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DYSPHEMISM IN SUNDANESE COMMENT COLUMNS ON SOCIAL MEDIA NEWS: A SOCIOPRAGMATIC STUDY OF THE RIDWAN KAMIL–LISA MARIANA CASE

(Penggunaan Disfemisme dalam Ruang Komen Berita Media Sosial Berbahasa Sunda: Satu Kajian Sosiopragmatik terhadap Kes Ridwan Kamil–Lisa Mariana)

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ABSTRACT

While rapid digitalisation facilitates online cross-cultural communication, it also accelerates the proliferation of online impoliteness, particularly through the weaponisation of regional languages in political discourse. This study aims to investigate the sociopragmatic use of Sundanese-language dysphemism in social media comment sections, specifically focusing on the viral controversy involving public figures Ridwan Kamil and Lisa Mariana on Instagram. In conducting this research, we opted for a qualitative descriptive approach with purposive sampling. A final sample of 24 comments was extracted from platform X and Instagram, specifically from Ridwan Kamil's official accounts and related trending news pages between March 2025 and August 2025, using observation and recording techniques. The data were then analysed and categorised based on Allan and Burridge's (1991) framework of dysphemism. The results indicate that netizen responses come out as abusive language that can be put into two main groups: (1) taboo language that goes along with taboo actions, and (2) derogatory swearing. The latter frequently appears through human-to-animal comparisons, nicknames targeting physical conditions, nicknames related to mental disorders, and expressions of contempt toward an individual's character. Practically, these insights serve as a critical reflection on digital etiquette and regional language literacy, highlighting the pressing need for character development and healthier online interaction guidelines among the younger generation. This study offers a significant contextual contribution to sociopragmatics by explicitly mapping how a regional language (Sundanese) is utilised as a tool for digital aggression within contemporary Indonesian political discourse, a domain under-explored in previous literature.

Keywords: Social media discourse, dysphemism, online impoliteness, sociopragmatics, Sundanese language.

ABSTRAK

Pendigitalan yang pesat bukan sahaja memudahkan komunikasi rentas budaya secara dalam talian, malah turut mempercepatkan penyebaran ketidaksantunan dalam talian, khususnya melalui penggunaan bahasa daerah sebagai senjata dalam wacana politik. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menyiasat penggunaan disfemisme dalam bahasa Sunda dari sudut sosiopragmatik dalam ruangan komen media sosial, dengan memberi tumpuan khusus kepada kontroversi tular yang melibatkan tokoh awam Ridwan Kamil dan Lisa Mariana di Instagram. Dalam menjalankan kajian ini, kami memilih pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dengan persampelan bertujuan. Sebanyak 24 komen dipilih sebagai sampel akhir daripada platform X dan Instagram, khususnya daripada akaun rasmi Ridwan Kamil serta halaman berita berkaitan yang sedang tular antara Mac 2025 hingga Ogos 2025, menggunakan teknik pemerhatian dan rakaman. Data tersebut kemudiannya dianalisis dan dikategorikan berdasarkan kerangka disfemisme Allan dan Burridge (1991). Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa respons netizen muncul dalam bentuk bahasa kesat yang boleh dibahagikan kepada dua kumpulan utama, iaitu (1) bahasa tabu yang berkaitan dengan tindakan tabu, dan (2) makian yang bersifat menghina. Kategori kedua kerap muncul melalui perbandingan manusia dengan haiwan, gelaran yang menyasarkan keadaan fizikal, gelaran yang berkaitan dengan gangguan mental, serta ungkapan penghinaan terhadap perwatakan seseorang individu. Dari sudut praktikal, dapatan ini berfungsi sebagai refleksi kritikal terhadap etika digital dan literasi bahasa daerah, di samping menonjolkan keperluan mendesak terhadap pembangunan sahsiah serta garis panduan interaksi dalam talian yang lebih sihat dalam kalangan generasi muda. Kajian ini memberikan sumbangan kontekstual yang signifikan kepada bidang sosiopragmatik dengan memetakan secara jelas bagaimana bahasa daerah (bahasa Sunda) digunakan sebagai alat agresi digital dalam wacana politik kontemporari di Indonesia, suatu domain yang masih kurang diterokai dalam kajian terdahulu.

Kata kunci: *Wacana media sosial, disfemisme, ketidaksantunan dalam talian, sosiopragmatik, bahasa Sunda.*

INTRODUCTION

Communication is a mechanism for transmitting cultural norms in society, either horizontally between one society and another or vertically, from one generation to the next (Mulyana, 2017, p. 7). Meanwhile, strategy can essentially be understood as a plan for achieving a goal. In other words, different goals require different strategies. Thus, a communication strategy refers to the approach that a communicator adopts to convey a message to the intended audience to achieve a specific goal. Communication strategy, therefore, is concerned with questions such as what message is conveyed, through which medium, and to what desired effect (Mudjiono, 2007, p. 126).

