

Sara Mills' Critical Discourse: Women Stereotypes in Indonesian Netizen Comments on Gita Savitri's Video

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia has a patriarchal culture. As a result, Gita Savitri's childfree statement shocked Indonesian society, exposing the country's long-standing patriarchal position. In the video, Gita says that her choice is a form of resistance to patriarchal culture and that it is critical to assist women in this respect. The study's objectives are to examine the subject-object position in Gita Savitri's video and the use of sexist language in netizen comments. According to the findings, both supporters and opponents of Gita Savitri's decision to stay childfree hold opposing views. Gita is positioned as a subject who argues for her decision not to have children as a kind of opposition to patriarchal rules, while netizens who comment become objects that reflect societal beliefs. Furthermore, this study found that Indonesian netizens still regard the decision not to have children as taboo, contrary to the patriarchal culture that emphasizes women as mothers. The comments frequently reflect society's pressure on women to conform to traditional roles, portraying those who choose not to have children as selfish or inadequate.

Keywords: Childfree, Feminism, Gender, Gita Savitri, Patriarchy.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The era of globalization has greatly changed the way people communicate, interact, and access information (Setiawan, 2017). Communication technology and internet infrastructure have removed physical and geographical boundaries, allowing people around the world to connect with each other and creating a new environment in which information can spread quickly across social and cultural classes. Based on that, social media is considered to have an important role in conveying messages and influencing public opinion (Siagian, 2015). Social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook have changed the way individuals share views, access news, and interact with others. In addition, social media also allows individuals to be both producers and consumers of content, opening up opportunities for greater discussion and interaction. Besides that, social media also creates forums for interaction and various opinions and points of view for its users (Khatimah, 2018). One way to express your opinion is through comments on social media platforms, where users can give feedback on the content they access. However, interactions on social media can also encourage conflict, polarization, and even the spread of extreme views (Nur Erma et al., 2022).

Public figures and social media content creators have a huge influence on public opinion. This phenomenon can be seen in internet content, including videos uploaded by celebrities and content creators such as Gita Savitri. One of the videos, "Childfree: Serba Salah di Mata Warganet," became a popular topic of discussion among Indonesian people. Gita talked about childfree, a movement that

challenges patriarchal culture in Indonesia by fighting for women's independence and encouraging society to respect women's decisions. As a result, the views and opinions expressed in the videos can influence perceptions and open discussions that arise in the comments of users, most of whom are Indonesian women.

Gita Savitri, better known as Gitasav, is a YouTube video content creator, blog writer, social media influencer, and writer who inspires many women through her work. Gita Savitri has 1.29 million subscribers or followers on YouTube, and her video about childfree, which is 30 minutes, 34 seconds long, received a total of 214,186 thousand views and 2,478 thousand comments. Gita Savitri, a feminist activist, uses her platform to fight patriarchal traditions on issues like gender roles, free thought, and life choices.

The childfree phenomenon itself has developed and become a matter of debate for many people, especially women in Indonesia (Dahnia et al., 2023). Childfree refers to married couples who have agreed not to have children in their married lives (Wijayanti Siswanto et al., 2022). Social and cultural changes have led to changes in views about the role of women in society. While tradition may associate women's happiness with motherhood and childrearing, meanwhile, women who choose not to have children often face negative perceptions and stereotypes in existing cultures (Fatimah, 2014). While the community's response to Gita Savitri's thinking is also a concern, this was researched by Leliana et al (2023) who found two results from a socio-cultural and religious perspective. The findings explain that society does not consider childfree as a taboo but rather a choice for couples. Others, Salamah (2023) examines the polemics of childfree discourse in debates on social media by identifying how the placement of women as subjects and the position of readers in receiving childfree discourse in the public sphere. The results see that the childfree discourse for researchers is a part of feminism ideology that must also be respected.

