



## REVEALING GENDER INEQUALITY IN SELECTION OF TOPICS FOR COMMENTS ON INFIDELITY IN GOSSIP CHANNEL

Viona Musti Dewinda<sup>1</sup>, Hamzah<sup>2</sup>

English Department

Faculty of Languages and Arts

Universitas Negeri Padang

email: [dewindamusti@gmail.com](mailto:dewindamusti@gmail.com)

### Abstract

This research aimed to employ Van Dijk's Ideological Square to examine gender inequality in infidelity news comments on YouTube. The study used a qualitative research technique. According to the results, the most popular netizen comments concerned for Virgound and Syahnaz were "bad personality," with 53 (23%) and 59 (26%), respectively. This category shows that both commonly used unfavorable personal qualities as the major basis for their discourse topics. The researcher discussed several concerns online users raised regarding Virgoun and Syahnaz. There was a noticeable gender inequality in the YouTube comments on the Virgoun and Syahnaz episode. Despite these parallels, men and women were viewed differently by society, with men generally being viewed as justified and women as being held to higher moral standards. The researchers recommend that future studies employ more equal reporting practices for adultery and discriminate based on the gender of commentators.

**Key words:** *Gender Inequality, Topic Selection, Comments on Infidelity, Gossip Channel*

### A. INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of the online platform, predominantly, so-called social networks and audiovisual services, has altered the way we communicate, express our thoughts, and receive information. These platforms have formed our digital communication and concept which has been a significant part of the daily life. YouTube is one of the most famous and significant video-sharing sites. As a result, a lot of people use YouTube daily to see videos, engage with content producers, and participate in discussions through comments.

Since its launch, YouTube has grown rapidly, revolutionizing the way we create, share, and consume video content (Burgess & Green, 2009). The site is currently an essential platform for education, entertainment, and community engagement. As a result, a large number of individuals watch videos, interact with content creators, and leave comments on YouTube every day.

<sup>1</sup> English ELLSP of English Department of FBS Universitas Negeri Padang graduated on September 2024

<sup>2</sup> Lecturer of English Department of FBS Universitas Negeri Padang



Diverse opinions and forms of expression are made possible by the ability to freely post comments on websites like YouTube. However, this flexibility is frequently misused, leading to disparaging remarks that exacerbate gender inequity (Herring, et al., 2002). A person's fear and sense of exclusion caused by negative remarks might result in negative attitudes and actions. Negative comments about gender can also reinforce stereotypical and detrimental norms. These platforms can provide more opportunities to understand and discriminate against gender in comments, stimulate active participation in addressing objectionable comments, and promote education and understanding of gender inequality.

Infidelity was a breakdown in trust in romantic relationships. It has an impact on both personal and social connections. Gender inequality created unfair stereotypes and conventions, with males typically perceived as more online or masculine, while women were viewed as 'naughty' or 'weak in morality'. Understanding these concepts and their impact on people of all genders is critical.

Research on gender inequality has been widely conducted in the fields of education, employment, news reports, proverbs, and social media. In education, gender inequality is researched through textbook analysis. Research by Smith, et al. (2018) regarding the strengthening of traditional gender roles and the marginalization of women in educational content shows this. Luh et al. (2021) claim that women are portrayed in English textbooks as less powerful, less deserving of respect than lazy, more at home, and frequently silent, defenseless, and subservient. Chinese textbooks tend to portray guys as having short hair, dressing in sportswear, and acting intelligently, while girls are portrayed as having pigtails, wearing skirts, and being brave, tidy, and well-mannered (Jiang, 2021).

From the research above, several researchers have conducted research related to gender inequality in textbooks, work, news, proverbs, and social media. Women always receive unequal treatment based on all research conducted. Therefore, it was found that there was a gap in research studies, namely gender inequality between men and women regarding infidelity in news comments. Van Dijk's Ideological Square would be used by researchers to examine gender disparities between men and women in the infidelity news comments area on the IntenseInvestigasi YouTube channel. Based on the framing of the problem, the following might be the declared purpose of this research: examining the discourse subjects that are employed to highlight gender disparities in YouTube comments on inequality.

## **B. RESEARCH METHOD**

This consideration includes a qualitative research approach to investigate the gendered elements within the comments area of the Virgoun and Syahnaz news issue on YouTube. Qualitative research, as emphasized by Creswell (2013), empowers significant investigation into social wonders and members' viewpoints and encounters. This research data was taken from YouTube, which is a well-known video-sharing site. On July 28 2023, three videos about Syahnaz and three

videos about the Virgoun affair were downloaded from the Intense Investigative YouTube page. From the video, researchers collected comments and then analyzed them.

