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SEXIST VERBAL VIOLENCE ON SOCIAL MEDIA: A PSYCHOLINGUISTIC STUDY OF ABUSIVE LANGUAGE

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Abstract: This study examines sexist verbal violence on social media from a psycholinguistic perspective, focusing on the linguistic forms, communicative functions, and psychological impacts of abusive language directed at women. The research addresses the increasing prevalence of gendered hate speech on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, particularly targeting female public figures. Employing a descriptive qualitative method and guided by speech act theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969), a total of 150 comments were analyzed, with 55 identified as sexist verbal abuse. The findings reveal that these utterances predominantly involve illocutionary acts, including insults, verbal sexual harassment, gender stereotyping, and moral judgment, while the perlocutionary effects evoke emotional harm, such as shame, fear, and reduced self-confidence. Psycholinguistically, such language reflects internalized gender biases, negative cognitive schemas, and affective disinhibition, amplified by the anonymity and lack of accountability inherent in digital platforms. The study underscores that language functions as a tool of power, reinforcing patriarchal norms and social control online. These findings highlight the need for enhanced linguistic awareness, promotion of digital empathy, and implementation of ethical communication practices to foster safer and more inclusive digital environments.
Keywords: *verbal violence; sexism; psycholinguistics; speech acts; verbal harassment; social media.*

INTRODUCTION

The rise of digital communication technologies has profoundly transformed patterns of human interaction, leading to the emergence of social media as a primary arena for public discourse and identity expression (Fadhel & Maharani, 2024; Khairani et al., 2024; Ningrum et al., 2025; Cahyani et al., 2025; Nugraha & Febriani, 2025). Platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter) have democratized communication, giving users unprecedented freedom to share opinions and emotions in real time (Jane, 2014; Purba et al., 2023). However, this freedom has also fostered a climate in which sexist verbal violence flourishes—particularly targeting women and gender minorities. Such language, often masked as humor or criticism, reinforces gender hierarchies and reproduces patriarchal dominance within online spaces (Eckert & Steiner, 2020; Ayusanti et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2024). Consequently, sexist verbal abuse represents not only a linguistic problem but also a sociopsychological phenomenon that perpetuates inequality and emotional harm in the digital era.

Recent studies have shown that sexist verbal violence on social media manifests through a variety of linguistic forms—ranging from explicit insults to more covert expressions of gender bias (Azijah & Asriani, 2023; Karthikeyan et al., 2023; Rodríguez-Sánchez et al., 2024; Dewanty &

Saryono, 2024; Nurmala et al., 2024). Dewanty and Saryono (2024) revealed that TikTok comments directed at women often contain personal attacks related to appearance, intellect, and morality. Similarly, Rodríguez-Sánchez et al. (2024) found that sexist discourse frequently employs derogatory metaphors and evaluative adjectives that associate femininity with weakness or irrationality. These findings underscore the need for psycholinguistic frameworks capable of revealing the cognitive and affective mechanisms behind such language.

Psycholinguistics offers critical insights into how mental schemas, emotions, and social conditioning shape language production (Field, 2003; Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Harley, 2013; Pinker, 2007; Schmidtke & Kuperman, 2024). Sinaga and Damanik (2025) emphasize that emotional states such as anger or disgust directly affect lexical choice and syntactic structure during communication. The production of sexist language thus reflects not only aggression but also deep-seated cognitive associations between gender and value. In this way, psycholinguistic approaches illuminate how affective disinhibition and bias manifest linguistically in social media interactions.

The digital environment amplifies verbal aggression through anonymity and reduced accountability (Joinson, 2001; Suler, 2004; Hardianti, 2024; Wang et al., 2024; Isnawijayani et al., 2024). Suler's (2004) "online disinhibition effect" explains that users often express hostility online more freely than in face-to-face communication due to psychological distance and lack of social cues. Joinson (2001) similarly argues that anonymity fosters self-disclosure without self-awareness, facilitating uninhibited sexist remarks. These findings are further supported by Hardianti (2024), who connects low digital literacy to the normalization of hate speech during political discourse. Collectively, they reveal that technological affordances intersect with psychological processes to produce abusive communication patterns.

Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969; Thomas, 1995; Van Dijk, 1998; Fairclough, 1995) has been widely applied to analyze the functional dimensions of verbal violence. Dewanty and Saryono (2024) classify sexist comments as illocutionary acts of insult, command, or moral policing, reflecting the speaker's intent to dominate or humiliate. In contrast, perlocutionary acts correspond to emotional harm in recipients, including shame and fear. Through this theoretical lens, language emerges not as a neutral system but as a vehicle of symbolic power that sustains gendered hierarchies (Bourdieu, 1991; Wodak, 1997).

Sociolinguistic research has demonstrated how language reproduces cultural ideologies and power structures (Mills, 2008; Bucholtz, 2011; Banet-Weiser, 2018; Van Dijk, 1998; Arcos & Rosso, 2024). Mills (2008) argues that sexism operates through both explicit insults and implicit linguistic asymmetries, while Bucholtz (2011) links identity construction to ideological discourse practices. Banet-Weiser (2018) further connects online misogyny with the rise of "popular misogyny," where gender bias is reframed as entertainment. Collectively, these works situate sexist verbal violence within broader sociocultural processes of identity, ideology, and media consumption.

Studies in the Indonesian context affirm that sexist abuse online often reflects cultural norms and moral expectations tied to femininity (Ayuningrum, 2021; Oktaviani & Sari, 2022; Nurmala et al., 2024; Isnawijayani et al., 2024; Susanti, 2025). Ayuningrum (2021) found that users employ patronizing or mocking tones toward men expressing femininity, while Oktaviani and Sari (2022) highlight the reproduction of patriarchal stereotypes in comment threads. Susanti (2025) and Isnawijayani et al. (2024) observed that women in hijab fashion communities receive moralistic policing when their behavior deviates from traditional norms. These findings underscore the local cultural lens through which sexist language operates.

The perlocutionary effects of sexist abuse are profound, with victims reporting emotional distress, self-censorship, and withdrawal from online spaces (Mantilla, 2015; Dreißigacker et al., 2024; Rodríguez-Sánchez et al., 2024; Eckert & Steiner, 2020; Purba et al., 2023). Dreißigacker et al. (2024) found that victims of hate speech experience heightened insecurity and fear. Similarly, Mantilla (2015) coined "gendertrolling" to describe the systematic targeting of women online. These findings establish a psychological link between digital aggression and mental health, reinforcing the need for psycholinguistic inquiry into affective harm.

Several scholars argue that sexist language persists because it is normalized and embedded in everyday communication (Mills, 2008; Wodak, 1997; Fairclough, 1995; Van Dijk, 1998; Corry et al., 2025). Such normalization obscures the boundary between humor and harm. Fairclough (1995) and Van Dijk (1998) explain that discourse practices naturalize ideology through repetition

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and social approval. Consequently, linguistic aggression becomes a routine communicative act rather than an exceptional event, which psycholinguistics can help uncover through its focus on unconscious language production.

Recent advances in computational linguistics have expanded the study of sexism detection through AI-based methods (Karthikeyan et al., 2023; Arcos & Rosso, 2024; Zakaria et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2024; Mubarok et al., 2023). Arcos and Rosso (2024) integrated text, audio, and visual cues to identify sexist patterns on TikTok, while Zakaria et al. (2023) used IndoBERTweet to detect misogyny in Indonesian posts. However, most of these studies focus on classification accuracy rather than the psycholinguistic mechanisms of language production. This methodological imbalance leaves cognitive and emotional factors underexplored.

Schmidtke and Kuperman (2024) emphasize that intergroup bias in language stems from cognitive representations and emotional schemas shared across cultures. Pinker (2007) and Harley (2013) argue that linguistic aggression often arises from evolved affective drives mediated by social learning. Sinaga and Damanik (2025) and Crespo-Fernández (2025) add that taboo and emotional expressions in language reveal the speaker's internal mental states. These theoretical insights bridge psycholinguistics and social psychology, providing a framework for interpreting sexist verbal abuse as both linguistic and psychological behavior.

Overall, the convergence of speech act analysis and psycholinguistics enables a richer understanding of how sexist language functions both as social action and cognitive process (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969; Harley, 2013; Field, 2003; Schmidtke & Kuperman, 2024; Sinaga & Damanik, 2025). This interdisciplinary integration is particularly relevant to online contexts, where anonymity and cultural narratives interact with personal emotion and cognition to produce abusive discourse. Such synthesis informs the analytical framework of the present study, which situates sexist verbal violence within both communicative intent and psychocognitive mechanisms.

