Feminist Praxis Beyond the Individual: Toward a Theory of Collective Agency –

Digital Mourning, Political Presence: Affective Feminist Activism in Turkey, Iran, and Argentina

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Hereby, I, Seren Arslanoglu, declare and assure that I have composed the present thesis with the title ***Feminist Praxis Beyond the Individual: Toward a Theory of Collective Agency – Digital Mourning, Political Presence: Affective Feminist Activism in Turkey, Iran, and Argentina****, independently, that I did not use any other sources or tools other than indicated and that I marked those parts of the text derived from the literal content or meaning of other works – digital media included – by making them known as such by indicating their source(s).* Nijmegen, 01/06/2025.

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ABSTRACT

This article explores how feminist theory might better conceptualize agency as a collective phenomenon rather than an individual attribute. Building on the work of Sara Ahmed, Judith Butler, and Bernard Harcourt, it proposes a three-part model of collective feminist praxis: affective ignition, performative disruption, and transformative praxis. The theory is grounded in a case study of the We Will Stop Femicide Platform in Turkey, whose activism transforms grief into protest, visibility into pressure, and collective presence into political strategy. The article argues that feminist agency emerges through relation—through the emotions that spark resistance, the performances that claim space, and the sustained labour that turns critique into institutional change. It also engages with critiques of liberal individualism, emphasizing the need for feminist theory to develop vocabularies that reflect the relational, affective, and strategic dimensions of resistance. By bringing together conceptual critique and empirical analysis, the article contributes to debates on feminist praxis, particularly in contexts shaped by political repression and digital mediation. It ultimately proposes a flexible yet structured framework for understanding how feminist collective agency takes shape, endures, and transforms the conditions under which it operates.

Key words: Collective Feminist Agency, Feminist Praxis, Affect Theory, Performativity, We Will Stop Femicide Platform, Political Resistance, Gender-based Violence

INTRODUCTION

"Feminism is a movement in many senses. We are moved to become feminists.**"**

— **Sara Ahmed** [1]

Feminist theory has historically emphasized resistance as a defining element of feminist subjectivity. Ever since Judith Butler's performative subversion and Sara Ahmed's affective politics of complaint and wilfulness, feminist resistance has often been imagined through the

[1] Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2017, p. 3.

figure of the individual subject—the one who subverts, speaks, or refuses.[2] Even as these theoretical shifts have offered rich insights into gendered power as constructed and contested, this subject-centred framing risks narrowing the political imagination of feminist praxis. What happens to collective forms of feminist struggle that emerge through solidaristic practices, shared vulnerability, and sustained action?

This thesis starts from this tension and asks the following research question: ***How can feminist theory conceptualize agency as a collective phenomenon, rather than an individual attribute, in a way that reflects the complexity of contemporary feminist resistance?***

While feminist and political theory has long treated agency as an individual capacity, this article draws attention to the importance of collective action. It proposes that resistance should be understood as a process shaped by emotional alignment, performative visibility, and sustained institutional engagement. In this view, agency is not merely a property of isolated individuals but a dynamic that emerges through relations between bodies, emotions, and structures. This shift becomes not only a theoretical but also a practical imperative because in the face of authoritarian regimes and widespread gender violence, collective resistance is a much more effective tool than individual resistance.

The article states a conceptual dialogue between Sara Ahmed, Judith Butler, and Bernard Harcourt —three thinkers whose works intersect around the challenge of moving from critique to transformation. Ahmed's theory of affect emphasizes how shared emotional intensities ignite resistance[3]; Butler's theories of performativity and assembly illuminate how opposition is embodied through bodily assemblage[4]; Harcourt, in turn, calls for a move beyond critique to praxis that engages with institutions and institutions.[5] These three thinkers are central to this article because they offer different yet complementary perspectives on the formation of collective agency. Ahmed grounds agency in emotional circulation and relationality, Butler theorizes its performative and embodied dimensions, and Harcourt insists on its material and infrastructural realization. Their combined insights provide a three-dimensional account of how feminist resistance operates not merely as affect or appearance but as sustained political practice.

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[2] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York: Routledge, 1990; Sara Ahmed, *Complaint!*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2021.
[3] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014, p. 9.
[4] Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015.
[5] Bernard E. Harcourt, *Critique & Praxis*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2020.

To ground this theoretical dialogue, I turn to the case of the **Turkish Women's Movement**, particularly the **We Will Stop Femicide Platform (Kadın Cinayetlerini Durduracağız Platformu, *hereafter WWSFP*)**. This movement offers a compelling model of collective feminist praxis: it mobilizes affect (grief, rage, solidarity), deploys performative strategies (public protests, court presence, online campaigns), and engages institutions (legal advocacy and political negotiation).[6] Their work does not merely illustrate theory—it actively produces it. Rather than treating the Turkish movement as an empirical supplement, this thesis positions it as a philosophical and political interlocutor.

This article is structured in three sections. Chapter 1 maps key theoretical concepts—agency, affect, performativity, and praxis—through a critical reading of Ahmed, Butler, and Harcourt. Chapter 2 turns to WWSFP, analysing how affective, performative, and strategic practices coalesce in its activism. Chapter 3 synthesizes these insights to propose a model of collective feminist praxis and reflects on its implications for feminist theory and political resistance under repressive conditions.

This article aims to contribute to feminist theory by foregrounding the significance of collective action and offering a model to conceptualize its operation across affective, performative, and institutional registers. It will be demonstrated that in the struggle to prevent femicide, feminist agency can be effectively achieved not only through individual rights but also through collective strategies. It will be argued here that feminist movements not only produce symbolic opposition but also implement a collective form of resistance by targeting concrete social changes. To understand this collective agency, the article explores three key concepts, distinct yet interconnected, that explain how feminist resistance takes shape, endures, and transforms: impact, performativity, and practice.

The article also addresses potential critiques and limitations of its central arguments and concepts. While affect and collective action can serve as powerful catalysts for social change, they are not inherently aligned with progressive or emancipatory goals. Emotional intensities and shared commitments can also be instrumentalized by authoritarian regimes or exclusionary movements to consolidate power, foment division, or legitimize violence. Fascist movements, for example, have historically relied on orchestrated public emotions—national pride, fear, and

[6] We Will Stop Femicide Platform, *2024 Annual Femicide Report*, https://kadincinayetlerinidurduracagiz.net/veriler/3130/we-will-stop-femicides-platform-2024-annual-report (accessed January 24, 2025).

resentment—to generate political momentum. As Lauren Berlant warns through her concept of *cruel optimism*, emotional attachments can persist even when they impede well-being or political transformation[7]. Collective action can risk flattening internal differences and blurring the boundaries between affect, ethical discernment, and emotional contagion. For these reasons, this article adopts a critical stance toward the thinkers it engages with, exploring not only the possibilities but also the ethical and political tensions embedded in collective action.

CHAPTER 1: CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS: AGENCY, AFFECT, PERFORMATIVITY AND PRAXIS

To redefine feminist agency as collective, rather than individual, requires going back to four primary concepts: agency, affect, performativity, and praxis. Each of these concepts has been chosen because it illuminates a different dimension of the processes through which feminist resistance takes shape and sustains itself. Agency addresses the capacity to act and to intervene; affect explains the emotional intensities that bind bodies together; performativity reveals how political presence is enacted and repeated; and practice locates resistance within ongoing, materially grounded struggles.

It is important to note here that while the collective agency is emphasized throughout this article, is not propose a rigid binary between the individual and the collective. As argued by Judith Butler and Michel Foucault, subjectivity is produced relationally through norms, discourses, and power structures that prevent a purely autonomous self. In this context, what appear as social processes already mediate individual agency. The shift we present here is therefore analytical rather than ontological and aims to emphasize the affective, performative, and institutional conditions under which agency is not only enacted but sustained in the collective feminist struggle.

Together, these concepts enable us to account for the emotional, bodily, and strategic dimensions of collective feminist action. This chapter aims to trace the main theoretical developments across these concepts, considering both their contributions and limitations in contemporary feminist thought.

