

Don't Mess Around! Indonesian Netizens' Offensive Language on Instagram in the Context of Couple Conflicts (Sociopragmatics Approach)

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Abstract: *This research aims to uncover the types of offensive language used by Indonesian netizens on Instagram in the context of couple conflicts and how the level of offensive language is influenced by gender. The researcher used the theories of Jay (1992), Wilson (2021), and Newman, et al. (2008) to analyze the objective. Spradley's (1980) analysis technique was used in this qualitative study, with the method involving documentation of comments in the comment sections of accounts related to couple conflicts. 515 data points were collected, most of which resulted from interactions by female netizens. The results show that insults and slurs are the most common types of offensive language, while the level used by both male and female netizens tends to be mild, with a difference of 1.9% compared to the moderate level. This research provides insights into the patterns of offensive language use in the context of couple conflicts on social media, as well as an understanding of how social dynamics, such as gender and their interactions can influence the use of offensive language.*

Keywords: *offensive language, netizen, Instagram*

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap jenis bahasa kasar yang digunakan oleh netizen Indonesia di Instagram dalam konteks konflik pasangan, serta bagaimana tingkat bahasa kasar dipengaruhi oleh gender. Peneliti menggunakan teori dari Jay (1992), Wilson (2021), dan Newman, dkk. (2008) untuk menganalisis tujuan tersebut. Teknik analisis Spradley (1980) digunakan dalam studi kualitatif ini, dengan metode yang melibatkan dokumentasi komentar di kolom komentar akun-akun yang terkait dengan konflik pasangan. Sebanyak 515 data dikumpulkan, sebagian besar berasal dari interaksi oleh netizen perempuan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penghinaan dan makian adalah jenis bahasa kasar yang paling umum digunakan, sementara tingkat kekasaran penggunaan bahasa kasar oleh netizen laki-laki dan perempuan cenderung tingkat ringan, dengan perbedaan sebesar 1,9% dibandingkan dengan tingkat sedang. Penelitian ini memberikan wawasan tentang pola penggunaan bahasa kasar dalam konteks konflik pasangan di sosial media, serta pemahaman dinamika sosial seperti gender dan interaksinya dapat mempengaruhi penggunaan bahasa kasar.

Kata kunci: *bahasa kasar, warga internet, Instagram*

1. PENDAHULUAN

Offensive language, or hate speech on social media, is considered a complex topic, especially given the abundance of offensive language in comment sections (Poletto et al., 2021). There are various reasons why someone might use offensive language, including, according to Guo & Johnson (2020), to insult, provoke, and attack someone or a group on social media. Ultimately, the root of the problem is the dislike that netizens have towards someone, which they then channel through comments on social media. Infidelity issues or couple conflicts are among the topics most 'favored' by Indonesian netizens, as evidenced by the many cases of couple conflicts that go viral due to the substantial amount of scorn and their influence on the public (Bukhori & Nugroho, 2023). On the other hand, the phenomenon of offensive language in social media is hypothesized to have disparities in the tendencies of type and level of offensive language influenced by gender. Gender and language have long been interesting topics for scholars (Arief, Yassi & Sahib, 2022). However, in this study, the focus is not on how gender and language mutually influence each individual, but rather on how one or a group of people express their views through (crude) language used towards the gender they encounter. A sociopragmatic approach is necessary for this research as a lens through which researchers view the related topic. Leech (1983) & Thomas (1983) define sociopragmatics as the study of users' perceptions of contextual factors, including perceived socio-cultural norms, which underpin the interpretation and execution of communicative acts as (in)appropriate.