Despite growing literature on online misogyny, few studies have explicitly connected the speech act functions of sexist comments (illocutionary and perlocutionary acts) with the psycholinguistic drivers of their production, particularly within Indonesian social media contexts (Dewanty & Saryono, 2024; Nurmala et al., 2024; Isnawijayani et al., 2024; Hardianti, 2024; Schmidtke & Kuperman, 2024). This study thus addresses the question: How do linguistic forms of sexist verbal violence reflect underlying cognitive, emotional, and ideological processes in social media discourse?

The novelty of this research lies in its integration of speech act theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969) with psycholinguistic analysis (Harley, 2013; Sinaga & Damanik, 2025; Schmidtke & Kuperman, 2024) to interpret sexist comments as both linguistic actions and reflections of cognitive-affective states. Unlike prior studies that focused solely on content or classification, this study maps the psychological underpinnings—such as emotional disinhibition, internalized gender bias, and cognitive schemas—behind sexist language production on TikTok and Instagram.

This study contributes to academic discourse by offering a multidimensional understanding of sexist verbal violence that integrates linguistic, psychological, and sociocultural perspectives (Mills, 2008; Bourdieu, 1991; Fairclough, 1995; Wodak, 1997; Banet-Weiser, 2018). The results have practical implications for promoting digital empathy, communication ethics, and educational literacy aimed at reducing online sexism. Furthermore, by analyzing Indonesian-language data within global theoretical frameworks, this research enriches the cross-cultural dialogue on gender, language, and digital behavior.

METHOD

In linguistic and psychological research, methods must align with the research questions and the qualitative nature of the data. Qualitative research seeks an in-depth understanding of social phenomena within their natural context, often using words, actions, and social interactions as data (Moleong, 2007; Corry et al., 2025; Jahrir et al., 2025). This study employed a descriptive-analytical qualitative method to explore the meaning, structure, and psychological effects of sexist comments, combining detailed description with interpretative analysis of linguistic and psychological processes.

The research followed Miles and Huberman's (1994) framework, involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, enabling systematic categorization, visualization, and interpretation of sexist comments. A psycholinguistic approach was applied to examine the interaction between language, cognition, and emotion, treating language as both a symbolic system and a reflection of thought patterns and affective responses.

Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969) guided the analysis, framing each comment as a social act with intention and effect, focusing on illocutionary acts (intended meaning) and perlocutionary acts (psychological impact on the listener).

Table 1. *Summary of research method*

Aspects	Descriptions
Research Design	Qualitative descriptive-analytical method. This design enables the exploration of meanings, patterns, and psychological implications of sexist utterances in digital spaces.
Research Focus	Psycholinguistic analysis of sexist verbal violence on social media, particularly examining the relationship between language, cognition, and emotion in sexist comments.
Data Sources	Comments collected from social media platforms (TikTok and Instagram) that contain sexist verbal abuse directed at female public figures.
Theoretical Framework	Psycholinguistic theory and Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969). These theories are used to interpret the cognitive-emotional and pragmatic aspects of verbal expressions.
Analytical Dimensions	1. Illocutionary acts – intended meaning and communicative purpose (e.g., insult, control, moral judgment). 2. Perlocutionary acts – psychological and emotional effects on the listener (e.g., shame, fear, intimidation, trauma).
Data Analysis Procedures	Based on Miles and Huberman's (1994) model: 1. Data Reduction: Selecting, simplifying, and categorizing sexist comments. 2. Data Display: Organizing findings into tables for interpretation. 3. Conclusion Drawing/Verification: Interpreting linguistic patterns and psychological effects.
Analytical Approach	Integrates linguistic and psychological perspectives to understand how language functions as symbolic violence and reflects gender bias in digital communication.
Expected Outcomes	To identify the forms, intentions, and psychological effects of sexist verbal abuse, revealing how language perpetuates gender inequality in online discourse.