In the video, Gita explains how patriarchal culture connects women's ultimate life goals with marriage and motherhood. From a feminist standpoint, her decision to be childfree is a kind of resistance to patriarchal expectations. The video generated a variety of public responses, both beneficial and negative, to the child-free option. Therefore, this research aims to explain the subject-object position and describe stereotypes of women who choose or reject childfree using Sara Mills' critical discourse theory in Indonesian netizens' comments on Gita Savitri's video entitled "Childfree: Serba Salah di Mata Warganet" via the YouTube account Gita Savitri Devi, which was uploaded on February 15, 2023. This research will identify linguistic patterns, meaning structures, and ideological aspects in these comments. Furthermore, YouTube attracts a wide range of users from various groups. So, collecting data from YouTube accounts is the right step to find out the response of the Indonesian people.

Furthermore, the purpose of this research is to gain a deeper understanding of people's cognitive patterns and cultural norms, particularly in terms of gender roles and expectations. The practical implications of this study can help overcome the barriers experienced by Indonesian women who choose or refuse to have children, as well as provide insights for future research and policy recommendations to improve women's autonomy and equality.

2. METHOD

This research uses qualitative methods using Sara Mills discourse analysis techniques. Primary data was collected by watching Gita Savitri's video entitled "Childfree: Serba Salah di Mata Warganet" and sorting netizen comments in the video to select parts that demonstrate stereotypes about women who choose or reject childfree. The process of watching the video is done by legally downloading the Gita Savitri video from the official YouTube site. This research uses a qualitative

descriptive approach by prioritizing data construction through words that contain thousands of meanings.

This research data was collected from netizen comments on Gita Savitri's video regarding her decisions and ideas on childfree. Comment data was chosen based on its direct relevance to the video content and their expression of opinion regarding Gita's point of view. Comments that directly address Gita's perceptions and offer arguments or insights on the women's concerns she discusses are also included. Some of the criteria applied to retrieve appropriate data are: (1) comments that directly state opinions about childfree; (2) comments that contain explicit gender-related terminology or stereotypes; and (3) comments that are written in Indonesian to ensure linguistic consistency. In addition, there are exclusion criteria that are not included, such as (1) comments that are off-topic or not related to the theme of the video, (2) comments that are only emotional and have no meaningful substance related to the video, and (3) comments that are duplicate or spam.

Gita is positioned as the subject, while netizens' comments are the object. The researchers used the reading, listening, and note-taking (BSC) technique to collect data. The reading technique is the primary method for collecting data through reading. The listening technique is a method of collecting data by hearing how language is used. The annotation technique is a data collection technique that involves recording or quoting netizen comments on the Gita Savitri video. The researchers analyze the data by collecting and categorizing the comments that are related to the topic. There are two types of comments categorized by the researcher: (1) comments that support Gita's arguments, and (2) comments that are against Gita's arguments. This systematic technique ensures a thorough comprehension of the data and helps to answer the research questions. The steps are as follows:

1. Reading netizen comments on Gita Savitri's video entitled "Childfree: Serba Salah di Mata Warganet".
2. Sorting out netizen comments that lead to stereotypes of women who choose or reject childfree.
3. Capture screenshot evidence (screenshots) of netizen comments.
4. Grouping the types of stereotypes of women who choose or reject childfree.
5. Identify these types of comments in bold and underlined to make it easier for researchers.

In the video, Gita Savitri discusses her decision to avoid having children in the face of Indonesia's obstinately patriarchal culture, which holds that a good marriage requires having children. This study examines how women are portrayed in netizen comments as a kind of discourse that is produced on modern social media. This study used Sara Mills' critical discourse analysis, which focuses on speech about women on social media, to identify subject-object positions and sexist terminology in comments (Ulfa et al, 2024). The study acknowledges certain flaws, primarily in the manner in which it chose comments that perpetuated misconceptions about women who choose or refuse having a child. Furthermore, the unique context of Indonesian netizens' comments on Gita Savitri's video may limit the study's generalizability. To overcome these limits, future studies may use a broader sample of comments and a range of data-analytic methods to validate the results.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Discourse theory explains an event that occurs, such as the formation of a sentence or statement. A sentence can be expressed not only because people form it with certain subjective motives or interests, but rather because the sentence can only be formed and makes sense according to some grammatical rules unforeseen by the writer's wishes. In other words, the parties involved cannot form and manipulate the sentence according to their wishes. Analysis Discourse employs sentence

