

WOMEN'S STEREOTYPES IN LUDRUK: SEXIST HUMOR AND GENDER DYNAMICS IN EAST JAVA

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini membahas humor seksis dalam Ludruk, teater komedi tradisional di Jawa Timur, dan menjelaskan dinamika gender yang tercermin melalui humor seksis tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dan memanfaatkan studi kepustakaan dengan cara menyimak rekaman video pertunjukan Ludruk. Rekaman video yang dipilih kemudian ditranskripsikan. Data dianalisis melalui analisis isi dan analisis wacana kritis dengan menggunakan kerangka Sara Mills untuk menggambarkan bagaimana humor seksis mencerminkan dinamika gender di Jawa Timur. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa dinamika gender dalam Ludruk terlihat melalui penggunaan humor seksis dalam interaksi antarpemain. Humor seksis dalam Ludruk juga menonjolkan nilai-nilai patriarki dan meminggirkan perempuan sebagai individu yang pasif. Dari hasil penelitian dapat disimpulkan bahwa humor dalam Ludruk tidak hanya menjadi sarana hiburan, tetapi juga sebagai mekanisme budaya yang mengekalkan stereotip gender dan melegitimasi relasi kuasa yang tidak setara dalam masyarakat Jawa Timur.

Kata kunci: dinamika gender, humor seksis, ludruk, stereotip perempuan, patriarki.

ABSTRACT

This study examines sexist humor in Ludruk, a traditional theatrical comedy performance from East Java, and explores how such humor reflects and reinforces local gender dynamics. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, the research is based on library analysis of selected Ludruk video recordings, which were transcribed and analyzed using content analysis and critical discourse analysis, guided by Sara Mills' feminist discourse framework. The findings reveal that sexist humor—often emerging through actor interactions—serves as a discursive site where patriarchal values are reproduced, positioning women as passive and subordinate figures. Far from being merely a source of entertainment, Ludruk humor functions as a cultural mechanism that sustains gender stereotypes and legitimizes unequal power relations within East Javanese society.

Keywords: gender dynamics, humor, ludruk, women stereotype, patriarchy.

A. INTRODUCTION

Humor plays an essential role in human life serving as a stimulus that evokes joy and relief from stress (Martin et al., 2003). It acts as a coping mechanism in freeing individuals from anxiety and sadness, while also helping them differentiate between positive and negative behaviors. As a vital part of the communication process, humor minimizes frustration for both speakers and listeners, enabling the spontaneous expression of thoughts and feelings, whether verbally or non-verbally. However, humor is deeply rooted in cultural context, as it relies on shared language and societal norms to be fully understood and appreciated (Davies, 1990). Language as a cultural product, facilitates communication and reflects the identity of a society. Thus, understanding humor requires an understanding of the culture from which it originates. The cultural embeddedness of humor at this point is particularly evident in traditional art forms like Ludruk, as traditional theatrical comedy performance from East Java, Indonesia.

Ludruk is a cultural phenomenon that reflects the values, norms, and social dynamics of East Javanese society. It is often performed during special events such as weddings or regional anniversaries where actors use humor to entertain and engage the audience. The humor in Ludruk is not merely for entertainment, it also serves as a medium for social critique to address real-life phenomena and encourage the audience to reflect on implicit messages (Kuipers, 2008). Ludruk actors build connections with the audience, using satire to convey societal values and critiques through humorous interactions (Apte, 1985).

However, the humor in Ludruk frequently serves as a vehicle for reproducing traditional gender stereotypes, thereby legitimizing and perpetuating the patriarchal ideologies deeply rooted in East Javanese culture. For instance, women are frequently portrayed as submissive and domestic, while men are depicted as dominant and authoritative. The portrayals are often exaggerated for comedic effect that perpetuates humor aligning with societal expectations. Improvisational humor among the actors can further amplify these stereotypes, as spontaneous jokes about physical appearance, power dynamics, and gender roles are common. Such humor relies on linguistic features like tone and language choices, as well as performative elements such as gestures and facial expressions, to emphasize gender norms on stage. The thematic content of these jokes often revolves around traditional gender roles that reinforces societal expectations while entertaining the audience.