The illocutionary act represents the intended meaning or communicative purpose behind the utterance—such as insulting, controlling, or passing moral judgment on women. It reflects the speaker's intention to assert dominance, impose social norms, or demean the target's identity. Meanwhile, the perlocutionary act refers to the actual effect the utterance has on the listener, such as evoking feelings of shame, fear, intimidation, or trauma. These psychological consequences highlight how language functions as a tool of symbolic violence, where words can inflict emotional harm and reinforce social inequality.

Through this dual-layered analysis, the study bridges linguistic form and psychological function, providing a comprehensive understanding of how sexist verbal abuse operates both as a linguistic phenomenon and a psychological act of aggression.

This interdisciplinary method bridges linguistics and psychology by not only interpreting the structural and pragmatic aspects of sexist speech but also understanding its emotional and cognitive roots. Therefore, this methodological framework ensures a comprehensive understanding of how language functions as a form of symbolic and psychological violence in digital discourse.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study examined a total of 150 public comments directed toward female public figures on TikTok and Instagram, particularly those responding to content related to physical appearance, personal opinions, and self-expression.

Prevalence and forms of sexist verbal abuse

To gain a deeper understanding of the linguistic mechanisms underlying sexist verbal violence, each identified comment was categorized according to its dominant form of expression and psychological function. The classification not only reflects the surface-level linguistic features but also reveals the cognitive and emotional intentions embedded within the utterances.

By mapping the data into five primary forms—verbal sexual harassment, use of derogatory terms, gender stereotypes, body shaming, and aggressive metaphors—the analysis captures the diversity of strategies used to reinforce gender hierarchies and exert symbolic control over women in digital discourse. Each category represents a specific way in which language functions as a vehicle of psychological aggression, illustrating how everyday expressions can perpetuate

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objectification, moral judgment, and emotional harm. The details of each form are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. *Classification of forms of sexist verbal abuse*

No.	Forms of Verbal Violence	Example Comments	Brief Explanations
1	Verbal Sexual Harassment	"Pake baju kayak gitu, pantes diliatin." (*Wearing clothes like that, it's worth looking at.*)	Blaming women for harassment, implying sexual objectification and normalization of predatory behavior.
2	Use of Derogatory Terms	"Dasar pelakor murahan." (*You cheap homewrecker.*)	Reinforcing negative moral stereotypes to demean and discredit women's character.
3	Gender Stereotypes	"Makanya jangan perempuan yang mimpin, baperan." (*That's why women shouldn't lead, they're too emotional.*)	Associating emotional instability and inferiority with women, reflecting patriarchal gender bias.
4	Body Shaming	"Cewek gendut kayak gitu sok cantik." (*Fat girls like that pretend to be pretty.*)	Attacking women's physical appearance to undermine confidence and self-worth.
5	Aggressive Use of Metaphors	"Mulut lo cewek tapi isinya sampah semua." (*Your mouth is like a girl's but it's all rubbish.*)	Using metaphorical language to insult identity, equating femininity with moral or intellectual weakness.

The findings indicate that these utterances are not merely spontaneous or harmless remarks made in passing, but rather structured communicative acts that reveal deeper psychological motives and sociocultural ideologies. From a psycholinguistic perspective, the language used in these comments demonstrates an intentional deployment of words to assert power, dominance, and social control over women in digital spaces. The use of aggressive, judgmental, or objectifying language reflects how language functions as a symbolic instrument of violence, shaping both emotional responses and social hierarchies.

Furthermore, the study highlights that sexist comments often operate within two interconnected dimensions—the linguistic and the psychological. Linguistically, the comments are structured through certain lexical choices, metaphorical expressions, and pragmatic intentions that reinforce gendered hierarchies. Psychologically, these utterances manifest the cognitive biases, emotional triggers, and social conditioning that underlie the speaker's worldview. For example, expressions such as "*Makanya jangan perempuan yang mimpin, baperan*" or "*Cewek kayak gini cuma modal badan*" reveal both semantic intentions (illocutionary acts) to demean and psychological effects (perlocutionary acts) that induce shame, intimidation, or inferiority in the targets.

Overall, the results underscore that sexist verbal abuse on social media is not an isolated phenomenon but a reproduction of entrenched patriarchal values within online communication. These findings provide critical insight into how digital discourse becomes a space where language, cognition, and emotion converge to perpetuate symbolic violence, demonstrating the necessity of integrating psycholinguistic analysis to fully understand the depth and implications of gender-based verbal aggression.