structure similarities, such as subject, predicate, object, verb, noun, and complement, to clearly describe sentence structures. The scientific use of language in question is the use of language in everyday communication. Discourse analysis, by Sara Mills (1994), is a response to traditional forms of formal linguistics. Traditional linguistic research focuses on selecting sentence structures rather than analyzing the language used, but rather on analyzing discursive problems related to sentence structure and grammar.

3.1 Subject-Object Position

Subject position refers to the person or group writing the text or narrative; both object positions refer to the person or group who is the subject of the writing or who is the object in the text. Critical discourse analysis, according to Mills (2007), includes subject-object positions (Mills, 2008). The analysis of stereotypes of women who choose or refuse to have children in netizen comments on the Gita Savitri video using Sara Mills' critical discourse analysis method is as follows:

1. Account 1 (@nrk296)

Table 1. Position of Subject (Gita Savitri) - Object (@nrk296)

Subject Position	Object Position
The subject is Gita Savitri, the video maker about childfree on her YouTube account.	<p>The object in the video uploaded by Gita Savitri is a netizen with the account @nrk296 who commented on the childfree decision taken by Gita Savitri and her husband.</p> 

In the video uploaded by Gita Savitri, Gita's husband explains that, *"If we wish happiness to other people, or in the sense of a child, and one day the child dies, the sadness is very lasting, so be happy for yourself."* Meanwhile, Gita Savitri added a statement: *"I feel like living with kids is actually going to be more contradictory. That is how it is with the core values that I want and what I have; that's how people should say that you're happy, but instead you find happiness there. This is contradictory to your fairness, and I can understand why some people don't get it."*

A video depicts the stereotype of patriarchal culture that if a husband and wife have not had children during their marriage, it means their marriage or life is less than perfect in the sense of being unhappy (Hapsari & Septiani, 2015). Meanwhile, as a subject, Gita said the opposite: that having children did not necessarily mean she would feel happy because it would conflict with her basic principles of life.

The position of the object in the video uploaded by Gita Savitri is that of the netizen who watched and commented on the video, see Table 1. From the account @nrk296:

"19:28 is a really good point. Most people hope that happiness is given to them by other people. Even though happiness like that is fragile, when that person leaves, it's like you lose everything. I don't know if I will get married and have children or not. What is certain is that I don't want my husband and children to be my only source of happiness. I have to be happy, even though all I have is myself. Because that is the foundation of happiness that is not fragile."

Gita Savitri's video shows today's patriarchal culture that having children is the key to happiness, while through her video, Gita explains that the source of happiness does not only come from having children. The object position supports the subject's explanation, namely, Gita, that children and husbands are not the only happiness in a marriage.


The comment "*Most people hope that happiness is given to them by other people*" contains several phrases that subtly reinforce traditional gender norms, particularly regarding women's roles and sources of happiness. The use of words like "hope" and "is given" indicates a passive stance, suggesting that happiness is something received rather than actively pursued or created. This passivity implies that individuals, particularly women, should depend on others for their emotional fulfilment, aligning with traditional gender roles that portray women as recipients of happiness rather than its agents. The phrase "by other people" emphasizes this external dependence, reinforcing the idea that happiness is contingent upon relationships, often with men, rather than personal achievement or self-sufficiency.

Further, the comment includes the statement, "*Even though happiness like that is fragile, when that person leaves, it's like you lose everything*," which implies that relying on others for happiness makes one vulnerable. This reflects the patriarchal notion that women, who are often expected to derive their fulfilment from relationships and family roles, are emotionally dependent on their partners and children. Such views perpetuate the stereotype that women's happiness is unstable if not tied to these traditional roles.

