



**Viral patriarchy: Discursive mechanisms of gender inequality in
TikTok Indonesia's comment sections**

Muhammad Nurullah Erfany*✉, Riky Arista**

**Master of Psychology, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang,
Indonesia*

Email: muhammadnurullah2020@gmail.com

***Master of Islamic Broadcasting Communication, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan
Kalijaga Yogyakarta, Indonesia*

Email: rikyarista46@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Social media has become a crucial space for producing and disseminating social narratives, including issues of gender inequality and sexuality. TikTok is one of the most popular platforms in Indonesia, widely used by the younger generation. Although studies on gender and digital media generally focus on the representation of women in online content, there remains a limited body of research examining how patriarchal values are reproduced through users' discursive interactions in social media comment sections. This study analyzes the representation of gender inequality in narratives of sexuality on TikTok Indonesia, focusing on netizens' responses to content related to gender issues. The study employs a descriptive qualitative approach using content analysis of comments on 10 selected TikTok videos. The findings reveal three main patterns of netizen responses. First, rejection of feminism manifested through misconceptions, stereotypes, and justifications of injustice based on biological and religious arguments. Second, limited support emphasizing principles of human rights and gender equality. Third, ambivalence that nominally accepts equality while maintaining the status quo in social practice. The analysis also identified four mechanisms for reproducing inequality: traditional gender role division, double standards in evaluating sexual behavior, denial of the objectification of women, and the reinforcement of gender hierarchies through narratives of natural order. These narratives are often conveyed through casual language, humor, or religious claims that normalize gender bias. These findings underscore the importance of strengthening digital gender literacy and multistakeholder collaboration to create a more inclusive and gender-sensitive social media ecosystem.

Keywords: Gender Inequality; Sexuality; TikTok; Comment Analysis; Digital Patriarchy.

✉ Corresponding author:

Email Address: muhammadnurullah2020@gmail.com

Received: October 10, 2025; Accepted: March 17, 2026; Published: March 30, 2026

Copyright © 2026 Muhammad Nurullah Erfany, Riky Arista

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22373/equality.v12i1.32371>

ABSTRAK

Media sosial telah menjadi ruang penting dalam memproduksi dan menyebarkan narasi sosial, termasuk isu ketimpangan gender dan seksualitas. TikTok merupakan salah satu platform paling populer di Indonesia yang banyak digunakan oleh generasi muda. Meskipun studi tentang gender dan media digital umumnya berfokus pada representasi perempuan dalam konten online, masih terbatas penelitian yang mengkaji bagaimana nilai-nilai patriarki direproduksi melalui interaksi diskursif pengguna di ruang komentar media sosial. Penelitian ini menganalisis representasi ketimpangan gender dalam narasi seksualitas di TikTok Indonesia dengan fokus pada respons netizen terhadap konten terkait isu gender. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan metode analisis isi terhadap komentar pada 10 video TikTok terpilih. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan tiga pola utama respons netizen. Pertama, penolakan terhadap feminisme yang muncul melalui miskonsepsi, stereotip, serta pembenaran ketidakadilan berbasis argumen biologis dan religius. Kedua, dukungan terbatas yang menekankan prinsip hak asasi manusia dan kesetaraan gender. Ketiga, ambivalensi yang secara nominal menerima kesetaraan namun tetap mempertahankan status quo dalam praktik sosial. Analisis juga mengidentifikasi empat mekanisme reproduksi ketimpangan, yaitu pembagian peran gender tradisional, standar ganda dalam penilaian perilaku seksual, penyangkalan terhadap objektifikasi perempuan, serta penguatan hierarki gender melalui narasi kodrat. Narasi tersebut sering disampaikan melalui bahasa santai, humor, atau klaim religius yang menormalisasi bias gender. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya penguatan literasi gender digital dan kolaborasi multistakeholder untuk menciptakan ekosistem media sosial yang lebih inklusif dan sensitif gender.

Kata Kunci: Ketidaksetaraan Gender; Seksualitas; TikTok; Analisis Komentar; Patriarki Digital.

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media has become an important space for producing and disseminating social narratives, including issues related to gender inequality and sexuality (Kholil & Budiantoro, 2022). Within this broader digital ecosystem, short-video platforms have emerged as influential spaces where users not only consume content but also actively participate in shaping public discourse (Putri et al., 2025). Among these platforms, TikTok has gained significant popularity in Indonesia, particularly among younger generations such as Generation Z and millennials, facilitates the production of content that touches on private matters, such as the body, gender relations, and sexual expression, and serves as a platform for netizens to express their views (Mukti & Asriadi, 2023). However, content related to sexuality, especially when presented by women, often triggers negative responses from netizens, such as verbal abuse, moral judgment, and hate speech. This phenomenon indicates that social media is not always a safe and fair space for women to express their sexual identities and experiences (Rukman et al., 2023).

The patriarchal culture deeply rooted in Indonesian society is reflected in how netizens respond to narratives created by women on TikTok. Women who raise issues about sexuality

or express themselves in ways considered “bold” are often seen as violating moral norms and labeled as immoral. Meanwhile, men who do the same do not receive such harsh reactions. This reflects gender bias in the digital public's perception of who is entitled to voice issues of sexuality and in what form (Nairurrohmah & Khotimah, 2024). As noted by Fatimatu Zahro & Achmad (2022), social media is not a neutral space but reflects the power structures and gender relations that exist in the real world.

Public perceptions of female sexuality cannot be separated from social constructs that position women as guardians of morality. In a study conducted by Setiawan (2024), it was found that narratives of female sexuality on TikTok are more often misinterpreted as immoral invitations than as forms of education or expressions of identity freedom. Comments from netizens on this platform are more driven by social norms and conservative values that position women as those who must adhere to certain behavioral standards. Such responses indicate that patriarchal values still hold significant sway in evaluating digital narratives related to the body and sexuality (Yanto et al., 2025).