Table 2. *Distribution of sexist verbal abuse categories (N = 55)*

No.	Category of Verbal Abuse	Frequency	Percentage
1	Verbal Sexual Harassment	18	32.7%
2	Gender Stereotyping	13	23.6%
3	Use of Derogatory Terms	10	18.2%
4	Body Shaming	8	14.5%
5	Aggressive Metaphors	6	10.9%
Total	—	55	100%

The classification revealed that verbal sexual harassment (32.7%) and gender stereotyping (23.6%) were the most prevalent forms of abuse, as

shown in Table 1. This pattern indicates that women's self-expression—particularly concerning autonomy, physical appearance, and leadership—remains a primary target of online scrutiny and social control. The dominance of these two categories reflects the endurance of patriarchal discourse structures that attempt to regulate and discipline female identity through linguistic aggression. Verbal sexual harassment, which accounted for the largest portion of cases, often involved objectifying or victim-blaming language directed at women's appearance or behavior. For instance, comments such as "*Pake baju kayak gitu, pantes diliatin*" ("Wearing clothes like that, it's worth staring at") exemplify how language can shift responsibility onto women for the harassment they experience, thereby normalizing predatory behavior and reinforcing gendered power imbalances.

Closely following this were gender stereotypes (23.6%), which manifested in remarks like "*Makanya jangan perempuan yang mimpin, baperan*" ("That's why women shouldn't lead, they're too emotional"). Such comments expose deeply rooted societal biases that associate leadership, rationality, and strength with masculinity, while linking femininity with emotional instability or inferiority. Meanwhile, other forms of sexist abuse—such as derogatory labeling (e.g., *pelakor murahan* or "cheap homewrecker"), body shaming, and aggressive metaphors—although less frequent, continue to operate as powerful mechanisms of symbolic violence. These linguistic strategies collectively serve to demean, control, and invalidate women's presence and voice in digital spaces, illustrating how online discourse perpetuates gender-based psychological harm and social inequality.

Psycholinguistic functions: Speech acts and affective language

Using Speech Act Theory as the analytical lens, the findings revealed that most sexist comments functioned primarily as illocutionary acts of insult, verbal domination, and moral policing. These utterances were not random or emotionally impulsive expressions but strategically structured linguistic acts intended to assert authority, impose social norms, or reinforce hierarchical gender relations. The illocutionary force of such comments—whether to humiliate, judge, or control—demonstrates how language can perform social power, turning everyday discourse into a site of symbolic domination. Correspondingly, the perlocutionary effects observed included a range of psychological responses, such as shame, guilt, anxiety, self-censorship, and even social withdrawal, particularly among women subjected to public scrutiny.

For instance, the comment "*Istri orang kok joget seksi, gak malu ya*?" (Why is someone's wife dancing sexily? Aren't you ashamed?) illustrates a dual-layered act: it operates illocutionarily as a moral judgment that implies social norm violation, and perlocutionarily as an emotional manipulation designed to instill guilt or shame. In this way, language becomes a mechanism of behavioral regulation, where moral discourse is weaponized to discipline women's expressions of autonomy or confidence. The repetition of such remarks across digital platforms reflects the institutionalization of gender norms through discourse, where linguistic aggression is normalized under the guise of moral concern or cultural propriety.

This dynamic underscores a key psycholinguistic insight: sexist verbal acts not only communicate prejudice but also shape cognition and affect, conditioning women to monitor their self-presentation and conform to restrictive social expectations. Ultimately, these patterns reveal that sexist comments are not merely linguistic artifacts but performative tools of psychological and social control, sustaining patriarchal ideologies in contemporary digital interactions.

Table 3. *Speech act analysis of sexist comments*

No.	Type of Speech Act	Example Comment	Illocutionary Function (Intended Act)	Perlocutionary Effect (Psychological Impact)
1	Insult/Verbal Domination	"*Dasar perempuan gak tahu malu*." (Typical shameless woman.)	To demean and assert male superiority by framing women as inferior or indecent.	Feelings of humiliation, anger, or social withdrawal.
2	Moral Policing	"*Istri orang kok joget seksi, gak malu ya*?" (Why is someone's wife dancing sexily? Aren't you ashamed?)	To enforce moral norms and control female behavior through public shaming.	Guilt, self-blame, and self-censorship of expression.