The societal context of Ludruk performances also plays a significant role in shaping the humor and its reception. Audience reactions influenced by cultural relevance and shared norms, determine whether the humor is perceived as acceptable or offensive. In some cases, the humor serves as a critique of societal stereotypes, using exaggeration and satire to highlight the absurdity of rigid gender roles. In other instances, it reinforces these stereotypes that perpetuates sensitive issues and norms under the guise of entertainment. The ethical and psychological impacts of such humor are complex, as it can both challenge and reinforce gender inequality.

The relationship between humor and gender has been extensively studied, with researchers focusing on subversive and sexist humor, as well as its

psychological and social impacts. Abrams et al. (2015), Riquelme et al. (2021), and Weber et al. (2023) highlight how humor can foster positive collective action against sexism while also having negative cognitive consequences when it reinforces stereotypes. Woodzicka et al. (2020) further explore how men and women respond differently to sexist humor, revealing gendered perceptions and reactions. These studies underscore the harmful effects of sexist humor on emotional well-being, particularly for those targeted (Greenwood & Gautam, 2020; Lawless et al., 2020), aligning with Parrott and Hopp's (2020) argument that such humor perpetuates harmful gender stereotypes and contributes to a culture of discrimination. Wijana (2015) examines how humor reinforces or challenges cultural and ethnic stereotypes which provides a framework for understanding the role of humor in shaping societal norms. On the other hand, in the context of Ludruk, a traditional Javanese theatrical performance, it may often use to depict traditional gender roles, such as submissive women and dominant men, while also entertaining and engaging the audience in some ways.

The social impact of sexist humor is another critical area of research, with studies like Romero-Sánchez et al. (2021) and Saucier et al. (2020) demonstrating how it influences behavior and attitudes toward women. Romero-Sánchez et al. (2021) found that sexist humor can increase sexual aggression among men with sexist attitudes, while Saucier et al. (2020) examined women's responses to men's use of sexist humor. These findings are particularly relevant to Ludruk, where humor often reflects societal power dynamics and gender hierarchies. Morreall, (2020) offers an ethical perspective on humor, providing a framework for evaluating its moral implications, which can be applied to analyze whether Ludruk's humor challenges or reinforces societal norms. Additionally, studies like Chavez et al. (2024) and Nursanti (2022) reveal how humor perpetuates gender-based stereotypes and power dynamics, with Nursanti (2022) specifically highlighting how sexist jokes reflect masculinity and gender identity.

Humour, media, and cultural contexts are also interconnected. Khusnia and Widagsa (2022) and Villasanta et al. (2022) examine how sexist language in media perpetuates gender stereotypes, with Khusnia and Widagsa (2022) focusing on films and online comments, and Villasanta et al. (2022) exploring how sexist humor is used to delegitimize female politicians. Wijana (1999) explores the use of sexual themes in proverbial parodies that highlight how humor can reflect societal attitudes toward gender and sexuality. Additionally, Wijana (2022) investigates erotic riddles in Javanese and Indonesian contexts on how humor intersects with cultural and gender dynamics. While Ludruk is a traditional performance rather than a media product, it serves a similar function in reflecting and shaping societal attitudes. Studies on Ludruk, such as those by Setiawan (2014), Peacock (1967), and Kurnia and Ferdianto (2018), emphasize its role as a medium for social critique, using humor to address societal issues, including gender dynamics. Kumuda and Wrihatni (2018) further explore how humor in Ludruk reflects gender-powered dynamics through insults and compliments, highlighting its cultural specificity. Finally, Abdel-Raheem (2023) examines humor during the COVID-19 pandemic, revealing how sexist tones in humor reflect broader societal inequalities, offering a contemporary parallel to the gender dynamics seen in Ludruk.

Previous studies have yet to explore the intersection between gender dynamics and cultural perspectives within traditional comedic performance. Addressing this gap, the present study focuses on sexist humor in Ludruk, a traditional theatrical form rooted in East Javanese cultural expression. Specifically, the analysis centers on Karya Budaya, a community-based Ludruk troupe that represents the traditional variant of the genre. Unlike modern adaptations, Karya Budaya's performances retain an explorative and unrestricted approach to humor, preserving the original cultural values and discursive patterns without significant transformation.