This phenomenon is also in line with the findings of Yulia, et.al. (2024), who noted that the majority of comments on content related to female sexuality on TikTok reveal misogynistic and unsympathetic attitudes, especially when the narrative voices criticism of gender inequality. Criticism of oppressive systems is often met with silencing or deflection, indicating low gender literacy in Indonesia's digital society. This means that narratives attempting to challenge gender inequality face pressure from online communities that still internalize patriarchal values (Rianto, 2022).

Such responses are particularly relevant to examine given that TikTok is one of the most widely used platforms in Indonesia, especially among young people. This digital generation is not only consumers of information but also actively shape social discourse through comments, reactions, and the sharing of content. Therefore, analyzing netizens' attitudes toward narratives of gender inequality, especially those related to sexuality, is crucial in understanding how society perceives, accepts, or rejects changes in social values within the digital space.

In the context of this study, objective reality illustrates how social media, particularly TikTok, has become a space that reflects the patriarchal culture and gender inequality that remain deeply rooted in society. Many narratives about female sexuality presented in the form of education, self-expression, or social criticism have received negative responses from netizens. Netizens' comments reveal a tendency toward misogynistic, sexist, and conservative attitudes that condemn, blame, or belittle women who express themselves in digital public spaces.

This phenomenon is also reflected in the research by Rani et al., (2025), which highlights the prevalence of online gender-based violence (KBGO) in the form of misogyny and sexism on social media platform X (formerly Twitter), where women are often targeted with hate speech for allegedly exceeding the boundaries of patriarchally constructed moral norms. Similar findings have also been reported in other studies examining gender discourse on major social media platforms such as Facebook, where discussions about women's bodies, sexuality, and gender equality often trigger hostile responses including harassment, insults against women who are considered promiscuous, and victim blaming (Suryanti & Muttaqin, 2023). These patterns indicate that digital spaces are not yet completely safe or equitable for women to express their experiences and perspectives on sexuality.

Meanwhile, the reality should represent the normative expectations of this research. TikTok, as a digital platform that reaches millions of users, should be an inclusive, fair, and supportive space for all genders. Narratives about sexuality that are conveyed for educational and empowerment purposes should be valued as a form of participation in social discourse, not targeted for discrimination. Netizens, as active users of this platform, should have critical awareness, empathy, and good gender literacy in responding to such content.

Thus, social media can contribute to a more equitable, progressive, and gender-fair cultural transformation. In the long term, this shift in attitude is crucial for creating a healthy digital ecosystem free from gender-based violence and promoting civilized freedom of expression (Rosdiana et al., 2023).

Based on existing literature, it is clear that social media plays a significant role in shaping contemporary gender discourse. Previous studies have examined issues such as gender representation, online harassment, and feminist activism in the digital environment. However, there are still several limitations in the current body of research. First, many studies focus on content creators or media representation, while few analyze how audiences actively construct meaning through their responses. Second, research on gender discourse in social media often emphasizes platforms such as Twitter or Facebook, while newer platforms such as TikTok are relatively unexplored. Third, understanding of the discursive mechanisms that reproduce patriarchal ideology through everyday digital interactions, especially in discussions related to sexuality, is still limited.

Examining netizen responses to sexuality-related narratives on TikTok is vital for understanding contemporary digital gender discourse. As a dominant platform for young Indonesians, TikTok facilitates both content dissemination and the formation of public opinion. This study analyzes comment patterns to gain insights into how digital audiences interpret gender issues and reproduce cultural ideologies. To achieve this, the research addresses three key questions: (1) How is gender inequality represented in TikTok content? (2) What are the patterns of netizen attitudes toward these narratives? and (3) What discursive mechanisms facilitate the reproduction of patriarchal values within the comment sections?

This study contributes to the field of digital media by modelling the reproduction of digital patriarchy within participatory online environments. It specifically examines how anti-feminist narratives are constructed and disseminated through everyday digital interactions, including mechanisms such as biological essentialism, religious justification, and humor-based normalization. By identifying these discursive patterns, the research offers a deeper understanding of how patriarchal ideologies are legitimized in contemporary culture. Ultimately, these findings aim to foster a more inclusive digital environment by promoting gender literacy and encouraging critical public engagement with gender-related narratives on social media.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Gender Inequality and Patriarchal Culture

Gender inequality refers to the unequal distribution of power, opportunities, and social roles between men and women that is shaped by long-standing social, cultural, and institutional structures. In many societies, gender relations are strongly influenced by patriarchal systems that position men as dominant actors in public and private spheres while women are often

placed in subordinate roles (Walby, 1990). Patriarchal culture operates not only through formal institutions such as politics, religion, and economic structures but also through everyday social practices and norms that regulate gender behavior (Fakih, 2008). As a result, expectations regarding appropriate roles, responsibilities, and moral standards for men and women are socially constructed and continuously reproduced across generations.

In patriarchal societies, women are often associated with moral responsibility and social dignity, especially in terms of sexuality and bodily expression. This cultural framework often results in double standards in judging the behavior of men and women. While men may experience relative freedom in expressing their sexuality, women are often expected to adhere to strict moral norms that govern their appearance, speech, and behavior (Connell, 2005). As a result, women who challenge these norms, such as by openly discussing sexuality or claiming autonomy over their bodies, may face social criticism, stigma, or moral judgment. These dynamics demonstrate how gender inequality is maintained not only through social structures but also through cultural narratives that normalize unequal expectations between men and women.

In contemporary society, the influence of patriarchal culture extends beyond traditional social institutions and permeates the digital communication environment. With the development of social media, public discussions about gender and sexuality are increasingly taking place on online platforms, where users actively participate in producing and responding to content (Zainuddin & Karim, 2025). However, these digital spaces do not always eliminate existing inequalities; on the contrary, they often reinforce dominant cultural norms that shape how gender issues are interpreted and debated. Therefore, analyzing how patriarchal values are reflected in digital discourse, especially in discussions related to female sexuality, is important for understanding how gender inequality continues to be negotiated and reproduced in modern communication environments.