1.1 Agency

Agency has long been central to feminist theory, traditionally associated with autonomy, intentionality, and subversion. In **Gender Trouble (1990)**, Judith Butler challenges the liberal

[7] Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2011, pp. 1–2.

assumption that agency stems from a stable, autonomous subject. Instead, she argues that subjects are constituted through repeated social and discursive norms. Agency, then, emerges through **performative repetition**—acts that are shaped by power but also capable of subverting the norms they reiterate.[8] While Butler dislodges agency from liberal individualism, her framework still centres on the subject, leaving less room for collective dimensions through which political action often unfolds.

Bernard Harcourt's **Critique & Praxis (2020)** complements this critique by interrogating the detachment of critical theory from practical engagement. He argues that theory often frames political agency as a solitary, ethical stance—thus reproducing individualistic understandings.[9] Harcourt urges a reorientation toward **praxis**, where agency is realized not through critique alone, but through sustained collective engagement with institutions and infrastructures.

This shift enables a more collective understanding of agency as relational and embedded rather than isolated and autonomous. Saba Mahmood, in **Politics of Piety (2005)**, challenges secular feminist views that equate agency with resistance. Her ethnographic work on women's religious practices in Egypt demonstrates how agency may take the form of submission, habituation, and relational obligation—modes that do not fit liberal or performative paradigms.[10] Mahmood's account calls us to recognize agency as plural, situated, and responsive to varied forms of power and life-worlds.

Together, Butler, Harcourt, and Mahmood offer competing yet complementary insights. Butler unsettles the fixity of identity by showing how agency is enacted through repeated, socially situated actions via performativity. Harcourt broadens this framework by encouraging a shift from critique to action, foregrounding not only the interpretive but also the interventionist and relational dimensions of agency. Mahmood, in turn, challenges liberal paradigms by demonstrating how agency can take nonconformist, embodied, and context-specific forms. Collectively, these thinkers illuminate a more expansive and relational conception of agency—one that transcends individual autonomy or transgression. A collective feminist theory of agency must therefore attend to how subjects are formed through power, act through shared practices, and sustain resistance by forging and maintaining solidarities. In this view, agency

[8] Butler, 1990, pp. 2–3; pp. 24-34.
[9] Harcourt, 2020, pp. 5-31.
[10] Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005, pp. 26-44.

is not the possession of isolated individuals but a distributed capacity enacted across emotional, ethical, and institutional relations.

1.2 Affect

Affect has become a key concept in feminist theory, especially through the works of Sara Ahmed and Lauren Berlant, who have demonstrated how emotions circulate between bodies and shape political life[11]. Rather than viewing emotion as an intimate, interior state, feminist affect theory highlights its public and relational nature—how emotions move between subjects, form attachments, and enable or foreclose collective action. Against the tendency to dismiss emotion as irrational or apolitical, theorists argue that emotion is world-making in a political sense.[12]

Sara Ahmed has been especially influential in shifting feminist theory toward affect. In **The Cultural Politics of Emotion (2014)**, Ahmed writes that emotions are not internal states but are connections that "stick" to bodies, objects, and signs, shaping social alignments of "us" and "them.".[13] Emotions are not simply expressions of internal states but rather circulate between bodies, aligning them toward some and against others. This means that emotions are performative: they do things. They bind collectives together, give shape to grievances, and fuel resistance.[14]

Ahmed's notion of the "feminist snap," introduced in *Living a Feminist Life*, captures the political force of emotional accumulation. "You can snap because you are exhausted by having not snapped thus far and by what you have had to put up with." she writes.[15] Though rooted in personal experience, this snap can travel affectively across bodies, catalyzing broader resistance. In this sense, grief, anger, and exhaustion—often pathologized as individual responses—are reinterpreted as political resources.

Lauren Berlant extends this conversation with her concept of "cruel optimism," which explores how people remain attached to conditions that hinder their flourishing. In this framework, affect is not only a catalyst but also a constraint.[16] This is especially important in collective feminist

[11] Ahmed, 2014, pp. 1–2; Berlant, 2011, pp. 1–2.
[12] Ahmed, 2014, p. 2.
[13] *Ibid*, p. 10.
[14] *Ibid*, pp. 12-13.
[15] Ahmed, 2017, p. 198.
[16] Berlant, 2011, pp. 1–3.

action, where affective attachments to family, nationalism, or cultural ideals complicate resistance.

The role of affect becomes especially visible in the digital age, where images, names, and hashtags can rapidly circulate emotion. As Zeynep Tufekci argues, digital platforms enable emotional intensification and collective identification, allowing movements to gain speed and scale.[17] Emotional expression online is not just cathartic—it is mobilizing. It signals presence, creates affective publics, and helps structure collective demands.

In this view, feminist theories of affect reframe agency not as a rational decision but as an embodied, relational process—being moved and moving others. Affect initiates collective action by generating attachment and resonance. Yet, as Berlant and digital theorists remind us, affect is politically ambivalent and must be treated critically. In the next section, the concept of performativity helps illuminate how bodies assert political presence through visibility and repetition, building on the emotional intensities that affect produces.

1.3 Performativity

While affect is concerned with the relational and embodied intensities that mobilize collective action, performativity reframes political agency as emerging through repetition and social citation rather than intention or internal will. In **Gender Trouble (1990)**, Judith Butler famously argues that gender is not a fixed identity but a performative accomplishment: "Gender proves to be performative—that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be."[18] This means that gender does not precede action; it is constituted by it. Through this formulation, Butler challenges essentialist notions of identity by showing how norms are reiterated and thus potentially subverted through performance. Subversion, then, becomes possible through resignification, parody, and disidentification.

However, Butler's early work centres primarily on the individual subject's capacity to destabilize norms. While this is foundational to feminist and queer theory, it underexamined how performativity functions collectively. In **Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly (2015)**, Butler addresses this gap by arguing that collective gatherings are also performative acts—bodily manifestations of political claims. "The bodies assembled are

[17] Zeynep Tufekci, "Social Movements and Governments in the Digital Age: Evaluating a Complex Landscape," *Journal of International Affairs* 68, no. 1, 2014, pp. 2-4.
[18] Butler, 1990, p. 25.

themselves the enactment of a plural and performative 'we'," she writes, emphasizing that assembly is not only symbolic but constitutive of resistance.[19]

This shift is essential for understanding feminist resistance as more than expressive dissent. In this expanded account, performativity is no longer just a theory of gender—it becomes a framework for reading political embodiment, especially when precarious bodies gather in public space to assert their right to appear.[20] These gatherings function as material interventions into regimes of visibility and legitimacy: they challenge those whose lives are considered grievable and whose suffering is recognized by the state.[21]

Reframing performativity in this way helps explain how collective agency materializes and gains strength. When feminist protesters are marching in the streets, occupying courthouses, or holding vigils, they are not merely expressing dissent but enacting a political agency grounded in embodied collectivity. These assemblies bring political claims into being through presence and relation, demonstrating that resistance typically comes to take shape not in individual performances but in the performative co-constitution of bodies in the public sphere.

At this point, it is important to note that performativity is not free from complexities. Because relying on visibility as a form of that resistance can reproduce exclusions; the invisible, the speechless, or the unrecognized can be left out of the performative "we." Furthermore, performative resistance in digital or monitored spaces can be commodified, monitored, or captured, which can raise concerns about its sustainability and inclusiveness.[22]

Thus, performativity becomes a core component of collective agency. It shows how public vulnerability and bodily togetherness establish a political presence and demand recognition. In feminist resistance, such acts are not merely representational—they are constitutive of political life. Performativity reveals how agency takes shape not just in isolated disruption but in the sustained acts of gathering and appearing. Yet for resistance to endure and reshape structures, it must move beyond the ephemeral. This is where praxis becomes indispensable.

1.4 Praxis

Praxis is important for understanding how collective resistance becomes politically effective and sustainable. While concepts of affect and performativity help make sense of how resistance

[19] Butler, 2015, p. 8.
[20] Butler, 2015, p. 18.
[21] Butler, Judith. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. London: Verso, 2004, xv–xvi.
[22] Jodi Dean, *Publicity's Secret: How Technoculture Capitalizes on Democracy*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002, p. 14.

is mobilized and brought into public sight, praxis focuses on the labour of connecting theory to sustained political transformation. But the meaning of praxis—and how it should be understood in the context of collective agency—remains a contentious question. In this article, praxis is understood not simply as action, but as a committed, context-sensitive, and strategic practice of change that unfolds both within and against existing institutional structures.

