive negotiation through which social actors construct affective communities, mobilize collective identities, and legitimize particular interpretations of gender. From the perspective of CDA, ideology functions as the underlying cognitive and social framework that shapes linguistic choices, multimodal representations, and evaluative positioning. Consequently, ideological contestation constitutes the foundational dimension upon which other forms of digital gender discourse are constructed.

#### ***b. Gender Performativity as Multimodal Semiotic Practice***

The second analytical theme demonstrates that gender identities are constructed through multimodal performative practices involving verbal language, visual imagery, audio, bodily movement, clothing, color, music, emojis, and hashtags. Across the reviewed literature, phenomena such as the *tradwife* movement, influencer culture, and digitally mediated masculinity illustrate that gender is continuously enacted through repeated multimodal performances rather than expressed as a fixed personal attribute (Pilyarchuk & Graf, 2026; Le Blanc et al., 2026; Gram et al., 2026). These performances extend beyond identity expression to become strategic mechanisms for acquiring social legitimacy, symbolic capital, audience

recognition, and algorithmic visibility. Digital gender performances are therefore embedded within platform-mediated communication, where recognition depends not only on communicative competence but also on the affordances and visibility regimes established by digital platforms. These findings reinforce Butler's notion of performativity while extending it into contemporary digitally networked environments characterized by multimodal interaction and algorithmic mediation.

***c. Body Politics as a Site of Gender Meaning Negotiation***

The third theme identifies body politics as the primary arena through which contemporary digital gender discourse materializes. Across the synthesized studies, both female and male bodies become symbolic sites where ideological beliefs, moral values, health narratives, sexuality, and commercial interests intersect. For example, discussions surrounding menstruation frame women's biological experiences as matters of public health, reproductive rights, and political recognition (Wang, 2026), whereas narratives concerning "low testosterone" construct male bodies through discourses of masculine crisis, self-optimization, and lifestyle consumption (Gram et al., 2026). These findings indicate that body politics is not merely another topic within gender discourse; rather, it constitutes the concrete discursive space where ideological orientations are translated into performative representations that can be publicly negotiated, contested, commodified, and circulated across digital platforms.

***d. Platform Political Economy as the Structural Dimension of Gender Discourse***

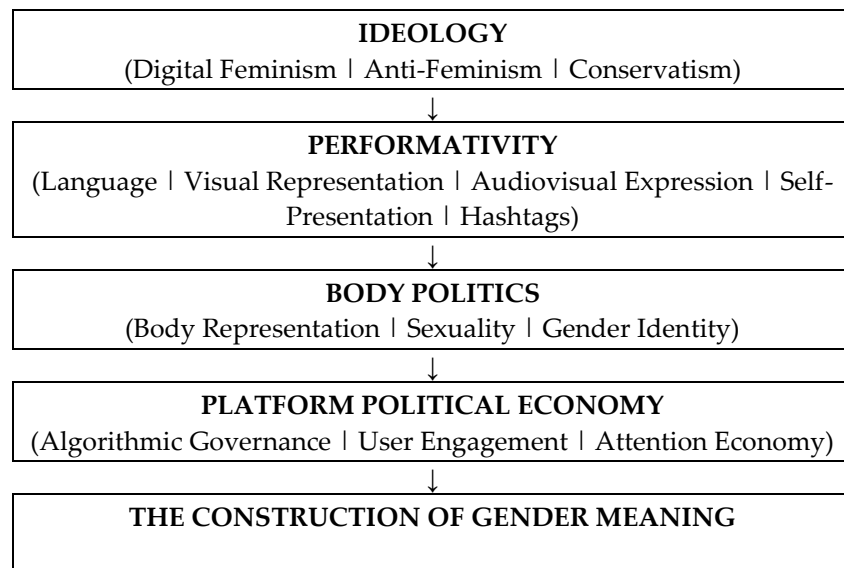
The fourth analytical theme demonstrates that the production and circulation of gender discourse are fundamentally shaped by the political economy of digital platforms. Algorithmic recommendation systems, engagement metrics, and attention-driven business models systematically privilege emotionally charged, controversial, and polarizing content over more moderate forms of communication (Amores et al., 2026; Rahman et al., 2026; Pacheco-Ortiz et al., 2026). Accordingly, algorithms function not merely as technical mechanisms for information distribution but as active sociotechnical infrastructures that regulate visibility, legitimacy, and audience reach. Platform governance therefore exerts considerable influence over which representations of gender become socially prominent, which remain marginalized, and which are transformed into commercially valuable forms of digital engagement. These findings underscore that the dynamics of gender discourse cannot be separated from the economic and technological structures through which digital communication is organized.