The rapid advancement of digital technology brings both positive and negative impacts to communication which has been facilitated through various media and platforms, including mobile phones that support social media applications such as *TikTok*, *Instagram*, *Line*, *WhatsApp*, *YouTube*, *online newspapers*, and others. These social media platforms reveal multiple applications of foreign languages, cognate languages, as well as regional languages, including Indonesian language.

Suganda et al. (2022) investigate how emotional expressions function as markers of impoliteness in Indonesian Instagram comment sections. Through a pragmatic analysis of user comments, their research identifies that emotions such as anger, sarcasm, resentment, and mockery are frequently encoded through lexical choices, emotive intensifiers, and digital paralinguistic features. These emotional expressions serve not only to convey affect but also to perform face-threatening acts, often escalating interpersonal conflict in online discourse. The findings highlight how social media interaction in Indonesia blends emotional expression with impoliteness strategies, illustrating the dynamic relationship between digital communication, affect, and pragmatic norms.

A study conducted by Tuan Ibharim and Alimi (2024) examines the subtitling of Malay taboo language into English in the film *The Assistant* (2022), which is streamed on Netflix. The analysis focuses on how various taboo expressions, ranging from sexual references, insults, scatology, animal-based derogations, death-related expressions, and sexist remarks, are rendered in English subtitles. The findings reveal that taboo expressions in the source text are predominantly explicit, dysphemistic, and frequently delivered in exclamatory form.

The ease of access and use of different languages on these platforms have proven to be useful for language learners. They can freely and sometimes for a fee observe how language is used and gain insights that expand their knowledge and horizons. Internet users, worldwide, readily access and comment on information related to science, politics, public figures, and celebrities, both positively and negatively.

Unfortunately, any internet posts containing offensive speech, taboo expressions, or swearing can have harmful impacts as they are prone to public criticism and may be imitated by younger audiences. This aspect of internet use requires serious attention, as it may be detrimental to character development. Educational, cultural, and linguistic approaches are therefore needed to address this issue.

The following is an example of taboo speech by Gus Miftah to an iced tea seller during a public event, which should not have been spoken by a Muslim preacher and public figure like him.

- (1) Gus Miftah : Es tehmu isih akeh? (Literal translation: You still got plenty of iced tea?)
Penjual es teh : Isih (Literal translation: Yes)
Gus Miftah : Ya kono di dol, *goblok*. Dolen di'se, engko ne ora payu, wes takdir.
(Literal translation: Try selling it first; if it doesn't sell, then call it destiny.)

The context of this exchange of dialogue has resulted in Gus Miftah receiving public attention for making fun of an iced tea seller during an event. In a video that went viral (See <https://kmp.im/plus6> & <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XdRIYeUD6f4>, minute 1.04), he used inappropriate language toward a man selling iced tea among the audience in the event. During this event, Miftah as the President's Special Envoy for Religious Harmony and Development of Religious Facilities, uttered the taboo word *goblok* ("stupid" or "foolish"). The official Indonesian dictionary, *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI) (n.d.), categorises *goblok* as an offensive slur meant to demean someone by highlighting their perceived personal or mental flaws. Based on the data compiled by Idzni (2024), the Indonesian language features a remarkably wide vocabulary for intellectual insults, listing 13 distinct synonyms for *goblok*. These terms span several linguistic nuances, for instance, for general simple-mindedness the words *bambung* or *beloon* is used, the words *bebal*, *domot*, *dongok*, or *dungu* is used for slow comprehension. For severe or historically clinical definitions of low intelligence, the most common used words are *bego*, *goblok*, *tolol*, and *debil*. The vocabulary also covers specific situational ignorance (*jahil*), innate foolishness (*pandir*), and a narrow worldview (*picik*). The word 'idiot' can be categorised into the fifth type of dysphemism, as the swear word indicates a person's state of mental disorder (Allan & Burridge, 1991, pp.148-149), for instance, the words 'idiot,' 'autistic,' 'crazy,' and many more. This is supported by Wijana and Rochmadi (as cited in Laili, 2017, p.112) who categorises the word *goblok* into a type of swear from the term used in mental disability.

Careless use of such a taboo word can potentially hurt the addressee's feelings, does not conform to politeness, particularly the modesty maxim, and violates Leech's politeness principle (1993, p. 206), which aims to minimise antipathy and maximise sympathy between speakers. The public criticised Miftah, and the government reprimanded him, prompting his apology to the iced seller. Gus Miftah's utterance violated the concept of face (Brown & Levinson, 1987), which prioritises negative and positive faces. Public

discourse demands a heightened awareness of the interlocutor's feelings. This principle is deeply embedded in Japanese communicative culture through the practice of *hairyo hyougen*, or "expressions that weigh feelings" (Noda et al., 2014). This linguistic framework emphasizes speech patterns that explicitly respect and protect the psychological comfort of the listener, offering a stark contrast to the confrontational nature of the utterance in question.

