

Naming and Shaming: Digital Patriarchy in Indonesian Cancel Culture

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Abstract. Cancel culture has emerged as a prominent feature of social media communication, often framed as a form of digital accountability. Yet in practice, it frequently reproduces real life existing gender inequalities. This paper examines how naming and shaming practices on Indonesian Twitter reinforce patriarchal norms by disproportionately targeting women in viral infidelity scandals. By applying Feminist Post-Structuralist Discourse Analysis (FPDA), the study shows how derogatory labels such as *pelakor* (homewrecker) operate as communicative tools of public punishment that reduce women to symbols of immorality and family destruction. By contrast, the men involved were largely invisible or treated with leniency, and it illustrates the persistence of double standards in digital communication. The paper draws on qualitative analysis of Twitter discourse, examining patterns of insulting language and their cultural meanings. This paper shows that cancel culture works as digital patriarchy in action, where naming and shaming are a form of symbolic violence.

Keywords: Cancel culture, Digital Patriarchy, Feminist Post-Structuralist Discourse Analysis.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, cancel culture has emerged as a controversial form of a form of communication collective moral policing in digital communication places. Commonly, the term means as the withdrawal of any kind of support for those who are assessed to have said or done something unacceptable or highly problematic (Ng, 2020). Though, in practice, cancel culture harnesses the power of social media to name and shame individuals, often public figures, by withdrawing support, rallying outrage, and inflicting reputational damage as punishment for perceived offenses (Roldan et al., 2024). Cancel culture is often hailed as a grassroots mechanism of accountability, such as campaigns like #MeToo movements on social media platforms, that called out over sexual misconducts by powerful men that are not expressed in mainstream news media (Hansson et al., 2024). However, cancel culture can devolve into harmful public shaming that overlooks nuance and due process. Thus, it raises a fundamental question, that is whose morality is being enforced through cancel culture and with what social consequences.

This study argues that in Indonesia, cancel culture frequently functions as a tool that reinforces patriarchal control in the digital realm. Rather than operating as a neutral or egalitarian practice, cancel culture often targets women more harshly than men (Saint-Louis, 2021), especially in scandals involving perceived moral transgression such as infidelity or sexual behaviour. Such a phenomenon needs critical examination because it suggests that digital public shaming is not inherently progressive, it can just as readily reproduce old inequalities in new, virtual forms (Duche-Pérez et al., 2024). As social media empowers ordinary users to voice their outrages, it may simultaneously perpetuate and amplify offline patriarchal norms in online discourse (Duche-Pérez et al., 2024). This study therefore asks how cancel culture in Indonesia, through its gendered moral language, operates as a form of symbolic violence that reinforces patriarchal control in the digital era. This study aims to reveal the interplay between online acts of public shaming intersect with the long standing gender power structures by exploring this issue. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of cancel culture as a reflection of digital patriarchy in practice.

Gendered moral discourse is the main core of this phenomenon. A striking feature of Indonesian cancel culture is how unevenly the moral spotlight falls upon women versus men especially when scandals arise. When ones scroll through social media, the examples can be seen of the infidelity scandals that show women who was entangled in it receive intense public scrutiny, while men

transgressors often escape people's anger or are framed more sympathetically. This inequality is very telling, it suggests that the online public draws on the entrenched patriarchal norms when interpreting and reacting to scandals. Indonesian have even got the terms that encapsulate this gendered moral framing, one of them is the notorious use of the word *pelakor*, an acronym for *perebut laki orang*, or man-stealer, which the usage is to label a woman accused of seducing or stealing another woman's husband (Elanda & Pitaloka, 2022). The *pelakor* label reduces the complex marital infidelities to a simplistic cause of a conniving femalhelp mee homewrecker, and implicitly absolving men of equal responsibility. Social media has elevated *pelakor* to meme status, with countless posts, images, and even songs demonizing alleged homewrecker women as the sole culprits of the infidelity (Elanda & Pitaloka, 2022). This study is going to explore the case of an actress Arawinda that was cancelled back in 2022-2023. Although several years have passed, her name continues to circulate on social media with netizens still revisiting and debating the incident. The persistence of these discussions makes the case analytically valuable as it shows how digital publics still continue to morally police women long after a scandal has ended, and reveals the enduring nature of gendered judgment in Indonesian online space.