In terms of its original purpose, traditional Ludruk functions as a form of social critique, often described as a *penyambung lidah rakyat*—a voice of the people that articulates grassroots concerns and societal tensions. In contrast, modern Ludruk tends to prioritize entertainment value, adapting its content to appeal to broader audiences, including those in the tourism sector. So, the social critique is often softened and made more generic to avoid controversy. Additionally, there was minimal internal censorship for the content of the jokes in traditional ludruk than the modern one. Thus, the jokes could fearlessly tackle any social issues and taboo subjects relevant to the community. Based on that, the present study aims to uncover the sexist humor within traditional ludruk that reflect the culture of East Java society by employing critical discourse analysis model proposed by Mills (1995) to comprehend the social context and culture behind it. It also scrutinizes how this humor reflects and reinforces gender norms in East Java and explores the function of humor in either maintaining or challenging the socio-patriarchal structure in the local society. Research on sexist humor through the lens of local cultural practices offers valuable contributions to existing scholarship in anthropological linguistics and gender dynamics, enriching our understanding of how humor operates within culturally embedded power structures.

B. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The critical discourse analysis framework proposed by Mills (1995) integrates feminist perspective with the discourse analysis by focusing on the power, ideology, and gender that embedded in language and social practices. The framework prioritizes the concept of subject position as illustrated in Figure 1 to examine how the individuals are situated within the discourse and how the positions reinforce societal norms, so that it can reveal how language perpetuates stereotypes within the discourse. The framework focuses on the idea that discourse constructs subject positions rather than merely reflecting the, which means that individuals do not speak from a neutral standpoint, instead, their language is shaped by dominant ideologies that dictate acceptable roles and behavior.

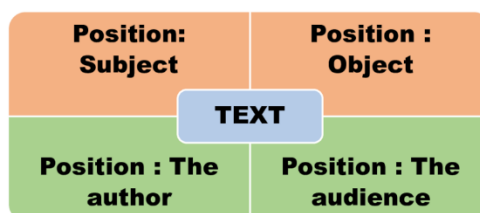


Figure 1. Critical discourse analysis framework by Mills (1995)

C. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze humor in Ludruk's performances using Sara Mills's (1995) critical discourse analysis model. The data were collected from the YouTube videos representing Ludruk's performances, focusing on humorous content, particularly the actors who played different gender roles. The selected video is transcribed to capture all verbal elements and non-verbal elements. This study employs a library research methodology, involving the systematic collection, analysis, and synthesis of existing resources to support the development of new insights. Central to this approach is the detailed transcription of Ludruk performances sourced from YouTube, capturing both verbal interactions and contextual cultural references that reflect gendered stereotypes of women in East Java. These transcriptions are analyzed through the lens of critical discourse analysis, guided by Sara Mills' (1995) feminist framework, which foregrounds the discursive construction of gender and power. The selected Ludruk performances span various titles, including:

Titles	Links
<i>Supali Hamil</i>	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M69IeRiV-RA
<i>Supali Gendeng Wedokan</i>	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mmaG8BJbgU4
<i>Supali Morotuwo Nggaplek'i</i>	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7c6WlOd6Sl0
<i>Supali Mayit Gendong Seng Urip</i>	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fdY5Ybyekww
<i>Supali VS Boneka</i>	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YD16FOzCv_A&t
<i>Rayuan Gombal</i>	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Zsl_5-YZ8g

The data analysis comprises two main parts: qualitative content analysis and critical discourse analysis. Qualitative content analysis is used to break down the video into scenes. Each video scene is analyzed by the critical discourse analysis framework by Sara Mills (1995), particularly on position the women as subject and object in Ludruk humor to identify the stereotypes. The subject position functions as the primary actor, the one who initiates and controls the action. The subject position reflects broader societal power dynamics concerning gender by which male characters in Ludruk frequently occupy the subject role, reinforcing patriarchal norms through the humor. While, the object position embodies the marginalized figure in Ludruk by which female characters are relegated to the object position as the targets of mockery. Such patterns are ideological objectification in discourse entrenches stereotypes.

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Women's Stereotypes in Ludruk Humor

The data are presented through a series of excerpts featuring sexist humor from Ludruk performances, each illustrating aspects of gender dynamics in East Java. These instances are classified into two primary categories: women's subordination and women's objectification.