2.2. Digital Media and Gender Discourse

The development of digital media has significantly transformed the way gender issues are discussed, debated, and contested in the public sphere. Social media platforms allow individuals to participate in the production and circulation of information, enabling users not only to consume content but also to actively shape public discourse through comments, reactions, and content sharing (Jatmiko et al., 2020). In this participatory communication environment, discussions related to gender equality, feminism, and sexuality increasingly emerge as part of everyday online interactions. Scholars have noted that digital platforms can function as spaces that amplify marginalized voices and facilitate feminist activism by providing opportunities for awareness campaigns, storytelling, and public dialogue about gender injustice (Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016). Through these digital networks, feminist ideas and gender equality narratives can reach broader audiences and encourage critical reflection on traditional gender norms.

However, digital media also presents challenges in the form of persistent gender bias and misogynistic discourse within online communities. Studies show that online environments often reinforce existing social hierarchies and cultural norms rather than eliminating them (Jane, 2017). The comments section, in particular, often becomes a space where hostile reactions to feminist perspectives emerge through sarcasm, ridicule, or moral judgments. Such responses

show that digital communication spaces can simultaneously function as arenas of empowerment and resistance to gender equality.

2.3. Social Media Narratives of Female Sexuality

Narratives about female sexuality have long been shaped by cultural norms and moral expectations that regulate women's bodies and behavior. In many societies, women are often positioned as symbols of morality and social order, which leads to stricter scrutiny of their expressions of sexuality compared to men (Lestari et al., 2025). As a result, public discussions about female sexuality frequently involve moral judgments that define what is considered appropriate or inappropriate behavior for women (Gill, 2007). These narratives are closely connected to patriarchal cultural frameworks that construct women's bodies as objects of regulation, surveillance, and social control. Consequently, when women publicly express their sexuality or challenge conventional gender expectations, they often encounter criticism, stigma, or negative labeling within social discourse.

With the rise of social media platforms, discussions surrounding female sexuality have increasingly moved into digital spaces where audiences can respond directly to content through comments and interactions. These digital environments make gendered responses more visible because users openly express their opinions, beliefs, and moral evaluations in public comment sections (Masruroh et al., 2025). Previous research has shown that women who discuss sexuality or gender equality online frequently experience forms of digital backlash, including slut-shaming, victim-blaming, and accusations of immorality (Mantilla, 2015). Such responses illustrate how online platforms can reproduce offline gender norms that continue to regulate women's sexual expression. At the same time, the interactive nature of social media allows these narratives to circulate rapidly, influencing broader public perceptions about gender roles and sexual morality.

Despite these challenges, social media also provides opportunities for the emergence of counter-narratives that challenge dominant patriarchal perspectives. Feminist activists, educators, and content creators increasingly use digital platforms to promote discussions about bodily autonomy, sexual rights, and gender equality (Himawati et al., 2024). Through educational content, storytelling, and advocacy campaigns, these actors attempt to reshape public understanding of female sexuality as a matter of personal agency and human rights. However, the coexistence of supportive and hostile responses within digital spaces demonstrates that online platforms function as contested arenas where different ideological perspectives compete for legitimacy.

2.4. Digital Patriarchy and Anti-Feminist Discourse

The concept of digital patriarchy has emerged in recent scholarly discussions to explain how patriarchal power structures persist and evolve within digital communication environments. Although social media platforms are often perceived as open and democratic spaces for expression, they frequently reproduce existing gender hierarchies embedded in broader social and cultural systems (Khasanah et al., 2025). Digital patriarchy refers to the ways in which gender inequality is maintained through online interactions, technological infrastructures, and cultural narratives that normalize male dominance and marginalize women's voices (Banet-Weiser & Portwood-Stacer, 2017). In this context, patriarchal values

are not only reflected in the content shared on digital platforms but are also reinforced through user responses, comment cultures, and collective interpretations of gender-related issues.

One important dimension of digital patriarchy is the emergence of anti-feminist discourse, which seeks to challenge or delegitimize feminist ideas in public conversations. Anti-feminist narratives in digital spaces often appear through various discursive strategies, such as denying the existence of gender inequality, portraying feminism as a threat to social harmony, or justifying traditional gender roles through biological and religious arguments (Ging, 2019). These narratives frequently appear in everyday online interactions, particularly in comment sections where users express personal opinions about gender-related topics. Through repeated circulation and reinforcement within digital discussions, such discourse contributes to the normalization of patriarchal perspectives and shapes how audiences interpret issues related to sexuality, gender equality, and women's rights in contemporary digital culture.

3. METHOD

Adopting a descriptive qualitative approach, this study employs qualitative content analysis (Arikunto, 2013) to interpret how Indonesian netizens respond to gender inequality and sexuality issues on TikTok. Rather than focusing on word frequencies, this method prioritizes the discovery of discursive patterns and social meaning-making embedded within netizens' comments.

3.1. Data Collection and Sampling

This study analyzes TikTok comments from videos featuring narratives on gender inequality, such as feminism, sexism, and women's roles. Utilizing purposive sampling, ten videos were selected as primary data based on three core criteria: thematic relevance, high public engagement (minimum 10,000 views and 500 comments), and the presence of active discursive debates. This approach prioritizes analytical depth over data volume, allowing for a nuanced interpretation of recurring patterns. Data were collected through digital observation and documentation, using targeted keywords to identify relevant content. To ensure data authenticity and capture the evolution of the discourse, both primary comments and user interactions (replies) were preserved via screenshots and digital recordings.

3.2. Research Process

This study employed qualitative content analysis (Sujarweni, 2014) to uncover the latent meanings within TikTok comments regarding gender and sexuality. This approach was specifically designed to capture the complex dynamics of digital communication, which are deeply embedded with social values, ideologies, and emotions. The analysis was conducted in four systematic stages: data reduction to exclude irrelevant content; the categorization of netizen attitudes into positive, negative, or ambivalent patterns; an in-depth interpretation of discursive mechanisms—such as religious justification, biological essentialism, and victim-blaming—and a final theoretical synthesis to map these interactions within broader socio-cultural structures.