Huang & Su (in Keerakiatwong, 2023) stated that the majority of female Instagram users use Instagram as a means to get the latest information, interact, and connect with friends digitally. The development of the intersection between the phenomenon of couple conflicts on Instagram, followed by offensive language, involves exploring the types and purposes, and then comparing the tendencies of the types and levels of offensive language itself. This has become the foundational aim of this research. To connect with the topic, see the example in Figure 1:



Figure 1. Offensive Language on @teukuryantr Instagram comments

In Figure 1 above, there is a screenshot of one of the comments on a post from the Instagram account @teukuryantr, who is now the ex-husband of a famous YouTuber, Ria Ricis. The viral domestic conflict since last year has been followed by their followers on both of their Instagram accounts. As of Thursday, May 2, 2024, they have been officially reported to be divorced. After the reason behind their divorce was revealed, netizens hurled many insults at Teuku Ryan's account. One of the offensive terms used by a netizen was the word *mokondo*, which is a slang term referring to someone who lacks the means to sustain their life, especially in terms of material (financial) or even skills. In short, *mokondo* is directed at someone who only wants freebies and 'lives off' others. Using Jay's (1992) theory, this comment is classified as a type of offensive language in the form of slang. Jay explains that slang is vocabulary developed within certain groups (teenagers, musicians, soldiers, drug users, or athletes) to facilitate communication. This offensive language is intended to express the netizen's negative (hateful) feelings. The term is categorized as mild in terms of offensive language severity.

This research offers novelty by focusing on the differences in types and levels of offensive language used, as well as how gender influences the use of such language on social media. Although there is extensive research on gender and language, this study focuses on how a group or

individual expresses their views through harsh language towards the gender they encounter. Additionally, this research employs a sociopragmatic approach, which has not been widely applied in studies on offensive language on social media. Thus, this study provides a new perspective in understanding the dynamics of offensive language in specific social and cultural contexts.

This research has several important benefits, both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it contributes to the scientific literature related to offensive language and hate speech on social media, particularly in the Indonesian context. By using a sociopragmatic approach, this research enriches theories on how social and cultural factors influence the use of offensive language. Additionally, it provides new insights into the interaction between gender and the use of offensive language on social media, thus serving as a reference for future studies focused on similar topics. Practically, the results of this research can be used as a basis for formulating more effective policies in addressing hate speech on social media by the government and social media platform providers. This research also offers guidelines for social media managers in identifying and mitigating offensive language, as well as improving communication ethics on their platforms. By revealing the phenomenon of offensive language and its impacts, this research can raise public awareness about the importance of maintaining communication ethics on social media. Furthermore, the findings can be used to develop educational programs or social campaigns aimed at reducing the use of offensive language and promoting more positive and constructive communication on social media.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The topic of offensive language or hate speech has been widely discussed and has attracted the attention of researchers, especially in the field of linguistics. Nurfarida (2016) has studied the politeness of communication on Instagram, which shares a similar topic on the use of language on social media as a phenomenon reflecting language diversity and development within speech communities. The object of this research also utilizes Instagram with a different context of Ahok's leadership. Nurfarida employs Brown & Levinson's theory (1987) to analyze the politeness strategies used by netizens. Brown & Levinson (1987) state that there are four politeness strategies, namely positive politeness, negative politeness, bald on record, and off record. The results show that the strategy predominantly used is positive politeness; people give positive responses to Ahok's policies and support his leadership.

Arief, Yassi, & Sahib (2022) analyzed how gender influences politeness strategies in a TV show (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians*). They stated that gender affects language style especially in employing politeness strategy. This research tends to analyze language style rather than categorizing the types of language used. However, the focus of this research still revolves around politeness, in which they also use the theory framework of Brown and Levinson (1987). The data in this study is a transcript of American people's utterances in the movie. The results of the study show that men tend to use in-group markers and pay attention to the listener's aspect. American women also like to offer help and maintain relationships by relating to each other. They give compliments more often than men.

