

Sexist Humor In TikTok: Content Strategies and The Normalization of Patriarchy in Digital Spaces

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Abstract

This article discusses the phenomenon of sexist humor in TikTok content and its contribution to the normalization of patriarchal values in the digital space. This research uses a qualitative approach with a *critical discourse analysis (CDA)* method to explore how sexist humor is represented, produced, and consumed on the short video-based social media platform. The research data comprised ten popular TikTok videos containing sexist humor, focusing on narrative structure, language, visual symbols, and audience responses.

The research findings show that sexist humor in TikTok often reproduces gender stereotypes through simple narratives full of patriarchal bias. Representations such as husbands fearing wives, emotional wives, or the traditional division of domestic roles are dominant themes. The humor is wrapped in light entertainment formats, such as text overlays, dramatic expressions, and upbeat music, making it difficult to recognize as a form of gender inequality. However, behind its comedic appearance, this humor reinforces patriarchal ideology by placing men at the center of the narrative, while women are reduced to emotional, manipulative, or subordinate objects. In the discourse practice dimension, the production strategy of sexist humor content is designed to be viral and relevant to the audience's daily experience. TikTok's algorithm that supports high engagement also amplifies the distribution of this content, creating a cycle in which gender stereotypes are continuously reproduced and normalized. As primary consumers, young audiences tend to internalize these messages as social truths, impacting the shaping of gender perceptions and behaviors beyond digital platforms.

Theoretically, this research draws on the framework of patriarchy, gender performativity, and the concept of symbolic violence to explain how sexist humor works as a subtle ideological tool that maintains patriarchal hegemony. The article emphasizes the importance of gender-based critical media literacy in developing public awareness about the negative impact of sexist humor. This research contributes to academic and practical discussions on the relationship between digital culture, humor, and gender dynamics and the need for social interventions to create more inclusive and equitable digital spaces.

Keywords: Sexist humor; TikTok; Patriarchy; Gender normalization; Critical discourse analysis

I. Introduction

The development of digital technology has opened up new spaces for humans to interact, express, and create content. One such platform that has become a global phenomenon

is TikTok, a short video-based social media application that allows users to express themselves creatively. TikTok's popularity is measured by its billions of users worldwide and its ability to create popular culture trends, including humor. However, behind its popularity, the platform is also a breeding ground for gender-biased humor content, one of which is sexist humor (Fillies et al., 2025; Tanner & Gillardin, 2025; Yin & Binti Abdullah, 2024).

Sexist humor refers to jokes or humorous expressions that discredit women or reinforce gender stereotypes in a demeaning or harmful way (Bouckaert et al., 2024; Chavez et al., 2023; Riquelme et al., 2021; Vijaya & Meghana, 2020). In the context of TikTok, this type of humor is often conveyed through narratives, language, visual symbols, and physical actions that demonstrate patriarchal views and value systems that place men as dominant in social structures. While humor is often understood as a form of light entertainment, previous research has shown that sexist humor can have a significant impact on public perceptions of gender relations and contribute to the normalization of patriarchal values.

In today's digital era, virtual spaces such as TikTok are not just a platform for entertainment, but also a medium for cultural and ideological socialization. The widespread sexist humor content on these platforms not only reflects existing gender biases in society but also has the potential to reinforce and reproduce patriarchal norms to a wider audience. This raises important questions about how sexist humor is represented in popular TikTok content, as well as how this phenomenon contributes to the process of normalizing patriarchal values in digital spaces.

This research aims to answer two main problems, namely 1. How are sexist humor forms and strategies represented in popular TikTok content? This question is answered by analyzing the forms of humor, narratives, language, visual symbols, and patterns in TikTok videos that contain elements of sexist humor. 2. How does sexist humor in TikTok contribute

to the normalization of patriarchal values in digital space? The analysis focuses on how humor reinforces gender stereotypes and shapes public perceptions of gender relations.

This research aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the mechanisms of representation of sexist humor in TikTok content and its implications for the reproduction of patriarchal values in digital spaces. Thus, this research is expected to serve as a basis for critical discussions on the impact of digital popular culture on gender dynamics in society.