Data analysis in this research involves a systematic approach aimed at transforming raw data into comprehensive and insightful findings. According to Sugiyono (2010), the data analysis process includes searching, assembling, and categorizing data from various sources such as interviews, field notes, and documentation. This methodical process allows for the synthesis of information, identification of patterns, selection of significant elements for deeper examination, and the formulation of clear conclusions that elucidate the gender dynamics present in the comments sections analyzed.

## C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Research Finding

The analysis revealed 25 discourse topics used by netizens across the videos. These topics varied in frequency and sentiment, categorized into different topic clusters reflecting perceptions and judgments surrounding Virgoun and Syahnaz's affairs.

*Table 1. Types of Discourse Topic for Virgoun and Syahnaz*

| No | Types of Discourse Topic                | Virgoun   |            | Syahnaz   |            |
|----|---|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|
|    |   | Frequency | Percentage | Frequency | Percentage |
| 1  | Relationship and sexual dissatisfaction | 11        | 5%         | 10        | 4%         |
| 2  | A desire for variety or excitement      | 5         | 2%         | 5         | 2%         |
| 3  | Confidence issue                        | 3         | 1%         | 5         | 2%         |
| 4  | Feeling of neglect or lack of attention | 7         | 3%         | 2         | 1%         |
| 5  | Bad personality                         | 53        | 23%        | 59        | 26%        |
| 6  | Lack of gratitude                       | 17        | 7%         | 24        | 10%        |
| 7  | Unattractive appearance                 | 21        | 9%         | 4         | 2%         |
| 8  | Playing victim                          | 15        | 7%         | 0         | 0%         |
| 9  | Sin of cheating and adultery            | 5         | 2%         | 7         | 3%         |
| 10 | A lot of money tends to be for fun      | 12        | 5%         | 2         | 1%         |
| 11 | No reason to cheat                      | 14        | 6%         | 1         | 1%         |
| 12 | Cheating and doom                       | 7         | 3%         | 3         | 1%         |
| 13 | Giving bad nickname                     | 17        | 7%         | 11        | 5%         |
| 14 | Choose not to provide further comment   | 9         | 4%         | 2         | 1%         |
| 15 | Do not understand the                   | 12        | 5%         | 0         | 0%         |

|              |                                     |            |             |            |             |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
|              | true meaning of <i>hijrah</i>       |            |             |            |             |
| 16           | Cheating disease                    | 14         | 6%          | 18         | 8%          |
| 17           | Karma                               | 5          | 2%          | 14         | 6%          |
| 18           | Normal for men to cheat             | 1          | 1%          | 1          | 1%          |
| 19           | Punishment                          | 2          | 1%          | 4          | 2%          |
| 20           | No shame                            | 0          | 0%          | 26         | 11%         |
| 21           | Bad family                          | 0          | 0%          | 13         | 6%          |
| 22           | Honorable family                    | 0          | 0%          | 2          | 1%          |
| 23           | Cheating woman                      | 0          | 0%          | 13         | 6%          |
| 24           | Wealth does not guarantee happiness | 0          | 0%          | 3          | 1%          |
| 25           | The power of love                   | 0          | 0%          | 1          | 1%          |
| <b>Total</b> |                                     | <b>230</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>230</b> | <b>100%</b> |

From the results above, the most dominant netizen discourse topic for Virgoun and Syahnaz is "Bad personality," where Virgoun has 53 incidents (23%) and Syahnaz has 59 incidents (26%). This category shows that both of them often highlight bad personal traits as the main reason in their discourse topics. Virgoun and Syahnaz have several similarities in the discussion topics given by netizens. For example, both individuals have the same frequency for the topic "A desire for variety or excitement" with 5 occurrences each and a percentage of 2%. Likewise with the topic "Normal for men to cheat" each has 1 incident and a percentage of 1%. This shows that the two individuals are seen as similar in certain aspects.

While there are some similarities, there are also significant differences in some topics. Virgoun showed a much higher frequency in the topic "Unattractive appearance" with 21 occurrences (9%) compared to Syahnaz who only had 4 occurrences (2%). In contrast, Syahnaz showed a higher frequency in the topic "No shame" with 26 occurrences (11%), while Virgoun had no occurrences at all in this topic. Other topics that showed marked differences included "Bad family" and "Cheating woman" which each had 13 occurrences (6%) on Syahnaz, but no occurrences on Virgoun. In contrast, Virgoun had 15 incidents (7%) in the topic "Playing victim" while Syahnaz had no incidents in that topic.

