
Verbal Sexual Violence On X : A Gender Perspective and Digital Communication Ethics

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Abstract

The development of social media has brought significant changes in people's communication patterns, but it has also become a vulnerable space for violence, including verbal sexual violence. This study aims to analyze the forms and characteristics of verbal sexual violence that appear on social media based on a gender perspective. Through a qualitative approach with a case study method, data was collected through content observation on various social media platforms, including comments, captions, and direct messages. The results show that verbal sexual violence tends to be experienced more by women, and is often excused as a joke or free expression of opinion. The inequality of gender-based power relations is the main factor that perpetuates this practice. In addition, weak digital ethics literacy exacerbates the situation, where perpetrators do not understand or ignore ethical boundaries in communicating online. This research emphasizes the importance of strengthening gender perspectives and digital communication ethics education as preventive efforts against verbal sexual violence in the digital space, particularly through institutional policies and community awareness programs.

Keywords: *Communication Patterns, Cyber Ethics, Digital Literacy, Online Behavior, Social Media*

INTRODUCTION

Rapid ICT advancement has substantially influenced contemporary forms of human interaction. Mass media disseminates information through text, audio, and visuals, functioning not only as a channel of communication but also as a tool for social control and entertainment (Indah et.al, 2023). Social media, as a central component of the modern digital landscape, is widely employed to facilitate communication, enable self-expression, and cultivate social connections. Among Gen-Z users, X (Twitter) has emerged as a popular platform for interaction and debate. However, the main challenge in communicating on social media remains the lack of digital literacy (Syapriani et al., 2025).

Despite its positive contributions, social media has also become a breeding ground for online sexual violence. X has emerged as particularly problematic, with the 2020 Online Gender-Based Violence report showing the highest number of online sexual harassment incidents on this platform (Lismini et al., 2023). Data from SAFEnet indicate a notable

escalation in Online Gender-Based Violence, with 480 complaints submitted in the first quarter. Victims aged 18-25 constitute the largest group with 272 cases (57%), followed by minors under 18 with 123 cases (26%)(SAFEnet, 2024).

The ease of accessing unlimited communication has facilitated the proliferation of gender-based violence on social media. Online Gender-Based Violence is characterized by actions leading to sexual, psychological, or other non-physical harm, including intimidation, coercive behavior, and deprivation of autonomy (Anna et al., 2023). Technology-facilitated Online Gender-Based Violence reflects the same structural and behavioral dimensions as offline gender-based violence, perpetrated to harass individuals based on gender or sexual orientation (Arsyad, 2022). As one of the nations with the largest social media user base, Indonesia faces heightened susceptibility to Online Gender-Based Violence, with women remaining the primary targets.

Within the framework of digital communication ethics, verbal sexual violence signifies a decline in communicative values founded on respect, empathy, and moral responsibility (Sahang et al., 2023). Social media, designed to facilitate connection, becomes an arena where language is misused to objectify, intimidate, and dehumanize individuals, especially women. The complexity lies in the ambiguity between freedom of expression and verbal violence. Cultural context, generation, and social background influence perceptions of ethical communication (Yora et al., 2021). The study of verbal sexual violence on social media X holds academic relevance due to several underexplored facets. First, research on digital sexual violence predominantly focuses on physical and non-verbal aspects, while verbal forms remain underrepresented. Second, previous studies emphasize legal and psychological perspectives, leaving communication science perspectives on gender and digital ethics underexplored. Digital communication's unique characteristics anonymity, speed, and wide reach fundamentally influence verbal sexual violence dynamics.

Verbal sexual violence should be understood not merely as individual harassment but as symbolic violence embedded in communication practices that reinforce power imbalances along gender lines. The anonymity on X weakens social accountability, communication speed accelerates harmful discourse, and platform reach amplifies symbolic impact. Thus, verbal sexual violence operates as a communicative mechanism marginalizing certain groups while legitimizing dominant voices in the digital public sphere.