Patriarchy theory is an important framework for better understanding this phenomenon. Patriarchy is a social system that places men at the center of power, both in the public and private spheres (Nash, 2009; Gupta et al., 2023; Ashraf & Jepsen, 2024). Within this framework, women are often positioned as subordinates, weakened in their roles, or reduced to sexual objects. Patriarchy manifests in institutional structures such as law and politics and everyday cultural practices, including humor.

Research on sexist humor and its influence on gender relations has been conducted in the context of popular culture and traditional media. Studies such as Chavez et al (2023), Riquelme et al (2021), and Bouckaert et al (2024) show that humor can be a subtle means of reproducing patriarchal ideology, primarily through stereotypes that demean women. Meanwhile, research by Billig (2012) highlights that humor is not neutral but has normative power in shaping and maintaining social structures.

In the context of digital media, several studies such as Yin & Binti Abdullah (2024) and Tanner & Gillardin (2025) have looked at how platforms like TikTok facilitate the spread of problematic messages, including sexist content. However, the main focus of these studies has generally been on general issues, such as viral culture, algorithms, and broad digital entertainment trends.

More specifically, literature on gender performativity from Butler (1990) and symbolic violence from Bourdieu (1991) has been used to understand how identity and power are

constructed through recurrent cultural practices, including in the form of humor. However, integrating these theories into the context of TikTok as a medium of patriarchal cultural production through humor is still relatively limited. Butler (1990), through the concept of *performativity*, also explains that gender identity is not inherent but the result of repeating actions and symbols that create the impression of naturalness. In this context, repeated sexist humor in TikTok videos becomes a cultural performance that reproduces gender hierarchies continuously. This process happens without users or viewers realizing it because it is presented in a light, funny, and readily accepted format.

Johnston & Meger (2024) offer an in-depth analysis of the morbid symptoms emerging from the global crisis of patriarchy. Johnston and Meger use a feminist dialectical approach to explore how patriarchal structures function and adapt in the context of the ongoing crisis. By combining feminist theory and international political analysis, this article makes a significant contribution to our understanding of gender relations in a global context.

According to Walby (1990), patriarchy operates through six main structures, namely: household production, paid work, the state, violence, sexuality, and culture. In the context of digital media, sexist humor is one form of patriarchal cultural structure that works through symbolic representation. It appears harmless because it is wrapped in laughter and entertainment, while it is an effective mechanism in maintaining male dominance and marginalizing women.

Billig (2012), in the book "Laughter and Ridicule," stated that humor is not neutral as it has the power to establish norms and reinforce existing social relations. Sexist humor, in this case, works as an ideological tool that makes gender inequality seem "normal" and even "entertaining". Jokes about women being "mature," "emotional," "illogical," or "only fit to be housewives" are narratives that are often repeated and widely consumed on TikTok, reinforcing established stereotypes in a patriarchal society.

Thus, sexist humor is not just a "joke" but part of a cultural structure that subtly reinforces patriarchal ideology. When people are constantly exposed to content that degrades women under the pretext of humor, the process of normalizing gender inequality becomes more entrenched, especially in digital spaces that are designed to strengthen engagement without considering the ethics of representation.

The novelty of this research lies in three main aspects that complement each other. First, in terms of the object of study, this research specifically examines the phenomenon of sexist humor in popular TikTok content. Unlike previous studies that focus on traditional media or social media in general, this study chooses TikTok as a digital space with an *engagement-based* algorithm, which greatly influences the dissemination and acceptance of cultural narratives, including gender representations. The focus of analysis on ten viral videos provides a concrete picture of how sexist humor is represented and received by today's digital audiences.

Second, the novelty also lies in the theoretical approach used. This article integrates three main theoretical frameworks: feminism within a patriarchal framework, Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity, and Pierre Bourdieu's theory of symbolic violence. This integration allows for a more in-depth and holistic analysis of humor as a cultural practice that is not neutral but instead loaded with ideological content and symbolic power hidden behind entertainment packaging.

Third, in terms of methodology, this research uses a critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach in the context of digital humor, which is still rarely explicitly applied in TikTok studies. Through CDA, this research is not only able to reveal the form and structure of representation in the content but also identify virality strategies and the process of internalization of patriarchal ideology that occurs among audiences, especially the younger generation. This approach opens a new understanding of how digital space shapes and reproduces gender-based power relations in everyday life.