There are some categories that are not used by one individual but are used by others. For example, Virgoun did not use the categories "No shame," "Bad family," "Cheating woman," "Wealth does not guarantee happiness," and "Honorable family," while Syahnaz had frequencies for each of these categories. On the other hand, Syahnaz did not use the categories "Playing victim" and "Do not understand the true meaning of hijrah" which were both used by Virgoun.

Table 2. Category Topic

| Name    | Category Topic |             |               |               | Total |
|---------|----------------|-------------|---------------|---------------|-------|
|         | Positive Us    | Negative Us | Positive Them | Negative Them |       |
| Virgoun | 56             | 24          | 35            | 115           | 230   |
| Syahnaz | 48             | 5           | 3             | 174           | 230   |

It is clear from examining the emotion categories that although both people experienced criticism (Negative Them), Syahnaz experienced more unfavorable impressions. There were 174 occasions as opposed to Virgoun's 115 instances. On the other hand, compared to Syahnaz, Virgoun garnered somewhat more good opinions about themselves from commentators (Positive Us).

Overall, these findings underscore the complex dynamics of public discourse on inequality and gender inequality on digital platforms, illustrating how societal perceptions and judgments are shaped and disseminated through online interactions. Further research could explore the broader impacts of such digital discourses on public figures' reputations and societal norms.

## 2. Discussion

The study found that the prevailing discourse was on individual differences, demonstrating that both have negative views and may affect society's assessment of their actions and decisions. This topic has an impact not only on both people's reputations, but also on their emotional states and perceptions of gender roles. . The emphasis on this theme not only impacts the reputation of both figures, but can also open emotional wounds for individuals who are the targets of negative comments, which in turn reinforces existing gender stereotypes, in line with the findings of Hausen and Richard (2010) who underlines the detrimental effects of discriminatory language on individual mental health.

According to Van Dijk, language and discourse emphasize the good characteristics of the "in-group" and the bad characteristics of the "out-group." Public discourse sometimes exaggerates negative characteristics associated with Virgoun and Syahnaz, placing them in the "out-group" due to perceived moral flaws. This biased use of discourse themes strengthens society's ideas, particularly those connected to gender. Syahnaz received more negative feedback than Virgoun, as discourse accentuates her flaws while downplaying her strengths.

The results of evaluating social discourse in creating inequality on social media demonstrated that netizens utilize power to perpetuate gender disparity. This was supported by Cameron, D. (2014) study on Gender and Language, which investigated how language builds and maintains gender disparities. Her examination of media depictions of men and women could help us understand how Syahnaz and Virgoun were depicted differently.

Furthermore, research by Tareen et al. (2021) on hate speech and social media. Research on hate speech on social media highlights how online platforms could be a vulnerable source of information leakage. Due to the absence of restrictions on social media, the trend of religious, gender, and racist hate speech was widespread. Similarly, online harassment based on gender and religion is also on the rise. All their knowledge of how social media users use various discourse topics and strategies to analyze and portray target groups may be related to the strategy expressed in the comments about Virgoun and Syahnaz.

In conclusion, a study of YouTube comments about the Virgoun and Syahnaz cases revealed a large gender inequality in language, with lazy condemnation but forgiven while women received harder moral scrutiny and

punishment. The application of Van Dijk's Ideological Square Theory highlights how public discourse is more than simply a reflection of cultural attitudes. It actively contributes to the perception of gender notions. It also emphasizes the dynamics of inequality and gender diversity on digital platforms.

#### **D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

Research on YouTube comments related to the Virgoun and Syahnaz incidents showed significant gender inequality in the topics of discourse. Findings showed that the two individuals, despite some similarities, were viewed differently by society, especially in the context of behavior and morality. Netizen discourse reflected existing cultural norms and gender stereotypes, where men were often justified or excused for their actions, while women were subjected to stricter moral tests and often received harsher punishments.

Analysis of discourse on social media also showed that netizens used the power of words to reinforce gender inequality, which was supported by research on how language could construct and maintain gender inequality. Furthermore, the increase in hate speech on social media platforms pointed to a trend of destructive behavior, with a spike in gender-based and religious attacks. In this context, netizens' comments about Virgoun and Syahnaz illustrate how social media users construct narratives and judgments based on a wide range of conversation subjects.

Based on the results of this research, there are suggestions that the researchers put forward. In this study, researchers did not consider the gender of the perpetrator commenting on the news of this affair. It would be good, for future research, researchers differentiate the gender of commenters so that the differences are clearer. Additionally, to promote gender equality in media representation, media platforms must adopt fairer practices when reporting and discussing injustice. The media must be mindful of gender bias in its coverage, seeking to present the actions and motivations of men and women with equal attention and empathy. Developing guidelines for fair and balanced reporting on issues such as injustice and other moral transgressions can help ensure that coverage does not disproportionately stigmatize one gender.

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