This study examines verbal sexual violence on X within the intersection of digital communication ethics, gender relations, and symbolic power. By adopting a communication-centered approach, this research contributes to gender-sensitive scholarship while addressing the theoretical gap in understanding verbal sexual violence as a socio-communicative practice in contemporary digital environments.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Verbal Sexual Violence

Verbal sexual violence is defined as communicative behavior, expressed through language or gestures, that carries sexual implications and results in humiliation, objectification, or discomfort for the recipient which makes the victim uncomfortable and disturbed. Communication that frequently causes discomfort for someone receiving a message from a communicator includes teasing tones, whistling, and the use of sexually charged language (Aurora et al.,2024.). According to results from (Hock et al., 2021)numerous individuals from racial or religious minority backgrounds recounted how gender-based harassment is frequently intensified by discrimination related to race or religion. Many participants noted that the same communication tactics could apply to various forms of identity-based harassment, but concrete training examples would

enhance their readiness to address such issues. In this phenomenon of verbal sexual violence, the perpetrator does this with the aim of gaining power and validation that the perpetrator has psychological control over the victim, causing the victim to lose their sense of respect (Herman et al., 2023). The impact caused trauma and suffering for the victims, and the adverse effects can affect both physical and mental health (Idris et al., 2023). These findings highlight that verbal sexual violence carries structural implications, as it normalizes harmful behavior and sustains the imbalance of power between genders in digital interactions.

Gender Perspective

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, attributes, behaviors, and identities assigned by society, distinct from biological sex. It encompasses societal norms and expectations that vary across time, place, and culture (Widayanti, 2023). A key aspect of gender is its nature as a self-defined identity that may shift across contexts and periods. While some individuals experience gender identity as fixed, others perceive it as fluid, changing over time and situations (Lindqvist et al., 2021).

Gender inequality manifested through women's oppression, restrictive gender roles, and double standards is deeply ingrained in historical frameworks and societal norms. Family socialization serves as a primary mechanism for transmitting traditional gender roles, where boys are encouraged to exhibit assertiveness and independence, while girls are expected to be nurturing and domestically oriented (Giani et al., 2022). These contradictory standards systematically disadvantage women while privileging men. For instance, women displaying assertiveness or ambition are often criticized, whereas men exhibiting identical traits are praised for leadership qualities (Adkiras et al., 2022). Social constructions have established distinct behavioral expectations based on gender, with women expected to remain within 'acceptable' boundaries defined by patriarchal standards.

Therefore, understanding gender and power relations is essential for analyzing verbal sexual violence, which fundamentally represents an expression of power through speech in public spaces, including digital environments.

Digital Communication Ethics

Digital communication ethics are based on moral principles that influence how individuals, organizations, and communities interact and convey information in digital spaces. Since ethics are so important to these behaviors, it becomes vital to ask how ethics should be communicated (Collste, 2017). This relates to the emergence of specific needs in communication that takes place in the virtual world, which is often anonymous, fast-paced, and massive. The study from (Yora et al., 2021) found that understanding and applying communication ethics is very important to keep everyone safe and comfortable when using social media platforms. Therefore, understanding the principles of digital communication ethics is the main foundation for interacting in the virtual world. According to (Fitria et al., 2022; Setyaningsih et al., 2020) research, in order for communication to be both efficient and respectable in the present era, digital technology proficiency must always be combined with the ideals of integrity, accountability, and Islamic wisdom. Ethical digital communication practices include several fundamental principles that are interrelated and form the basis for responsible interaction in cyberspace. Honesty is the main foundation, which means not spreading false information or manipulating data, reinforced by a sense of responsibility in fully realizing the impact of any digital content shared on other individuals or groups (Medvi et al., 2024). In addition, respect must be shown by appreciating diversity of perspectives while consistently avoiding hate speech, harassment, and other forms of verbal abuse.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative case study approach with narrative discourse analysis to examine verbal sexual violence on Twitter (X) from the perspectives of gender and digital communication ethics. Data were collected through netnographic observation of public posts from May to June 2025 and supported by secondary sources such as journals, books, and news articles. A purposive sampling technique was employed to identify online content relevant to the research objectives. In the initial stage, a total of 37 Twitter posts were collected as the preliminary data corpus. The inclusion criteria consisted of: (1) posts from public accounts; (2) content containing explicit or implicit forms of verbal sexual violence, such as sexualized remarks, harassment, or objectification; and (3) posts directed toward or involving women as the primary targets. Posts from private or protected accounts, duplicated content, and posts lacking clear indicators of verbal sexual violence were excluded from the dataset. Following the data collection process, data reduction was conducted to refine the analytical focus. From the initial corpus of 37 posts, seven posts were selected for in-depth analysis based on their narrative richness, clarity of verbal sexual violence indicators, and relevance to the analytical framework. These seven posts were considered information-rich cases that most clearly represented recurring patterns of gender-based verbal violence identified across the broader dataset. The phenomenon of gender based violence against women in social media can be analyzed using Muted Group theory. Silenced groups are those who come from groups subordinates with little or weak power (Griffin et al., 2019). Muted Group Theory is a theory compiled by Cheri Kramarae. This theory was born from the problem of women's groups who are rarely heard in forums. Women's opinions are considered unreasonable and trivial. Muted Group Theory comes from the thoughts of Edwin and Shirley Ardener, anthropologists who focus on social structure and hierarchy. They observe that forms of domination in society determine the hierarchical structure that occurs between groups, such as men and women, rich and poor, white and black. This condition explains how the condition of dominance in the second term becomes a form of weak entity. Muted Group Theory can basically be implemented in various contexts. Kramarae focuses on theories and explanations on communication patterns between men and women (Aisyah et al., 2023). Therefore, he formulated three basic assumptions which became the essence of Muted Group Theory.