This research is important and relevant in both academic and practical contexts. Academically, this research contributes to studying digital culture and gender by offering a new perspective on how sexist humor works in modern social media platforms. Practically, the findings can be used as a basis for raising public awareness about the negative impact of sexist humor and encouraging policymakers and digital platform managers to take concrete steps to address content that harms certain groups.

In addition, this research is also relevant in the context of the growing digital feminism movement. By understanding how sexist humor operates in digital spaces, activists and communities can develop more effective strategies to counter gender stereotypes and promote gender equality. In other words, this research aims not only to understand the phenomenon but also to provide solutions that can be implemented to create a more inclusive and equitable digital space.

Theoretically, these findings emphasize the importance of interdisciplinarity between critical discourse studies, gender theory, and digital cultural studies in understanding the dynamics of representation and power relations in social media. A cross-theoretical approach allows for a more comprehensive analysis of how social structures, in this case patriarchy, work subtly but systemically through digital media.

Practically, this study underscores the need for social interventions in the form of strengthening gender-based media literacy, producing alternative content that is more equal, and involving digital platforms in reducing the visibility of content that contains sexist discourse. Without these collective efforts, digital space will continue to reproduce social inequality in a form that is increasingly invisible and difficult to criticize.

II. Research Methods

2.1. Research Approach

This research uses a qualitative approach with the *critical discourse analysis (CDA)* method (Fairclough, 2013) to understand how sexist humor is represented and functions in shaping and normalizing patriarchal values in the digital space. Critical discourse analysis was chosen because it can explore the relationship between language, power, and ideology in a particular social and cultural context. In this case, humor is not seen as neutral but rather as a form of discursive practice that can strengthen or challenge existing social structures.

2.2. Data Source

The data source in this study is TikTok video content that contains sexist humor and has a high level of popularity (indicated by the number of likes, comments, and shares). Data selection focused on videos that:

1. Produced in an Indonesian context and in Indonesian (or with elements of local language and a mix of English).
2. Show jokes or sketches that contain explicit or implicit gender stereotypes.
3. Uploaded within the timeframe of 2024 - 2025.
4. Get high engagement, i.e., at least 100,000 impressions/likes and 1,000 comments, to show the content's social impact.

There were 23 videos watched and downloaded on April 13, 2025, based on predetermined criteria by applying the purposive sampling method. Furthermore, the random sample method was used to minimize the data to determine 10 videos for in-depth analysis. The videos selected as data in this study can be observed in the following table.

No.	Owner	Title	Number of likes (thousand)	Number of comments (thousand)	Upload date
1	HARIS IS ON	Kalau gua ini ga takut sama istri	239, 9	11.7	22 -5 - 2024

		(Tutorial marahin istri biar diam ga bikutik)			
2	Chibil jpr	Suami takut istri super ngakak	88,6	4.628	11-7- 2024
3	Bobby Faraby MAGI	Akibat suami tumpahkan air kopi	39,3	3.368	22 -7- 2024
4	SERGIO_MG 81 F. A. N	Seperti gadis – Beginilah kalu suruh bapak-bapak jadi juri	50,4	2.663	25 -1 - 2025
5	Petrogultom1	Begini makaya laki-laki matinya duluan	28,4	1.952	11 - 3 - 2025
6	Petrogultom1	Terkejut	24,9	2.570	8-1- 2025
7	Iman Batax	Suami yang Terjajah	195	16,2	17-6-2024
8	Ayiuta	Ya Allah, lindungilah hamba dari mara bahaya	71	5.070	24-6-2024
9	Vira & Esta	Ketika Istri Mau Minggat	522,9	22,7	5 - 9 -2024
10	Ilhambaza21	Ketika suami lebih memahami dan menghargai istri	23,3	1.214	6-2-2024

2.3.Data Collection Methods

Data was collected using digital observation and documentation techniques. The researcher searched using keywords such as "humor cewek vs cowok" and "laki-laki takut istri." These two keywords were chosen as popular phrases that indicated the presence of gender stereotypes in humor. Videos that met the criteria were saved, transcribed, and coded for analysis. In addition, user comments were also examined as additional data to assess how audiences responded to the content and the extent to which they reproduced or challenged the sexist messages in the videos.

