

Metaphors in Impolite Portrayal of Women Online: The Case of Indonesia's Cyber-Sexism

Dhanisa Kamila M. Huda, Korea University, South Korea

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Abstract

This paper investigates how metaphor functions as a strategy of impoliteness in the online sexist portrayal of women in Indonesian social media. Drawing on Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and theories of impoliteness, the study analyses metaphorical language used to convey offense, dehumanisation, and gendered power relations in computer-mediated communication. The dataset comprises 48 metaphorical excerpts collected from Instagram and X (Twitter), selected through two of the most followed Indonesian feminist-curated accounts and keyword-based searches targeting gendered discourse. Employing a qualitative approach, metaphors were identified and analysed through a two-phase procedure of metaphor hypothesizing and metaphor analysis. The analysis reveals four dominant conceptual metaphors used to target women online: WOMAN IS ANIMAL, WOMAN IS COMMODITY, WOMAN IS (SEXUAL) OBJECT, and WOMAN IS DOWN AND MAN IS UP. In addition, a smaller number of instances instantiate the metaphor WOMAN IS IMPURE, which further contributes to moral degradation and exclusion. The findings demonstrate that metaphor enables speakers to perform highly aggressive face-threatening acts while exploiting indirectness, cultural associations, and evaluative entailments. These metaphorical constructions both reflect and reinforce patriarchal norms and gender hierarchies in Indonesian society. It is prominent that metaphors being used specifically to cause offence to have not been receiving much attention, especially in the realm of cyber-sexism. By foregrounding metaphor as a central mechanism of cyber-sexism, this study contributes to research on metaphor, impoliteness, and online gender-based abuse and highlights the need for further investigation into figurative strategies of offense in digital discourse.

Keywords: metaphor, (im)politeness, cyber-sexism, Indonesia, computer-mediated communication

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Introduction

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) refers to communication that takes place through networked technologies such as computers, laptops, and mobile phones, with social media constituting one of its most prominent forms. While social media offers numerous benefits and conveniences, it also facilitates harmful behaviours such as cyberbullying, hate speech, and cyber-sexism. These phenomena are often attributed to factors such as anonymity and the linguistic, social, and psychological distancing effects of online communication, which can make impolite behaviour easier to produce. Cyber-sexism can be understood as the online manifestation of offline sexism. According to Poland (2016, p. 2), sexism is “a combination of prejudice against persons based on their gender, combined with the privilege and power required to cause harm.” Because men as a group generally possess greater social power and privilege, sexist attitudes toward women can contribute to discrimination, restricted opportunities, and various forms of harm. In online environments, such attitudes are frequently expressed through harassment and abusive language targeting women.

As a result, CMC has become an important domain for impoliteness research. Despite increasing content moderation efforts by online platforms, users continue to engage in offensive and abusive behaviour, often using figurative language. Metaphors and metonymies are particularly noteworthy in this regard because they can convey negative evaluations in both direct and indirect ways. Since impoliteness involves intentional and conflictive face-threatening acts designed to cause offense and recognized as such by the recipient, the use of metaphor as an offensive strategy warrants closer examination. Against this background, the present study investigates the use of conceptual metaphors to cause offense toward women in Indonesian social media discourse, focusing on posts and comments from Instagram and X (formerly Twitter) and drawing on Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT).

According to CMT, metaphor is widely used in ordinary daily life that our conceptual system is “largely metaphorical in nature” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; as mentioned in Coll-Florit et al., 2021, p. 86). CMT also sees metaphor as something that enables us to not only think but also talk about abstract, complex, and subjective areas of an experience. As an example, arguments are oftentimes referred to as WAR or FIGHT. Conceptual Metaphors (CMs) are abstract constructs that could be possibly linguistically instantiated in various Metaphorical Expressions (MEs). CMs are conventionally constructed as [TARGET DOMAIN] IS [SOURCE DOMAIN]. On the other hand, MEs are specific linguistic cases of a CM. For instance, as cited in Coll-Florit et al., p. 87):

- (1) CM: ARGUMENT IS WAR
- ME: (a) Your argument is **indefensible**.
- (b) His criticisms were **right on target**.
- (c) I’ve never **won** an argument with him.