Marta, Alfandi, & Larassati (2022) discussed swear words in hate speech in their research with the aim of uncovering information about various forms and functions of swear words. The research cases addressed in this study include the case of Gaga Muhammad for drunk driving, which caused his girlfriend, Laura Anna, to suffer a serious accident in 2019. Also, the case of Rachel Vennya, a celebrity who bribed quarantine officers to escape from the quarantine period. Gaga and Rachel received many protests and

hate speech from Indonesian netizens. They used Muslich's theory (2008) for the analysis of the purpose of this research. Hate speech, on the other hand, can be considered another term or derivative of offensive language, but in this case, the research focus is only on swear words. The data sources they used came from the @detik.com accounts on Twitter and Instagram. The results of the data analysis include: 1) abbreviations, 2) clippings, 3) associations, 4) monophthongized words, 5) words that lose vowels, 6) words formed from improvised original words, 7) use of foreign languages, and 8) changes in meaning in a sentence. 9) words with connotations. So far, this research does not associate gender roles within it.

Aporbo (2023) discovered the phenomenon of hate speech within a nation and explored the dynamics between social media celebrities and their followers. According to Aporbo, social media has revolutionized the way people engage, interpret, and react to online discussions. This study examined the role of celebrities as sources of information on social media during elections in the Philippines. Researchers utilized two theories: online persona theory and Crystal's language and technology theory to analyze celebrity posts and hostile fan comments. Data were gathered from Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Key findings include the prevalence of toxic online discourse during the election period, the predominance of celebrities utilizing the public dimension (41%), and the use of aggressive language strategies by social media fans, such as graphology (88%), bald-on-record (33%), and sarcasm or mock politeness (33%). Two primary triggering mechanisms were identified: the context surrounding celebrity posts and the behavior of social media fans in their language use. This suggests that celebrities play a significant role in disseminating information during elections. A similarity with this research lies in the use of sociopragmatics as its approach and its exploration of the language domain within social media.

Tahir & Ramadhan (2024) investigated the phenomenon of hateful comments by Indonesian netizens related to the 2024 presidential election in a YouTube talk show uploaded in 2023. They examined the types of hateful comments that appeared on social media related to the 2024 presidential election and identified contributing factors to hate comments. In this regard, they used Elfrieda and Pasaribu's theory (2023). The findings indicated early warning (43%), dehumanization and demonization (21%), violence and incitement (19%), and offensive language (17%). The results also showed that anonymity and personality traits were contributing factors. However, this research is still related to hate speech but with different platforms and contexts.

The previous studies presented show a variety of research on offensive language, which is actually an umbrella term encompassing swear words, hate speech, politeness and impoliteness, among others. The fact that no one has yet researched the objectives proposed by the researcher has created a gap that highlights the necessity and importance of this study. Therefore, the researcher formulates the problem as follows: what types of offensive language are used by Indonesian netizens on Instagram in the context of couple conflicts? And how does the tendency for the level of offensive language differ between genders? To identify the types of offensive language, the researcher relies on Jay's (1992) theory of offensive language types. Jay (1992) posits that there are ten types of offensive language, including cursing, profanity, blasphemy, taboo, obscenity, vulgarity, slang, epithets, insults and slurs, and scatology. Finally, the researcher utilizes Wilson's (2021) theory to measure the tendency for offensive language to be influenced by gender, so that ultimately comparisons can be revealed. To appropriate the result, this research used the theory of

language and gender (Newman, et al., 2008).

2.1.1. Offensive Language Definition

Offensive language is language that contains rough or vulgar words/phrases (Turaob & Mitranont, 2017). Offensive language is defined as any type of rude or insulting words (Sigurbergsson & Derczynski, 2023). It is a broad category that encompasses various forms of impolite and coarse language, ranging from common swear words to more severe types of language such as hate speech. Hate speech is considered part of offensive language and is characterized by targeting a group with the intention to harm or cause social disorder, often based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, or religion. However, Wijana & Rohmadi (2010) and Turaob & Mitranont (2017) have their own views, adding a note that not all offensive language is considered hate speech. Offensive language can be used in various contexts, such as jokes or informal conversations to express familiarity, and it can also be used to express surprise or amazement at an event or phenomenon. However, the use of offensive language on social media can be dangerous as it can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts among users (Ibrahim & Budi, 2023).