To maintain rigor and credibility, the research utilized systematic coding procedures, data triangulation with existing literature, and the inclusion of representative excerpts for empirical transparency. Ultimately, this methodological framework aimed to provide a

comprehensive understanding of how gender inequality was contested on TikTok and the ways in which patriarchal ideologies were reproduced within contemporary digital culture.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Narrative Representations of Gender Inequality in TikTok Content

The findings indicate that gender inequality narratives on TikTok are not only present in the original video content but are also reproduced and reinforced through netizen responses. Comment sections function as discursive arenas where users negotiate, challenge, and reproduce dominant gender norms embedded in broader social structures. Several comments analyzed in this study illustrate how patriarchal perspectives are articulated in everyday digital discourse. For instance, a comment posted by the account @PunggawaKematian on the account @mapiahongkongreborn states:

“I still can't believe people who say patriarchy still exists, even though the qualifications for all jobs are the same. Yes, even though men still excel in terms of output.”

This comment reveals a paradoxical form of reasoning that simultaneously denies and implicitly acknowledges the existence of gender inequality. The commenter dismisses the concept of patriarchy by referring to formal equality in job qualifications while simultaneously asserting that men still outperform women (Sari et al., 2022). Such reasoning reflects a common misunderstanding of patriarchy as merely a matter of formal legal equality rather than a structural system embedded in cultural norms, social expectations, and power relations. As discussed in the literature on gender inequality, patriarchal systems often persist through subtle cultural mechanisms that normalize gender hierarchies rather than through explicit institutional discrimination (Walby, 1990). In the context of sexuality discourse, these mechanisms become visible when women's sexual expression is subjected to stricter scrutiny and moral judgment than that of men. Thus, denying the existence of patriarchy while maintaining assumptions about male superiority indirectly contributes to the reproduction of patriarchal ideology within digital discourse. In this sense, the comment illustrates how digital spaces can facilitate what may be described as discursive denial, a process through which systemic inequality is obscured by emphasizing superficial indicators of equality.

A similar pattern of discursive reproduction of gender inequality can be observed in comments that directly criticize feminist movements. For example, a comment posted by the account @HanyaBerkomentar on the account @Susisandiago states:

“Feminists are just creatures who want to have it their way, but are unwilling to accept the consequences of the equality they desire.”

This statement reflects a widespread anti-feminist narrative frequently encountered in online discussions about gender issues. By portraying feminists as individuals who seek privilege rather than equality, the commenter delegitimizes feminist activism and reframes the struggle for gender justice as a form of selfish demand. Such arguments often ignore the structural conditions that necessitate feminist advocacy in the first place. Within the context of sexuality discourse, narratives like this frequently reinforce sexual double standards (Faatiya et

al., 2024). Women who demand autonomy over their bodies or challenge gender norms are often accused of refusing to accept the social consequences of their choices, including objectification or harassment. As highlighted in previous studies on digital misogyny (Jane, 2017), this rhetorical strategy often shifts responsibility from perpetrators of discrimination to women themselves. Consequently, anti-feminist discourse functions not only as criticism of feminist ideology but also as a mechanism that legitimizes gender inequality in everyday communication (Nugraha et al., 2023).

Another example of how patriarchal narratives are reproduced in digital discourse can be observed in comments that express superficial support for gender equality while ignoring structural inequalities. For instance, a comment posted by the account @Wm on the account @carine_benedict states:

“That's called gender equality, men and women are equal. It doesn't always have to be women. The people we should respect on the train are people with disabilities, pregnant women, and the elderly.”

At first glance, this comment appears to support the principle of equality. However, the argument reflects a limited understanding of gender inequality by framing equality solely as equal treatment in isolated situations rather than recognizing broader systemic disparities (Faradiazahary et al., 2024). By suggesting that gender equality has already been achieved, the commenter implicitly dismisses ongoing issues such as the objectification of women's bodies, sexual double standards, and gender-based violence. This form of discourse reflects what scholars describe as discursive minimization, in which systemic inequality is trivialized by emphasizing individual cases of fairness. As noted in studies on digital gender discourse, such arguments often shift attention away from structural inequalities and frame feminist concerns as exaggerated or unnecessary (Banet-Weiser & Miltner, 2016; Khasanah et al., 2025). In doing so, they contribute to the normalization of patriarchal norms while maintaining the appearance of supporting equality.

The reproduction of patriarchal ideology becomes even more explicit in comments that openly justify gender hierarchy through religious or biological arguments. For example, a comment posted by the account @Enold on the account @Asminuarais states:

“Discrimination must exist, there is no such thing as equality. Men are providers, women are helpers. That is why God gave us different powers. For me, feminism is just a concept used to demand privileges, not equality.”

This statement represents a form of essentialist discourse, in which gender roles are framed as natural or divinely ordained. By presenting gender hierarchy as part of a predetermined order, the commenter rejects the possibility of social transformation and portrays feminist advocacy as an attempt to disrupt cultural and religious traditions. Such narratives align with previous research showing that religious interpretations are often used to legitimize patriarchal power relations in discussions about sexuality and gender roles (Rahmawati et al., 2024). In digital environments, these arguments can gain significant visibility because they resonate with widely shared cultural values. As a result, religious and biological justifications

become powerful rhetorical tools for resisting gender equality in online discussions (Gigik et al., 2025).

4.2. Categories of Netizens' Attitudes toward Narratives of Gender Inequality

The findings reveal that netizen responses can generally be classified into three main categories: supportive attitudes toward gender equality, resistant attitudes that reject feminist discourse, and ambivalent attitudes that partially acknowledge equality while simultaneously maintaining patriarchal assumptions. These categories demonstrate that digital discussions surrounding sexuality and gender equality are characterized by ideological contestation rather than a uniform public consensus. One example of supportive discourse appears in a comment posted by the account @cherry on a video from the “Equal Rights, Equal Fights” account featuring a lecture by Ustad Adi Hidayat:

“That's not right, Ustad. Feminists are fighting for their rights as human beings.”