Semino (2008; as cited in Coll-Florit et al., p. 87) mentioned that “CMT is associated with highlighting some concepts while hiding others.” To illustrate, <<ARGUMENT IS WAR highlights argument as a competitive, aggressive, and confrontational, while hides its cooperative and constructive sides>>. Consequently, different people conceptualise or interpret the same experience differently and it is reflected in the existence of multiple CMs to refer to one area of experience. Because of this, to detect abstract ideas and assumptions in discourse, CM is generally used.

Literature Review

Previous Studies on Impoliteness, Offense, and Metaphors

The study of impoliteness originated from the assumption that impolite behaviour represents a deviation from socially expected or “normal” conduct, particularly within early politeness research. Since then, scholars have approached impoliteness from various perspectives, including postmodern discursive, interactional, and social psychological approaches. Drawing on Goffman’s (1967) theory, impolite behaviour can be broadly categorized into ritual/mock impoliteness, non-malicious impoliteness, rudeness and failed politeness, and genuine, malicious, strategic impoliteness. The present study focuses on the latter category, as it involves deliberate acts intended to offend or harm others.

Insults and the offense they generate are closely linked to evaluation (Demjen & Hardaker, 2016). Although evaluations may be either positive or negative, metaphors and metonymies are particularly effective in conveying negative evaluations due to their indirect nature. In some contexts, such as Malay communication, metaphors are used to express criticism while preserving the hearer’s face (Charteris-Black, 2003). Similarly, metaphors may serve as indirect vehicles for criticism in sensitive settings, such as end-of-life medical care (Semino et al., 2017). However, metaphors can also be employed with the explicit intention of causing offense. Animal metaphors are especially common in such cases, as referring to humans as animals often carries dehumanizing and degrading connotations (Lakoff & Turner, 1989). The offensiveness of these metaphors is further shaped by contextual and cultural factors, including the manner of expression and the social status of the target. Metaphors involving negatively perceived animals, such as rats, snakes, or leeches, are often regarded as particularly offensive. Their impact may be intensified when directed toward less privileged or marginalized groups, including women and members of the LGBT community.

Metaphor and Gender

As a matter of fact, metaphors that are used to offend the hearer (e.g., to abuse or insult) often contain a gendered element. In general, gender can be embedded in metaphors in several ways. Metaphors may be used differently by speakers of different genders, or they may be employed to feminise or masculinise certain behaviours, activities, or individuals. Additionally, metaphors can be used to represent men and women in discourse (Koller, 2011, as cited in Demjen & Hardaker, 2016). A considerable number of metaphors fall into the latter two categories. For example, studies on animal metaphors have shown that only a small number are applied to both sexes, whereas most are gender specific. Terms such as *hen*, *bitch*, and *fox* are commonly directed at women, while *stallion* and *stag* are typically used for men. However, according to Demjen and Hardaker (2016), the distribution of such metaphors is not equal. This observation is supported by previous studies on animal metaphors (e.g., Hines, 1999; Leach, 1964), which suggest that women are described as sexual objects through a wider variety of animal metaphors than men. Furthermore, animal metaphors associated with livestock (e.g., *cow*), game animals (e.g., *fox*), and pets (e.g., *pussy*), which imply ownership, domestication, taming, or hunting, are used predominantly to refer to women (Demjen & Hardaker, 2016, p. 357).