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3	Gender Stereotyping	"*Makanya jangan perempuan yang mimpin, baperan*." (That's why women shouldn't lead, they're too emotional.)	To delegitimize female authority and reinforce traditional gender roles.	Reduced confidence, internalized inferiority, and fear of judgment.
4	Body-Based Ridicule	"*Cewek gendut kayak gitu sok cantik*." (Fat girls like that pretend to be pretty.)	To attack self-image and diminish self-worth through appearance-based criticism.	Shame, body dissatisfaction, and low self-esteem.
5	Metaphorical Aggression	"Mulut lo cewek tapi isinya sampah semua." (*Your mouth is like a girl's but it's all rubbish.*)	To dehumanize and invalidate identity using metaphorical insults.	Emotional distress, confusion, or trauma from symbolic degradation.

Emotional and cognitive drivers of language use

The affective-psycholinguistic analysis revealed that sexist verbal abuse in digital spaces is not simply spontaneous or reactive but is deeply shaped by underlying emotional and cognitive mechanisms. Emotions such as anger, disgust, envy, resentment, and moral superiority frequently emerge as dominant affective drivers influencing the choice of words, tone, and syntactic construction. These emotional states serve as motivational forces that guide linguistic behavior, shaping how individuals conceptualize and express hostility toward women.

For instance, the comment "*Cewek kayak gini cuma modal badan, gak pake otak*" ("Girls like this only use their body, not their brains") encapsulates a dehumanizing cognitive schema that reduces women to their physical appearance while negating intellectual capacity. Cognitively, this reflects what Van Dijk (1998) describes as ideological mental models—internalized thought structures that encode social prejudice and reproduce power asymmetries through language. Such utterances are not arbitrary; they draw on entrenched gender scripts and stereotypical associations stored in long-term memory, which are activated in emotionally charged contexts like social media debates or controversies.

Table 3. *Emotional and cognitive drivers of sexist verbal abuse*

No.	Emotional State	Underlying Cognitive Schema	Typical Linguistic Output	Psychological / Social Function
1	Anger	Hostility toward perceived female deviation from traditional norms.	Use of insulting or imperative phrases, e.g., *"Cewek kayak gini gak tahu malu!"* (*Girls like this have no shame!*)	Expresses dominance, enforces conformity, and asserts control over women's behavior.
2	Disgust	Cognitive association of femininity with impurity or inferiority.	Derogatory metaphors and animalistic comparisons, e.g., *"Mulut lo kayak sampah."* (*Your mouth is like garbage.*)	Dehumanizes women, reinforcing psychological distance and social exclusion.
3	Envy / Resentment	Perception of women's success or visibility as a threat to male status.	Mockery and dismissive tone, e.g., *"Cewek sukses pasti gak bener kelakuannya."* (*Successful women are never decent.*)	Justifies inequality by discrediting women's achievements; restores threatened ego.
4	Moral Superiority	Belief in patriarchal moral order; view of women as needing regulation.	Moralizing or judgmental comments, e.g., *"Istri orang kok joget seksi, gak malu ya?"* (*Why is someone's wife dancing sexily? Aren't you ashamed?*)	Polices female behavior, legitimizes verbal control through moral discourse.
5	Disgust + Superiority Mix	Cognitive schema of female inferiority and body objectification.	Sexualized or objectifying remarks, e.g., *"Modal badan aja, gak pake otak."* (*She only uses her body, not her brain.*)	Reduces women to physicality, sustaining gender stereotypes and symbolic subordination.

From a psycholinguistic standpoint, emotionally loaded speech tends to be more salient, memorable, and linguistically marked, often featuring exaggeration, repetition, or metaphorical intensifiers. This aligns with Pinker (2007) and Harley (2013), who argue that emotional arousal significantly influences linguistic encoding and retrieval processes—speakers in high emotional states produce speech that is both impulsive and affectively charged. Consequently, sexist comments on social media are frequently produced under low self-regulation and heightened affective arousal, conditions that facilitate aggressive or moralizing discourse.