Women's Subordination in East Java Potrayed in Ludruk Humor

Excerpt 1

Actor 1: *Supāli ôlèh sampean iku anūgrāh, sampean ôlèh Supāli iku musibah.*
(Supali is a blessing for you, but getting Supali is a disaster for you)

Actor 2: *Nah musibah dèk.*
(Yeah, a disaster, right)

Actor 3: *Musibah ôpō, cāk?*
(What disaster, bro?)

Actor 2: *Wès ôjō, kowe engkōk mètèng kowe.*
(Don't, or you'll get pregnant)

Actor 3: *Yōwès, bāh, mètèng āku. Pōkōkè āku sampean rābi, āku gèlèm yō cāk.*
(Fine, I'll get pregnant. As long as you marry me, I'll agree)

The conversation between Actor 1, Actor 2, and Actor 3 as in Excerpt 1 contains several elements of sexist language and underlies the assumption about gender roles in the way it frames relationship and interaction among the men and women. Actor 1 states that the woman's relationship with Actor 2 (named Supali) is a blessing, while Supali's relationship with the woman (Actor 3) is a disaster by contrasting the lexical items of *anugrah* (blessing) and *musibah* (disaster). This introduces the idea that one side of the relationship of the woman is inherently negative for the man, while the man is a gift to the woman. Actor 2 then confirms the idea by calling it *musibah* and warns Actor 3 not to delve further into a romantic relationship with Actor 2 in order to avoid pregnancy possibility as an outcome before marriage. Actor 3, in a seemingly casual response, states that she does not mind becoming pregnant before marriage, as long as the man eventually marries her. This humorous exchange reflects a discourse in which the woman is positioned not as an equal participant in the relationship, but as an object—one to be either accepted as a blessing or dismissed as a burden. Drawing on Sara Mills' framework, this instance exemplifies how humor can function ideologically to normalize unequal gender relations. The woman's subject position is constructed through a lens of passivity and conditional worth, where her value hinges on male acceptance rather than autonomous agency. Mills argues that such discursive strategies often mask patriarchal norms beneath a veneer of playfulness, rendering them socially palatable while reinforcing structural asymmetries. Portrayal of women's objectification is when Actor 2 (Supali) and Actor 3 (the woman) continue the conversation which implies that the main concern for a woman is her reproductive role. The dialogue exemplifies humor functions as a discursive tool to normalize gender oppression in which the framing pregnancy as a *musibah* (disaster) reinforcing women's reproductive roles are inherently problematic unless regulated by marriage. The humor sustains patriarchal ideologies by positioning women as threats and passive dependents. Then, the laughter generated by the exchange depends on shared cultural assumptions in East Java that stigmatize female sexuality while excusing male agency in sexual relationships. Patriarchal societies continue as in Excerpt 1 to perpetuate gender discrimination, with men restricting women's social rights while reinforcing harmful stereotypes that depict women as inherently weak and intellectually inferior (Apriliandra & Krisnani, 2021; Asri & Hayati, 2019).

Excerpt 2

Actor 1: *Malēm Senin āku nāng Srāgēn.*

- (On Monday night, I was in Sragen)
- Actor 2: *Mlākū-mlākū kārō nyāngking durēn.*
(Walking around while carrying a durian)
- Actor 1: *Ōnō cèwèk mlākunè ijen.*
(There was a girl walking alone)
- Actor 2: *Barang tāk gudō āku dithūthuk gadhèn.*
(When I teased her, she hit me with a broom)
- Actor 1: *Kāpōk kōn yō rasaknō, mangkāné ôjōk pèthuk cèwèk langsung mbōk gudō.*
(Serves you right, that's what happens when you immediately tease a girl when you meet her)
- Actor 2: *Èman kōk.*
(Such a great chance, though)

The first four lines in Excerpt 2 are a rhythmic conversation between Actor 1 and Actor 2. The humor, as in Excerpt 2, revolves around a man harassing a woman and being punished for it, which is represented as a comical situation. The humor consists of a sexist element that objectifies the woman. The line where the girl is walking alone is framed as someone to be teased, which reduces her to an object of the man's teasing. Furthermore, Actor 2's bothering the girl without her consent is treated as humorous yet sexist behavior. The humor rests on the stereotypes that women are expected to react violently when men cross their boundaries, and the man's regret is not about his inappropriate behavior but rather about the consequences he faced for it. The final line of the conversation reinforces the sexist tone. Instead of acknowledging the wrongdoing, Actor 2 expresses regret and disappointment, which implies that he missed the opportunity to harass further, which is what he finds unfortunate. The stereotype as depicted in Excerpt 2 deflects from the seriousness of harassment by framing it as a playful interaction. It minimizes the reality of gendered aggression and reinforces the stigma that women's boundaries are humorous. The humor illustrates gendered hierarchy by rendering male misconduct harmless while depicting women's resistance as excessive.