Animal metaphors are not the only type of gendered metaphor. Several scholars (Hines, 1999; Kövecses, 2006; López Rodríguez, 2009, as cited in Demjen & Hardaker, 2016) have found that women in English are also conventionally represented through metaphors related to food

(e.g., *honey, sweetie*), playthings (e.g., *toy, doll*), personality traits (e.g., *ditz*), clothing (e.g., *skirt*), and body parts (e.g., *blondie, piece of ass*). Although some of these expressions may be used affectionately, they can also be offensive, demeaning, or patronising. Supporting this view, Kövecses (2006, as cited in Demjen & Hardaker, 2016), drawing on Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), examined 245 American English slang terms for women and men and found that four source domains dominate the conceptualisation of both genders: THING (e.g., *package, doll, piece of*), FOOD (e.g., *sweetie*), ANIMAL (e.g., *cow, stud, pussycat, chick*), and KINSHIP (e.g., *baby, lad*). While both men and women were described using these domains, women were associated with a greater number and wider variety of metaphorical conceptualisations. In particular, only women were conceptualised as COMMODITIES, GOODS, MERCHANDISE, and PLAYTHINGS, entities that can be bought, owned, or controlled. Similar to livestock and pets, these metaphorical representations imply male ownership and reinforce the perception of women as sexual objects and socially inferior to men (Kövecses, 2006, as cited in Demjen & Hardaker, 2016). Comparable findings have also been reported in studies of Italian and French metaphors describing men and women (Baider & Gesuato, 2003, as cited in Demjen & Hardaker, 2016).

Impoliteness, Gender, and Sexism Online

Gender is a social construct that is better understood as a continuum rather than a binary category (Butler, 1990; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003). Nevertheless, research on (im)politeness has often relied on traditional male–female distinctions (Holmes, 2013; Mills, 2003), and numerous studies have shown that men and women are associated with different expectations regarding polite and impolite behaviour. In Indonesian society, for example, expressions such as “Nice girls don’t sit with their legs open” reflect gendered norms that distinguish not only between women and men but also between socially acceptable and unacceptable female behaviour. Such norms contribute to the development of pragmatic knowledge and shape expectations regarding appropriate conduct. Research on computer-mediated communication (CMC) similarly suggests that online interactions largely reflect offline social norms, including those related to politeness and impoliteness. This is particularly evident in the prevalence of gender-based abuse directed at women in online spaces (Poland, 2016). Sexism, defined as prejudice based on gender combined with the social power necessary to produce harmful effects, continues to influence both online and offline interactions. Because men as a group generally hold greater social, political, and economic power, sexist attitudes toward women can restrict opportunities, reinforce inequality, and contribute to various forms of discrimination. These attitudes are manifested in expectations about women’s behaviour and communication, unequal media representation, male dominance, and violence against women. As gender stereotyping and gendered abuse remain common experiences for many women, the increasing integration of online and offline activities has made it difficult to draw a clear distinction between online and offline harassment, with discriminatory practices often extending across both domains.

Methodology

Sources of Data

The data for this study is obtained from the two social medias that are used by most Indonesians, namely Instagram and X (Previously known as Twitter). With Instagram being the top social media compared with X, most data were taken from Instagram. Nevertheless, Indonesian X users are also big in number. Therefore, despite the less amount of data obtained from X

compared to Instagram, it does not bring any disadvantage or hindrance for this study. With that said, this study mostly looked at two Instagram accounts for its data: @lawanpatriarki (which has around 199,000 followers) and @indonesia.butuhfeminis (around 13,300 followers). Both accounts claimed to be supportive of feminism and are against the patriarch. Their activities on Instagram include raising awareness of gender equity, sex education, self-love, supporting the LGBT communities, and actively opposing any kinds of discrimination and offence against women and other marginalised groups. In doing so, they often repost screen-captures of texts, posts, and comments that consist of sexism, oppression, or bullying, and other kinds of harassment that lead to impolite portrayal of woman (and other marginalised groups) and bring such issues to light. For the purpose of this study, posts that are selected from both accounts are those that contain the use of metaphors to target women. For data obtained from X, tweets or excerpts were found through random search using related keywords such as *perempuan* (woman) and *betina* (female). A number of tweets with screen-captures of texts were also randomly found from a long thread of a discussion among women about their ex-boyfriends. Selected tweets are those containing the use of metaphors to target women.