Moreover, the digital environment amplifies these tendencies through two interrelated mechanisms: anonymity and disinhibition. The absence of immediate social feedback reduces empathy and accountability, allowing individuals to express hostile emotions without fear of social sanction. This phenomenon, known as the online disinhibition effect (Suler, 2004), contributes to the normalization of verbal aggression and the erosion of social empathy in online interactions. Psychologically, this means that sexist verbal abuse online is often the result of emotionally unfiltered cognition, where impulsive emotional responses bypass higher-order reasoning.

In this sense, the cognitive and emotional mechanisms behind sexist language use can be understood as reciprocal and reinforcing: emotional arousal activates biased cognitive schemas, and those schemas, in turn, justify and sustain the emotion through linguistic expression. The result is a self-perpetuating cycle of symbolic violence, in which language becomes both the product and the producer of prejudice.

Psycholinguistic analysis

It is important to note that the sexist comments collected from social media exhibit both illocutionary and perlocutionary dimensions, reflecting the dual nature of language as a social and psychological instrument. Illocutionary acts reveal the speaker's intended function—such as insulting, controlling, or morally judging women—while perlocutionary acts capture the psychological impact on the recipient, including feelings of shame, intimidation, and self-censorship. Analyzing these comments through the lens of speech act theory highlights how digital interactions not only convey hostility but also reinforce social norms and gender hierarchies. The following table summarizes key examples of these acts and their associated effects on victims.

Table 4. *Illocutionary and perlocutionary acts in sexist comments on social media*

No	Comments	Illocutionary Acts	Perlocutionary Acts
1	"*Pantes dilecehin, bajunya kayak gitu sih*." (No wonder she's being harassed, her clothes are like that)	Blaming the victim and normalizing sexual harassment.	Victims feel blamed, ashamed, and afraid to express themselves.
2	"*Udah tua, masih aja joget-joget kayak anak ABG*." (She's old, she still dances like a teenager)	Insulting and degrading women based on age.	The victim feels unappreciated and socially restricted.
3	"*Cewek kayak gini cuma modal badan, gak pake otak*." (Girls like this only use their body, they don't use their brains)	Demeaning the intellectual capacity of women.	The victim feels reduced to her physical appearance only and loses self-confidence.
4	"*Istri orang kok joget seksi, gak malu ya*?" (Why is someone else's wife dancing sexily? Aren't you ashamed?)	Controlling and morally judging married women's self-expression.	Victims feel guilty, intimidated, and pressured by social norms.
5	"*Cewek kalau udah terkenal, pasti gak bener kelakuannya*." (If a girl is famous, she definitely doesn't act right)	Stereotyping successful women as immoral.	Victims feel distrusted, stigmatized, and lose a safe space to be creative.

Cognitive and emotional processes in language

The cognitive and emotional dimensions of sexist language use reveal that online verbal aggression is shaped by a combination of psychological impulses, sociocultural conditioning, and the affordances of digital media. Social media users often employ emotionally charged expressions rooted in anger, disgust, or moral superiority, particularly toward women who deviate from traditional gender expectations. These linguistic choices are not arbitrary but reflect underlying cognitive schemas that categorize and judge women based on patriarchal ideologies. Furthermore, digital anonymity and the absence of immediate social consequences lower users' self-regulation, while limited digital empathy intensifies the tendency to dehumanize others. Collectively, these factors illustrate that sexist

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speech is both a cognitive reflection of ingrained social beliefs and an emotional reaction to perceived norm violations.

Table 5. *Cognitive and emotional processes underlying sexist language use*

Aspect	Description	Illustrative Example / Explanation
Emotional Drivers	Language is shaped by emotions such as anger, disgust, envy, or superiority, which influence word choice and tone.	Comments like *"Cewek kayak gini cuma modal badan"* (Girls like this only use their body) express contempt driven by emotional bias.
Cognitive Schemas	Users rely on internalized mental models or gender stereotypes that define what women "should" be like.	Women who express confidence or independence are often labeled *baperan* (overly emotional) or *tidak tahu malu* (shameless).
Sexist Ideologies	Deep-seated patriarchal beliefs reinforce male dominance and justify verbal control over women's behavior.	Verbal policing of women's clothing or opinions reflects attempts to reassert traditional gender norms.
Digital Anonymity	Online platforms reduce social accountability, encouraging harsher or uninhibited speech.	Anonymous users post degrading comments they might avoid in face-to-face settings.
Lack of Digital Empathy	Limited awareness of the psychological impact of words fosters emotional detachment.	Users underestimate the harm caused by humiliation or objectification in public digital spaces.
Linguistic Manifestation of Power	Verbal aggression symbolizes broader social inequality, where language becomes a tool of domination.	Insults or moral judgments serve to silence and regulate female self-expression.