Excerpt 3

- Actor 1: *Malēm Sèlāsō nāng Surābāyā.*
(On Tuesday night, I was in Surabaya)
- Actor 2: *Mlākū-mlākū kārō tūku sēmōngkō.*
(Walking around while buying a watermelon)
- Actor 1: *Ōnō cèwèk kètōkè ngèrsulō.*
(There was a girl who looked upset)
- Actor 2: *Arèp tāk cīpōk langsung bōngkō.*
(I wanted to kiss her, but I got hit right away)
- Actor 1: *Lah.*
(Oh)
- Actor 2: *Nyīpōkku kègètèn.*
(My kiss was too hard)

Like Excerpt 2, Excerpt 3 also starts with rhythmic speeches in the first four lines. The main point of the conversation is in the fourth line when Actor 2 talks

about wanting to kiss the girl without her consent, and *langsung bongko* suggests she might immediately react violently. It reflects an underlying sexist notion of entitlement to a woman's body and humor derived from her reaction. As in the sixth line, the punchline involves Actor 2 being startled and surprised by the kiss, reinforcing the idea that the humor is derived from his attempt at non-consensual contact and surprise reaction. The type of humor in Excerpt 3 is the objectification of women by treating them as passive individuals of male action, and the idea of kissing as a non-consensual action being a source of humor illustrates a normalization of boundary-crossing behavior. The humor is considered sexist because it reinforces harmful stereotypes, which signal that it is funny to disregard a woman's autonomy and to expect a violent response when doing so. The objectification is central to the joke's structure, which shows a lack of respect for women's privacy. Excerpt 2 perpetuates rape culture by framing non-consensual advances as humorous misunderstanding rather than acts of violence. The absence of any critique of Actor 2's behavior reflects the patriarchal ideologies are maintained through innocuous conversational patterns that privilege male perspectives while silencing female subjectivity, and it also sustains systemic inequality by disguising oppressive norms as humorous interaction.

Excerpt 4

Actor 1: *Malēm Kemis āku nāng Pākis.*

(On Thursday night, I was in Pakis)

Actor 2: *Mlākū-mlākū budhāl gèrimis.*

(Walking around while it was drizzling)

Actor 1: *Ōnō cèwèk lhā kōk kārō nāngis.*

(There was a girl, and she was crying)

Actor 2: *Barèng tāk tōlōng āku dīkèprūk linggīs.*

(When I tried to help, I got hit with a crowbar)

Actor 1: *Lhā mbōk tōlōng ambèk mbōk āmbungè.*

(Well, you help while you kiss her)

Actor 2: *Lhā kan buruanè.*

(Well, that's the reward)

Excerpt 4 also contains rhythmic lines in the first four lines, which are interpreted as sexist since they objectify the woman and center appropriate behavior towards her. Actor 1 mentions seeing a girl crying, which introduces the woman as a vulnerable individual figure in the scenario. Actor 2 claims he tried to help the girl but got away with a crowbar instead. The punchline here becomes the center of the idea that even when he tries to help, the woman reacts violently. However, it is essential to note that this violent reaction is depicted as part of sexist humor where the woman's reaction to men's actions is exaggerated and turned into comedy, especially when the situation is more about a man's inappropriate behavior masks as help. Actor 1 then responds that Actor 2 should help the girl and kiss her, which is why Actor 2 got hit. This turns what is presented as an act of kindness at first into sexual harassment at the end, which implies that the woman's vulnerability can be exploited for physical affection. Actor 2's final line reinforces the objectification by suggesting that the goal was to get something out of the encounter, which implies that helping the woman was just a pretext for trying to make physical contact. The

vital move in the humour is the framing of male sexual aggression as benevolent assistance as a strategy for normalizing patriarchal dominance. The speakers construct a reality where male sexual advances are intentioned, while female resistance becomes an overreaction.