Data Identification Method

Following Coll-Florit et al. (2021), the method used to identify metaphors in this study is organised in two main phases: metaphor hypothesizing and metaphor analysis. The metaphor hypothesizing phase is meant to overcome the problem of time inherent in the above-mentioned methods for manual detection. In the metaphor analysis phase, hypotheses for metaphoricality are validated (or rejected) and clauses are annotated with domain formulae (target domain and source domain) at two levels. Annotators are provided with a detailed annotation guide and a set of auxiliary documents, among them, most importantly, metaphor compendia. Metaphor identification is mainly based on dictionary checks (as in MIP and MIPVU) and metaphor labelling is based on metaphor compendia and metaphor formulation strategies (innovative features of our method). Compendia and formulation strategies aim to prevent divergence in annotator criteria so that the final results are both internally consistent as well as comparable to results reported in the study.

Findings

A total of forty-eight data were extracted from both Instagram and X. After analysing the data, four main types of metaphor conceptualizing the target domain of WOMAN were detected:

1. WOMAN IS ANIMAL,
2. WOMAN IS COMMODITY,
3. WOMAN IS (SEXUAL) OBJECT,
4. WOMAN IS BELOW MAN.

The first three metaphors, WOMAN IS ANIMAL, WOMAN IS COMMODITY and WOMAN IS (SEXUAL) OBJECT, were equally the most prevalent metaphor used in impolite portrayal of women on social media (Instagram and X) by Indonesian, with thirteen data found for each metaphor. Come second is the conceptualisation that WOMAN IS BELOW MAN with seven data found in total. The rest of the data is two excerpts that do not belong in any of the four major types found. Instead, the metaphors being used to convey impolite portrayal of women on social media is WOMAN IS IMPURE. All types of conceptual metaphor found are presented and exemplified below.

Woman is ANIMAL (13 data)

In this type, women were portrayed as various animals starting from eel, louse (or bedbugs), chicken's comb, and pig. See excerpt (1) to (5) below:

- (1) “*Jangan joget-joget depan kamera ya cantik, masa iya calon ibu **kaya belut sawah**.*”
– don’t dance around in front of the camera beautiful, as a mother-to-be (you’re) **acting like an eel**.
- (2) “*... GUE JG GAK BERHARAP DISAYANG SAMA **CEWEK BGSTT** KEK LO...*”
– I DON’T WANT TO BE LOVED BY A GIRL (LIKE A) DISGUSTING LOUSE (or bedbugs) LIKE YOU...
- (3) “*Status di KTP belum kawin tapi pas di buka ada **jengger ayamnya**.*”
– The status on her ID says unmarried but when (I) opened (her clothes) there’s a **chicken’s comb**.
- (4) “*ngapain cari istri gabisa masak, **sama aja kaya peliharaan babi** maunya diumpanin doang anj (anjing) ... tolol.*”
– why looking for wife who cannot cook, it’s **the same as keeping and feeding a pig** (dog (shit)) ... stupid.
- (5) “***Babi** sia, tong sangenahna ka urg **babi**, tersinggung aing bener yeuh goblog.*”
– you **pig**, don’t you do whatever you like to me **pig**, I’m offended you stupid.

Among other animals, the most commonly used animal in impolite portrayal of women on social media is *anjing* or dog. A number of different spellings of *anjing* were also used on different excerpts, such as *anjeng*, *anjg*, and the Javanese language version of dog; *asu*. See excerpt (6) to (10) below:

- (6) “*koe kafir **anjeng***”
– you’re a **pagan dog**.
- (7) “*...gausah bacot lo **anjing***”
... shut up you **dog**.
- (8) “*Woiiiiiii **asu**... klw kau sdar diri main pakai otak bodat*”
– Heyyyy (you) **dog**... if you know your place use your brain.
- (9) “*Mne duit gw yg pernah gw kasih ke lu. Balikin, woy gendut **anjg**...*”
Where’s all my money that I ever gave you, give them back, hey fat **dog**...
- (10) “*Bodo amat **anjing***”
I don’t care (you) **dog**.