This comment represents an attempt to correct misconceptions about feminism that frequently circulate in digital environments. By emphasizing that feminism is a struggle for human rights rather than merely a movement advocating women's superiority, the commenter reframes the discussion within a broader humanitarian perspective. The strategic use of the term “human beings” shifts the discourse from a gender-based conflict to a universal rights framework, reinforcing the principle of substantive equality (Zainuddin & Karim, 2025). From a discursive perspective, this statement functions as a form of counter-discourse, challenging the dominant anti-feminist narratives that often frame feminism as a threat to social order (Devi et al., 2025). The corrective tone of the sentence (“That's not right, Ustad”) also illustrates how social media comment sections can serve as spaces for critical engagement and knowledge negotiation. As previous research has shown, digital platforms can simultaneously reproduce gender bias while also providing opportunities for progressive voices to challenge dominant narratives (Banet-Weiser & Portwood-Stacer, 2017). In this context, such comments represent emerging forms of gender literacy among Indonesian netizens, although these perspectives often remain a minority within broader online discussions.

However, not all netizen responses fall clearly into either supportive or resistant categories. A significant number of comments display ambivalent attitudes, reflecting partial acceptance of gender equality combined with the persistence of traditional gender norms. An example of this can be observed in a debate involving the account @Brooklydream in the comment section of the same video:

“If my opinion is that women shouldn't be leaders, that's patriarchy. Criticizing women for being lazy and not wanting to cook based on patriarchy alone is already offensive. Your mother cooking for your own stomach is patriarchy, isn't it?”

This statement illustrates a fragmented understanding of patriarchal structures. While the commenter acknowledges that excluding women from leadership positions constitutes patriarchy, they simultaneously defend traditional domestic expectations by portraying feminist critiques as exaggerated or unreasonable. Such reasoning reflects a selective interpretation of

gender equality in which structural inequalities in public spheres are recognized, but inequalities embedded within everyday social practices remain normalized (Putri et al., 2025). This ambivalence demonstrates how patriarchal ideology often persists through seemingly moderate or pragmatic arguments rather than overt rejection of equality (Himawati et al., 2024). As discussed in the literature on gender discourse, individuals may support the abstract principle of equality while resisting its practical implications in domains such as domestic labor, sexuality, or gender roles (Gill, 2007; Ali et al., 2025). Consequently, ambivalent discourse becomes an important mechanism through which patriarchal norms are subtly maintained within contemporary digital culture.

Another example of ambivalent discourse can be observed in a comment posted by the account @goldenhour on the account @nurism_a:

“Women often talk about gender equality. But in certain situations, it doesn't apply, and instead they argue that men should give in.”

This comment reflects a common rhetorical strategy used in online debates about gender equality, namely the argument that women selectively apply the principle of equality only when it benefits them. Such statements simplify complex structural issues by framing gender inequality as a matter of individual behavior rather than systemic power relations. In discussions related to sexuality, this argument often reinforces traditional expectations that men should remain dominant while women occupy passive roles (Rokhimah, 2014). From a discursive perspective, this narrative represents what scholars describe as discursive reversal, a strategy in which feminist arguments are reframed to portray women as beneficiaries of unfair advantage rather than victims of inequality. By accusing feminists of inconsistency, the commenter delegitimizes feminist demands while simultaneously reinforcing the existing gender hierarchy. Previous research on anti-feminist discourse in digital environments has identified similar rhetorical patterns, where calls for gender equality are reframed as demands for privilege (Jane, 2017).

4.3. Discursive Mechanisms of Digital Patriarchy Reproduction

The findings suggest that digital discourse on TikTok does not simply reflect individual opinions but rather operates as a social mechanism that continuously reproduces patriarchal ideology through everyday interaction among users. Through the analysis of netizen comments, this study identifies several dominant patterns of discourse that contribute to the normalization and persistence of gender inequality within digital environments. One of the most visible mechanisms is gender essentialism, which frames gender roles as natural and unchangeable. For instance, a comment posted by the account @Fathurrahman on the account @sayyidah_nisa states:

“No matter what, gender equality cannot be fully achieved because both genders have very important roles.”

At first glance, this statement appears to acknowledge the value of both men and women. However, the argument implicitly assumes that gender roles are predetermined and therefore cannot be fundamentally transformed. Such reasoning reflects an essentialist

worldview in which the division of gender roles is understood as a natural social order rather than a socially constructed system. In discussions related to sexuality, this essentialist narrative often functions as a justification for maintaining unequal expectations between men and women. Women are expected to conform to moral standards associated with modesty and sexual restraint, while men are granted greater freedom in expressing sexuality (Angelina & Afrizal, 2025). Previous research on gender discourse in digital media shows that essentialist narratives frequently serve as a defense mechanism against feminist critiques of traditional gender norms (Lestari et al., 2025). Thus, comments such as these not only represent individual beliefs but also contribute to the reproduction of patriarchal ideology by presenting inequality as a natural and unavoidable condition.

Another discursive mechanism identified in this study is victim-blaming rhetoric, which shifts responsibility for gender-based discrimination or harassment onto women themselves. This pattern is illustrated in a comment posted by the account @Aukrachesana on the account @abgmauganteng:

“So if I'm like this because you're like that, what then ?”

Although expressed in casual everyday language, the statement reflects a defensive rhetorical strategy that attempts to justify misogynistic behavior by portraying women as the cause of such reactions. In discussions about sexuality, this type of discourse frequently appears in cases of catcalling, sexual objectification, or moral criticism of women's clothing and behavior. The normalization of victim-blaming discourse contributes to what scholars describe as rape culture, in which responsibility for sexual harassment is redirected toward women rather than perpetrators (Wijaya & Setiawan, 2024). Because such narratives are often delivered through humor or informal language, they can circulate widely within online communities without being critically challenged. Consequently, everyday digital conversations can become powerful mechanisms for reinforcing harmful gender stereotypes and legitimizing unequal power relations (Wang, 2024).