In addition, account @nrlk296 asserts, "*I don't want my husband and children to be my only source of happiness*" and "*I have to be happy, even though all I have is myself*". These statements challenge traditional gender norms by rejecting the notion that a woman's primary source of happiness must come from her relationships. Instead, the speaker advocates for self-reliance and personal fulfilment, emphasizing that true happiness can and should be derived from within rather than solely from external sources. This critique aligns with Sara Mills' feminist stylistics approach by highlighting how language constructs and perpetuates gender norms and power relations while advocating for a redefinition of women's roles to include independence and self-sufficiency.

2. Account 2 (@Jaska4638)

Table 2. Position of Subject (Gita Savitri) - Object (@jaska4638)

Subject Position	Object Position
<p>The subject is Gita Savitri, the video maker about childfree on her YouTube account.</p>	<p>The object in the video uploaded by Gita Savitri is a netizen with the account @jaska4638 who commented on the childfree decision, which seemed to affect others who undertake pregnancy programmers.</p> 

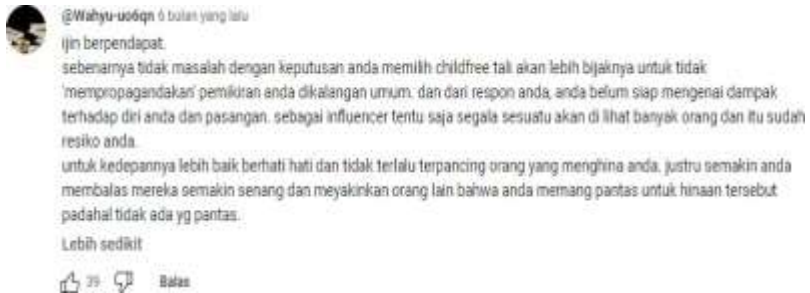
The subject's position, namely Gita Savitri, see Table 2, in her video explains her decision to choose childfree, which has been widely opposed and has become a public controversy in the past few days. Then, @jaska4638, as a netizen, commented that Gita's decision to choose childfree was influenced by factors such as a favorable environment, education, an established economy, and a supportive husband (Rizka et al., 2021). However, it should be noted that Indonesian culture is still rooted in a strong patriarchal tradition where having children is considered crucial for a family. Childfree may be everyone's choice, but if someone lives in a patriarchal environment, being childfree is not easy to do.

The comment about Gita Savitri's decision to be childfree highlights several words and phrases that reveal underlying sexism and reflect traditional gender norms. Specifically, the phrase "*having children is considered crucial for a family*" reflects a patriarchal view that places significant value on women's roles as mothers. This expectation reinforces the traditional belief that women's primary purpose is to bear and raise children, which is a central tenet of a patriarchal society. The comment also notes that Gita's decision to be childfree is influenced by "*a favorable environment, education, an established economy, and a supportive husband,*" which suggests that such decisions are privileged and accessible mainly to those in advantageous positions. This language implies that the choice to be childfree is easier for those with financial stability and supportive partners, reinforcing the notion that women's reproductive choices are often constrained by their socio-economic status and the support they receive from their families.

According to Sara Mills's feminist stylistic perspective, the use of these phrases highlights how traditional gender roles and societal expectations shape perceptions of women's decisions and autonomy. The discourse underscores the tension between individual choices and entrenched cultural norms, revealing how deeply patriarchal values influence and restrict women's reproductive freedoms and personal decisions.

3. Account 3 (@Wahyu-uo6qn)

Table 3. Position of Subject (Gita Savitri) - Object (@Wahyu-uo6qn)

Subject Position	Object Position
The subject is Gita Savitri, the video maker about childfree on her YouTube account.	<p>A netizen with the account @Wahyu-uo6qn commented on the childfree decision in the video uploaded by Gita Savitri, stating that it should be kept to oneself and not shared widely.</p> 

The position of the object, namely @Wahyu-uo6qn, commented that it doesn't matter what decision the subject, Gita Savitri, chooses to be childfree, but it would be better to keep it to herself. Perhaps, according to netizens with the account @Wahyu-uo6qn, Gita's video and her reasons for choosing childfree are like campaigning for childfree in Indonesian society, which still has a strong patriarchal culture. However, the object commented further that the subject was also not ready regarding the impact of being childless on himself and his partner.