Particularly, on X, there was a hashtag found that was especially used to offend women; #dasarbetina. The word *betina* in Indonesian means female. However, it is only to refer to female animal, not human. The word *dasar* formally means basic, primary, or natural yet *dasar* in casual conversation means to address something negative or to create critical remark. It functions as an exclamation or swearing that means more or less “basically yes!” or “indeed!” or “yeah it’s by nature!” Therefore, #dasarbetina is a hashtag to offend women that, more or less, means “female animal by nature.” See excerpt (11) to (13) below:

- (11) “*jadi ***betina** itu enak nganggur, ngk beduit tinggal VCS (video call sex)*”
– being a ***female** (animal) is good, no (need to) work, (when there’s) no money just VCS.
- (12) “*pasang foto sexy giliran diajak ngewe malah diblock **#dasarbetina***”
– (women would) put up sexy photos but when (we) invite them for sex (we) get blocked **#dasarbetina**
- (13) “*dasar wanita di colok sedikit bilangnya Aahh **#sange #dasarbetina***”
– women, insert (it) for a little (and they would be) like Aahh **#horny #dasarbetina**

Woman is COMMODITY (13 data)

The next type of metaphor conceptualizing the target domain of woman is COMMODITY. In this type, various words that are commonly related to transactional activities were used to describe women. Those words are *expensive*, *cheap*, *sell*, *sale*, *pay*, *cost*, and *price*. See all excerpts from (14) to (26) below:

- (14) "... *sok jual mahal*"
– (you) act as if (you're) **expensive**.
- (15) "*Lebih mahal yang open BO*"
– (women) who open for bookings are more **expensive** (than you).
- (16) "*Jadi perempuan tu jgn terlalu murah akhirnya kan dibuang juga...*"
– as a woman don't be **too cheap**, in the end you still get dumped.
- (17) "*Secantik apapun kamu semahal apapun skincaremu se anggun apapun wajahmu HARGA DIRIMU TETAP MURAH*"
– no matter how beautiful you are how expensive your skincare is how graceful your face is, YOUR DIGNITY IS STILL **CHEAP**.
- (18) "*Nggak usah segitunya juga kali, kesannya murahan banget tau nggak.*"
– no need to overdo it, (you) look **so cheap** (you) know.
- (19) "*Percuma cantik klau tibu di pertontong gratis... sangat murahan.*"
– being pretty is no use if you show it freely... **very cheap**.
- (20) "*KELIHATAN LEKUK TUBUH = PEREK DAN MURAHAN*"
– showing body shapes = bitch and **cheap**.
- (21) "... *cuma itu kan kamu bisa jual, kemolekan tubuhmu...*"
– that is the only thing (you) **can sell**, your body...
- (22) "*Perempuan yg belum menikah dicap GAK LAKU...*"
– unmarried (or yet to be married) women are marked as **NOT SELLING WELL** (leftovers).
- (23) "*perawan tua, nggak laku*"
– old virgin, **not selling well** (leftovers).
- (24) "...*memek aja diobral*"
– (you're) putting your vagina out **for sale**.
- (25) "*Ngewe ajh di coba dulu.. nnti ku bayar. Kalau blowjob sampe deepthroat kena brp? Gmn? Hotel mkan nnti aq yg tanggung.*"
– (let's) try to have sex... I'll **pay**. How much does it **cost** for a blowjob and deepthroat? Hm? I'll cover the hotel and meal.
- (26) "... *buka harga ga?*"
– ... how much is **your price**?