In the context of Indonesia, offensive language often includes words that are considered derogatory, disgusting, or too taboo to be mentioned in public. Offensive language is seen as language that does not adhere to societal norms and can have negative impacts on individuals' self-esteem or well-being, making them feel uncomfortable, humiliated, hurt, or fearful (Al- Zawawi & Al-Ghizzy, 2022). Jay (1992), on the other hand, defines offensive language as offensiveness related to the repulsive nature of words or concepts and their potential taboo status. Offensive language consists of words or phrases that can negatively impact individuals, causing discomfort or insult (O'Driscoll, 2020).

2.1.2. Types and Levels of Offensive Language

Jay (1992) classifies offensive language into ten types:

1. Cursing: The purpose of cursing is to cause harm to others through the use of specific words or phrases. These words gain significant power through religious or social markers. Example: *D*mn you!*
2. Profanity: Based on religious differences, being rough implies being secular or behaving outside religious customs. Being rough means being ignorant or intolerant of the guidelines of a particular religious order. Example: *Jesus Christ, can you be quiet?*
3. Blasphemy: Blasphemy is an attack on religion or religious doctrines. While roughness is related to secular or indifference (towards religion), blasphemy directly targets the church or its equivalent. Example: *God is a joke.*
4. Taboo: Taboo functions to suppress or inhibit certain behaviors, thoughts, and expressions. Different cultures use taboos to maintain social order, and the power of taboos is relative to the controlling group's power to impose sanctions or punish offenders. The function of taboos is to prohibit speaker behavior and maintain social coherence. Example: *D*ck.*
5. Obscenity: Refers to words or expressions that crudely describe anatomy distinguishing between genders or sexual and excretory functions. Vulgar words are considered the most obscene and are rarely used in public media. Example: *F*ck off!*
6. Vulgarity: Means the language of ordinary people, "street language", or people who are uneducated or less educated. Vulgarity does not serve any specific needs or functions beyond the demands of normal human communication. Example: *That movie was crap!*

7. Slang: This is vocabulary developed within specific groups (teenagers, musicians, soldiers, drug users, or athletes) to facilitate communication. Slang functions to identify group members, while its use or ignorance identifies non-members, which may be crucial in illegal transactions. Example: *Jelly roll* (Jay, 1992)
8. Epithets: It is a short but powerful burst of emotional language. Epithets are stronger in presentation (yesterday or duration) and impoliteness than other types of cursing, for example, jokes. Example: *You idiot!*
9. Insult and Slurs: These are verbal attacks on others. These words are spoken to hurt others solely by the word itself. Insults and mockery do not always derive their power from religious sanctions or social taboos but gain strength by highlighting real or imagined characteristics of the target. Example: *You stupid loser!*
10. Scatology: Refers to the products and processes of human waste. Example: *You're full of sh*t!*

In this context, the researcher establishes a connection between the outlined types and the findings from Wilson's study (2021). This research involves the classification of the severity levels of offensive words, divided into three categories: mild (unlikely to cause concern in most situations and requiring limited context), moderate (having a greater potential for offense than mild words and requiring a higher level of context), and strong (perceived as highly offensive and requiring clear and strong contextual justification).

2.1.3. (Offensive) Language and Gender

Sapolsky & Kaye (2005) stated that both men and women tend to use mild levels of coarse language. They also mentioned that several studies have found that men use coarse language more frequently than women. On the other hand, Staley (1978) noted that women are more selective in their use of offensive language. Women tend to avoid or dislike using coarse language that refers to excretion and sexuality, as well as anatomy and obscenities (Bate & Bowker, 1997). Gender is viewed as a complex socio-cultural construct related to sex, and language plays a role in this construct by reflecting and shaping the gender system (McConnell, 2003). Thus, the link between language and gender (sociolinguistics) begins here. Gender differences also lead to different responses to offensive language, with men finding it more acceptable, while women perceive it as impolite (Burgoon & Stewart, 1975; De Klerk, 1991; Mulac, Incontro, & James, 1985). The hypothesis presented by Newman's (2008) research suggests that women use more words related to psychological and social processes, while men refer more to object properties and impersonal topics. This is related to the findings of Bate & Bowker (1997) and Staley (1978).