2.4.Data Analysis Method

The analysis was conducted using Fairclough's critical discourse analysis model (2013), which includes three dimensions:

1. Text - Analysis of humor forms (narrative structure, wordplay, language style), visual symbols, and non-verbal expressions used in the video.
2. Discursive Practices - The content production, distribution, and consumption process, including creators' strategies in structuring content to go viral and how audiences respond (comments, reactions).
3. Social Practice - The relationship between sexist humor discourse and broader social structures, such as patriarchal systems, gender norms, and popular culture ideologies.

The results of this analysis are then synthesized to answer the two main focuses of the research: the form/strategy of sexist humor and its contribution to the normalization of patriarchal values in the digital space.

III. Findings and Discussion

3.1.Findings

The data for this study came from ten videos selected through predetermined criteria and methods.

Video Data 1

This video features a humorous interaction between a married couple, where the husband appears angry and dominates the conversation aggressively while the wife is passive. However, the anger turns out to be feigned, as the husband pays the wife to pretend to be silent and submissive for the sake of the image. Humor in the video is constructed through screen texts such as "tutorial marahin istri" and male-dominant dialogue, which reinforces gender stereotypes. Visuals such as clothing, facial expressions, and body gestures add to the comedic dynamics. Audience responses on social media reflect an acceptance of humor and a critique

of sexism. The video reflects patriarchal structures and gender norms, where men appear dominant, but are ironically controlled by their wives. Sexist humor in digital content like this contributes to the normalization of patriarchal values and reinforces popular cultural ideologies that find gender stereotypes funny and natural.

Video Data 2

The video features a suspicious-looking man checking the contents of his bag, accompanied by overlaid text such as "Insting Istri Itu Pekah, jangan main main." Humor is built through wordplay, non-verbal expressions, and visual symbols such as sarongs and white hats, which add local context. Skeptical facial expressions and body movements reinforce the comedic effect. Expressive internal narration and spontaneous dialogue create an authentic feel typical of viral content. The content also reflects sexist humor through the portrayal of women as overly suspicious and sensitive, reinforcing gender stereotypes in a patriarchal society. Despite being lighthearted and humorous, the video contributes to the normalization of patriarchal values in the digital space. This kind of content spreads easily on platforms like TikTok and can influence how young audiences view gender roles. The long-term effects could potentially reinforce gender bias and inequality through seemingly harmless humor.

Video Data 3

The video features a woman cleaning up the floor from spilled coffee water while the man who caused the mess sits back and plays with his phone without help. Titles and text such as "Begini cara istri bersihkan air kopi yang tumpah!" emphasized women's domestic roles, reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes. Visuals such as brooms and men's passivity symbolize the inequality of roles in the household. The facial expressions of annoyed women and laughing men emphasize this inequality. Although wrapped in humor, the video reflects patriarchal norms, where women are considered responsible for housework while men are free from such obligations. This situational humor displays gender contrasts explicitly and can

reinforce unequal social views if not critiqued. In digital spaces, content like this risks propagating and normalizing patriarchal views, but it can also be a critical mirror to prevailing social structures.

Video Data 4

The video features a woman demonstrating two styles of dress-pink and black traditional prints against a bright neon backdrop, while a man in a different room comments. He judges the woman's appearance based on age with remarks such as "seperti gadis 18" or "20," which creates humor but also reproduces age-based beauty stereotypes. The woman's changing expressions and the man's non-verbal reactions, such as thumbs up, add to the humorous feel. Despite its lighthearted nature, the video reflects patriarchal norms, where men are the evaluators and women are the objects. In the context of popular culture, this kind of humor appears frequently on social media and risks normalizing the view that a woman's value is measured by her physique and age. The humorous strategies employed subtly reinforce patriarchal values, suggesting that in digital spaces, even entertainment content can reproduce gender inequality if it is not reflectively critiqued.

Video Data 5

The video shows an interaction between a man and a woman sitting in a car, with the man driving and the woman actively talking. The video title "Begini makanya laki-laki matinya duluan 😏" provides a humorous context that hints at men being more easily offended or embarrassed. The phrase "matinya duluan" is used ironically, satirizing men's sensitivity to specific comments, reinforced by the cheeky smile emoji that adds a sarcastic tone. Visual symbols such as natural lighting, seat belts, and the interior setting of the car support the casual and realistic feel. Women's non-verbal expressions, such as hand gestures and expressive facial expressions, create a humorous dynamic when men show discomfort.