4.4. Determinants of Netizens' Responses to Narratives of Gender Inequality

The findings indicate that gender inequality narratives in digital environments are not merely the result of individual opinions but are shaped by the interaction of several structural and communicative factors. These include netizens' cognitive perceptions about gender roles, cultural and religious norms embedded in society, and the algorithmic dynamics of social media platforms that influence how discourse circulates and gains visibility. One example that illustrates the dynamics of digital patriarchal discourse can be observed in a comment posted by the account @Rofikmuhammad on the account @nafia.humaira, which states:

“The busier women are at work, the less they need men, isn't that right, miss...”

This statement reflects a form of masculine anxiety toward women's increasing economic independence. By linking women's participation in the workforce with reduced dependence on men, the commenter implicitly frames female autonomy as a threat to established gender hierarchies. Within the context of sexuality discourse, such arguments reveal concerns about the potential loss of male authority over women's bodies and personal decisions.

As discussed in gender inequality literature, patriarchal systems often rely on women's economic dependence to maintain control over gender relations (Masruroh et al., 2025; Connell, 2005). The language used in the comment also reinforces symbolic power relations. Addressing women with the term “miss” in a patronizing tone suggests an attempt to maintain hierarchical gender relations within everyday communication. Through such seemingly casual expressions, patriarchal ideology becomes embedded in routine digital interactions. As previous research has shown, subtle discursive practices often play a significant role in normalizing gender inequality because they appear socially acceptable and therefore remain largely unchallenged (Aisyah, 2023).

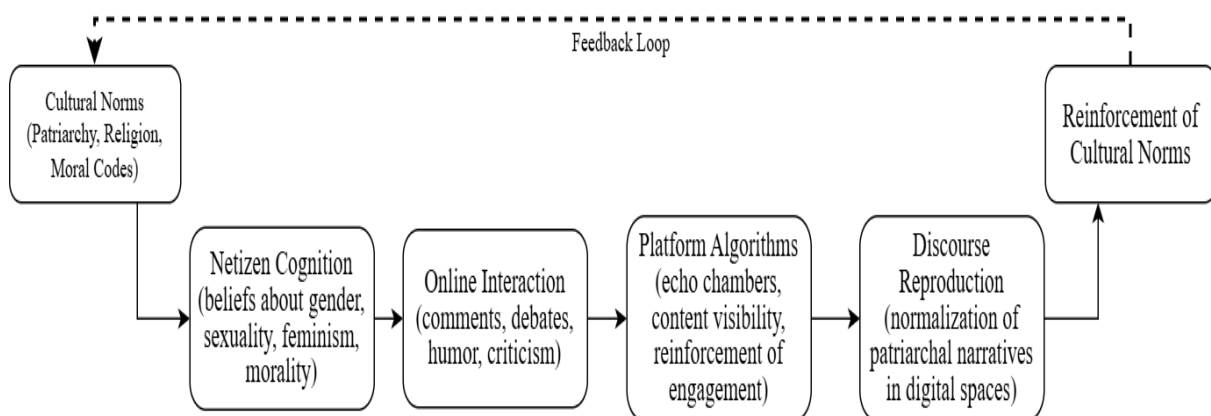


Figure 1. Determinants of Netizens' Responses to Narratives of Gender Inequality: A Digital Patriarchy Discourse Reproduction Model.

Figure 1 illustrates various factors that influence how netizens respond to narratives of gender inequality on TikTok. One of the main factors is a limited understanding of feminism. Many netizens mistakenly view feminism as a movement that aims to “elevate women” above men, rather than as a struggle for structural justice. This misconception often stems from fragmented information and the spread of misinformation through social media. Such misunderstandings contribute to the emergence of defensive reactions when discussions about gender inequality appear in online spaces. Instead of engaging with structural critiques of gender relations, some netizens interpret feminist arguments as personal attacks against men or traditional values. Consequently, discussions about gender inequality become polarized, with users focusing on defending existing social norms rather than examining the broader systems that produce inequality.

Another highly influential factor is cultural and religious norms. In many comments, references to religious teachings and customs are used to reinforce patriarchal positions. Traditions are seen as an unquestionable source of social legitimacy, so any criticism of them, including feminism, is viewed as an act of defiance. In digital contexts such as TikTok, these cultural narratives become embedded within everyday communication practices. When multiple users express similar arguments based on shared cultural values, these narratives gain collective legitimacy and appear as common sense within the online community. As a result, patriarchal ideology is reproduced not only through explicit ideological statements but also through the repetition of culturally familiar arguments in everyday interactions.

In addition, another important factor shaping the digital gender discourse is the role of platform algorithms. Social media platforms such as TikTok operate through algorithmic systems that prioritize content that generates high levels of interaction, including comments, debates, and emotional reactions (Suharnanik et al., 2025). As a result, controversial topics such as gender equality and sexuality often gain higher visibility because they stimulate interaction among users. This dynamic contributes to the formation of algorithmic echo chambers, where users are repeatedly exposed to opinions that align with their existing beliefs. In such an environment, patriarchal narratives can become stronger as users frequently encounter comments that reinforce similar views. Over time, this repetition reinforces the perception that these perspectives represent the dominant or socially accepted position. As a result, algorithmic amplification can indirectly contribute to the persistence of gender inequality discourse in digital spaces.

Finally, public opinion is influenced by the way content is presented. If content is delivered in a humorous way, through jokes, or “biological facts,” it is considered more neutral and easily accepted. However, the fact is that such content subtly contains stories about inequality. Gender inequality in the digital space is reinforced by this method of delivery, which hinders critical and fair discussion. Patriarchal theories can spread widely without being considered ideological statements thanks to this humorous normalization. Humor can serve as a powerful rhetorical tool to hide social criticism and reinforce existing standards (Gill, 2007). Humor becomes a subtle tool through which gender inequality is reproduced in a way that seems socially acceptable on TikTok.

5. CONCLUSION

This study reveals that TikTok has become a significant space for the reproduction of gender inequality and patriarchal values, particularly regarding female sexuality. The findings demonstrate a dominant resistance to feminism through misconceptions and justifications rooted in biological and religious arguments, indicating that digital spaces are contested environments shaped by cultural power structures. Netizen responses are polarized into three patterns: open rejection (characterized by victim-blaming and objectification), limited support for human rights, and ambivalence, which reflects a superficial acceptance of equality while maintaining patriarchal control over women's bodies. These interactions ultimately illustrate how digital discourse normalizes patriarchal ideology within contemporary online culture.