The analysis focused solely on the content of public posts without engaging directly with account owners or intervening in online interactions. Given the sensitive nature of verbal sexual violence, the data were handled cautiously to avoid re-victimization and further dissemination of harmful content. These ethical considerations were implemented to ensure responsible research practices and to respect the rights and dignity of individuals involved in digital spaces.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Communication and human relationships are at the core of social interaction. Human relations emphasize the psychological aspects of communication, where communicators and communicants understand, feel, and act together. Habermas, a famous German philosopher and sociologist in an article written by (Didimus, 2023) states that there must be established guidelines for communication in order to foster intelligent and healthy dialogue. The findings demonstrated the prevalence of verbal sexual assault on social media, particularly on the Instagram and Twitter (X) platforms. Demeaning remarks, body objectification, and explicit sexual jokes accounted for the bulk of verbal sexual assault, according to the findings of netnographic observations of 37 postings and comments over a 11st May until 14th June. The findings show that 87% of the content samples analyzed contained elements of verbal violence with explicit or implicit sexual

characteristics. The data obtained shows consistent patterns in the use of language containing elements of verbal violence with a sexual orientation.



Figure 1. X Tweet
Source: @titit_ketjil X account

Table 1. Tweet Content, Verbal Forms of Sexual Violence & Digital Communication Ethics Violations in figure 1.

Tweet Content	Verbal Forms of Sexual Violence	Digital Communication Ethics Violations
The tweet was a reply to the @Intel_Imut account which shows a reactive communication pattern in the digital space. The language style used is abusive, full of insults, and contains elements of verbal violence and harassment.	The diction “ <i>modal congor saja</i> ” reduces women's capacity only to the physical/sexual aspect. The words “ <i>GOBLOK. JANCOK. BANGSATTTTT</i> ” is a form of verbal abuse with emotional escalation. The phrase “ <i>modal congor</i> ” refers to the objectification of women's body parts which implies that women only rely on physical appearance, not intellectual capacity.	Not maintaining language politeness: words like “ <i>goblok</i> ”, “ <i>jancok</i> ”, and “ <i>bangsat</i> ” are hate speech that contain symbolic violence. there is a Violation of the Principle of Civility (Netiquette) which is the use of crude and inappropriate language in digital public spaces.

The use of harsh diction in tweets such as “*modal congor saja*” (just talk), ‘*goblok*’ (stupid), and “*jancok*” (fuck) cannot be understood solely as expressions of individual emotion, but rather as symbolic practices that reproduce power relations in digital communication. The phrase “*modal congor*” serves to delegitimize the voice of the interlocutor by framing it as irrational and unworthy of being heard, a mechanism that is in line with Muted Group Theory, in which language is used by dominant groups to silence subordinate groups. In the context of the X platform, characterized by anonymity, speed, and minimal accountability, the normalization of harsh speech reflects a failure of digital communication ethics literacy and creates an intimidating discursive space. As a result, verbal violence not only hurts individuals but also operates as a systematic mechanism that narrows participation and marginalizes the voices of certain groups in the digital public sphere.



Source: @chocomilkshae X account
Figure 2. X Tweet

Table 2. Tweet Content, Verbal Forms of Sexual Violence & Digital Communication Ethics Violations in figure 2.