From a social perspective, this video reproduces patriarchal stereotypes, portraying men as the ones who should be strong and should not show emotional weakness. Meanwhile, women are portrayed as free to express emotions. This video's humor reflects how popular culture uses gender differences for entertainment. However, while funny, this kind of content reinforces traditional gender norms if it is not critiqued. In the digital space, this kind of humor can expand perceptions that normalize patriarchal values, especially if watched without critical reflection on the messages it carries.

Video Data 6

This video depicts a man falling asleep while holding a cell phone. A woman, presumed to be his wife, enters, covers the man's body with a blanket, turns off the lights, and then shines a light on the man's face with the phone, creating a humorous effect as the man remains asleep. The humor is built through a visual narrative without dialogue, relying on physical actions and non-verbal expressions.

The title "Istri pengintai" provides a humorous context, portraying active women in soft roles and reversing traditional stereotypes. Visual symbols such as the simple room, the casual appearance of the two characters, and the use of dark light give a realistic feel and reinforce the comedic elements.

The video reflects discursive practices in domestic life, readily accepted as relevant and lighthearted. However, there are representations of gender roles that reinforce patriarchal stereotypes. Women are portrayed as active supervisors, while men are passive, which can be interpreted as a form of covert sexist humor.

On social media, this kind of humor is often seen as entertaining without consciously contributing to the normalization of patriarchal values. The narrative composition and symbolism reinforce traditional roles, making this video enjoyable to study in the context of gender representation and popular culture ideology.

Video Data 7

The video features two characters: a man in a car as the narrator and a woman walking outside. The narrative begins with the man observing the woman and making humorous comments, initially sounding critical but then becoming more witty. The language style is casual, full of sarcasm and irony, such as "awak limpu" and "kolaborasi VOC," creating a lighthearted yet poignant atmosphere.

Visual symbols such as ordinary women's clothing and the iron fence background reflect everyday life, making the humor feel closer to the audience. The speakers themselves are expressive: laughing, pointing, and holding things, adding an element of visual comedy.

However, in social terms, this video contains sexist humor. Men appear as active observers, while women are silent objects. His touching comments about money and appearance reinforce gender stereotypes in the patriarchal system.

In popular culture, this kind of humor is often considered "tidak berbahaya," but it can normalize unequal gender roles. TikTok and similar platforms accelerate the spread of this kind of content due to its lighthearted nature and easy acceptance by a broad audience.

Video Data 8

The video features a couple who appear to be husband and wife, with the man wearing prayer clothes (sarong and shirt) and the woman wearing a kebaya. The man appears to be praying while the woman approaches him angrily and shows him something on her phone. The man responds by repeating the prayer movements as if to get away. Their interaction creates humor out of a mild conflict in a domestic relationship.

Even without text, humor is built from facial expressions, gestures, and physical interactions. Men appear defensive, while women are aggressive. Visual symbols such as traditional clothing and simple home interiors reinforce the local cultural context.

Discursively, the video attracted audience attention through comments and shares, mainly because it reversed traditional gender expectations. However, there remains an element of sexist humor that reproduces stereotypes- women are portrayed as dominant and emotional, men as passive and repressed.

In social terms, this humor contributes to the normalization of patriarchal values, albeit in reverse. The use of traditional clothing reinforces cultural gender norms, and its dissemination on social media reinforces the perception that gender stereotype-based humor is common and acceptable.

Video Data 9

This video presents a straightforward narrative about a wife who appears to be leaving the house with a large suitcase. The title "KETIKA ISTRI MAU MINGGAT" is the main element of situational humor. Without spoken dialogue, the video relies on visual actions and non-verbal expressions, such as the wife's angry face and the husband's initially indifferent but then panicked gestures. The suitcase becomes a symbol of comedy, depicting a serious decision in a joking context.

The modern home setting adds to the sense of everydayness. In social practice, the video reflects patriarchal the wife is portrayed as emotional and 'threatening' to leave, while the husband tries to calm the situation. This confirms gender stereotypes: women are the reactive party, and men are the mediators.