The persistence of digital inequality is deeply rooted in Indonesia's patriarchal values, with TikTok acting as both a mirror and an amplifier of these biases. Women face frequent backlash and harassment for their expressions, while men encounter greater tolerance, reinforcing a digital double standard. To address this, there is an urgent need for comprehensive digital gender literacy that critiques cultural and religious myths, alongside gender-sensitive moderation policies. Ultimately, a multilevel collaborative approach is essential to transform social media from a patriarchal reflection into a tool for fostering inclusive and equitable gender discourse.

References

- Aisyah, A. N. (2023). Remediasi dikotomi gender melalui profesi drag queen: Analisis konten selebritas TikTok @ravelliobahri. *Calathu: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, 5(1), 37–48.

<https://doi.org/10.37715/calathu.v5i1.3577>

- Ali, N., Hayati, M., & Mopoliu, A. Z. (2025). Dualism of Tiktok's algorithmic impact: disruption of students' sexual identity in Islamic Education at Palangkaraya Universities. *Syamil: Journal of Islamic Education*, 13(1), 65–80. <https://doi.org/10.21093/sy.v13i1.10182>
- Angelina, S. B., & Afrizal, S. (2025). Respons netizen dalam kasus pelecehan seksual laki-laki di kolom komentar Tiktok. *PESHUM: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial Dan Humaniora*, 4(4), 5040–5047. <https://doi.org/10.56799/peshum.v4i4.9793>
- Arafat, Y. M., Agustiana, I., Subari, A. G., & Sarathan, I. (2024). Persepsi remaja pada konten edukasi seksual di media sosial Tiktok. *Serat-Journal of Literature and Cultural Studies*, 01(01), 26–31. <https://doi.org/https://jurnal.fib.unpad.ac.id/index.php/serat/article/view/52330>.
- Arikunto, S. (2013). *Prosedur penelitian: Suatu pendekatan praktik (Edisi Revisi)* (13th ed.). Jakarta: Rineka Cipta.
- Banet-Weiser, S., & Miltner, K. M. (2016). #MasculinitySoFragile: culture, structure, and networked misogyny. *Feminist Media Studies*, 16(1), 171–174. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2016.1120490>
- Banet-Weiser, S., & Portwood-Stacer, L. (2017). The traffic in feminism: an introduction to the commentary and criticism on popular feminism. *Feminist Media Studies*, 17(5), 884–888. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2017.1350517>
- Connell, R. W. (2005). *Masculinities* (2nd ed.). London: University of California Press. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003116479>
- Devi, R. A., Ridwan, A., & Kiranantika, A. (2025). Exploitation and objectification of women through Video Call Sex practice in radical feminism: The study of the phenomenon in working women. *Gender Equality: International Journal of Child and Gender Studies*, 11(1), 98–108. <https://doi.org/10.22373/equality.v11i1.28287>
- Faatiya, A., Adyastika, C. F., Syifa, M. A., Gestania, N. A., Quddus, S. N. Q., Sahila, W., ... Yodsuban, P. (2024). The use of tiktok as a medium for education on sexual violence from a psychological perspective. *Health Frontiers*, 2(1), 66–77. <https://doi.org/10.62255/mjhp.v2i1.77>
- Fakih, M. (2008). *Analisis gender dan transformasi sosial* (12th ed.). Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- Faradiazhary, S. G., Fadel, M., & Permatasari, D. B. A. (2024). Analysis of verbal harassment on women in the comments column of the Tiktok account @Kinderflix.Idn. *Mediakita*, 8(2), 193–205. <https://doi.org/10.30762/mediakita.v8i2.2214>
- Fatimatu Zahro, F., & Achmad, Z. A. (2022). What if it was you (#WIIWY) digital activism on TikTok to fight gender-based violence online and cyberbullying. *Masyarakat, Kebudayaan Dan Politik*, 35(4), 450–465. <https://doi.org/10.20473/mkp.V35I42022.450-465>
- Gigik, Y. R., Lailiyah, N., & Puspitoningrum, E. (2025). Form and gender of language politeness in Tik Tok Densu comment column. *Jurnal Disastri*, 7(1), 49–64. <https://doi.org/10.33752/disastri.v7i1.8718>
- Gill, R. (2007). *Gender and the media* (1st ed.). Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Ging, D. (2019). Alphas, betas, and incels: Theorizing the masculinities of the manosphere.