Tweet Content	Verbal Forms of Sexual Violence	Digital Communication Ethics Violations
liThe communication structure shows a confrontational pattern by using rhetorical questions as an attack strategy. The significant level of engagement (17.6K views, 363 likes) indicates that the content has public appeal, indicating the normalization of verbal violence in the digital space. Phrases such as “otak lo setolol apa si” are a form of cognitive insult that denigrates a person's intellect.	The use of words such as “tolol” and “otak lo” in aggressive forms is a communication style that reflects dominance and control, which in digital spaces is often reproduced by dominant groups in patriarchal systems. these words form a communication pattern that aims to silence the target through shaming tactics.	This tweet clearly violates the principles of ethical communication in the digital space where the use of abusive language “tolol” shows a failure to maintain civility in public dialog. the tweet is also Lack of Constructive Engagement where Communication does not aim to build constructive dialog, instead of conveying opinions with logic, this tweet leads to attacking someone's personality instead of ideas.

Within the framework of Muted Group Theory, this pattern shows how women who express dissenting opinions immediately face intellectual delegitimation not being refuted argumentatively, but having their capacity for thought attacked. This strategy creates a double silencing: victims are not only silenced through insults, but also constructed as subjects who are "unable to read the situation" so that their opinions are considered unworthy of being heard. The normalisation of attacks on women's intellectuality on Platform X reflects the failure of digital communication ethics and the reproduction of patriarchy, which positions women as a muted group with no control over the validity of their own voices.



Figure 3. X Tweet
Source: @kbyfredhy9522 X account

Table 3. Tweet Content, Verbal Forms of Sexual Violence & Digital Communication Ethics Violations in figure 3.

Tweet Content	Verbal Forms of Sexual Violence	Digital Communication Ethics Violations
This tweet was a response to a discussion about gender distribution in Padang restaurant ownership. The user refuted the claim by stating that many women also play a role in the sector. However, the response was delivered aggressively, with curses directed at the interlocutor.	The construction of language that places women as comparative objects in an economic context. Although it aims to defend the role of women, this narrative still reinforces gender distribution through unethical confrontation with men. In gender communication studies, this can be seen as counter-sexism that has not built an equal discourse, but still reproduces verbal violence on the basis of gender.	Failure to meet the standards of responsible communication in the digital space. there is also a violation of the manners of online discussion, namely instead of presenting an argumentative and rational rebuttal, users instead carry out attacks. it is also seen that mild hate speech appears, although the intention is to correct gender-biased narratives, the way of delivery actually reproduces hatred and muddies the digital discourse space.

The findings in Table 3 indicate that even discourse intended to challenge gender bias can reproduce verbal sexual violence when delivered through aggressive and confrontational language. Although the tweet aims to defend women’s roles in the economic sector, the argumentative strategy positions women in comparative and confrontational terms, reinforcing gendered binaries rather than fostering egalitarian dialogue. From a gender communication perspective, this form of counter-sexism does not dismantle dominant discourse but instead perpetuates symbolic violence by legitimizing hostility as a mode of engagement. Furthermore, the use of curses and mild hate speech reflects a failure to adhere to ethical standards of digital communication. Instead of promoting rational deliberation, the aggressive delivery blurs the boundary between advocacy and hostility, contributing to the normalization of uncivil interaction in digital public spaces. This finding demonstrates that ethical violations in online discourse are not solely defined by intent, but by communicative impact, where confrontational rhetoric reproduces exclusionary dynamics and undermines constructive gender discourse.



Figure 4. X Tweet
Source: @tithaside2side X account

Table 4. Tweet Content, Verbal Forms of Sexual Violence & Digital Communication Ethics Violations in figure 4.

Tweet Content	Verbal Forms of Sexual Violence	Digital Communication Ethics Violations
This tweet reflects the expression of negative emotions in an online conversation. use of aggressive Tone aimed at silencing the other party “ <i>mending diem</i> ”. The author expresses frustration with someone who is perceived as unwilling to help, and uses slurs such as “ <i>goblok</i> ” and “ <i>jancok</i> ” to emphasize his anger.	There is a coercive and authoritative tone to the phrase “ <i>mending diem</i> ” indicating an attempt to silence the other party, which in the context of digital discourse can lead to the marginalization of the interlocutor's voice, especially if directed at vulnerable groups such as women or minorities. this is what shapes the occurrence of communication patterns that tend to repress the interlocutor's voice. Curses like this have the potential to form a psychologically unsafe digital communication climate, especially for marginalized groups or those who often experience silencing.	Although it does not contain discriminatory speech, it has the potential to create a toxic environment for other users with the use of aggressive and vulgar language that supports the normalization of verbal violence on social media. in addition, this tweet does not show respect for other users by using degrading and dehumanizing language.