Bernard Harcourt directly addresses this problem in **Critique & Praxis** (2020). He argues that critical theory has at times become disconnected from material intervention, prioritizing intellectual diagnosis rather than action for change.[23] This, Harcourt warns, risks imagining agency to be first and foremost reflective, as a position which is aware of power, but maybe does not necessarily need to destabilize it in real and strategic ways.[24] "We need to move beyond critique to begin to transform our present," he writes, underscoring that critique without praxis becomes hollow.[25] Praxis, for Harcourt, must be cultivated intentionally as a politically engaged practice that intervenes in the world.

Importantly, Harcourt resists binary framings of praxis as either reformist or revolutionary. Instead, he proposes a recursive, open-ended model—one responsive to the material conditions of struggle while wary of capture or co-optation.[26] This formulation is particularly important for feminist movements, which often operate under repressive or ambivalent institutional conditions. Feminist praxis, in such conditions, must be adaptive: simultaneously strategic and subversive, capable of engaging institutions while critiquing their exclusions and failures.

The Turkish women's movement demonstrates the tension of praxis in collective action. WWSFP integrates affective mobilisation and performative protest with strategic legal activism, policy activism, and public pedagogy.[27] Rather than positioning themselves solely in opposition to the state, the platform engages courts, legislators, and international conventions to demand accountability and institutional change. Their praxis is not one of pure refusal, nor passive incorporation—it is iterative, situated, and politically generative. They challenge institutional inertia while leveraging its mechanisms to fight for change.

This dynamic form of praxis completes the triadic model of collective agency developed in this chapter. If affect mobilizes, and performativity renders political claims legible, then praxis

[23] Harcourt, 2020, pp. 4–5.
[24] *Ibid*., p. 6-7.
[25] *Ibid*., p. 7.
[26] *Ibid*., pp. 8-10.
[27] We Will Stop Femicide Platform, *2024 Annual Report*.

sustains resistance and embeds it in the material conditions of struggle. It mitigates the risk that feminist activism will remain symbolic or episodic by anchoring it in strategic labour and long-term intervention. At the same time, praxis is not immune to ambiguity: engaging with institutions can entail compromise, and long-term activism can exhaust or fragment movements. Still, praxis remains indispensable for any theory of collective agency that seeks not only to resist power but to transform it.

CHAPTER 2: COLLECTIVE AGENCY IN PRACTICE

Concepts such as feminist politics, emotion, performance, and praxis often risk becoming overly abstract when confined to theory. Yet, feminist movements build theoretical frameworks not just with abstractions —they create them through collective acts that respond to injustice in everyday life. As Sara Ahmed reminds us, feminist knowledge is not only produced in books but also everyday struggles.[28] Feminist practice is thus grounded in the gestures, solidarities, and actions through which people come together, express emotion, and demand change. There is a need, then, to examine how theory and practice co-constitute one another in feminist activism.

The difficulty of conceptualizing collective agency arises from a core insight of Foucauldian and poststructuralist thought: the critique of the autonomous liberal subject. As Michel Foucault argues, agency does not precede power but it is formed through it. Subjects are not independent entities but emerge from historically situated discursive and institutional practices that define, limit, and enable what one can be.[29] This view challenges the distinction between individual and collective as a stable binary—since all subjectivity is already relational and embedded within networks of power.

In **The History of Sexuality (1978),** Foucault extends this analysis by describing power as productive rather than merely repressive. He writes that power "produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth."[30] This shift is crucial for feminist theory, allowing us to understand collective agency not as external to power, but as something generated through its circuits. Resistance, from this view, becomes a mode of subjectivation.

[28] Ahmed, 2017, p. 22.
[29] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon, New York: Pantheon Books, 1980, pp. 98–99.
[30] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley, New York: Pantheon Books, 1978, pp. 92–93.

Yet while Foucauldian critique helps us move beyond essentialist accounts of individuality, it does not fully explain how organized and enduring forms of collective agency develop. Saba Mahmood, engaging both Foucault and Butler, argues that agency should not be reduced to moments of subversion.[31] It also includes the embodied, relational practices through which subjects sustain political struggle. In this light, collective feminist agency is not a return to liberal voluntarism, but an inquiry into how solidarities are forged and maintained.

This chapter turns to the Turkish feminist movement—particularly WWSFP—as a lived example of how collective agency becomes emotionally mobilized, performatively enacted, and strategically sustained in the face of systemic violence. The platform's actions not only critique norms that support gender inequality but also enact feminist agency as a collective process—emotional, performative, and strategic, all at once.

2.1 Collective Feminist Action in Turkey: The Case of the We Will Stop Femicide Platform

To understand collective feminist activity "in practice," feminist struggle must be situated in specific historical and social contexts. Feminist movements are not built from abstractions alone—they emerge in response to lived conditions of injustice and through sustained practices of resistance. As Cengiz Diner and Şule Toktaş note, Turkish feminism has long been characterized by internal diversity and ongoing debate.[32] Yet, despite these tensions, there remains a shared commitment to confronting gender-based inequalities and affirming the necessity of collective action that runs through these varied traditions.

In this evolving process, the founding of the founding of the **We Will Stop Femicide Platform (*Kadın Cinayetlerini Durduracağız Platformu, hereafter WWSFP*)** in 2010 was an important turning point.[33] While previous feminist movements generally operated with small groups or a limited public sphere, this platform brought women together against the deep crisis of femicide and gender-based violence in Turkey, overcoming ideological, generational, and regional differences. The platform was born as a reaction to the state's inaction and the continuous erasure of femicide from the public agenda.[34]

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[31] Mahmood, 2005, pp. 17–18.
[32] Cengiz Diner and Şule Toktaş, "Waves of Feminism in Turkey: Kemalist, Islamist and Kurdish Women's Movements in an Era of Globalization," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 12, no. 1 (2010): pp. 41-43.
[33] We Will Stop Femicides Platform, "About Us".
[34] Gamze Erükçü Akbaş and Kasım Karataş, *Femicide in Turkey: A Document Analysis of News from 2011 to 2019*, *Journal of Social Service Research* 50, no. 1 (2023), pp. 55-56.

Since its establishment, WWSP has been shaping the feminist movement with a collective action approach. Members of the platform participate in protests that leave a mark on social memory, actively present themselves in digital environments and make legal interventions to defend demands for justice. Such actions are not only symbolic forms of resistance but constitute strategic engagements with institutional structures. With the combination of emotional appeals, visual protests, and legal struggle, the platform manages to transform feminist activism in a way that creates both disruptive and long-term effects.

WWSFP offers a powerful example of how the Turkish feminist movement comes to life collectively and operates in practice. Instead of focusing on individual actions, this movement unites women and strategies to transform into a sustainable force. Through emotional mobilization, performative protests, and long-term practices, the Platform demonstrates how feminist resistance can survive, adapt, and continue to demand transformation even under oppressive conditions.

Unlike the #MeToo movement's emphasis on individual testimony and exposure, WWSFP builds resistance through collective mourning and sustained organizational strategy. It demonstrates how feminist agency can be forged in community rather than isolation. While both movements respond to gendered violence, their modalities of agency differ. One amplifies personal voice, the other builds a persistent, collective presence. This contrast underscores the value of a framework that foregrounds solidarity, strategy, and shared labour in the theorization of feminist resistance.

2.2 Affect

For WWSFP, "affective experience" is not just a background element of activism. On the contrary, it is central to its ability to mobilize support, articulate political demands, and sustain its energy. Sara Ahmed's concept of the "feminist snap" shows how shared emotions like grief and exhaustion catalyse political refusal. Emotions, as Ahmed writes, are not internal states but circulate between bodies and signs, directing collective energies and shaping resistance.[35] In this view, emotion is both the grammar and ground of protest.