***e. Integrating the Themes into the Ideology–Performativity–Platform Political Economy Conceptual Model***

The cross-thematic analysis demonstrates that the four analytical themes operate as an interconnected system rather than as independent dimensions of digital communication. Ideological polarization provides the normative and political orientations that shape gender discourse. These ideological positions are enacted through multimodal performative practices, whereby language, visual representation, embodiment, and other semiotic resources construct recognizable gender identities. These performances subsequently materialize within body politics, where ideological contestation becomes embodied through representations of health, sexuality, morality, and identity. Finally, the platform political economy determines

which of these representations achieve visibility, legitimacy, amplification, or marginalization through algorithmic governance, engagement-based ranking, and commercial platform logics.

The resulting conceptual framework illustrates a recursive rather than linear relationship among these dimensions. Ideological formations shape performative practices; performative practices generate audience engagement and digital traces; body politics provides the principal arena in which gender meanings are negotiated; and platform infrastructures selectively amplify or suppress these meanings according to algorithmic and commercial priorities. In turn, the unequal visibility produced by platform governance reinforces or transforms prevailing ideological narratives, thereby sustaining an ongoing cycle of digital meaning-making. Based on this synthesis, the proposed IPP Conceptual Model conceptualizes gender discourse as an emergent sociotechnical process arising from the continuous interaction among ideology, multimodal performance, embodied representation, and platform governance. The structural relationships among these four analytical dimensions are illustrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Integration of the Synthesized Themes into the Ideology–Performativity–IPP Conceptual Model

Source: Authors' conceptual synthesis

#### *f. Gender Discourse as an Ecology of Ideological, Performative, and Structural Interactions*

The findings of this study suggest that gender discourse on social media is more appropriately understood as a dynamic communicative ecology rather than a collection of isolated identity representations. Across the synthesized literature, digital feminism, anti-feminism, conservatism, and the manosphere emerge not merely as competing viewpoints but as interconnected ideological formations that continuously struggle for legitimacy, visibility, and symbolic authority within digitally mediated public spheres. These ideological formations coexist within a sociotechnical environment where meaning is negotiated through the reciprocal interaction of discourse, multimodal performance, and platform governance. From this perspective, gender meanings are neither produced exclusively by individual users nor determined solely by technological infrastructures. Instead, they emerge through the interaction of three mutually constitutive dimensions. First, ideological orientations provide the normative frameworks through which gender identities and social relations are interpreted. Second, these ideological positions become publicly intelligible through

multimodal performative practices involving language, visual imagery, bodily expression, audiovisual content, and other semiotic resources. Third, platform political economy regulates which performances receive visibility, legitimacy, amplification, or suppression through algorithmic recommendation systems, engagement-based ranking, and data-driven commercial logics.

These dimensions therefore reinforce one another in a recursive process. Ideological positions require performative enactment to become communicatively meaningful, while performative practices depend upon platform infrastructures to achieve public visibility and social recognition. At the same time, algorithmic governance is not politically neutral; by selectively amplifying particular forms of engagement, digital platforms indirectly shape the ideological landscape of online gender discourse. Consequently, gender discourse should be conceptualized as an evolving sociotechnical ecology in which ideology, multimodal performance, and platform political economy continuously interact to produce, circulate, negotiate, and legitimize gender meanings across digital environments. This ecological perspective constitutes the principal theoretical implication of the proposed IPP Conceptual Model. Rather than explaining digital gender discourse through a single analytical dimension, the model conceptualizes meaning-making as an emergent outcome of the continuous interaction between ideological formations, performative practices, and platform governance. In doing so, the model provides a more comprehensive framework for understanding the complexity of contemporary gender discourse within digitally mediated societies.