The data in Table 4 shows that the use of harsh language such as "goblok" and "jancok", accompanied by the coercive phrase "mendingan diem", is not merely a spontaneous emotional expression, but a systematic mechanism to silence marginalised groups, especially women. From the perspective of Muted Group Theory, this phenomenon represents an asymmetrical power relationship in which aggressive language is used as a tool to repress the voices of groups that do not have access to linguistic power. The normalisation of this kind of verbal violence reflects a failure of digital ethics literacy,

leading to systematic marginalisation: the digital space, which should ideally be democratic, instead becomes a field for the reproduction of power imbalances when dehumanising language is allowed to flourish without social sanctions.



Figure 5. X Tweet
Source: @caaebysmonth X account

Table 5. Tweet Content, Verbal Forms of Sexual Violence & Digital Communication Ethics Violations in figure 5.

Tweet Content	Verbal Forms of Sexual Violence	Digital Communication Ethics Violations
The tweets studied show the highly emotional expression of a user on platform X, who responded to a photo of two men in military uniforms who are members of the South Korean boy band BTS. The post uses vulgar and emotional language in the form of swear words such as “NGENTOTTTTT”, “ANJING”, and “BABI”, and includes hyperbolic crying expressions with emojis.	The swearing and extreme emotional expressions in the language used contain verbal violence in the context of gender through the use of vulgar and sexually connoted harsh words “NGENTOTTTTT” which are culturally considered as sexual swearing in Indonesian. This can be categorized as a form of objectifying admiration. The use of the word in the context of expressing joy still reproduces symbolic violence against the norms of polite and civilized communication.	This tweet violates the principle of civility in digital communication by using inappropriate language and disrespecting prevailing social norms. The user failed to demonstrate digital responsibility by posting content that could potentially harm the reputation of the individual in the photo and create an unsafe digital environment. While social media allows for self-expression, the use of hyperbolic emotions in a vulgar manner can violate netiquette (network etiquette) because it can potentially offend or distort the meaning of the original content displayed.

The data in Table 5 shows that hyperbolic emotional expressions towards K-pop idols, mediated through vulgar language such as "FUCK", "DOG" and "PIG", are not merely a form of fanatical admiration, but a reflection of the normalisation of verbal violence that has exceeded the boundaries of ethical digital communication. Although social media allows space for self-expression, the mass use of vulgar language in the context of admiring public figures reflects a failure of digital ethics literacy that allows symbolic violence to be normalised as part of fandom culture. The use of harsh words to express admiration actually reproduces patterns of communication that objectify and dehumanise the subjects being admired, reducing them to objects of desire that can be verbally abused without consequence.

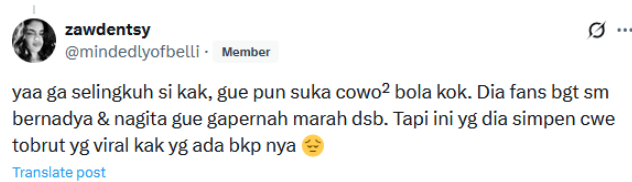


Figure 6. X Tweet
Source: @mindedlyofbelli X account

Table 6. Tweet Content, Verbal Forms of Sexual Violence & Digital Communication Ethics Violations in figure 6.

Tweet Content	Verbal Forms of Sexual Violence	Digital Communication Ethics Violations
This user shared her discomfort with her partner who saved content from other women, referred to as “ <i>cewek tobrut yg viral kak yang ada bkp-nya.</i> ” The term “ <i>tobrut</i> ” is a popular digital slang that refers to “ <i>cewek brutal</i> ” or women who are considered to appear sensual/sexually daring. This expression implies that the woman appears with explicit sexual appeal, and “ <i>bkp-nya</i> ” refers to sexually charged content (usually an abbreviation of “ <i>bokep</i> ”).	The term “ <i>cewe tobrut</i> ” indirectly sexualizes other women, especially with the association of “ <i>bkp</i> ” (pornographic) content. This shows how women are positioned as sexual objects in digital culture, without regard to their agency or right to privacy. By calling women who go viral for “pornographic” content a threat to personal relationships, this tweet reinforces the stereotype that women who show or are associated with open sexuality are worthy of suspicion and objectification.	Calling a viral woman with sexual content without disguising her identity or providing a neutral context has the potential to defame and violate the principle of non-maleficence in digital communication. By comparing the reactions to female public figures (Bernadya, Nagita) that were received, but judging women who appear “brave”, this tweet shows the gender double standard that often appears in digital relationships where women’s sexual behavior is controlled more strictly than men.