The table illustrates that sexist comments on social media are not merely casual or humorous remarks but deliberate acts with clear communicative intentions and psychological consequences. The illocutionary acts show that commenters actively aim to insult, demean, or control women's behavior, reflecting underlying gender biases and societal norms that seek to regulate female expression. The perlocutionary effects demonstrate the real emotional and cognitive impact on the recipients, including feelings of shame, fear, reduced self-confidence, and social withdrawal. This interpretation highlights that language functions as a tool of symbolic violence: it not only communicates hostility but also perpetuates patriarchal power structures and reinforces social inequalities in digital spaces.

The findings of this study indicate that sexist verbal violence on social media operates as both a linguistic and psychological phenomenon, consistent with prior research on online gendered harassment. Similar to Mills (2008), who emphasized that language reflects and reproduces patriarchal structures, the comments analyzed in this study reveal how verbal sexual harassment, derogatory labeling, and gender stereotyping normalize the subjugation of women. These remarks function not merely as spontaneous expressions but as patterned communicative acts that enforce societal expectations, demonstrating that digital spaces are extensions of offline power dynamics (Van Dijk, 1998).

From a psycholinguistic perspective, the study confirms that sexist utterances are shaped by interrelated cognitive and emotional processes. Aligning with Fiske and Taylor's (1991) schema theory, commenters drew on internalized gendered stereotypes to construct derogatory remarks, while affective psycholinguistics (Harley, 2013) explains how emotions like anger, disgust, and envy intensified these expressions. The combination of cognitive bias and emotional arousal supports prior findings that online aggression is amplified by anonymity and the reduced social accountability of digital platforms (Suler, 2004; Joinson, 2001). This dual influence of cognition and emotion underscores that sexist language is both intentional and psychologically consequential.

The social function of these comments is further illuminated through speech act theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969), which positions utterances as actions capable of producing effects beyond their literal meaning. Illocutionary acts in the dataset served to control, insult, and delegitimize women, while perlocutionary effects included shame, self-censorship, and social withdrawal, echoing Thomas's (1995) observations about the enduring

psychological impact of verbal aggression. These results reinforce Bourdieu's (1991) concept of symbolic violence, demonstrating that language can invisibly perpetuate cultural ideologies and gender hierarchies. Overall, the study corroborates previous research in illustrating that digital verbal abuse is not only a reflection of personal prejudice but also a vehicle for sustaining structural inequalities.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of sexist comments directed at female celebrities on TikTok demonstrates that these utterances function as deliberate forms of verbal aggression. Most comments contain illocutionary acts of insult, harassment, or moral judgment, employing language that demeans, blames, or controls women. Phrases such as "only body," "brainless," or "deserves to be harassed" exemplify how online discourse reflects entrenched misogynistic attitudes and reinforces negative gender norms. Pragmatically, these comments are not neutral expressions but intentional communicative acts aimed at asserting social dominance and regulating female behavior in digital spaces.

The perlocutionary effects of these utterances reveal their profound psychological impact on victims. Exposure to sexist remarks can trigger feelings of shame, fear, diminished self-confidence, and even social trauma, demonstrating that language serves as both a communicative and psychological tool. This finding aligns with psycholinguistic perspectives that emphasize how cognitive and emotional processes interact with social and cultural frameworks to shape language production and reception. The comments analyzed on TikTok illustrate that verbal violence is not an isolated phenomenon but a reflection of broader social biases and power structures.

Furthermore, the study highlights the role of social media as a platform that facilitates the reproduction and amplification of gender-based verbal violence. The anonymity and lack of accountability in comment sections contribute to the normalization of harassment and reinforce patriarchal ideologies. Addressing this issue requires promoting digital literacy and linguistic awareness, equipping users to recognize, challenge, and mitigate sexist language. By fostering safer and more equitable online environments, it is possible to reduce the prevalence of verbal abuse and its associated psychological harm, creating a space where women can express themselves freely without fear of judgment or hostility.

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