#### *g. Dialogue with Theory*

The thematic synthesis not only corroborates the theoretical perspectives underpinning the IPP Conceptual Model, but also extends them by demonstrating how these perspectives intersect within contemporary social media environments. While previous theories have largely examined ideology, gender performativity, and platform political economy as separate analytical domains, the present findings reveal that these dimensions operate simultaneously and recursively in shaping digital gender discourse. From the perspective of gender performativity (Butler, 1990), the findings reaffirm that gender identities are continuously constituted through repeated multimodal performances rather than reflecting essential or biologically predetermined characteristics. However, this study extends Butler's framework by demonstrating that performative repetition in digital environments is increasingly mediated by platform affordances and algorithmic visibility, thereby linking performativity to broader sociotechnical infrastructures.

Similarly, the findings support the central assumptions of CDA (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1998, 2006), which conceptualize discourse as a mechanism through which ideology and power relations are reproduced. Nevertheless, the synthesized evidence suggests that ideological contestation on social media extends beyond linguistic practices to encompass multimodal communication, affective engagement, algorithmically curated visibility, and digitally networked publics. Consequently, ideological struggle should be understood as both discursive and platform-mediated. The findings also reinforce the perspective of platform political economy (Srnicke, 2017; van Dijk et al., 2018), confirming that digital platforms actively shape the circulation of discourse through algorithmic governance, datafication, and attention-based business models. Beyond merely facilitating communication, platforms influence which ideological narratives achieve legitimacy, which performative practices become socially recognizable, and which representations generate economic value through sustained user engagement.

Taken together, these findings indicate that ideology, performativity, and platform political economy are not competing explanations but complementary dimensions of a single communicative process. Their integration within the IPP Conceptual Model therefore contributes a more comprehensive theoretical explanation of how gender meanings are produced, negotiated, amplified, and legitimized in contemporary digital environments. This integration further highlights the need for interdisciplinary approaches that consider discourse, identity construction, and technological infrastructures as interconnected processes rather than isolated phenomena in understanding digital gender communication. The relationships between the theoretical propositions and the empirical findings synthesized in this study are summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Dialogue Between Theoretical Propositions and the Findings of the Present Study

| <b>Theoretical Perspective</b>                                                          | <b>Core Proposition</b>                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>Theoretical Extension Based on the Findings</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Gender Performativity</b> (Butler, 1990)                                             | Gender identities become socially intelligible through the repeated performance of actions, linguistic practices, and symbolic expressions that gradually acquire the appearance of naturalness. | In digital environments, performative repetition is increasingly mediated by algorithmic recommendation systems. Representations that generate higher levels of user engagement are more likely to gain visibility, be replicated, and become normalized within platform ecosystems.   |
| <b>Critical Discourse Analysis</b> (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1998)                   | Linguistic choices and representational strategies actively construct ideological meanings while reproducing or challenging existing power relations.                                            | On social media, ideological circulation is shaped not only by discursive content but also by algorithmic governance, which differentially amplifies, suppresses, or prioritizes competing ideological positions through platform visibility mechanisms.                               |
| <b>Multimodality</b> (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021)                                        | Meaning emerges through the integrated interaction of verbal, visual, auditory, gestural, and spatial semiotic resources.                                                                        | Multimodal configurations operate within platform architectures that selectively privilege particular forms of representation according to algorithmic visibility and user engagement, thereby influencing how gender meanings are produced and circulated.                            |
| <b>Platform Society and Platform Capitalism</b> (van Dijck et al., 2018; Srnicek, 2017) | Digital platforms organize the circulation of information through datafication, algorithmic governance, and attention-based business models.                                                     | Within gender discourse, these mechanisms actively determine which ideological narratives and performative practices are amplified, marginalized, or commodified. Consequently, digital platforms function as active sociotechnical actors rather than neutral communication channels. |

Source: Authors' synthesis.