The data in Table 6 reveals how the viral term “cewek tobrut” has become a systematic mechanism for reducing women’s identities to sexual objects as a normalised practice in the digital space. The use of this term, which explicitly associates women with sexual attractiveness alone, demonstrates how dominant patriarchal language is used to silence women’s agency by positioning them as objects without considering their privacy or the neutral context they provide. The normalisation of the term “cewek tobrut” in digital slang is not merely a linguistic phenomenon, but an indicator of the failure of ethical and gender literacy, which allows the objectification of women to become an accepted cultural practice. Therefore, critical educational intervention is needed on how language shapes social reality and perpetuates gender-based marginalisation in the digital age.

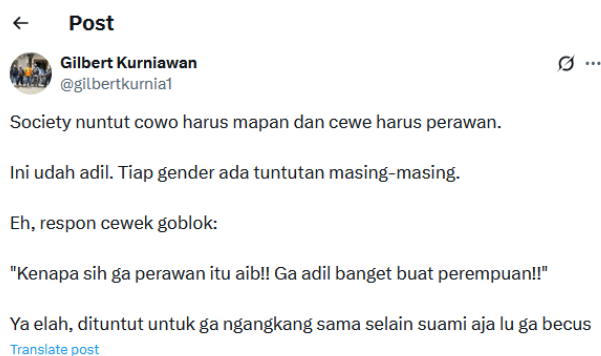


Figure 7. X Tweet
Source: @gilbertkurnia1 X account

Table 7. Tweet Content, Verbal Forms of Sexual Violence & Digital Communication Ethics Violations in figure 7.

Tweet Content	Verbal Forms of Sexual Violence	Digital Communication Ethics Violations
<p>This tweet voices an opinion about the social construction of gender demands: men must be established, and women must maintain their virginity. The user stated that this is a form of “justice” because each gender has its own burden. However, the response to women's criticism is packaged in the form of insults and harsh statements such as “<i>cewek goblok</i>” and “<i>dituntut untuk gak nganggang sama selain suami aja lu ga becus</i>”.</p> <p>This expression is not only offensive, but also reflects gender bias, the dominance of masculinity, and the inequality of power relations that are verbally legitimized in the digital space.</p>	<p>In this tweet, women are burdened with the obligation to maintain their virginity as a symbol of morality, while similar standards are not applied to men. This phrase reinforces patriarchal dominance and makes women's bodies a field of social control. The phrase “<i>dituntut untuk gak nganggang sama selain suami aja lu ga becus</i>” explicitly uses rude and sexual language to insult women's moral integrity. This is a form of sexual shaming that degrades women's self-esteem by linking their self-worth to sexual activity.</p>	<p>This statement reproduces a sexist narrative that not only demeans women but also normalizes discriminatory views on gender in the digital space, which should be an equal space. Users also Disrespect Critical Perspectives from WomenBy mocking critical responses to double standards “<i>respon cewek goblok</i>”, users demonstrate a rejection of women’s emancipatory discourse. This reflects resistance to gender equity in digital communication practices.</p>

Tweets stating "cewek goblok", " dituntut untuk gak nganggang sama selain suami aja lu ga becus " are not merely criticisms of rigid gender norms, but manifestations of the patriarchal bargain , where criticism of men's burdens is met with verbal abuse towards women as compensation for frustration. This phenomenon reflects a paradoxical double standard: while the tweet criticises the patriarchal burden on men, it actually reinforces the patriarchal structure itself by positioning women as inferior and unentitled to speak a contradiction that demonstrates a failure to understand that gender liberation must be mutual, not a zero-sum game. The use of the phrase "can't even talk to anyone other than her husband" reflects a patriarchal ideology of social control that limits women's interactions with the outside world and reduces their integrity solely to their relationship with their husband, reflecting sexual shaming that degrades women's self-worth.