Excerpt 5

Actor 1: *Pèno ôjōk kakean ngomōng, pèno sèneng ta karō aku?*

(You shouldn't talk too much, Peno, do you like me or not?)

Actor 2: *Lhō lhō pèno ôjōk atèk mengkèrik, kandāni nèk aku diuring-uring wōng ngunū merangsang.*

(Lho lho you shouldn't put your hands on hips, I told you when people scold me, I feel aroused)

Actor 1's command to not talk too much to Actor 2 reflects a power dynamic where her voice is marginalized. This line can be interpreted as a form of control and dominance where the man assumes authority over the woman's speech, and this becomes the typical pattern in sexist humor where the woman is expected to be less assertive, and they are culturally identified with and practice Javanese traditions in thought and deed (Suharti & Suyata, 1986). Actor 2's comment about feeling aroused when getting scolded is problematic and turns a potentially serious situation into something sexual. The sexualization of regular emotional exchanges reduces the woman's role in the interaction to that of a source of sexual excitement only rather than someone who is expressing genuine emotion, and by framing anger as sexually arousing, the humor devalues the significance of the woman's feelings. In other words, their interaction illustrates stereotypes about men and women in relationships. It suggests that men are driven by sexual urges even in appropriate situations and that women's discomfort can be brushed aside. This humor reinforces gender norms where men are seen as unable to control their desires, and women are viewed as objects of sexual gratification

Women's Objectification Potrayed in Ludruk Humor

Excerpt 6

Actor 1: *Bāhāsā Mbāli nèk perāwan iku Wāyān, nèk lānang Kētut iku Mbāli.*

Awakmu jarè tau kenal wong Mbāli?

(In Balinese, if it's a girl, she's called Wayan, and if it's a boy, he's called Ketut. You said you know someone from Bali, right?)

Actor 2: *Nèk Ròndhō ôpō?*

(What about a widow?)

Actor 1: *Ôpō?*

(What?)

Actor 2: *Lègō?*

(*Lègō*—a feeling of relief or lightness)

Actor 1: *Kòk lègō iku lō? Ròndhō kòk lègō?*

(Why lightness? A widow doesn't mean already sold)

Actor 2: *Lhā wong wès isō ngèladani wong lānang.*

(Well, she's already served a man)

Actor 1: *Bèrāti kètōkè lègō ngunu.*

(So, it seems like she's available then)

Actor 2: *Iyō bènēr.*

(Yes, that's right)

Actor 1 and Actor 2 discuss terms used for individuals based on marital status and gender in the context of Balinese culture, as depicted in Excerpt 6. Actor 1 explains that the term *Wayan* in Balinese refers to a virgin and unmarried woman, and *Ketut* refers to a Balinese man. Actor 2 then jokingly asks about the naming term for a widow (*rondo*— in Javanese) and suggests the term *lego*, which means sold or available, implying that a widow is a woman available to serve men. At this point, a direct objectification of a woman is depicted through their utterances. The lexical item of *lego* implicitly refers to a widow who is available again after losing her husband. The utterance signifies that a widow is like a commodity available to be with another man. Also, it creates a metaphorical association between a widow and an object that can be sold. It dehumanizes the widow by equating her worth to her availability for men, which reinforces the idea that a woman's value is related to her capacity to serve men. Additionally, Excerpt 6 demonstrates the gendered power structures by positioning women as objects of male discourse rather than subjects with their own narratives. The joke hinges on the assumption that a widow's sexual and marital status is a communal matter open to scrutiny reinforcing the idea that women's bodies are properties.

Excerpt 7

Actor 1: *Arek ngéné iki pirōan?*

(How much would a girl like this cost?)