This phenomenon shows how private conflicts are dragged into the public sphere for moral judgment in the digital era. Virality of messages on social media is increased with the use of negative terms, causal arguments, and threats to core values (Mousavi et al., 2022), all which are prevalent in these infidelity scandal cases. In the context of cancel culture, these elements can magnify the scandals, making them even more prominent and widespread. The emotional intensity leads to more sharing, commenting, discussing, and eventually helps spread the scandal viral across platforms. Through comments, tweets, memes, and viral threads, netizens effectively act as the judge, jury, and executioner in the court of public opinion (Mueller, 2021). The virality of scandals especially involving infidelity cases that often stumbled upon on social media, plays a significant role in shaping negative representation of women in media.

As these cases spread, derogatory terms and blame narratives strengthen harmful stereotypes and intensify negative portrayals of women. Naming and shaming involve publicly identifying and criticizing individuals which can lead to widespread social condemnation and reputational harm (Dunsby & Howes, 2019; van Erp, 2021). The harsh language used frequently reflects the patriarchal and moralistic values that aim to shame women for violating the traditional norms and push them toward guilt or exclusion. Drawing from Feminist Post-Structuralist Discourse Analysis (FPDA) theory, this study examines how these naming and shaming practices reproduce patriarchal norms and enact symbolic violence against women in Indonesian cancel culture.

This study does not justify infidelity or support any person involved. Its focus is strictly on examining how Indonesian social media discourse disproportionately blame on women in cancel culture cases.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative approach grounded in a critical paradigm to examine how online naming and shaming practices function as forms of symbolic violence that maintain patriarchal norms. The analysis draws on Feminist Post-Structuralist Discourse Analysis (FPDA) which pays attention to both explicit statements and the underlying meanings embedded in texts, and also considers how different discourses overlap and interact through intertextual links (Al-Ali, 2021), thus, making it an appropriate framework for studying conversations on Twitter where gendered identities are shaped through public moral communication rather than thorough personal narratives.

This study gathered tweets using Selenium, a Python-based automation program that allows researchers to interact with websites the way a user would. Selenium can scroll, click, and navigate through dynamic webpages, which makes it suitable for collecting data from platforms like Twitter where content constantly updates (Gudavalli & JayaLakshmi, 2022). Using this method ensured that the data reflected naturally occurring public conversations, since only openly accessible posts were recorded and later anonymized. The scraping procedure used targeted keywords, Indonesian language filters, and specific time periods to capture discussions surrounding the infidelity case. The

automated process, run through Jupyter Notebook with Firefox and Geckodriver, accessed Twitter's "Latest" tab to retrieve real-time tweets from June 2022 to June 2024, covering the period from the initial controversy to two years of continued public discussion. After collection, the dataset was exported into Excel for manual sorting. The search terms were chosen based on commonly used public expressions, including "arawinda pelakor", "arawinda cancel", "arawinda amanda", and "arawinda guido".

All tweets used in this study were drawn from publicly accessible posts, and any identifying information such as usernames or profile images has been removed to maintain user anonymity. After the initial data collection of more than 2000 tweets, a preliminary screening identified roughly 150 tweets that contained indicators of power relations, including moral judgments and sexualized language. From this pool, a smaller set of tweets demonstrating the strongest expressions of these dynamics such as religious condemnation, profanity, and assertions of moral authority was selected for detailed examination using Feminist Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis (FPDA). The coding process was carried out manually to ensure sensitivity to Indonesian linguistic nuances, cultural meanings, and digital communication practices.

The tweets were analyzed using Feminist Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis following the analytical steps outlined by Danielle Macdonald.