Leech (cited in Prayitno, 2017) stated that as a main aspect of pragmatics, sociopragmatics is related to sociology, particularly the social aspects of language use, as the sub-discipline is concerned with how social, cultural, or interpersonal norms affect the way we communicate. To understand speech, it is very important to consider its context, as different contexts can produce different meanings. Sociopragmatics provides us with tools to understand the complex social dynamics of communication.

Leech's perspective on sociopragmatics emphasises the importance of social norms and contextual factors in shaping communication. This theoretical foundation becomes particularly relevant when examining speech acts, as the way speakers convey meaning is not only determined by linguistic form but also by the social dynamics underlying the interaction. Building on this, Searle (1996) provides a classification of illocutionary acts that offers a more detailed framework for analysing how speakers perform various functions in discourse. Searle (1996) classifies illocutionary acts into five categories, namely, representative/assertive, directive, commissive, expressive, and declaration. In this study, the speech acts related to dysphemism are primarily explicit speech acts, as they serve to express the speaker's feelings and attitudes towards the situation implied in the illocution. This highlights the speaker's attitude towards the speaking partner, as it only conveys the speaker's feelings about a situation without including any element of satisfaction. However, the data also revealed instances of directive illocution in the form of suggestions and interrogations.

Today, social media posts and comments frequently and freely use various forms of dysphemism and other taboo expressions in different languages. In the Indonesian context, users often employ, and at times, combine Indonesian with ethnic or regional languages, particularly in comment sections. The use of local languages is more prominent in posts and comments related to public figures from regions where those languages are commonly spoken. A recent viral case involving Ridwan Kamil and Lisa Mariana illustrates how taboo expressions circulate in online discourse. This study draws data from the comment sections of social media posts about the alleged affair.

Ridwan Kamil (RK), born and bred in Bandung, West Java Province, is an architect whose monumental works include the Kota Baru Parahyangan and Al Jabbar Mosques. During his service as Bandung mayor (2013-2018), Kamil established Bandung as a creative and innovative city. Later, Kamil was elected as the West Java governor for the 2018-2023 period (<https://kompaspedia.kompas.id/baca/profil/tokoh/ridwan-kamil>). Meanwhile, Lisa Mariana (LM) is an Indonesian social media influencer who became publicly known after her involvement in a high-profile legal dispute with Ridwan Kamil (RK).

RK's public image as a faithful husband, reflected in his frequent use of "Si Cinta" (roughly equivalent to "my love" or "darling") as a term of endearment for his wife, Athalia Praratya, has been tarnished since allegations of an affair with LM surfaced. It has been claimed that the alleged relationship resulted in LM giving birth to a child. In response, RK has denied being the child's biological father. The results of a DNA test, which he submitted to the Criminal Investigation Agency, corroborated his claim, although LM has reportedly expressed a wish for a second opinion through another DNA test (<https://www.kompas.com/tren/read/2025/08/20/163000065/perjalanan-drama-kasus-ridwan-kamil-dan-lisa-mariana-awal-mula-hingga-hasil?page=all>).

Approached through the sociopragmatic lens, this descriptive analysis focuses on public comments posted by Sundanese-speaking social media users. Using the observation and documentation techniques, the method includes searching, collecting, and classifying data from Instagram and X (formerly known as Twitter).

This paper investigates how online commentators employ Sundanese dysphemism on social media, using a sociopragmatic perspective to analyse the viral Instagram scandal involving public figures Ridwan Kamil and Lisa Mariana. The primary objective is to unpack the pragmatic functions of these impolite expressions in digital platforms.

In this study, we employed a qualitative descriptive method within a sociopragmatic framework to investigate Sundanese-language dysphemism in digital spaces. This approach allowed us to conduct an in-depth, contextual interpretation of linguistic phenomena and the underlying pragmatic forces behind impolite online expressions. To ensure academic rigour and replicability, our research design was structured into three systematic phases, specifically, sampling, data collection, and data analysis.

Employing a qualitative descriptive approach with purposive sampling, we collected digital discourse data from multiple sources across platform X (formerly Twitter) and Instagram. These sources comprised Ridwan Kamil's official accounts, trending news pages, and several public accounts actively broadcasting the RK-LM controversy. The timeframe for data collection spanned from March 2025 to August 2025, capturing the peak period of online public engagement. Following a rigorous data reduction process to eliminate redundancies, irrelevant advertisements, and non-Sundanese entries, a final sample of 24 highly representative comments was secured for in-depth sociopragmatic analysis.