The comment by @Wahyu-u06qn reflects several underlying sexist attitudes and traditional gender norms, particularly through phrases that reveal discomfort with Gita Savitri's public decision to be childfree. The phrase "it would be better to keep it to herself" suggests that Gita's choice to be childfree should be privately held rather than publicly shared, reflecting a belief that women's reproductive choices should conform to societal expectations and not challenge traditional norms. This sentiment aligns with a patriarchal view that prescribes silence and compliance regarding non-traditional roles, reinforcing the idea that women's decisions about their lives and bodies should not be openly discussed or debated.

Furthermore, the comment criticizes Gita for "*campaigning for childfree*" in a society with strong patriarchal values, implying that her decision to be childfree is seen as a form of dissent or activism against these entrenched norms. This perspective reflects the discomfort with challenging the status quo, where traditional gender roles that emphasize motherhood are highly valued. The additional critique that Gita is "not ready regarding the impact of being childfree" suggests a lack of understanding or empathy for her personal choice, framing it as an unprepared or ill-considered decision. From Sara Mills's feminist stylistics approach, this language highlights how discourse surrounding women's reproductive choices often involves pressure to conform to patriarchal expectations and a tendency to dismiss or undermine non-traditional decisions. The commentary underscores the tension between individual autonomy and societal norms, revealing how traditional gender roles continue to influence and restrict women's choices and their public expression.

3.2 Representation of Sexism

The subject-object analysis carried out above illustrates the representation of sexism in the context of the childfree decision. In Table 1.1, the object comments explain that the patriarchal culture in Indonesia is still very strong and has a significant impact. The perception of patriarchy within societies adhering to a social system often places men in a crucial role in elevating the status of women. According to this patriarchal value, women are destined to accompany men in preserving existence, leadership, recognition, authority, fulfilling their duties, and expressing affection, all with the aim of creating a more harmonious and balanced social order (Spradley, 2007). In Indonesia, the culture of patriarchy also emphasizes that having children is important and is a measure of happiness in the family.

When women are childless, society often questions their roles, reinforcing the stereotype that women are not considered good wives until they have succeeded in giving birth. This perspective is deeply rooted in the notion that women's primary value lies in their ability to reproduce, effectively linking them to roles akin to "child reproduction factories." Sara Mills' discourse theory categorizes this situation as indirect sexism, as it involves societal norms and perceptions that indirectly discriminate against women. In patriarchal cultures like Indonesia, the emphasis on women's roles in bearing children and nurturing a family creates a normative expectation that a woman's worth or success as a wife is contingent upon her ability to have children. This connection not only diminishes women's worth for their reproductive capabilities but also perpetuates gender inequality, especially within patriarchal cultures. Feminist theory provides a critical lens to analyze these dynamics, particularly through its exploration of how gender roles are socially constructed and maintained. According to feminist theorists, such as Judith Butler (1998) and Simone de Beauvoir (2011), traditional gender norms and expectations are instrumental in perpetuating power imbalances and limiting women's autonomy.

Indirect sexism operates through societal structures, norms, and cultural beliefs rather than explicit, overt discrimination. In this context, the societal pressure on women to conform to

traditional gender roles of motherhood and domesticity indirectly marginalizes those who choose a different path, such as being childless. Women who choose to be childfree are often viewed negatively within society; they're seen as selfish, deviant, and lacking in femininity (Doyle, 2013). The implicit expectation that women should prioritize childbearing and domestic responsibilities perpetuates gender inequality by limiting their choices and defining their value primarily based on their reproductive capabilities. Gita Savitri's video highlighting her decision to be childfree sparked discussions questioning societal norms and women's rights to make choices about their own lives.