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The main focus of this qualitative research is the analysis of the types of offensive language used by Indonesian netizens and how the level of such offensive language is influenced by gender differences. Researcher, in this research, is the main instrument. The objects of this study are couples experiencing conflicts in their relationships, chosen due to the popularity of their issues on social media, specifically Instagram. The data collected consists of comments (textual) from netizens directed at the target who are identified as guilty or blamed. These comments are taken from the comment sections of official accounts, fandom accounts, and other accounts discussing the couple's conflict issues. The

analysis is conducted through a classification process of the types of offensive language and the categorization of the levels of offensive language to identify trends. The research method focuses on determining whether the use of types and levels of offensive language yields different results and responses in the context of gender influence.

Theory Spradley (1980) is used in this qualitative research. The analysis is conducted by identifying the gender of netizens and the target (what gender) they direct offensive language towards. In this study, there are four types of interactions based on gender: women to men, women to women, men to women, and men to men. This identification is carried out by examining account names, profile pictures, post timelines, and language styles (Rubin & Greene, 1992). From these types of interactions on Instagram, the types of offensive language (Jay, 1992) and the levels (of harshness) of each type of offensive language (Wilson, 2021) are then applied.

Table 1. Componential Table of Offensive Language Types and Levels

Interaction	Cursing			Profanity			Blasphemy			Taboo			Obscenity			Vulgarity			Slang			Epithets			Insult and Slurs			Scatology		
	Mild	Moderate	Strong	Mild	Moderate	Strong	Mild	Moderate	Strong	Mild	Moderate	Strong	Mild	Moderate	Strong	Mild	Moderate	Strong	Mild	Moderate	Strong	Mild	Moderate	Strong	Mild	Moderate	Strong	Mild	Moderate	Strong
Female to Male																														
Female to Female																														
Male to Female																														
Male to Male																														

In Table 1 above, the first row lists the types of offensive language, followed by the levels of offensive language below them. On the left side, there are sections showing the interactions between netizens and their targets. Ultimately, the researchers formulated a hypothesis by summing up the comparisons of these findings.

4. DISCUSSION

Findings

Testing several cases of couples considered popular and receiving a lot of responses from Indonesian netizens, including Ria Ricis-Tengku Ryan, Inara Rusli-Virgoun, Ira Nandha- Elmer Syaherman (with Bella Damaika), Jeje Govinda-Syahnaz Syadiqah (with Rendy Kjaernett), Ririe Fairus-Ayus Sabyan (with Nissa Sabyan), Norma Risma-Rozi Zay (with Rihanah), and Fenny Frans-Atox Daeng Sila (with Mamli). The findings (515 data) indicate the largest tendency for interaction in responding to couple conflicts on Instagram lies with women, with the following comparison:

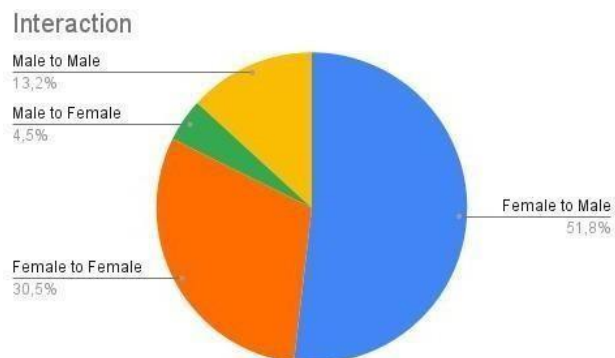


Diagram 1. Interaction

In the diagram above, the results show that women are more engaged in responding to couple conflict cases. The aggregation of interaction results based on netizen gender is 82.3% for women, with a breakdown of 51.8% of them criticizing male targets, while the remaining 30.5% criticize women. As for other interactions, it comprises 17.7% for men, with details showing that 13.2% of men tend to criticize male targets, while the least finding indicates that offensive language from men is least directed towards women, with a result of 4.5%.