Among these emotions, grief plays a particularly catalytic role. The Platform's activism often begins with mourning: names, faces, and stories of murdered women are shared across social media, held up in marches, and invoked in courtroom vigils. These acts of commemoration

[35] Ahmed, 2014, p. 4.

transform individual mourning into collective anger. Sarah Ahmed calls this as accumulation of “emotional repression,” which can manifest in the feminist snap that can occur in sudden acts of resistance.[36] What matters is not just the emotion itself, but how it mobilizes protest and demands accountability.

This affective work is not confined to physical spaces. Online campaigns such as #İstanbulSözleşmesiYaşatır ("The Istanbul Convention Saves Lives") and #ÖzgecanAslan spread pain and solidarity beyond borders. Rather than merely raising awareness, they amplify shared indignation. As Zeynep Tufekci puts it, digital platforms can facilitate affective contagion and attachment, allowing emotional expressions to serve as organizing forces.[37] But affect in digital spaces is double-edged: it can also generate echo chambers, polarization, or reactive forms of activism that burn out quickly. The Platform mitigates this through continuity—its monthly femicide reports, vigils, and online commemorations constitute an “affective archive,” where *mourning becomes a memory and repetition becomes an identity*[38].

Anger, too, is cultivated as a collective force. When Platform activists appear in courtrooms—typically attired in purple, shouting slogans, turning legal space into a site of collective outrage. These performances, as Ahmed calls it, form "the affective life of dissent," where anger is not a destabilizing force but a mode of coherence and action.[39] Through repetition, symbols, and presence, the Platform transforms individual pain into public protest.

Solidarity, finally, emerges not from sameness but from emotional resonance. This is consistent with Ahmed's account of feminist gatherings as "a history of being against," in which solidarity is generated through a common orientation to injustice.[40] The Platform’s rituals—marches, commemorations, slogans—build collectivity through affective resonance. Emotional expression is not secondary; it constitutes the movement’s form of agency.

Therefore, affect in the case of WWSFP is not ephemeral or reactive—it is durational because it is structured by repetition, memory, and sustained emotional labour. It initiates action, marks participants, and continually reasserts the moral urgency of the struggle. Instead of being

[36] Ahmed, 2017, pp. 188–189.
[37] Zeynep Tufekci, *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017, pp. 33–37.
[38] Ahmed, 2017, p. 189.
[39] Ahmed, 2017, p. 186.
[40] Ahmed, 2014, pp. 176–177.

personalized expressions of pain, these affective practices enact feminist agency as visible, resonant, and transformative.

2.3 Performativity

If affect brings people into resistance, performativity shows how that resistance takes form in public. In her early work **Gender Trouble** (1990), Judith Butler argues that gender is not innate but performative—it is produced through repeated social acts. Identity, then, is constituted through performance, and subversion becomes possible by rearticulating those norms.[41]

However, this theory initially emphasized individual subversion. In her later work, **Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly (2015)**, Butler shifts focus to collective embodiment. She writes that "the bodies assembled are themselves the enactment of a plural and performative 'we'," emphasizing that gathering is not symbolic but constitutive.[42] Assembly enacts presence—it asserts that lives matter by insisting on being seen and heard.

This expanded notion is crucial for understanding the work of WWSFP. Public protests—marches, vigils, courthouse actions—are not only expressive. They enact a feminist presence that interrupts daily life and lays claim to public space. Their courtroom activism is both strategic and symbolic: activists wear purple, take notes, post outcomes online and hold press conferences. These acts transform legal spaces into sites of feminist visibility. As Butler argues, appearance politics asks "who gets to be seen and heard."[43] The Platform ensures that no femicide goes unrecorded and collective grief remains visible, even after the crowds disperse.

Butler's observation that mourning itself can become a political act is particularly instructive. As she writes, "to grieve and to make grief itself into a resource for politics, is not to be resigned to inaction, but it may be understood as the slow process by which we develop a point of identification with suffering itself."[44]Additionally, in **Precarious Life** (2004), Butler argues that public mourning is a way of contesting these exclusions, insisting on the political value of lives otherwise erased.[45]

The Platform's use of digital technologies also operates within this expanded field of performativity. Hashtags such as #İstanbulSözleşmesiYaşatır ("The Istanbul Convention Saves Lives") are more than online slogans—they are affective and political acts that extend the

[41] Butler, 1990, p. 33.
[42] Butler, 2015, pp. 66–68.
[43] *Ibid.*, p. 18.
[44] Judith Butler. "Violence, Mourning, Politics." *Studies in Gender and Sexuality* 4, no. 1 (2003): 9–37.
[45] Butler, 2004, xv–xvi.

performative reach of protest. Livestreamed vigils and viral posts do not just document events; they *are* events, that expand collective presence into digital space. As Zeynep Tufekci suggests, online platforms can generate "networked public action," where emotional alignment and political visibility operate in tandem.[46]

Thus, performativity in the case of the Platform is not limited to disruption—it is also about persistence. Bodies that show up again and again—in courts, in streets, in digital timelines—do more than interrupt; they establish. They create continuity, visibility, and political legitimacy. The Platform's protest performances are not sporadic gestures but sustained claims to space, to memory, and to justice. In this way, performativity operates not only as a mode of subversion but as a form of collective feminist world-making.

2.4 Praxis

If affect generates political emotion and performativity triggers resistance in the public sphere, then praxis refers to the sustained labour that upholds and advances that resistance. In this context, praxis does not only refer to a form of political action; it also refers to the deliberate, iterative, and interventionist processes of feminist collectives, such as WWSFP, to transform social structures and institutions.

Bernard Harcourt addresses the urgency of praxis in **Critique & Praxis** (2020), arguing that reducing critical theory to abstract analysis risks losing its real transformative potential.[47] For Harcourt, praxis does not flow naturally from critique—it must be intentionally cultivated. He insists that it be context-sensitive and reflexive, navigating the tension between institutional engagement and political rupture.[48] This perspective is particularly relevant to feminist movements, which often operate within hostile or repressive environments where transformation must be both strategic and resistant.

At this juncture, the collective feminist agency must be recognized not as an abstraction but as a mode of political labour. Resistance, to move beyond affective ignition or performative disruption, must engage in practices aimed at altering the structures that reproduce inequality. Praxis, in this sense, is not reducible to action alone. It involves the deliberate and iterative work of transforming material and institutional conditions over time. Feminist movements do not merely challenge symbolic norms or encroach on public space; they participate in legal

[46] Tufekci, 2017, p. 164.
[47] Harcourt, 2020, pp. 4–5.
[48] *Ibid.* pp. 7-8.

processes, negotiate with state institutions, cultivate public pedagogies, and build coalitions that allow demands to endure. These forms of engagement are often slow, repetitive, and structurally constrained—yet they are precisely where feminist resistance takes shape as a strategic and sustained practice. This is what distinguishes praxis from protest: not its intensity or visibility, but its commitment to the long-term reconfiguration of power.

This is what makes praxis so difficult to theorize and yet essential to understand. In everyday feminist activism, praxis is not heroic or spectacular. It is often the unseen, unpaid, and exhausting work of showing up to court dates, collecting data, writing petitions, following up on political promises, and holding coalitions together across ideological lines. WWSFP exemplifies this labour. Its members do not just mourn the dead or call for justice once—they return to the courtroom again and again, maintain databases of femicide statistics, assist families, and pressure the state to ratify and enforce protective legislation like the Istanbul Convention.[49] This slow repetition is not a failure of politics but its very condition—a form of persistent labour that, as Sara Ahmed argues, constitutes the 'sweaty' work of feminist life, where concepts and resistance are shaped through lived and repeated struggle.[50]

Harcourt maintains that praxis emerges from the tension between immanent critique and outside intervention. He resists reducing praxis to reformist or revolutionary, instead highlighting its contextual and recursive character.[51] Praxis, in this understanding, must be sensitive to lived conditions but wary of the threat of co-optation or political watering down. This is particularly important for feminist movements, which typically operate in unfriendly or repressive environments that both restrict and necessitate political action.

The Turkish women's movement demonstrates the central tension of praxis in collective action. WWSFP integrates affective mobilization and performative protest with strategic legal activism, policy advocacy, and public pedagogy.[52] They demonstrate that resistance must be sustained through working through institutions while still challenging institutions' legitimacy. Praxis here is neither pure refusal nor passive acceptance. It is continuous praxis. It is a process of working in and against what is present now to create spaces in which feminist demands can be asserted and fights for institutional change can be engaged.