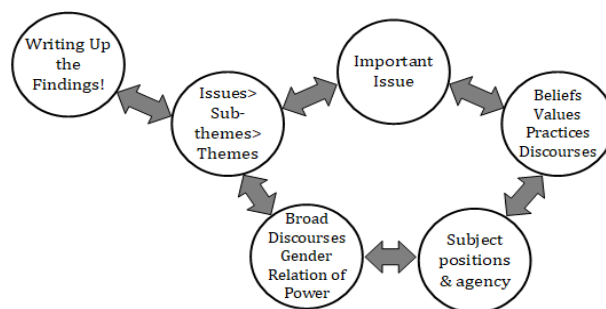


Figure 1. The cyclical process of Feminist Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis (FPDA), showing how the researcher moves from identifying key issues to uncovering cultural discourses, analysing gendered power relations, and synthesizing findings. (*Adapted from Macdonald, 2025*)

The analysis follows Macdonald's (2025) FPDA framework, which works through a repeated cycle of reading, interpreting, and refining the data. As seen from Figure 1 above, the process begins by identifying the central issue in the tweets, namely naming and shaming in Indonesian cancel culture. It then examines the beliefs and discourses that sustain this issue, including moral judgment, religious piety, and patriarchal ideas of femininity. Next, the analysis identifies how subjects are positioned within these discourses and how such positions constrain or enable women's agency. These interpretations are then connected to Indonesian cultural narratives. Finally, the recurring patterns are organized into themes and written up, with earlier steps revisited when new insights appear.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

The analysis reveals that naming and shaming is a dominant way in how netizens construct moral judgment in cancel culture. The following tweets below show how this form of judgment is articulated and circulated in online communication.

First tweet:

ga pernah sebenci ini sama pelakor tp arawinda is another level of pelakor. titisan iblis
never hated a *pelakor* this much but arawinda is another level of *pelakor*. spawn of iblis.

1. Issue (from the tweet)
The issue expressed is intense moral condemnation of a woman labeled as *pelakor* (homewrecker), and the tweeter escalates the insult by calling her *titisan iblis* (spawn of the devil), positioning her as morally monstrous. This is a clear case of naming and shaming where the woman is reduced to a morally degrading label.
2. Deconstruction of the Issue
 - a. Beliefs :
Belief that women involved in infidelity deserve moral hatred, that the other woman is solely responsible for the relationship problems (no mention of the man), belief that female sexuality or disobedience to norms is inherently dangerous, and belief that extreme judgment is justified toward women who break moral expectations.
 - b. Values :
The tweeter upholds the purity and loyalty, defending traditional heterosexual relationship norms, centering patriarchal family values that women must protect not destroy, and the tweeter also valuing their own moral superiority by indirectly saying "I am justified in my hatred".
 - c. Practices (what the tweet does):
Naming (using *pelakor* as an identity category to reduce the woman to a stereotype); Shaming (using emotional hatred *sebenci ini*, ranking levels of immorality, by that mention another level of *pelakor*); and Demonizing (Calling her *titisan iblis* that intensifies dehumanization).
 - d. Discourses:
Patriarchal discourses (women as guardians of morality; 'bad women' cause social disorder); Moral-religious discourse (associating a woman with the devil); Digital public-shaming discourse (hatred, hostility, extreme emotional expression online); and Gendered blame discourse (blaming women far more than men in infidelity).
 - e. Subject Positions:
 - i. Tweeter: positions themselves as a righteous moral judge with authority to condemn and constructs their hatred as justified and legitimate.
 - ii. Arawinda: positioned as a morally deviant woman (*pelakor*) and reduced to a non-human entity (*titisan iblis*).
 - iii. Men involved: positioned as invisible and morally irrelevant, and excused from accountability.
 - f. Agency:
The tweeter enacts agency by reinforcing social norms through language; exercises power by publicly labeling and condemning a woman; Participates in circulating gendered stereotypes (*pelakor*) and moral violence; and amplifies patriarchal moral frameworks through emotional and religious condemnation

Second Tweet:

ngeliat kasus arawinda ternyata emang semua sifat pelakor tuh sama ya, sama-sama gatau diri dan playing victim. ajg, pokoknya aku manusia no 1 yg benci sama pelakor penghancur keluarga orang.

seeing arawinda case, turns out all *pelakor* have the same traits huh, shameless and playing victim. fuck. i'm definitely the number one person who hates *pelakor* who destroy families.