Among the ten types of offensive language (Jay, 1992), there are nine types of offensive language used by Indonesian netizens in responding to couple conflicts on Instagram. Blasphemy is the type of offensive language that is not used. The data results are as follows:

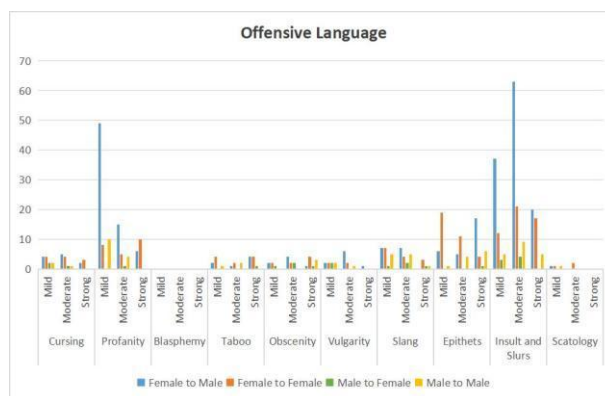


Diagram 2. Types and Level of Offensive Language

In Diagram 2 above, it's evident that insults and slurs are the most common findings, with the highest interaction from female to male. Insults and slurs contain mockery and insults towards the target, either based on facts about what the target did or fantasies/fabrications from the netizens themselves. The most common level of usage in the insults and slurs type is moderate or medium, where at this level, the target would feel disturbed. This is appropriate because in insults and slurs, indirectly, in most data findings, they express reasons why they dislike the target. Here are some example findings from this type of offensive language:

Table 2. Data Sample

Types	Sample	Meaning
Cursing	"Mampussss" "Rasain slapa suruh masti boong dan pajokitu..." "PENGKHIANAT DAN PENGGODA LAYAK HANCUR BERSAMA"	"Die!" "Feel that! Who told you to keep lying and cornering..." "TRAITORS AND TEMPTRESSES DESERVE TO BE DESTROYED TOGETHER"
Profanity	"Bikin malu" "Burik lebih menantang" "...otaknya eeser"	"So embarrassing!" "Ugly is more challenging" "... (the) brain is off/misplaced"
Blasphemy	-	-
Taboo	"modal kont doang" "bapak kont*1" "crok"	"Only got by with your d*ck" "Your dad is a d*ck" "Splat" (often used to imitate the sound of ejaculation).
Obscenity	"Rozi Rozi... dikasih susu FRESHMILK malah milik susu FERMENTASI" "Atas beridung bawah warung" "Enaaak gayanannya... kalah anaknya"	"Rozi, Rozi... given FRESH MILK but prefers FERMENTED MILK" (Fresh Milk refers to young lady's breast, while Fermented Milk refersto old lady's breast) "Hijab on top, shop underneath" (implying that the person is religious or modest on the surface, but behaves otherwise) "The moves are so good... even her daughter can't compete"
Vulgarity	"Si cawok malah fucekboi" "Tanpa ria ricis dia hanya pengungsi Rohingya" "boti"	"The guy has a f*ckboy face" "Without Ria Ricis, he is just a Rohingya refugee" "boti" (a term referring to gay men who position themselves as 'female/more feminine')
Slang	"Mokondo!!" "Manis di gyal PERMEN KARET" "Pugen nano2"	"Only got by with your d*ck!" (or <i>Modal kont*1 doang</i> is a slang that refer to men who want (usually) freebies or just 'such' capital) "Sweet at first, like chewing gum" "Want something mixed/varied" (Referring to the Indonesian candy Nano-Nano, which has a mix of flavors: sweet, sour, and salty. This phrase implies wanting something with mixed sensations or experiences.)
Epithets	"Si tolol" "Selingkuh bok sm genderowo" "...kang colay..."	"The idiot" "Cheating with a demon?" "...the masturbation guy..." (<i>Colay</i> from the word <i>coli</i> is a term for masturbating)
Insult and Slurs	"Brewok meresahkan" "cok ganteng sapunya duit numpang tenar lagi" "Ganteng DOANG... NUMPANG IDUP MODAL NGAMBEK 500 JT MASUK REKENING... ENAKNYOOOOO JD ANAK MAMI"	"Beard (man) is troubling" "Act like as if he's so handsome, has no money, riding on fame again" "Just handsome. Living off others, throws a tantrum and gets 500 million in his account. How nice it is to be a mama's boy"
Scatology	"Hueeee" "SAMPAH" "eek"	The sound of someone vomiting "TRASH" "sh*t"