The comments scrutinizing Gita Savitri's childfree choice reflect a reinforcement of these patriarchal norms, as they imply that a woman's worth and role are intrinsically tied to her ability to bear children. This scrutiny aligns with the feminist critique of how societal structures often restrict women's roles and freedoms based on traditional expectations. From a feminist perspective, these comments illustrate a reluctance to move beyond entrenched patriarchal views. They emphasize the continued societal pressure on women to conform to traditional roles, reinforcing the idea that a woman's primary function is to be a mother. This resistance to accepting alternative choices, such as being childfree, underscores the persistence of gender norms that feminist theory seeks to challenge. However, there are also indications of progress toward feminist ideals. The very presence of discussions about childfree choices and the visibility of individuals like Gita Savitri who publicly challenge traditional norms suggest a shift in the conversation around gender roles. The fact that such discussions are happening, despite the backlash, signifies an evolving dialogue about women's autonomy and reproductive choices. This progress reflects the feminist push towards recognizing women's rights to make personal decisions free from societal pressure and judgment.

In Indonesia, a strong patriarchal culture significantly influences societal attitudes towards gender roles and reproductive choices, as seen in the scrutiny faced by Gita Savitri for her childfree decision. Traditional gender norms in Indonesia place a high value on women's roles as mothers, viewing childbirth as a fundamental aspect of family life and personal fulfillment. Deviating from these expectations, such as choosing a childfree lifestyle, often results in considerable societal backlash, reflecting a deep-seated resistance to non-traditional roles for women. This scrutiny and judgment serve to reinforce indirect sexism by effectively policing women's autonomy and choices. Women who deviate from traditional roles face public criticism and are frequently accused of undermining societal norms. For instance, the comments criticizing Gita's choice suggest that her decision to be childfree is viewed as an attempt to challenge or impose an alternative perspective on traditional norms, which is met with resistance. This resistance is indicative of a broader societal trend where deviation from established gender roles is not just discouraged but actively condemned. Despite this resistance, there are signs of shifting attitudes in some segments of Indonesian society. Increasing access to education and exposure to global feminist movements are fostering more nuanced discussions about gender roles and women's rights. Social media platforms and influencers, like Gita Savitri, play a role in bringing these discussions into the public eye, challenging traditional views, and promoting awareness of feminist issues. However, these changes are often met with backlash from conservative elements within society that strive to maintain traditional values and gender norms. The persistence of traditional views is evident in the continued emphasis on women's roles as mothers and the societal pressure to conform to these roles. This is reflected in the strong reaction to childfree choices, which are perceived as undermining traditional family structures and values. The lack of public awareness and effort toward feminist issues in some areas further highlights the challenges faced in advancing gender equality in a deeply patriarchal society. Overall, while there are emerging signs of changing attitudes, especially among younger and more progressive segments of the population, traditional views remain deeply entrenched. The ongoing tension between

progressive and conservative perspectives underscores the broader societal struggle to reconcile modern feminist ideals with deeply rooted cultural norms.

4. CONCLUSION

This current study, which was carried out within the concept of critical discourse analysis, gave information regarding the structure of the text. According to the findings, it appears that the writer of the opinion piece published on thejakartapost.com media contributed to the formation of a favorable public attitude toward the news. This written text has macrostructure, superstructure, and microstructure elements in accordance with the Van Dijk paradigm. The journalist chose a subject that was relevant to the material being delivered, including religious doctrines, in order to persuade the reader. All of this was done in an effort to win over the reader and get their full backing. In order to support the argument made in the main body of the article, the journalist might illustrate the worldwide shift that might occur or a theory regarding the global shift that will take place if religions are included in the global effort. Future research could expand this study by conducting a comparative analysis of R20 forum coverage across multiple Indonesian news outlets, both in English and Bahasa Indonesia, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how the forum is constructed in the national media landscape.

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