Actor 2: *Krungu engkōk pecehan kōn.*

(You'll be reported for harassment later)

Actor 1: (*suitan*) (whistles)

The first line is a solid sexist utterance as woman objectification, which reduces a woman to an item with a monetary value. The line implies that the woman is a commodity to be bought or sold rather than an individual with dignity. Actor 2 then acknowledges that Actor 1's inappropriate comment would qualify as harassment. However, this recognition is framed in a humorous tone, which has less seriousness of the offence and normalizes the sexist behavior. The following line further sexualizes the woman by whistling and reinforces the idea that a woman is an object of desire to be judged based on her appearance. This behavior is often associated with catcalling. The act of whistling is a form of verbal harassment that asserts dominance over the woman, which implies she is being rated solely for her physical appearance. In the context of humor, this portrayal plays into traditional power imbalances where men assert control over women's bodies through comments and make women into passive and subversive individuals of attention. Actor 2's response appears to challenge the objectification by referencing potential consequences. However, based on Mills (1995), it also functions to reinforce rather than undermine the sexist discourse. Additionally, this humor is particularly maintaining gender hierarchies because it operates through everyday conversation rather than overt statements. The whistling demonstrates how non-verbal elements can also sustain sexist discourse even in the face of apparent challenges.

Excerpt 8

- Actor 1: *Wōng rùmah tanggā iku sèng idāmnō ôpō?*
(What do married people hope for?)
- Actor 2: *Sèng diidāmnō? yō kudu duwè sèmbārang kālir.*
(Hope for? Well, you have to have everything)
- Actor 1: *Di samping dunyō, bondhō kan kepèngen duwè anak mināngkā gécōkannè āti, nèk rabī āku cèpèt duwè anak, kōn njālūk sētāhun duwè anak pirō.*
(Besides wealth, don't they also want to have children to bring joy to their hearts? If I got married, I'd want to have children quickly, how many kids would you want in a year?)
- Actor 2: *Gāk ngununè lhō, tèrnāk ta prāsamū.*
(That's not how it works, do you think it's like livestock?)

Excerpt 8 depicts an objectification of women as child-bearers. The notion that the primary goal of marriage is to have children and to have children quickly reflects a traditional and sexist expectation that women's primary role in marriage is reproduction. Actor 1's question about how many children they would want in a year portrays women as if their worth is measured by how many children they can produce, which degenerates their role in marriage to that of reproductive media. The objectification ignores the physical, emotional, and personal realities of pregnancy, turning women into tools for fulfilling male desires and societal expectations regarding family. Furthermore, Actor 2's response compares having children and breeding livestock. While this is meant to ridicule Actor 1's unrealistic ideas, it also carries a sexist tone by equating family planning with animal breeding. The humor here is derived from the absurdity of the comparison, but it reinforces the objectification of women by likening them to livestock whose primary function is reproduction. According to Aryanti and Tjahyadi (2024), gender discrimination manifests in various ways, including the subjugation and violence faced by women positioned as subjects, as well as the violence experienced by female characters objectified in narratives. Additionally, the text positions readers in a way that encourages them to align with or normalize the oppression and abuse of women.

The Portrayal of Gender Dynamics in Ludruk Sexist Humor

Sexism arises from broader societal structure and struggles over access to positions and resources (Mills, 2008). Mills (2008) further distinguishes between overt (direct) sexist language and covert (indirect) sexist language. Overt sexism is identifiable through explicit linguistic markers or presuppositions that reflect historically entrenched discriminatory views of women, reinforcing the perception that they are inferior to men. The term refers to adherence to conventional gender stereotypes in social roles (Percy, 1996). Sexism involves the use of language that discriminates against women, marginalizing and demeaning activities traditionally linked to them. Sexist remarks in the performance were largely interpreted as humorous rather than offensive. Handoyo (2022) argued that the audience appeared to favor straightforward comedy featuring physical humor and direct language. The audience accepted and appreciated gender-based humor and stereotypical portrayals as part of the entertainment, excluding the portrayals of women's subordination and objectification.

The marginalization of women through the use of humor in the excerpts above is closely related to what Chavez et al. (2023) and Kleinman et al. (2021) argue about language and humor being tools for reinforcing power dynamics. In Excerpt 1, the lexical term '*lego*' is used to describe a widow and signifies a woman as an object commodity available for men after losing her husband which illustrates a patriarchal perception where a woman's value is linked to her marital status and availability for men. This also aligns with the findings of Abrams et al. (2015) and Weber et al. (2023) regarding how sexist humor reinforces traditional gender roles by reducing women to their sexual and physical availability. At his point, humor serves to dehumanize widows and place them within a system that commodifies them and implies the patriarchal structures aligned with Chavez et al. (2023). Based on Handayani and Novianto (2008), there is a dual perspective on Javanese gender roles. On one hand, they frame women's supportive role positivity, suggesting that behind every accomplished man stands a woman providing support. Conversely, they also acknowledge this cultural expectation carries problematic implications which positions women as incapable in decision making and demands unwavering loyalty above anything else