The level of offensive language commonly used in the context of targeting couples' conflicts on Instagram is Mild, with a ratio not significantly different from the Moderate level. Meanwhile, the Strong level itself is the least used, but of course, the Strong level has a greater impact on 'bringing down' the target. The Strong level is the highest level where the words of insult uttered will make the target feel very disturbed or even have fatal consequences.

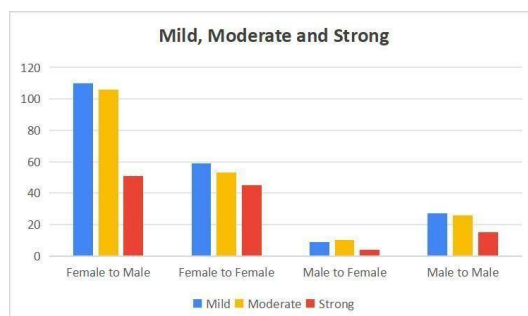


Diagram 4. Mild, Moderate and Strong

If we look at Diagram 4 above and compare the responses of female netizens to the target, the results are indeed quite different. Walker (1994) found that men focus on shared activities, while women prioritize shared feelings. So, it can be concluded that women indeed use offensive language as a means to express their feelings.

Discussion

The tendency of female netizens to interact in Instagram comments in the context of couple conflicts indicates that content related to couple conflicts easily captures women's attention. This is consistent with Huang & Su's (2018) research, which states that women engage more on Instagram than men. Women are often labeled as highly sensitive to emotions, being more emotional than men (Nilsen & Vrana, 1998), thus in this case, women are involved or participate in experiencing the suffering of victims and harboring hatred towards the target. Therefore, couple conflicts are more responded to by women. From the analysis results, it is also found that couple conflicts are often caused by infidelity, especially infidelity caused by men, resulting in the majority of targets of offensive language being men and, of course, being directed by female netizens. This is supported by a survey conducted by the General Social Survey (GSS), where men are more likely to engage in infidelity compared to women, with 20% of men and 13% of women reported engaging in infidelity (Wang, 2018). Consistent with this, research by Munsch (in Karima, 2022) states that men are significantly more likely to be involved in infidelity than women. Among the observed men and women, 12% of men cheated while only 9% of women did.

Moreover, couple conflicts are usually presented in news related to gossip. The term gossip itself is closely associated with women. According to Rysman (cited in Mouly & Michelson, 2000), some suggest that the inconsistent use of the term gossip is used by men as an expression such as “a man who talks too much” is often called “an old woman”. Returning to the focal point, men, in this case, become the minority in their interaction in responding to couple conflicts on Instagram. Men tend to respond less to matters related to couple conflicts, and in the data found, men who utter offensive language only mention a few words, which is in stark contrast to women.