The video also shows how popular culture, through social media such as TikTok, uses domestic humor to attract attention. Sexist humor emerges from traditional gender roles that are reinforced by visual and aesthetic filters. Finally, content like this contributes to the normalization of patriarchal values in digital culture, where unequal gender dynamics are subtly but repeatedly displayed, thus reinforcing existing social structures.

Video Data 10

The video depicts four men sitting outdoors at night, playing cards while chatting. The on-screen text, "POV Ketika suami lebih memahami dan menghargai istri," creates a humorous contrast when a woman suddenly appears with a small child. The video uses a simple narrative style and straightforward language, and the "POV" element gives it a distinctive and interesting point of view.

Visual symbols such as small tables, cards, and the evening atmosphere create a sense of comfort in social interactions between men. However, the woman's arrival triggers a drastic change in expression: from relaxed to anxious and shy. The woman appears confident and calm, reinforcing the impression that she is present with a legitimate purpose.

Socially, the video reflects patriarchal structures, presenting men as enjoying leisure time and women as disturbing the 'peace.' This reinforces traditional gender norms: men are free to socialize, while women are associated with domestic responsibilities.

Despite its humorous nature, the video reinforces gender stereotypes and patriarchal values in digital popular culture, a standard form of sexist humor in today's social media context.

3.2. Discussion

3.2.1. Representation of Sexist Humor Forms and Strategies in Popular TikTok Content

a. Text Analysis (Discourse Microstructure Level)

In the textual dimension of discourse, almost all TikTok content analyzed shows that sexist forms of humor are represented through simple narratives full of gender stereotypes. Representations such as husbands being afraid of their wives, wives being emotional, or husbands being reluctant to help with household chores are dominant narratives. For example, in one of the videos (Data 1), the narrative "Tutorial memarahi istri" contains a pseudo-dominance that ultimately puts men in a symbolically submissive position, negotiating power

relations through humor. In this context, verbal expressions such as "biar diam gak bikutik," "istri pengintai," and "matinya duluan" also reinforce the inequality of relations. Although wrapped in a seemingly lighthearted style of humor, these phrases carry a deep ideological content, creating an image that women must submit and men have the right to dominate.

Semiotic aspects also play an important role in this representation. Visual symbols such as the traditional clothing worn by the female characters in the video, passive facial expressions, and dominant gestures such as pointing, crossing arms, and glaring reinforce existing gender stereotypes (Motel & Peck, 2018). For example, when a man in the video points with raised hands and a serious face while the woman looks anxious and passive, it creates a clear contrast between strength and weakness based on gender. These non-verbal expressions add a dimension to the humor and show how humor is constructed through verbal texts, visually and symbolically (Barta et al., 2023; Cela et al., 2024). Thus, sexist humor in TikTok content serves not only as entertainment but also as a tool to maintain and disseminate patriarchal ideologies.

b. Discourse Practice (Content Production and Consumption)

At the level of discourse practice, content production strategies are highly oriented towards relatable humor that is readily accepted by the audience. Content creators use typical formats that are easily viral, such as personal point of view (POV), overlay text, dramatic expressions, and background music that supports the comical atmosphere. For example, in videos that show everyday situations at home, the use of upbeat music and humorous overlay text can make situations that contain elements of gender injustice seem trivial and entertaining. This creates a distance between the realities many women face and how the humor is presented, so viewers can easily overlook the more profound meaning.

In terms of distribution, this content spreads massively. It gains a high level of interaction, indicated by the number of likes and comments reaching hundreds of thousands (e.g., Data 9 with more than 522.9 thousand likes). The consumption of the content by the

audience confirms that sexist humor is not only accepted but also normalized and appreciated (Parrott & Hopp, 2020). The comments justify the video content as entertainment and a reflection of personal experience. For example, many TikTok users responded to the video with comments that acknowledged their own experiences with the same situation, reinforcing the discourse's social legitimacy. This suggests that sexist humor serves as entertainment and a means to build community among users who share similar views (Chavez & del Prado, 2023).

c. Social Practice (Macrostructure of Discourse and Ideology)

In the social practice dimension, sexist humor in TikTok content works as a mechanism to perpetuate patriarchal ideology. The representation of men in a dominant position or a state of "wife fear" still places men at the center of the narrative. Despite appearing weak in some contexts, they remain the main subject, while women are reduced to emotional, manipulative, or easily controlled symbolically and economically. For example, in many videos, women are often portrayed as characters who fight for attention or recognition from men, reinforcing the view that men are the primary decision-makers in relationships.