1. Issue (from the tweet)
The issue expressed is generalized moral condemnation toward the *pelakor* in general. The tweeter claims they all share the same immoral traits, and positions themselves as proudly hating them. This is direct naming and shaming through stereotype, moral labeling, and hatred.
2. Deconstruction of the Issue

- a. Beliefs:
Belief that *pelakor* is real, and a fixed category of immoral women; belief that all women accused of infidelity share the same negative traits; belief that women, not men, are primary destroyers of families; belief that showing hatred toward immoral women is pretty much justified.
- b. Values:
The tweeter upholds patriarchal values of female purity and obedience, the loyalty to traditional family structures, and the feel of moral superiority (sees hatred as righteousness).
- c. Practices (what the tweet does):
Naming (using *pelakor* to categorize all accused women as morally deviant); Shaming (assigning character traits to women); Generalizing (turning one case into a universal statement); and Boasting moral hatred.
- d. Discourses:
Patriarchal gender discourse (women are blamed for infidelity; men's actions are erased); Digital hostility discourse (hatred, emotional intensity); Victim-blaming discourse (accusing all women are manipulators)
- e. Subject Positions:
 - i. Tweeter: positions themselves as enforcer of gender norms.
 - ii. Arawinda (and all *pelakor*): positioned as immoral, shameless, playign-victim, collectively positioned as threats to family stability, and reduced to a label rather than a person.
 - iii. Men involved: positioned as irrelevant and invisible. Their agency and responsibility are erased from the moral narrative.
- f. Agency:
The tweeter exercises agency through linguistic violence, and actively circulating gendered moral stereotypes. They participate in reinforcing and normalizing the *pelakor* judgment, and reproducing patriarchal power by targeting just women as the primary moral offenders.

Third tweet:

Yeah si pelakor bangke, bangga bgt keknya dia, pen buat sayembara cariin otaknya arawinda tapi keknya gabakal ketemu

Yeah that damn *pelakor*, so proud of herself, makes me want to start a contest to find her brain but i guess it'll never be found

1. Issue (from the tweet): The issue expressed is public humiliation aimed at a woman labeled as *pelakor*, and the insult by calling the woman brainless. This is a direct naming and shaming through intellectual degradation and dehumanization.
2. Deconstruction of the Issue
 - a. Beliefs :
Belief that *pelakor* is a morally inferior and contemptible category of woman; belief that an accused woman deserves ridicule and public mockery; belief in the legitimacy of attacking a woman's intelligence as a form of moral punishment.
 - b. Values :
The tweeter upholds patriarchal expectations that women must be humble and modest, and values social punishment for women who defy norm. Also, the tweeter values mockery as a justified form of public discipline.
 - c. Practices (what the tweet does):
Naming (uses *pelakor* as a fixed moral identity); Shaming (calls her *bangke*, brainless, and stupid); Character assassination (attacks her intellect, moral character, and turns her into an object of communal ridicule).
 - d. Discourses:
Patriarchal gender discourse (women must be disciplined); Humiliation discourse (ridicule and sarcasm used to enforce norm); Digital violence

discourse (Normalizes insult as entertainment); and Gendered blame discourse (men's wrongdoings are remain unmentioned).

e. Subject Positions:

- i. Tweeter: positions themselves as someone with superior moral with authority to humiliate.
- ii. Arawinda: positioned as a morally corrupt and dehumanized through associations with stupidity and disgust.
- iii. Men involved: absent from the narrative

f. Agency:

The tweeter uses language deliberately to degrade and dehumanize a woman, then reinforces patriarchal moral norms by attacking her intelligence and pride. They further online hostile against women.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study show that naming and shaming practices in Indonesian cancel culture function as a key communicative mechanism through which patriarchal norms and symbolic violence are reproduced in digital spaces. By applying FPDA, it becomes clear that labels such as *pelakor* do more than describe behavior. The label actively construct women as the only culprits, legitimize hostility towards women, and completely erase men from the narrative. Cancel culture that serves as a neutral tool of public accountability, instead, here it serves as a place form digital patriarchy by disciplining women through language and circulating derogatory identities that become socially accepted. From a Communication Science perspective, this study shows how everyday digital communication shapes public meaning and reinforces unequal power relations, and also influences how individuals are positioned within social discourse. These results highlight the need for critical awareness of gendered language in online communication and for further research on counter-discourses that challenge the normalization of moral punishment against women.

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