Regarding the types of offensive language, as outlined in the findings above, it shows that men tend to interact more with other men than with women. Although the results indicate that the type of offensive language used by men tends to employ profanity, which are offensive words carrying coarse (non-obscene) elements/usually associated with something related to religion, this does not negate the fact that men also dominate the use of slang. On the other hand, according to Staley (1978), women indeed tend to be more discerning and selective in the offensive language they use. Women tend to use insults and slurs to express negative feelings and to entertain others. Bebee (in Culpeper, 2011) states that there are at least four purposes of expressing offensive language: to vent negative feelings, to gain power, to directly attack the hearer, and to entertain others. The insults and slurs used by female netizens, in this case, contain factual reasons why they vilify the target. On the other hand, blasphemy in this context is not used at all. This can be considered reasonable because blasphemy itself is offensive language that contains religious desecration. Blasphemy might be found in Instagram comments related to national or religious conflicts, such as the Israel- Palestine conflict.

In classifying the level of offensiveness, researchers have identified these three levels.

Look at the following examples as a comparison of mild, moderate, and strong:



Figure 2. Mild (above), Moderate (mid), and Strong (below)

The research findings on the expression levels used by both genders also align with the findings of Sapolsky & Kaye (2005), which state that both men and women tend to use the mild level. However, the results also show that the difference in the use of the moderate level is not negligible. The difference between them is only 1.9%, almost the same. In interactions from female to female, female to male, and male to male, the results indicate a tendency to use the mild level, while male to female interactions tend to be moderate, with a slight difference noted. Men are traditionally expected to be a group that is anti-derogatory and considered malicious when vilifying women. Thus, a significant difference occurs when men insult women compared to when women insult men, which is related to gender stereotype acceptance. Furthermore, the prevailing perception is that using foul language is acceptable for men but inappropriate behavior for women (Burgoon & Stewart, 1975; De Klerk, 1991; Mulac, Incontro, & James, 1985). This means there is a difference in how men and women perceive the use of foul language. Women tend to be more offended by the use of foul language by men, and vice versa. So, although some men may still perceive women who use foul language as “impolite” or “masculine”, this perception varies depending on context and individuals.

In conducting this research, the results may be evaluated as ‘subjective’ depending on the prevailing circumstances. As previously mentioned, field facts indicate that men are more likely to cheat/be the cause of couple conflicts. This might differ when comparing countries that have similar or equivalent ratios in terms of male and female infidelity, for example. Weaknesses in the data search process include the treatment given by the target, such as when the target locks/deletes their account, disables the comment feature, or when the target hires buzzers to defend them, causing accounts containing insults to be buried/rarely seen. However, there are also treatments provided by Instagram itself, such as hiding comments deemed offensive. Certainly, offensive language can be uncomfortable to read, but this can be considered reasonable for the comfort of Instagram users themselves in creating a safe and comfortable environment. Additionally, comments containing offensive language can still be accessed if needed.

5. CONCLUSION

The study investigates the types of offensive language used by Indonesian netizens on Instagram during couple conflicts, based on Jay’s (1992) classification of ten types of offensive language, namely; cursing, profanity, blasphemy, taboo, obscenity, vulgarity,

slang, epithets, insult and slurs, and scatology. It also explores how the level of offensive language varies between genders, utilizing Wilson’s (2021) theory to measure tendencies influenced by gender. The level is divided into three stages; mild, moderate and strong. The research employs a sociopragmatic lens to examine users’ perceptions of socio-cultural norms and the appropriateness of communicative acts. The study found that female netizens are more active in responding to couple conflicts on Instagram, with a significant majority criticizing male targets. Insults and slurs were the most common types of offensive language used, with a tendency for moderate severity in the context of couple conflicts. Meanwhile, the type of blasphemy is not used at all. This might be found when the research subject is closely related to religious conflicts or environments that are highly religiously fanatical. The level of offensive language commonly used was mild, closely followed by moderate severity, while strong language was used the least but had a more significant impact.

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