- Men and Masculinities*, 22(4), 638–657. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X17706401>
- Himawati, Y., Rachim, H. A., & Taftazani, B. M. (2024). Women victims of gender-based cyber violence from the perspective of person in environment. *Marwah: Jurnal Perempuan, Agama Dan Jender*, 23(1), 75–87. <https://doi.org/10.24014/marwah.v23i1.21313>
- Jane, E. A. (2017). *Misogyny online: a short (and Brutish) history* (1st ed.). London: Sage Publications.
- Jatmiko, M. I., Syukron, M., & Mekarsari, Y. (2020). Covid-19, Harassment and social media: a study of gender-based violence facilitated by technology during the pandemic. *The Journal of Society and Media*, 4(2), 319. <https://doi.org/10.26740/jsm.v4n2.p319-347>
- Khasanah, S. U., Sutinah, & Budirahayu, T. (2025). Representation of women's bodies on TikTok social media. *Journal of Urban Sociology*, 1(1), 13. <https://doi.org/10.30742/jus.v1i1.4045>
- Kholil, K. L. R., & Budiantoro, W. (2022). Cyberfeminisme: Pembebasan psikologi perempuan di ruang digital. *KURIOSITAS: Media Komunikasi Sosial Dan Keagamaan*, 15(1), 97–121. <https://doi.org/10.35905/kur.v15i1.2587>
- Lestari, N. M. P., Erviantono, T., & Noak, P. A. (2025). Praktik komodifikasi tubuh perempuan sebagai konten pemasaran dalam ruang media sosial Tiktok. *Indonesian Journal of Public Administration Review*, 2(4), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.47134/par.v2i4.4402>
- Mantilla, K. (2015). *Gendertrolling: How misogyny went viral* (1st ed.). Santa Barbara: Praeger Press.
- Masrurroh, D., Wardani, F. Y. K., Suhatmady, B., & Aridah, A. (2025). Patriarchal ideology in Indonesian social media: A critical discourse analysis. *Scope: Journal of English Language Teaching*, 9(2), 867. <https://doi.org/10.30998/scope.v9i2.26099>
- Mukti, I., & Asriadi, M. (2023). Representasi perempuan pada tayangan video dalam media sosial Tiktok. *CORE: Journal of Communication Research*, 1(2), 12–22. <https://doi.org/10.47650/core.v1i2.882>
- Nairurrohmah, V., & Khotimah, K. (2024). Representasi patriarki pada konten Tiktok Riski Hasibuan: Analisis wacana kritis Model Sara Mills. *Anufa*, 2(1), 77–84. <https://doi.org/10.63629/anufa.v2i1.50>
- Nugraha, C. D., Muam, A., & Supriyono. (2023). An analysis of gender representation In English Indonesia: A corpus-based study. *Interference*, 4(2), 235–243. <https://doi.org/10.26858/interference.v4i2.45728>
- Putri, N. N., Khoirunnisa, D. A., Ilhamy, D. W., Ikhsan, M., & Purwanto, E. (2025). Pergeseran budaya: Media baru sebagai Tiktok dan aparatus ideologi. *CONVERSE: Journal Communication Science*, 2(1), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.47134/converse.v2i1.4345>
- Rahmawati, R., Gustianingsih, G., Deliana, D., & Syarfina, T. (2024). Stimulus and response of verbal violence delivered and gender acceptance in social media: A psycholinguistic study. *International Journal of Religion*, 5(7), 1171–1179. <https://doi.org/10.61707/kqqh7039>
- Rani, C., Destiana, N., & Angelie, D. (2025). Kekerasan berbasis gender online (KBGO) dalam konteks misogini dan seksisme pada media sosial X (Twitter). *Linimasa: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, 8(1), 41–61. <https://doi.org/10.23969/linimasa.v8i1.20646>
- Rianto, P. R. (2022). Tiktok dan kesenangan seksualitas kaum perempuan Tiktok and

- women's sexual pleasure. *KOMUNIKA*, 9(1), 15–28. <https://doi.org/10.22236/komunika.v9i1.7845>
- Rokhimah, S. (2014). Patriarkhisme Dan ketidakadilan gender. *Jurnal Muwazah: Jurnal Kajian Gender*, 6(1), 1–14. Retrieved from <http://e-journal.iainpekalongan.ac.id/index.php/Muwazah/article/view/440>
- Rosdiana, Izaac, F. A., Utami, S., Yulaeka, Febria, C., Apriyanti, A., ... Ernita, L. (2023). Gender dan kesehatan. In N. Yuniar & S. Yusran (Eds.), *Eureka Media Aksara* (1st ed.). Purbalingga: Eureka Media Aksara.
- Rukman, Huriani, Y., & Shamsu, L. S. binti H. (2023). Stigma terhadap perempuan korban kekerasan seksual. *Jurnal Iman Dan Spiritualitas*, 3(3), 447–454. <https://doi.org/10.15575/jis.v3i3.29853>
- Sari, R. A. P., Tjahjono, T., & Rengganis, R. (2022). Representasi seksime dalam kolom komentar netizen pada budaya populer konten Tiktok hastag #Wanitakuat (Kajian Wacana Kritis Sara Mills). *Jurnal Education and Development*, 10(3), 603–608.
- Setiawan, A. F. (2024). Representasi perempuan dalam konten quotes di media sosial Tiktok: Tinjauan analisis wacana Sara Mills. *Parataksis: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, Dan Pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.31851/parataksis.v7i1.13611>
- Suharnanik, S., Emanuel, E. P. L., & Ashfaq, A. (2025). The algorithm's gaze: Gender, age, and the structuring of TikTok content consumption patterns in urban Indonesia (A case study in Surabaya). *Gender Equality: International Journal of Child and Gender Studies*, 11(2), 242–256. <https://doi.org/10.22373/equality.v11i2.31980>
- Sujarweni, V. W. (2014). *Metodologi penelitian: Lengkap, praktis dan mudah dipahami* (1st ed.). Yogyakarta: Pustaka Baru Press.
- Suryanti, M. S. D., & Muttaqin, M. Z. (2023). Online gender-based violence in Indonesian context: The shadow pandemic study. *Violence and Gender*, 10(3), 153–158. <https://doi.org/10.1089/vio.2022.0057>
- Walby, S. (1990). *Theorizing patriarchy* (1st ed.). Cambridge: Blackwell Publishing.
- Wang, Y. (2024). The “female-to-male” phenomenon in short videos: A feminist media analysis. *Communications in Humanities Research*, 45(1), 15–20. <https://doi.org/10.54254/2753-7064/45/20240070>
- Wijaya, S., & Setiawan, R. (2024). Pelecehan seksual melalui aplikasi Tiktok. *Guiding World (Bimbingan Dan Konseling)*, 7(1), 105–114. <https://doi.org/10.33627/gw.v7i1.1931>
- Yanto, M. D., Satu, I. E. I. N., & Silaban, D. I. (2025). Analisis narasi digital tentang seksisme di kanal Youtube Puella.ID. *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi UHO : Jurnal Penelitian Kajian Ilmu Komunikasi Dan Informasi*, 10(3), 569–582. <https://doi.org/10.52423/jikuho.v10i3.1674>
- Zainuddin, & Karim. (2025). Language and gender on social media: A critical discourse analysis of Tiktok comments. *Jalc : Journal of Applied Linguistic and Studies of Cultural*, 03(01), 31–36. <https://doi.org/10.65787/jalc.v3i1.555>