This discourse affirms the gendered division of domestic roles and inserts it into the frame of humor, making it difficult to recognize as a form of inequality. When examined more deeply, this seemingly innocuous humor turns out to have significant implications for how people perceive and treat each other in the context of gender. As such, humor becomes an ideological tool that is not neutral but subtly and non-confrontationally reinforces and normalizes patriarchal systems (Cohen-Chen et al., 2024; Douglas, 2015). This raises critical questions about the responsibility of content creators in presenting humor that not only entertains but also makes audiences aware of the impact of the narratives they consume.

3.2.2. The Contribution of Sexist Humor to the Normalization of Patriarchy in Digital

Space a. Reproduction of Gender Stereotypes through Humor

As a digital space, TikTok has become an arena for disseminating discourses that shape social perceptions, including perceptions of gender roles. In this context, sexist humor emerges as an interesting phenomenon to analyze. This humor is not just a joke but also functions as a means of reproducing gender stereotypes that have existed for a long time (Reizer & Brender-Ilan, 2024). When someone sees a video on TikTok that presents women as fussy, emotional, or manipulative or men as victims who should not express emotions, they are presented with images that have long been embedded in society. The repetition of these stereotypes makes them seem natural, as if they are an unchangeable reflection of social reality.

These gender stereotypes, reproduced through humor, not only influence how individuals view the opposite sex but also reinforce existing patriarchal norms (Cohen-Chen et al., 2024; Little, 2023). For example, when a TikTok user uploads a video of a woman over-expressing her emotions, and the video is accompanied by laughter and positive comments, this indicates that the behavior is considered funny and acceptable. In this context, sexist humor serves to reinforce the view that women are supposed to behave this way while men are expected to remain calm and unemotional.

b. Commodification of Gender Relations

Next, we need to consider the commodification of gender relations in the sexist humor circulating on these platforms. Unequal gender relations are not only represented but also commodified in the form of content designed to go viral. Clickbait titles such as "Istri mau minggat" or "suami terjajah" are packaged in a way that attracts attention, thus gaining high engagement. In this case, we can see how gender inequality is used as an object of entertainment. These contents not only attract attention but also makes patriarchal discourse something worth selling in the digital market.

This phenomenon creates a cycle where content that reinforces gender stereotypes gets more attention and support, while content that tries to challenge those norms is often marginalized. For example, videos that demonstrate more egalitarian relationships or challenge gender stereotypes may not get the same engagement, making it difficult to compete in TikTok's algorithm, which favors provocative and entertaining content. Thus, sexist humor becomes an effective tool in maintaining the status quo, where patriarchy reigns supreme and equitable gender relations are challenging to achieve (Humonen & Whittle, 2025).

c. Effects on Audiences and Popular Culture

The effects of disseminating sexist humor on TikTok do not stop at the digital realm. Audiences, especially the younger generation, internalize these messages as undeniable social truths. Content that shows emotionally dominant women or submissive men modeling relationships is considered funny and entertaining. In the long run, this impacts shaping perceptions, attitudes, and even social behavior outside of digital platforms. For example, in a romantic relationship, a teenager may feel that aggressive behavior from their female partner is expected, as it has been presented in many videos as funny and entertaining.

Furthermore, this sexist humor can also influence a culture of discussion that is resistant to equality discourse (Ford et al., 2008; Vizcaíno-Cuenca et al., 2024). When individuals are entertained by content that contains gender stereotypes, they tend to ignore or trivialize arguments against patriarchy (Ringblom, 2022; Cohen-Chen et al., 2024). This creates an environment where discussions on gender equality become difficult to have, as many people have been exposed to content that normalizes inequality. In this context, sexist humor is not just entertainment but also a powerful tool to maintain and reinforce unjust social structures.