[49] Istanbul Convention Monitoring Platform, “About the Istanbul Convention”; We Will Stop Femicide Platform, “2024 Annual Femicide Report,”.
[50] Ahmed, 2017, pp. 12-14.
[51] Harcourt, 2020, pp. 10–12.
[52] We Will Stop Femicides Platform, “About Us,”.

Through this, praxis completes the model of collective agency developed in this chapter. While affect explains the mobilization of bodies and performativity theory explains the trouble-making entry of bodies into the public, praxis explains the organized and coordinated nature of the collective struggle. It reminds us that political resistance ought not only to ignite and disturb, but to endure, develop, and transform. Praxis reduces the likelihood that collective agency will remain episodic and symbolic. Through praxis, feminist movements can maintain political life as a continuous, expansive, and transformative practice. If collective agency is to be fully theorized, however, we must now turn from these conceptual registers to the ways feminist movements enact these dynamics in practice.

CHAPTER 3: TOWARD A MODEL OF FEMINIST COLLECTIVE PRAXIS

When theorizing "collective feminist agency", multiple conceptual paths are available. This article foregrounds a specific approach: the collective agency is best understood through the intersection of affect, performativity, and praxis—a model that has been implicitly guiding the analysis and is now made explicit. These three dimensions were explored in depth in the previous chapters and shown to be central to the practices of WWSFP. We saw how emotional intensities ignite resistance (affect), how collective performances assert political presence (performativity), and how long-term institutional engagement sustains movements over time (praxis).

This chapter proposes a model that presents impact, performance and practice as intertwined processes that reinforce each other, rather than treating them as separate or sequential stages of activism. This approach makes a significant intervention into existing understandings in the literature, which often examines these dimensions in isolation. For example, impact theory often overlooks institutional structures or strategic engagement, foregrounding emotional intensities; performance is evaluated more in terms of individual disruption and reactions; and practice is often viewed as action, often from a less emotional or concrete perspective, unreflexively.[53] In this context, the article reconsiders the collective feminist movement not as a moment of rupture, but as a continuous process shaped by shared emotions, concrete struggles and strategic insistence.

[53] See Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensatio*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2002; Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2003; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York: Routledge, 1990; Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos, New York: Continuum, 1970; Bernard E. Harcourt, *Critique & Praxis*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2020.

Through the actions of WWSFP, we observe how these forces interact to build sustainable feminist resistance. This section presents a theoretical model to help us understand this interaction; The aim here is not to suggest a specific method, but rather to better understand how collective agency functions both within and against power under oppressive conditions.

3.1 Affective Ignition

Affective ignition marks the first step in collective feminist praxis: the moment when emotional intensity turns into political agency. As Sara Ahmed argues in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, emotions are not private feelings but social forces that circulate between bodies, shaping attachments and boundaries. Her concept of "affective economies" reframes emotions as constitutive of political identity, not just expressive of it. [54]

In *Living a Feminist Life*, Ahmed introduces the concept of the "feminist snap" to describe the tipping point at which emotional exhaustion, grief, and anger culminate in refusal. "You snap because you are worn down," she writes—but crucially, this snap is not just personal. It resonates. It travels across bodies, becoming politically contagious. The snap is thus both a rupture and a relay, triggering a shift from isolated endurance to collective resistance.[55]

Lauren Berlant's theory of "cruel optimism" deepens this view by explaining how people remain emotionally tethered to systems that harm them.[56] When these attachments are finally broken, the result is not just relief but political awakening. The "snap," in this light, marks the collapse of false promises and opens the possibility for new collective alignments.

WWSFP exemplifies how such affective snaps can become public and enduring. Mourning becomes ritualized: victims' names are chanted, their images displayed, their stories repeated. Rage is cultivated and shared amplified digitally, translated into protest, and sustained through repetition. As Zeynep Tufekci notes, digital platforms allow affect to travel quickly, turning local pain into a transnational political charge.[57]

Importantly, the Platform's affective politics are not fleeting. By archiving deaths, producing reports, and sustaining memory, it builds what Ahmed calls "a collective being against."[58] This is not just reactive outrage, but a political infrastructure of feeling. Affective ignition, then, is more than a spark. It initiates collective agency, transforms grief into resistance, and enables

[54] Ahmed, 2014, p. 11.
[55] Ahmed, 2017, p. 187.
[56] Berlant, 2011, pp. 23–24.
[57] Tufekci, 2014, pp. 2-3.
[58] Ahmed, 2017, p. 212.

feminist movements to emerge, persist, and organize. By bringing together Ahmed's theory of circulation, Berlant's critique of attachment, and Tufekci's insights on digital affect, this section shows how emotion initiates and sustains collective feminist agency.

3.2 Performative Disruption

Whenever emotional power generates resistance to feminism, the visible and political strength in public space originates from performative disruption. The core concept of this explanation exists within Judith Butler's theory of performativity. In *Gender Trouble,* Butler posits that gender is not an innate quality but a series of actions and behaviours repeated over time, which both reinforce and challenge existing power structures.[59]

In *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, Butler shifts the focus to collective social action. According to Butler, political action emerges when people assemble their bodies in physical space to claim their presence within society. Butler explains that the assembled bodies represent more than separate people because they physically demonstrate the demands of their collective group.[60] Through this perspective, performativity evolves beyond words and symbols to become an active and spatial human experience.

WWSFP exemplifies this performative disruption within the courtroom setting. This presence is supportive but also strategic. Activists attend court in purple, take notes, post results on social media, and hold press conferences after verdicts. Such gestures convert the legal process from a closed bureaucratic form into a performative site of feminist contestation. The courtroom—a domain usually belonging to the state—becomes, for a fleeting moment, a site of interruption and resistance.

Digital platforms further amplify these performative acts. Hashtagging, live streaming, and viral videos serve to duplicate and amplify acts of physical protest. Put together, these digital extensions do not dilute the power of the performance but instead make it repeatable, accessible, and transnational. Appearance politics, as Butler has argued, is about who gets to be seen and heard.[61] With the Platform's performative strategy, no femicide goes unrecorded, and collective presence or visibility persists even in instances when the assembly has ceased to exist.

[59] Butler, 1990, pp. 25–29.
[60] Butler, 2015, p. 18.
[61] *Ibid*, p. 71.

Therefore, performative disruption is not just a spectacle for non-interventionist occasions, but the visibility of feminist claims in spaces where such claims are otherwise excluded. It interrupts dominant narratives with a willed bodily presence, transforming public space into feminine agency. If affective ignition is the spark, then performative disruption is the flame made legible.

3.3 Transformative Praxis

If affect sparks resistance and performativity make it visible, transformative praxis sustains it. Praxis is not simply action—it is the thoughtful, repeated labour that connects critique to institutional transformation. It is the dimension of collective agency that ensures resistance endures and expands.

Bernard Harcourt, in Critique & Praxis, warns that critique risks becoming hollow if disconnected from material engagement. "Critique without praxis remains empty," he writes, arguing that theory must lead to deliberate, context-sensitive action.[62] He resists framing praxis as strictly reformist or revolutionary, emphasizing its recursive nature—emerging from and responding to lived conditions.[63]

WWSFP embodies this principle. Its courtroom activism is both performative and pragmatic: activists attend hearings, document outcomes, pressure legal actors, and demand accountability. These acts transform mourning into monitoring and protest into intervention. Rather than validate the justice system, the Platform leverages it to spotlight systemic failures and push for change. Beyond the courts, the Platform engages in sustained advocacy. It collects and publishes femicide data, lobbies for international conventions, and challenges state narratives that frame gender violence as isolated events.[64] This work reframes femicide as a structural issue, shifting both public discourse and legal frameworks. It is not episodic—it is durational.