Similarly, in Excerpt 1, the conversation between Actor 1, Actor 2, and Actor 3 depicts the woman's relationship with a man as a blessing. In contrast, the man's relationship with her is framed as a disaster. This opposite lexical meaning between the words '*anugrah*' and '*musibah*' reflects sexist stereotypes where women are seen as burdens rather than equal partners in the relationship. As Romero-Sánchez et al. (2021) and Saucier et al. (2020) argue, humor like this perpetuates harmful gender dynamics by reinforcing the idea that women are secondary to men in relationships, their worth measured by how much they bless or burden men. The power imbalance depicted becomes normalized through humor, where women are objectified and dismissed as sources of inconvenience or danger to men.

Furthermore, sexist humor examples are also found in Excerpt 2 and Excerpt 3, where the harassment and non-consensual actions, such as teasing a woman walking alone or wanting to kiss a woman without her consent, are presented as humorous situations. In Excerpt 3, Actor 2's comment about '*langsung bongko*' implies that the humor derives from the expected violent reaction to non-consensual physical contact. These examples signal that harassment becomes an amusing interaction between men and women in Ludruk and emphasize the male entitlement over women's bodies that supports the findings of Nursanti (2022), who argues that sexist humor often reflects masculine power dynamics where women are passive individuals of male actions, while men's inappropriate behavior is normalized and minimized through humor.

Moreover, in Excerpt 4, Actor 2's statement about helping a crying girl only to get hit with a crowbar illustrates a situation where the punchline revolves around a woman's exaggerated reaction to a man's help. Then, the follow-up response about how Actor 1 should have kissed the girl instead of helping her turns an act of kindness into an opportunity for exploitation, as if the girl's vulnerability should be taken advantage of by physical affection. Like those in Excerpts 3 and 4, this example reflects how humor reflects women's emotions. The woman's

vulnerability is turned into an opportunity for a man to fulfil his desires, similar to how Parrot and Hopp (2019) argue that sexist humor reinforces stereotypes about women being passive to men's actions.

Additionally, the excerpts illustrate how humor becomes a tool for disempowering women by consistently portraying them as secondary figures defined by their relationship to men, whether as burdens, sexual objects, or sources of amusement. As Khusnia and Widagsa (2022) and Villasanta et al. (2022) point out, media and public discourse often use humor to undermine women and reinforce gender stereotypes. The humor in Excerpt 6, Excerpt 7, and Excerpt 8, which depict women primarily as child-bearers in marriage, aligns with these broader cultural narratives. The focus on women's reproductive role, such as in Excerpt 8, where the number of children a woman can bear becomes the center of the joke, reflects a traditional and sexist expectation of women's role in marriage. This reflects the study by Kurnia and Ferdianto (2018) and Abdel-Raheem (2023), who explore how cultural humor reinforces traditional gender roles and limits women.

E. CLOSING

The gender dynamics and women's stereotypes portrayed in Ludruk through the use of humor highlights how it is used to reinforce patriarchal values and marginalize women. Women are frequently depicted as commodities, burdens, and objects of male desire by which their value is reduced to their availability, physical traits, and reproductive roles. Additionally, Ludruk's humor normalizes gender stereotypes through jokes that objectify women and harass and frame relationships in unequal terms. The themes of women as passive and emotional individuals align with broader cultural narratives that degenerate women's capacity as individuals and place them in subordinate positions relative to men. These dynamics reflect the power imbalance between men and women, which emphasizes men's dominance and control over women's roles within relationships and society.

Future research could investigate how audiences interpret and respond to gendered portrayals in Ludruk, particularly in relation to their sociocultural positioning and lived experiences. It is equally important to examine the impact of humor on younger generations, especially in shaping their perceptions of gender roles and internalizing normative expectations. Such inquiry may illuminate how comedic discourse contributes to the reproduction—or contestation—of social norms. Furthermore, comparative studies across regional and cultural contexts could explore how humor in Ludruk diverges from other traditional theatrical comedy forms, thereby enriching our understanding of humor's function in constructing and negotiating gender dynamics across diverse media and societal frameworks.

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