Woman is (SEXUAL) OBJECT (13 data)

The last metaphor among the top three types is WOMAN IS (SEXUAL) OBJECT. Note that the word "sexual" is put into brackets. This is because sexual object is generally still an object. Therefore, in order to accommodate a bigger scope of data, this paper does not specifically differentiate between sexual object and object. In this type, impolite portrayal of women was delivered using different kinds of words indicating both regular object and sexual object. For regular object, words used were *dodol*, *beer*, *valuables*, *property*, *mark*, *broken* or *break*, and *used*. See excerpt (27) to (35) below:

- (27) "*pgn dptin sesuatu itu kerja dodol... idup aja asupannya dari om teross wkw*"
– to get something (you) need to work for it **dodol** (Indonesian sticky dessert), yet (you) live with support from a sugar daddy lol.

- (28) “*Cowo makin tua makin matang kaya wine, liat George Clooney, tapi kalau wanita itu kaya bir gitu ada waktu kadaluarsanya.*”
– the more guys get older they get finer like wine, look at George Clooney, but **women are like beer they have expiry time.**
- (29) “*...makin banyak perempuan yang jadi properti umum.*”
– more women are becoming public **property** (for men).
- (30) “*Jd perempuan jgn gampang ikut tren yg mnjtuhan harga diri, brang brharga tdk diksih smbarangan org ...*”
– as a woman don’t be too easy following trends that would bring down your dignity, **valuables** are not for just anyone ...
- (31) “*Tidak perawan lagi berarti rusak?*”
– Not a virgin means **broken?**
- (32) “*Carilah gadis yang sudah rusak...*”
– Find a girl who is **broken...**
- (33) “*Yaudah aku ga peduli masa lalu kamu udah di rusak juga yang penting kamu bisa dirusak juga sama aku secara gratis*”
– Well, I don’t care if you were **broken** in the past as long as you let me **break** you again for free...
- (34) “*Cewe itu selalu ada bekas nya, kalau cowo ga ada.*”
– women always have **marks** (of being used), men do not have.
- (35) “*Th gue mah kalau tidur sama perempuan harus yang perawan, nggak main deh sama bekas orang.*”
– I only sleep with virgin girls; I don’t touch those who has been **used** by other.

Similarly, to describe women as sexual object, the words used were *personal slut*, *bitch*, *penis*, and *vagina*. See excerpt (36) to (39) below:

- (36) “*Mending lo*** dibayar lah ini ... mau aja dijadiin pelacur pribadi cowonya.*”
– wh*** are better because at least they get paid... yet this one was okay for being (her boyfriend’s) **personal slut**.
- (37) “*... ibu kau lonte lesbian bodoh, ...*”
– your mother is a stupid lesbian **whore**.
- (38) “*ceritanya balas dendam haa awkwk lonte kontol lonte lonte memek...*”
– it’s a revenge haa lol (you) **whore penis whore bitch vagina (pussy)**.
- (39) “*TAPI BALESAN LO GAENAK MEMEK!*”
– BUT YOUR REPLY IS SO UNFLATTERING (YOU) **VAGINA (pussy)!**

Woman is BELOW MAN (7 data)

Comes second after the top three types of metaphors is WOMAN IS BELOW MAN. There are seven data in total for this metaphor. All describe women as unequal to men, where men are socially above women. Words and phrases used for this situation were *trampled on*, *serve*, *help*, *below*, *(too) high*, *obey*, and *bow down*. See excerpt (40) to (46) below:

- (40) “*perawan atau tidak, cantik atau jelek, wanita wajib di injek-injek*”
– virgin or not, beautiful or ugly, women **must be trampled on** (suppressed) (by men)
- (41) “*istri itu emang pembantu/melayani suami, contoh seperti cuci pakaian suami, tukang masak nasi ddapur... sampai misal suami tidak ridho sma kelakuan istri, jgn harap akan masuk surga*”
– wives are to **help and serve the husbands**, like wash husbands’ clothes, cook meals in the kitchen... if husbands don’t like what their wives do, don’t expect to be able to go to heaven.