This article challenges the perceived tension between emotion and praxis by showing how, in feminist movements, the two are not only compatible but mutually sustaining. While affect is often framed as fleeting or irrational and praxis as strategic and reasoned, the work of WWSFP reveals how emotional energy is not antithetical to political endurance—it is its fuel. Yet the Platform's endurance is powered by emotional labour. Grief and anger are not separate from

[62] Harcourt, 2020, p. 6.
[63] *Ibid*, pp. 7–10.
[64] We Will Stop Femicide Platform, "2024 Annual Femicide Report".

strategy—they are embedded in it. As Sara Ahmed notes, emotional responses fuel persistent refusal and political commitment.[65] In this model, affect and praxis are not opposites; they are interdependent.

Importantly, the Platform does not choose between resisting institutions and working within them—it does both. It occupies legal and digital spaces, not to uphold the system, but to transform it. Harcourt reminds us that critique must also "build alternatives."[66] For feminist praxis, this means channelling outrage into legal action, data gathering, and public education. What sustains collective resistance is not just visibility—it is repeated, strategic, emotionally grounded labour.

CONCLUSION

This article has argued that feminist resistance is best understood not only through the lens of individual agency but also through the intertwined dynamics of collective action. Beginning with a conceptual discussion of agency, I proposed a model of feminist agency that draws on affect, performativity, and praxis to explain how resistance is emotionally sparked, publicly embodied, and strategically sustained. Rather than separating theory from practice, the article placed Sara Ahmed, Judith Butler, and Bernard Harcourt into philosophical dialogue with the lived strategies of the We Will Stop Femicide Platform in Turkey.

At the heart of this argument is a central claim: feminist agency is forged and sustained through relational processes. Emotions such as grief and anger are not simply signs of injury—they catalyse resistance, as Sarah Ahmed's theory of "feminist snap" clearly demonstrates.[67] On the other hand, public presence, as Judith Butler emphasizes, is not only a performance of opposition but also a restructuring of whose lives matter and whose voices can be heard in the public sphere.[68] In particular, Butler has noted that "to grieve and to make grief itself into a resource for politics, is not to be resigned to inaction, but it may be understood as the slow process by which we develop a point of identification with suffering itself."[69] Bernard Harcourt further reminds us that critique, without a commitment to action, risks political irrelevance.[70] The three-dimensional insight does not remain in the realm of abstract theory but also plays an

[65] Ahmed, 2017, pp. 188–190.
[66] Harcourt, 2020, pp. 11–13.
[67] Ahmed, 2017, pp. 284–286.
[68] Butler, 2015, pp. 18–20.
[69] Butler, 2003, p. 18.
[70] Harcourt, 2020, p. 5.

important role in understanding how and why feminist movements continue to exist under conditions of oppression, fragmentation, and institutional resistance.

Through the activism of WWSFP, we see these dimensions enacted in tandem: affect as the ignition of collective refusal, performativity as its visible force, and praxis as its strategic endurance. This movement shows that feminist resistance cannot be reduced to moments of anger or symbolic protest alone; essentially, it is shaped by a continuous practice of visibility, organization, and intervention. The aim here is not to offer a universal scheme of resistance, but to propose a flexible model of how collective feminist agency takes shape in different political contexts. Rather than resolving the tensions between affect and praxis, spontaneity and structure, this model aims to hold them together as indispensable elements of collective action. It also opens up new avenues for analysing feminist struggles in digital spaces, authoritarian regimes, and transnational feminist solidarities.

The shift from individual to collective agency, that I seek to provide within the framework of feminist theory, is not limited to a conceptual revision; it also represents a political necessity. In a time of increasing gender-based violence, rising authoritarianism, and shrinking democratic spaces, feminist movements cannot rely solely on individualized forms of resistance. They need a framework of collective care, resilience, and struggle. This article aims to contribute to this effort by providing a vocabulary and structure for understanding how feminist activism shapes, sustains and transforms the world.

For future research, I suggest that this model could be expanded by examining how collective feminist activity operates in different cultural contexts or within transnational digital movements, exploring differences in affective, performative, and institutional strategies. Such studies would not only test the adaptability of the model but also deepen our understanding of how feminist resistance evolves under various social and political conditions.

(7794 Words)

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APPENDIX A: Submission Guidelines of *Feminist Review*

Note: The full submission guidelines are included as a separate PDF document titled "Appendix A - Feminist Review Submission Guidelines." Please refer to this document for detailed information.

Source: Feminist Review – Submission Guidelines, SAGE Journals. Accessed April 2, 2025. https://journals.sagepub.com/author-instructions/fer

RESEARCH PROPOSAL by Seren Arslanoglu

1. Title of the Project

Digital Mourning, Political Presence: Affective Feminist Activism in Turkey, Iran, and Argentina

2. Summary

This research explores how affective practices and performative strategies help feminist digital movements survive and exert pressure under political repression. Many feminist movements have looked to internet platforms to communicate, organize, grieve, and resist in an era of escalating authoritarianism, violence against women, and online backlash. However, what sustains a movement when the initial wave subsides, even though hashtags could become viral?

The We Will Stop Femicide Platform in Turkey, the #MahsaAmini demonstrations in Iran, and the #NiUnaMenos movement in Argentina are three potent instances of digital feminist resistance that are examined in detail in this study. It examines how feelings are not merely responses but also tactics—how sorrow turns into a ritual, rage into a performance, and unity into a framework. It combines philosophical analysis with digital ethnographic approaches, drawing on feminist praxis (Fraser, Federici, Tronto), affect theory (Ahmed, Berlant), and performative theory (Butler, Papacharissi).

This study offers a new theoretical framework for comprehending feminist resistance as both emotional and infrastructural by investigating how emotions "stick," spread, and facilitate collective agency online. In addition to providing useful information for activists and groups involved in long-term feminist struggles, the findings will add to discussions in feminist theory, digital activism, and political philosophy.

3. Description of the Proposed Research

3.1 Background / Status Quaestionis

In recent years, digital communication and transnational solidarity have increasingly shaped feminist resistance. From the viral spread of #MeToo to the global reverberations of #MahsaAmini and #NiUnaMenos, movements are being collectively constituted through emotional resonance and technological mediation. However, there remains a gap in theorizing

how emotional politics and digital media interact within feminist theory to shape transnational feminist action, particularly in authoritarian or oppressive contexts.[71]

This project addresses that gap by examining how "affect" functions as both a form of political disruption and a structure of feminist solidarity within digitally mediated protests, as noted above. Drawing on affect theory, particularly Sara Ahmed's work on emotional circulation and political voluntarism, and Lauren Berlant's concept of "cruel optimism", the research explores how grief, anger, and concern are transmitted across borders and how digital platforms shape feminist publics.[72] Judith Butler's "performativity" and Zizi Papacharissi's "affective publics" further inform how collective presence is performed and extended online.[73]

While this project draws on Ahmed, Butler, and Harcourt, it does not exempt them from critique. Each framework will be approached with a critical distance and its limitations will be acknowledged. For example, Butler's emphasis on individual subversion or the potential for mobilization in emotional movements to ignore risks will be criticized. It should also be remembered that fascist or authoritarian regimes have historically used collective emotional strategies to consolidate their power; this is an important dynamic when discussing emotional politics.

Much of the current literature either emphasizes the symbolic and emotional dimensions of protest or isolates the strategies of mobilization. What is missing is an integrated framework that traces the recursive relationship between emotional ignition, performative visibility, and infrastructural persistence—particularly in "non-Western" and politically repressive settings. This research will analyse three key cases: the We Will Stop Femicide Platform in Turkey, the #MahsaAmini movement in Iran, and the #NiUnaMenos protests in Argentina. Each of these cases illuminates how feminist resistance becomes simultaneously affective, performative, and infrastructural.[74]

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[71] Zeynep Tufekci, *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).
[72] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014); Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).
[73] Butler, Judith. *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015); Papacharissi, Zizi. *Affective Publics: Sentiment, Technology, and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).
[74] Gamze Erükçü Akbaş and Kasım Karataş, "Femicide in Turkey: A Document Analysis of News from 2011 to 2019," *Journal of Social Service Research* 50, no. 1, 2023, pp. 54–72; Zeynep Tufekci, "Social Movements and Governments in the Digital Age: Evaluating a Complex Landscape," *Journal of International Affairs* 68, no. 1, 2014, pp. 1–18; *Welcome to the Revolution: Promoting Generational Resistance*.