In conclusion, the contribution of sexist humor to the normalization of patriarchy in digital spaces, particularly on TikTok, demonstrates how seemingly innocuous content can have a profound impact on social perceptions and behaviors. Through the reproduction of gender

stereotypes, the commodification of gender relations, and long-term effects on audiences, sexist humor serves to reinforce existing patriarchal norms. Therefore, we need to be more critical in consuming digital content and be aware of its impact on society. By raising awareness of these issues, we can create a more inclusive and equitable digital space where everyone, regardless of gender, can be treated equally and valued.

3.2.3. Theoretical synthesis

The findings in this analysis show that sexist humor in TikTok content is not only a form of creative expression or light entertainment but also functions as a deep ideological mechanism in shaping and reproducing the structure of unequal gender relations. From the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 2013), language is never neutral; it always carries certain power relations and ideological interests. Therefore, humor containing gender stereotypes must be understood as part of a discursive process that reinforces patriarchal hegemony in the digital public sphere.

Fairclough's approach combines text analysis, discourse, and social practices in this context. This allows us to see how sexist discourse is micro-produced through humorous texts, massively distributed and consumed in social media, and ultimately forms a macro-social structure that legitimizes gender-based power relations. In the framework of critical gender theory, especially as Butler (1990) proposed, gender identity results from performative social construction. Sexist humor content on TikTok reinforces gender performativity by repeating patterns of behavior, expression, and narrative that affirm traditional gender roles.

Furthermore, this phenomenon can also be read through Bourdieu's perspective (1991) on symbolic violence. Sexist humor works as an unconscious symbolic violence, where gender inequality is wrapped in humorous and normative narratives, making it seem natural and even fun. This violence is effective because it is not recognized as violence - it permeates the

structure of perception, shaping the habitus of the younger generation, who eventually internalize inequality as natural.

On the other hand, as part of global digital culture, the TikTok platform cannot be separated from the logic of digital capitalism. As explained by Banet-Weiser (2018), today's digital culture creates "marketable feminism" and "marketable patriarchy," where gender representations are commodified according to market tastes. In this case, sexist humor becomes a popular commodity produced, consumed, and circulated in an algorithmic cycle that encourages high engagement without considering its social and ideological impact.

In this context, the concept of *critical digital literacy* becomes very important. According to Buckingham (2015), critical media literacy includes accessing and understanding media and analyzing, evaluating, and rejecting messages that reproduce social injustice. Thus, gender literacy in digital content consumption needs to be developed to equip the younger generation not only to be passive consumers of dominant discourses but also subjects who can challenge and reconstruct a more just and equal narrative.

IV. Conclusion

This study examines the phenomenon of sexist humor in TikTok content and its contribution to the normalization of patriarchal values in the digital space. Through critical discourse analysis, it was found that sexist humor is represented through simple narratives that contain gender stereotypes, such as male dominance, female emotionality, or traditional domestic roles. The humor is wrapped in a light entertainment format using visual elements, text overlays, and upbeat music, making it difficult to recognize as a form of gender inequality. However, underneath its comedic appearance, this content reinforces patriarchal ideology by placing men at the center of the narrative while women are reduced to emotional or subordinate objects.

In terms of discourse practices, the production strategies of sexist humor content are designed to be viral and relevant to audiences' everyday experiences. TikTok's algorithm that supports high engagement also amplifies the distribution of this content, creating a cycle in which gender stereotypes are continuously reproduced and normalized. As primary consumers, young audiences tend to internalize these messages as social truths, impacting the shaping of gender perceptions and behaviors beyond digital platforms.

Theoretically, this research draws on the framework of patriarchy, Judith Butler's gender performativity, and Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence to explain how sexist humor works as a subtle ideological tool that maintains patriarchal hegemony. This article emphasizes the importance of gender-based critical media literacy in developing public awareness about the negative impact of sexist humor. This research contributes to academic and practical discussions on the relationship between digital culture, humor, and gender dynamics and the need for social interventions to create a more inclusive and equitable digital space.

For future research, a longitudinal analysis of the evolution of sexist humor on digital platforms, a comparative study across platforms, and its impact on children and adolescents is recommended. In addition, the effectiveness of educational programs or interventions on gender literacy also needs to be explored further. With these steps, the digital space is hoped to become a more responsible medium in representing gender dynamics.

Conflict of Interest: The corresponding author, on behalf of second author, confirms that there are no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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