#### ***h. Validation of the IPP Conceptual Model***

The thematic synthesis provides strong conceptual support for the three analytical dimensions of the proposed IPP Conceptual Model introduced in Section 2.4. The dimension of ideology is substantiated by the findings on ideological polarization (Section 4.1), which demonstrate that digital gender discourse is fundamentally structured through competing ideological formations. The dimension of performativity is supported by the findings on multimodal gender performance (Section 4.2), illustrating how ideological positions become socially recognizable through repeated semiotic practices across multiple communicative modes. Finally, the dimension of platform political economy is validated by the findings presented in Section 4.4, which reveal that algorithmic governance, engagement-driven visibility, and commercial platform logics significantly shape the circulation and legitimacy of gender discourse.

Importantly, body politics (Section 4.3) functions as the empirical arena in which these three analytical dimensions converge. Rather than constituting an independent component of the model, body politics represents the primary site where ideological orientations are enacted through multimodal performances and subsequently amplified, constrained, or commodified by platform infrastructures. This interpretation further reinforces the integrative character of the IPP Conceptual Model. The validation presented in this study is conceptual rather than statistical. The explanatory coherence of the model is established through thematic convergence across thirteen international studies representing diverse digital platforms, sociocultural contexts, and empirical settings, rather than through quantitative hypothesis testing or structural model estimation. Accordingly, the proposed framework should be understood as a theoretically grounded interpretive model whose value lies in its capacity to integrate fragmented scholarship into a coherent analytical explanation of digital gender discourse.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This study systematically synthesized evidence from thirteen international journal articles to identify the dominant themes and recurring patterns of gender discourse across contemporary social media platforms and to develop the IPP Conceptual Model. The findings demonstrate that digital gender discourse is inherently multidimensional, emerging through the interaction of four interrelated analytical themes: ideological polarization, gender performativity, body politics, and platform political economy. Together, these themes explain how gender meanings are produced, negotiated, circulated, and legitimized within digitally mediated communication. The principal contribution of this study lies in the development of the IPP Conceptual Model, which integrates insights from gender performativity, CDA, and platform political economy into a unified analytical framework. Rather than treating these perspectives as competing explanations, the model conceptualizes them as complementary dimensions of a single sociotechnical process through which gender discourse is constructed in contemporary digital environments. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that a SLR employing thematic synthesis can function not only as a method of evidence synthesis but also as a rigorous approach to conceptual model development and theoretical advancement.

Nevertheless, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the synthesis was based on thirteen studies published within a single publication year, which may not fully capture the diversity of digital platforms, cultural contexts, and evolving forms of gender discourse. Second, the IPP Conceptual Model remains a conceptually derived framework that has not yet been subjected to empirical validation. Consequently, its explanatory power should be

interpreted as theoretical rather than predictive. Future research should empirically evaluate the proposed model across diverse social media platforms using complementary methodological approaches such as multimodal discourse analysis, CDA, digital ethnography, corpus linguistics, computational discourse analysis, and mixed-method research designs. In addition, the model could be further refined by incorporating emerging dimensions of digital communication, including algorithmic governance, generative artificial intelligence, automated content moderation, platform transparency, and cross-cultural variations in the construction and circulation of gender discourse. Such extensions would strengthen the explanatory capacity of the model and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of gender communication within rapidly evolving digital ecosystems.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

### **Authors' Contribution**

Aliyah was responsible for conceptualizing the research topic, conducting the systematic literature review, developing the search strategy, identifying and screening relevant studies based on the PRISMA 2020 framework, extracting and analyzing the data through thematic synthesis, developing the Ideology–Performativity–Platform Political Economy (IPP) conceptual model, and preparing the initial manuscript. Zainal Rafli and Miftahulhairah Anwar contributed as academic supervisors by providing theoretical and methodological guidance, validating the literature review procedures, reviewing the thematic analysis and conceptual interpretation, and critically revising the manuscript. All authors contributed to the refinement of the final manuscript and approved the submitted version.

### **Statement of the use of AI**

The authors used artificial intelligence (AI)-assisted tools solely for English grammar checking and language refinement. AI was not used for generating research ideas, conducting data analysis, interpreting findings, or preparing the scientific content of the manuscript. All intellectual contributions, analyses, and conclusions remain the sole responsibility of the authors.

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