These movements do not simply offer a hashtag but rather mobilize emotion, transform visibility into oppression, and allow digital networks to expand their feminist presence. In each, the wounded, the mourned, and the assembled body becomes a political site. By situating these within a broader theoretical inquiry, this project develops a framework for understanding collective feminist activity in the digital age.

3.2 Aims and Research Questions

A central question guides this research: ***How do emotions such as grief, anger, and solidarity circulate through digital platforms to constitute a collective feminist agency, and how are these affective dynamics strategically deployed by movements like the We Will Stop Femicide Platform in Turkey, #NiUnaMenos in Argentina, and the #MahsaAmini protests in Iran?***

This question allows us to examine a growing feminist literature that views the concept of "affect" as a political force that structures collective behaviour rather than a personal experience. To illustrate, Sara Ahmed emphasizes how emotions "stick" to signs and bodies, creating bonds and alignments that generate political momentum.[75] Lauren Berlant similarly argues for the emotional investments people make in social structures (even when they prove harmful) and how the severing of such bonds can open up space for new collective formations.[76] Judith Butler's theory of performative assembly adds further texture by showing how public assemblies transform emotion into embodied resistance, particularly when marginalized groups assert their right to be seen.[77]

The aim of this research is to theorize the iterative interplay between emotion, performativity, and digital infrastructure in feminist protest through philosophical analysis of how these forces collectively shape and sustain feminist activity. In addition, it explores how emotionally charged states such as grief, anger, and solidarity are mobilized, amplified, and ritualized, both digitally and physically. As we have already mentioned, the central focus of this research is an examination of specific strategies employed by three feminist movements: #NiUnaMenos in Argentina, #MahsaAmini in Iran, and the We Will Stop Femicide Platform in Türkiye. Building on feminist theoretical traditions while engaging closely with empirical cases, this project proposes a model of feminist resistance that is neither episodic nor individualistic, but emotionally grounded, strategically sustained, and collectively enacted.

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[75] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014, p. 11.
[76] Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2011, pp. 52–54.
[77] Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015, pp. 8–9.

3.3 Methodology

This research is a comparative case study focusing on three feminist movements: We Will Stop Femicides Platform (Turkey), #MahsaAmini protests (Iran) and #NiUnaMenos (Argentina). These movements were chosen because they represent different geographical and socio-political contexts, while also sharing common themes such as transnational resonance, digital activism under political pressure and emotional mobilization. This approach allows the project to identify both commonalities in emotional strategies and context-specific dynamics for resilience.

This methodology adds a comparative dimension by comparing WWSFP to movements that prioritize individual testimony and disclosure, such as #MeToo. This comparison will help us better understand the distinctive features of collective feminist activity, especially its strategic and emotional structures.

The project uses a multi-site digital ethnography method to understand how these movements produce, share and ritualize emotion on platforms such as Twitter, Instagram and their websites. Digital ethnography is a highly effective method for studying dispersed communities, networked protest cultures and emotional communities.[78] Images, texts, hashtags, campaign materials and digital memorials produced between 2015 and 2025 will be collected. This ethnographic approach will be complemented by critical discourse analysis of activist language, media frames, and emotional expressions, focusing on the role of repetition, visibility, and emotional appeal in the production of political meaning.[79]

For data management, research materials will be classified along three main thematic axes: (1) emotional mobilization (e.g., grief, anger, solidarity), (2) performative tactics (e.g., hashtags, digital rituals, visual campaigns), and (3) resilience strategies (e.g., sustainable existence, institutional interactions, digital archiving). Comparisons across cases will examine how these categories change in different contexts, such as authoritarian repression, feminist history, and media infrastructure.

Ethical responsibilities are of great importance in this research. Given the potential risks faced by activists, all content used will be either publicly available or anonymized. No private communications will be collected. The work will adhere to feminist ethical principles such as

[78] Christine Hine, *Virtual Ethnography*, London: SAGE, 2000, pp. 3-4.
[79] Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*, London: Longman, 1995, pp. 2–3.

respect for the communities represented, protection of privacy, and accountability.[80] Furthermore, where possible, the research will seek to contextualize and interpret the materials responsibly, collaborating with activists and digital archivists.

The methodology is grounded in a feminist epistemology that views knowledge as situated, relational, and emotionally charged.[81] By combining a theoretical approach with empirical digital research, this study explores how emotions are operationalized in feminist resistance beyond Western-centric frameworks.

3.4 Scientific and Societal Relevance

This project makes two important contributions: first, to feminist political theory, and second, to a broader understanding of how resistance can be sustained under oppressive digital regimes.

From a scholarly perspective, this research proposes an innovative model of feminist resistance that brings together affect, performativity, and infrastructural practices. While many studies have focused on the emotional dimensions of protests or the role of digital media in mobilization, little research has examined how emotions (such as grief and anger) are not only expressed but also how these emotions are transformed into long-term strategies and incorporated into organizing processes. Drawing on Sara Ahmed's concept of "emotional economies,"[82] this project reconsiders affect as a force that initiates and sustains feminist resistance. Lauren Berlant's concept of "ruthless optimism" explores how emotional connections can survive under oppressive conditions yet still create both hope and burnout.[83]

The research also draws on Judith Butler's theory, which sees protests as embodied enactments of political demands, particularly for communities whose existence is socially ignored.[84] Zizi Papacharissi's theory of "affective publics" examines how emotional intensities in the digital environment shape participation, and how digital extensions reinforce this.[85] However, as Jodi Dean warns, digital visibility sometimes risks vulnerability to commodification and

[80] Annette N. Markham and Elizabeth Buchanan, "Ethical Decision-Making and Internet Research," Association of Internet Researchers, 2012, p. 5.
[81] Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3, 1988, pp. 581–582.
[82] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 2nd ed., Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014, p. 11.
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[85] Zizi Papacharissi, *Affective Publics: Sentiment, Technology, and Politics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, pp. 24–26.

spectacle.[86] By combining these different perspectives, the project aims to more clearly explain the emotional dimension of digital feminist activism, how it performs as a political performative, and how it becomes sustainable under oppression.

From a societal perspective, this project contributes to an important discussion about how marginalized communities can resist state violence, gendered oppression, and digital authoritarianism. Examples from countries such as Turkey, Iran and Argentina provide powerful examples of feminist movements that have gained international resonance in response to local violence. In examining these cases, the research also considers Nancy Fraser's call for a balance between recognition and redistribution in feminist politics[87], Silvia Federici's reflections on how unpaid work and care are fundamental to resistance[88] and Joan Tronto's work on the ethics of care[89].

By examining how feminist activists transform grief into political visibility and resistance, this research aims to provide valuable insights for scholars, journalists, human rights advocates and community organisers. Challenging views that digital activism is merely a temporary phenomenon, this study demonstrates how emotional labour, care practices and ritualised strategies are vital to sustaining resistance even in the most challenging environments.

The project recognizes that emotional mobilization and collective action may not always be progressive in nature. Emotional energies have historically been manipulated by exclusionary or authoritarian movements. As such, the research engages with thinkers such as Lauren Berlant and Jodi Dean to assess risks such as commodification, burnout or populist appropriation and develops a critical perspective on the political use of influence.

3.5 Literature Review

This project examines work in three main areas: affect theory and feminist emotional politics, performativity and digital visibility, and feminist practices of resilience and infrastructural participation.

First, it focuses on literature that addresses how emotions figure in social life and collective identities. Sara Ahmed's concept of "emotional economies" argues that emotions are not

[86] Jodi Dean, *Publicity's Secret: How Technoculture Capitalizes on Democracy*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002, pp. 13–14.
[87] Nancy Fraser, *Fortunes of Feminism: From Women's Liberation to Identity Politics to Anti-Capitalism*, London: Verso, 2013, pp. 210–212.
[88] Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*, New York: Autonomedia, 2004, pp. 99–102.
[89] Joan C. Tronto, *Caring Democracy: Markets, Equality, and Justice*, New York: NYU Press, 2013, pp. 20–21.

simply individual experiences, but move between bodies, identify with figures, and create social alignments between "us" and "them."[90] In particular, she emphasizes how grief and anger can become a mobilizing force for social change.[91] Lauren Berlant examines the "ruthless optimism" in which people maintain hope despite adverse conditions in their lives.[92] This reveals the contradictory relationships between hope and its depletion. These studies emphasize that emotions are not transitory but shapers of political subjectivity.