- (42) “... *tidak boleh menolak, dan perempuan harus cerdas untuk **melayani**.*”
– (wives) cannot refuse (husbands), and women must be smart enough to **serve** (the husbands).
- (43) “... *walaupun umur wanita tersebut diatas laki-laki, tapi kelakuannya tetap aja seperti **dibawah laki-laki**.*”
– Even though the woman is older than the man, women’s behaviours are still **below men**.
- (44) “*Alasan gua ninggalin lu gitu aja tanpa sebab karena lu **terlalu tinggi** bil, seandainya lu jadi perempuan yang biasa biasa aja ga mungkin gua tinggalin, lu bisa kerja mandiri, pinter, keluarga lu tajir... gua ga suka kalau perempuan lebih tinggi dari gua...*”
– the reason I left you without reason was because you’re **too high**, if only you were just a regular girl, I wouldn’t have left you, you have a job, smart, your family is rich... I don’t like if the girl is higher than me...
- (45) “*Istri kalau tidak **nurut** sama suami, buat apa nikah?*”
– If the wife does not **obey** the husband, what’s the point of getting married?
- (46) “*Istri harus **tunduk** sama suami apa pun yang terjadi.*”
– A wife must **bow down** to the husband no matter what.

There are two more data obtained from Instagram and X. Both are conveying impolite portrayal of women on social media. However, these two data do not belong in any of the four major types discussed earlier. Although it is a little uncommon, the conceptual metaphor used to cause offense in these data was WOMAN IS IMPURE. Words used to describe women were *filthy* and *rotten*. See excerpt (47) to (48) below:

- (47) “... *lu gatau diri **jijiin** nggilani hati nya busuk lebih **busuk** dari bangkai.*”
– you don’t know your place **filthy** disgusting your heart is more **rotten** than a dead body.
- (48) “... *manusia ga guna lu, cuih... **najiz**... cari makanan mengandalkan kemolekan tubuh...*”
– you useless human, cuih *spitting sound*... **filthy**... make a living by relying on the attractiveness of (your) body...

Although the data for this metaphor type is not as many as the other four metaphors, it is still considered important and worth noting.

Discussion and Conclusion

As mentioned previously, cyber-sexism is a combination of prejudice against people based on their gender, combined with the privilege and power required to cause harm in the online world. Women are usually the main victim. The decision to target women with abusive, gender-based harassment online is not random or spontaneous. Women around the world remain significantly underrepresented within the legal bodies that govern the everyday lives of people. Generally, men have significantly more control over the economic fate of the world and, as a result, most of the women in it. Movie and TV shows still feature significantly more men than women, and even when women are present, they are often relegated to supporting roles or are characters whose existence only matters in relation to a main male character. Women are more likely to be sexualized than men in entertainment, and degrading comments about women’s bodies and intelligence are common across all types of media. Economic power and the erasure and sexist portrayals of women through entertainment and media are not the only ways that gender comes into play. How people interact with one another at the personal level is keenly shaped by gender,

expectations of proper gender roles and behaviours, and the power structures that uphold men and degrade women (Poland, 2016). In current digital age, all these phenomena are highly reflected online through computer mediated communication (CTC), such as social media.

By exploring how Indonesian people on social media (namely Instagram and X) utilise metaphors in the construction of their impolite portrayal of women, this study can particularly be useful to look at metaphor as a strategy for causing offence, since impoliteness-via-metaphor can pack a particularly rich semantic punch. With that said, this study discovered four types of metaphor conceptualising the target domain of WOMAN. The first one is WOMAN IS ANIMAL, the second one is WOMAN IS COMMODITY, next is WOMAN IS (SEXUAL) OBJECT, and lastly WOMAN IS BELOW MAN. There is also the fifth type of metaphor: WOMAN IS IMPURE. However, the number of data accounted for this fifth type is very little compared to the other four types of metaphor. Therefore, this discussion will largely focus only on the four main types.