Based on the results of data collection during the period 11st May – 14th June 2025, the researcher identified 37 tweets containing verbal sexual violence on social media X (formerly Twitter). This finding indicates that verbal sexual violence is an ongoing phenomenon in the digital space and often goes unaddressed, both by the platform and by other users. Verbal sexual violence found in the data consists of various forms, including explicit comments that degrade women's bodies, coercive and unwanted sexual invitations, the use of vulgar terms that are personally addressed, and harassment based on gender stereotypes. These forms show that sexual violence does not only occur in physical spaces, but also manifests in the form of harassing speech in virtual spaces.

From a gender perspective, the tweets analyzed reflect the unequal power relations between perpetrators and victims (Medvi et.al., 2024) . The majority of victims in the data are women, which shows that women in the digital public sphere are still considered as objects that can be commented on freely and sexually. In this context, perpetrators of verbal sexual violence not only express symbolic power over women, but also reinforce patriarchal culture that legitimizes harassment as something normal or even funny. Some perpetrators even use humor or joke narratives to justify their sexual speech, which is essentially a form of symbolic violence that wraps domination in language that is considered 'light'. The dominance of male voices and the lack of protection for women

are strong indicators that women are still positioned as a “muted group” in the digital space (Wanjiru, 2021).

This concept is in line with the Muted Group Theory proposed by Cheris Kramarae. This theory states that women (and other subordinate groups) do not have full control over the dominant language and communication system in society (Riskiyah et al., 2022). Language and communication structures are shaped by the dominant group (in this case men), which ultimately puts women in a position of silence or silenced both symbolically and structurally (Widayanti, 2023). The use of abusive and objectifying language has been naturalized as a 'normal' form of communication in the digital space. This naturalization process is in line with Kramarae's concept of how dominant groups use language to maintain their privileged positions. In the context of social media, this can be seen in how women who voice their opinions or express themselves are often subjected to verbal sexual harassment. Even when they fight back or defend themselves, their responses are often ignored, harassed back, or stigmatized as “excessive” or “having no sense of humor”.

In terms of digital communication ethics, this phenomenon shows a violation of the basic principles of ethical communication in cyberspace. Ideally, digital communication should uphold the values of civility, mutual respect, and not harming other parties (Dwiputra et al., 2022). However, in practice, the openness of social media creates a borderless space that allows hate speech, verbal violence, and sexual harassment to flourish. The anonymity offered by social media platforms exacerbates this condition, as it allows perpetrators to feel unaccountable for the consequences of their words (Sahang et al., 2023). In many cases, this verbal sexual violence is not even reported because it is considered difficult to prove or because victims feel they will be ignored. Furthermore, this ethical violation also shows how digital space becomes an arena where power imbalances between men and women are reproduced through language (Adkiras et al., 2022). In this case, Muted Group Theory provides a framework for understanding that the communication system that applies on social media tends to accommodate the perspectives of the dominant group (men) and excludes or silences women's expressions. When women experience verbal sexual violence online, their responses or objections are often considered excessive, unimportant, or even ridiculed again, so that the space for safe and equal speech is increasingly narrowed.

Furthermore, women who experience verbal sexual violence tend to be reluctant to report or respond to such acts due to fears of retaliation or further silencing. In this context, muted groups are not only understood as groups that are not given space to speak, but also as groups that are systematically prevented from using their voices due to threats, further harassment, and stigmatization. Thus, the supposedly democratic digital space reproduces gender injustice through invisible symbolic and cultural mechanisms.

CONCLUSION

This study confirms that verbal sexual violence on social media X cannot be understood solely as deviant individual behavior, but must be seen as a manifestation of a systematic and hierarchical communication structure. Muted Group Theory provides a powerful theoretical lens to understand how dominant groups use language as an instrument to maintain privilege and silence vulnerable groups. This study also shows that the fight against verbal sexual violence in digital spaces is part of a broader struggle for gender equality and social justice. Digital communication ethics should not only be seen as normative rules, but as a form of collective responsibility in creating a healthy, civilized, and inclusive digital space. Therefore, there needs to be digital literacy education based on gender awareness and empathy, as well as enforcement of platform policies that are

able to identify and take firm action against sexist speech. Ethical digital communication requires not only technical skills in using media, but also social sensitivity to the impact of every statement made to individuals or vulnerable groups in cyberspace.

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