Another part of the project uses Judith Butler's theory of performativity to understand how feminist resistance is embodied in the social sphere. In Butler's early work, she shows how gender is constructed through repetitive actions[93], and in later years, she argues that social gatherings and collective actions convey political messages through a "plural and performative we" of bodies coming together[94]. This perspective connects to digital theories through Zizi Papacharissi's concept of "affective publics". Here, online networks generate emotional intensities and these intensities drive participation[95]. Jodi Dean questions how digital environments are commodified and how online visibility is used in this process[96]. Finally, studies on the importance of feminist practices and resilience discuss the labour required to ensure the sustainability of social movements. Nancy Fraser's work on redistribution and recognition[97], Silvia Federici's analyses of unpaid labour and reproductive justice[98], and Joan Tronto's thoughts on the ethics of care[99] highlight the need to combine the emotional, material, and ethical dimensions of collective action. In this context, Zeynep Tufekci's work on the effects of digital platforms on mobilization[100] shows that while these platforms accelerate social movements, they often weaken organizational depth.

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[90] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 2nd ed., Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014, p. 11.
[91] Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2017, p. 187.
[92] Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2011, pp. 52–54.
[93] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York: Routledge, 1990, p. 25.
[94] Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015, p. 8.
[95] Zizi Papacharissi, *Affective Publics: Sentiment, Technology, and Politics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, pp. 24–26.
[96] Jodi Dean, *Publicity's Secret: How Technoculture Capitalizes on Democracy*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002, pp. 13–14.
[97] Nancy Fraser, *Fortunes of Feminism: From Women's Liberation to Identity Politics to Anti-Capitalism*, London: Verso, 2013, pp. 210–212.
[98] Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*, New York: Autonomedia, 2004, pp. 99–102.
[99] Joan C. Tronto, *Caring Democracy: Markets, Equality, and Justice*, New York: NYU Press, 2013, pp. 20–21.
[100] Zeynep Tufekci, *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017, pp. 189–191.

Within the context of these theoretical frameworks, this research will philosophically examine how emotions are shaped in public and political spheres, how visibility is created and maintained, and how feminist movements construct enduring resistances in different socio-political contexts.

(Word Count: 2437)

4. Key Words

Affect, digital feminism, performativity, emotional politics, transnational activism, authoritarianism, feminist theory, digital ethnography.

5. Timetable

Year	Timeframe	Activities	Deliverables
1	Sept 2025 – Jan 2026	Conduct literature review; finalize theoretical framework; ethics approval; build research contacts.	Annotated bibliography; ethics clearance; framework outline
1	Feb 2026 – Aug 2026	Pilot digital ethnography; early interviews; refine research questions; first internal presentation.	Fieldnotes; refined research design; seminar presentation
2	Sept 2026 – Jan 2027	Full digital ethnography; complete interviews; begin archival and social media discourse analysis.	Draft of empirical Chapters 1–2; interim progress report
2	Feb 2027 – Aug 2027	Continue analysis; begin comparative synthesis; draft articles; possible teaching.	Article manuscript; draft Chapters 3–4
3	Sept 2027 – Jan 2028	Present findings at conferences; finalize empirical material; integrate	Conference presentation; revised article; full chapter drafts

		theoretical framework.	
3	Feb 2028 – Aug 2028	The first full draft of the dissertation; internal review; revision based on feedback	Full dissertation draft; draft conclusion
4	Sept 2028 – Jan 2029	Final revisions; proofreading; mock defence	The final version of the dissertation; defence preparation
4	Feb 2029 – Aug 2029	Submit thesis; defend; submit to journals; outreach	Thesis submission; defence; journal submissions; blog/op-eds

6. Summary for Non-Specialists

My research explores how grief, anger, and solidarity not only help feminist movements survive—but also become powerful political tools, especially in the face of censorship, state violence, and public backlash. Today, feminist protests take place not only in the streets but also in digital spaces. Movements like #MahsaAmini in Iran, #NiUnaMenos in Argentina, and We Will Stop Femicide in Türkiye show how online platforms can shine a light on gender-based violence, challenge authoritarian policies, and build communities of care and resistance across borders.

But what happens when the hashtag stops trending? Why do some digital protests fade, while others endure and grow stronger? This project explores how emotions are not just expressed in these movements—they become part of their strategy. It examines how grief, outrage, and concern are shared online not just as feelings, but as forms of collective power.

To understand this, I compare three feminist movements in different regions. I analyse websites, social media posts, images, and public statements to uncover how emotional expressions—like mourning for victims of femicide or calling out injustice—help these movements stay united, visible, and active over time. Drawing on feminist theory, political philosophy, and media studies, I build on the work of scholars who show how emotions and politics are deeply connected, especially in moments of protest.

By studying how feminist activists interact online and transform emotion into action, this research offers insights into how movements can adapt and persist in the digital age. It also

highlights the creative and enduring ways that feminist groups continue to organize—even when formal institutions fail them—and how they manage to reach global audiences and influence public debate.

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8. Curriculum vitae

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EDUCATION

2023 – present	**Radboud University, Faculty of Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies** Research Master in Ethics and Political Philosophy
2017 - 2023	**Galatasaray University, Faculty of Science and Letters** Bachelor’s in Philosophy

2020 – 2021 **Université Catholique de Louvain, Department of Philosophy**

Erasmus Exchange (First Semester)

2013 – 2017 **Florya Tevfik Ercan Anatolian High School**

General Baccalaureate

EXPERIENCE

2024 – Present **Radboud University Philosophy Department**

Student Assistant (Part-time)

2022 – 2023 **Galatasaray University Suna Kıraç Library**

Student Job (Part-time)

EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

2018 – 2023 **Galatasaray University Stray Animals Protection Club**

President of the Supervisory Board (2022 – 2023)

Board Member (2019 – 2022)

Committee Member (2018 – 2019)

2019 – 2020 **Galatasaray University Philosophy Club**

Board Member (2019 – 2020)

2017 – 2022 **IAESTE (International Student Exchange Program for Technical Experience) Galatasaray University Committee**

President of the Supervisory Board (2021 – 2022)

Committee President (2020 – 2021)

Board Member (2018 – 2020)

Committee Member (2017-2018)

CONFERENCES & SEMINARS

- Dr. Aylin Kuryel & Güliz Sağlam "Feminist Movements Within the Resistance in Turkey" (May 15, 2025), University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands

- Prof. Lea Ypi “Freedom and Democracy” (November 6, 2023), Radboud Reflects, Nijmegen, Netherlands
- Prof. Seyla Benhabib “The Idea of Sovereignty from Thomas Hobbes to Hannah Arendt and Carl Schmitt” (December 17, 2022), Bilim Akademisi, Istanbul, Turkey
- IAESTE National Conference (February 2022), Galatasaray University, Istanbul, Turkey *(Organizer)*
- Prof. Laurent Jaffro, “What is an action? At Aristotle and Donald Davidson” (March 2-6, 2020), Galatasaray University, Istanbul, Turkey
- IAESTE National Conference (February 2019), Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, Turkey
- IAESTE National Conference (February 2018), Galatasaray University, Istanbul, Turkey

VOLUNTEER PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES

- KızBaşına “Women in Command” Project (November 12-13, 2022), Ankara, Turkey
  Participant
- IAESTE Turkey Summer Reception (2021)
  Representative of the Local Committee
- IAESTE International JUMP Event (September 2019)
  Member of the Organization Team
- IAESTE Turkey Summer Reception (2019)
  Representative of the Local Committee
- Emmaüs Volunteer Program (July – August 2018), Montauban, France
  Volunteer

LANGUAGE & IT SKILLS

Turkish (native), English (C1 level), French (DELF B2 level), Spanish (beginner)

Microsoft Office Programs, Basic knowledge in design and photo/video editing, Proficiency in Canva, Python Language – Basic knowledge

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