As the findings on part 4 of this study has shown, the first three types of metaphors were equally used by Indonesians in social media and have equally the same amount of obtained data. This means, in Indonesian society, women are equally conceptualised as ANIMAL, COMMODITY, and (SEXUAL) OBJECT. Although all three of them are equally used, the degree of offence each of it causes is a little bit different.

Firstly, in WOMAN IS ANIMAL, women were described metaphorically as animal. It is widely noticed that simply referring humans as (other) animals conveys a very negative evaluation and perceived as very dehumanising or degrading. With that said, the most offensive animal metaphors usually involve disliked animals such as snakes, rats, and leeches, which lead to moral disgust through associations of depravity and disagreeableness. As for the case of Indonesian people and their society, the animal metaphors mostly used to offend other people are *dog* and *pig*. This is because the cultural associations of Indonesians with *dogs* and *pigs* are rather negative. In Islam, *dogs* and *pigs* are mentioned to be one of *haram* (not allowed) animals and consequently, as a country with the highest number of Muslim, most Indonesians see *dogs* and *pigs* as unpleasant animals. Therefore, calling someone else as either a dog or a pig is something derogatory. However, this does not apply only to Muslim's society in Indonesia because a lot of other societies with different believes also use animal as a metaphor in their impolite utterances. Interestingly, the extensive use of the hashtag #dasarbetina, despite being unacceptable, also plays a big role on portraying how being a human woman in Indonesia is equal to being a female animal than to men.

Another metaphor is WOMAN IS COMMODITY, where women are specifically portrayed as transactional materials that can be bought, sold, and owned by other human (mostly by men) like livestock and pets. In this study, the common words used in transactional context were found, such as *expensive*, *cheap*, *sell*, *sale*, *pay*, *cost*, and *price*. Drawing from this result, it is obvious that this outcome was driven by a combination of social views of women as inferior to men and as sexual objects. This is linguistically in line with a previous study done in Italian and French by Baider and Gesuato (2013; as cited in Demjen & Hardaker, 2016).

Similarly, in WOMAN IS (SEXUAL) OBJECT, women are portrayed as merely objects or properties that can be *used*, *marked*, and *break*. To add, body related metonymies were also used as frequent type of figurative reference to impoliteness. For instance, *vagina* and *penis*. Metonymies such as these generally communicate negative evaluations through depersonalisation, similar to animal metaphors. As well-documented, women are more

frequently reduced to their sexual organs via metonymy than men (Gervais et al., 2012; Weatherall, 2002). Accordingly, the results of this study highlight the patriarchal view in Indonesia that women are positioned hierarchically beneath men, as evidenced by the findings for WOMAN IS BELOW MAN, but also that they are expected to remain within the domestic sphere.

To conclude, current study is qualitative in nature and focused on a small and very specific dataset (forty-eight data). However, as mentioned by Demjen & Hardaker (2016), metaphors being used specifically to cause offence has not been receiving much attention. Especially in the realm of sexism. Despite of the fact that there are plenty of studies focus on metaphor and its functions, there is only a few on metaphor's direct involvement in offence. Nevertheless, although there is limited literature on metaphors specifically to cause offence, it does not mean that metaphors (and other tropes such as simile and metonymy) do not occur in insults and offensive comments. This fact is highly proven in this paper. Therefore, the outcome of this study is expected to provide contribution to the development of literature and studies in not only metaphors and impoliteness theories, but also cyber-sexism. Moreover, despite the limited works of literature, the study of metaphor uses in impolite sexism utterances is still very wide and requires more investigation in various other aspects. Hence, further investigation in this field is very encouraged.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

The author declares that Grammarly, an AI-assisted writing software, was used in proofreading and refining the language used in the manuscript. The usage was limited to correcting grammatical and spelling errors and rephrasing statements for accuracy and clarity. The author further declares that, apart from Grammarly, no other AI or AI-assisted technologies have been used to generate content in writing the manuscript. The ideas, design, procedures, findings, analyses, and discussion are originally written and derived from careful and systematic conduct of the research.

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Contact email: dhanisa.kamila@gmail.com