The data collection phase itself was executed using non-participatory observation (watching) and documentation (recording) techniques. We systematically observed the digital discourse to comprehend the contextual flow of interactions, then transcribed the selected Sundanese comments into a structured text corpus.

Our data analysis procedure followed an interactive qualitative framework consisting of data reduction, data categorisation based on Allan and Burrridge's (1991) types of dysphemism, and sociopragmatic interpretation using speech act theory to uncover the underlying illocutionary forces. Finally, to ensure the trustworthiness and reliability of our findings, we established cross-contextual triangulation and peer debriefing, repeatedly verifying the categorised linguistic data against their original digital contexts to eliminate researcher bias before drawing final conclusions.

Discussion

Given that sociopragmatics is fundamentally driven by perspective, evaluating the RK-LM social media commentary requires a deep integration of context. In this study, we operationalise context by adopting the tripartite framework proposed by Rahardi et al. (2019), which synthesises the classic insights of Hymes (1972) and Verschueren (1999). Our data analysis is systematically guided by their three designated categories, namely, communicative, speech situation, and socio-cultural contexts, as these dimensions directly shape how netizens formulate online hostility.

To map these contextual realities into a clear and structured qualitative pattern, we classified the identified Sundanese dysphemistic expressions into a functional matrix. Based on Allan and Burrridge's (1991) framework and Searle's speech act theory, Table 1 outlines how these specific thematic categorisations, linguistic forms, and dominant illocutionary forces intersect in our digital corpus.

Table 1

Qualitative Classification of Sundanese Dysphemism Types and Speech Acts in the RK-LM Case

No	Dysphemism Category (Allan & Burridge, 1991)	Core Sundanese / Slang Lexicons	Illocutionary Act (Searle)	Pragmatic Function & Target
1	Organs of the body	<i>Empang butek</i>	Assertive (Suggesting)	Devaluation of a woman's moral character by metaphorically targeting genitalia.
2	Human-animal comparison & creatures	<i>Anak bagong, Tobrut, Wewegombel</i>	Directive (Questioning) & Expressive (Mocking)	Dehumanization and body-shaming aimed at eroding the target's social status.
3	Mental and physical disability	<i>Kehed, Koplok</i>	Assertive (Stating) & Expressive (Swearing)	Aggressive venting of political frustration through terms pathologizing intellect.
4	Activities (Sexual & Extortion)	<i>Jajan, Meres, Ah uh ah</i>	Expressive (Empathy/Criticism) & Directive	Shifting public opinion by framing interactions as morally degrading and transactional.
5	Physical characteristics	<i>Bal beklen, Kandel beungeut</i>	Expressive (Disappointment) & Assertive	Constructing a stark moral contrast between the "ideal wife" and the "inferior partner."
6	Matters related to death	<i>Modar</i>	Expressive (Cynicism/Ridicule)	Sarcastic debasement signaling public satisfaction with the collapse of a political career.

Following the qualitative matrix established in Table 1, the subsequent sections provide a detailed contextual analysis of representative data excerpts for each dysphemism category.

Dysphemism of the Organs of the Body

- (2) @lucia_lili_liana : Lah ga *kudu* jg tes dna udah yakin *atuh* masa pak rk *nyemplung* ke *empang butek*. (Literal translation: Well, there's no need for a DNA test; surely Mr. RK couldn't have plunged himself into a murky pond.)

Context: An Instagram reel shows the result the DNA test, which confirms that the child is not RK's. In the quoted comment, the noun phrase "murky pond" functions as a metaphor for LM, who is considered a woman of questionable moral character (Instagram reel comment, <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DNkba3HP-VL/?igsh=MXNtbWliNXp0YjN0MA==>).

In data (2), dysphemism is shown through the Sundanese expression "*pak rk nyemplung ke empang butek*." The verb "*nyemplung*" in Sundanese means "to plunge" and the noun phrase "*empang butek*" in Betawinese means "murky (fish) pond." The comment suggests that it was impossible for RK to engage himself in an affair with a woman whose morality is perceived as falling below socially accepted standards.

More specifically, “*empang butek*” constitutes a dysphemistic expression for a body organ. In other words, LM’s genitalia are metaphorically likened to a murky pond.

According to Allan and Burrige (1991, p. 234), dysphemism is often used as a weapon against people or things that are frustrating, underestimated, disliked, or just plain hateful. Dysphemism can take the form of condemning expressions, derogatory remarks, or derogatory words that hurt others or the interlocutor. The use of dysphemism can be considered as an individual’s attempt to express thoughts or facts in a rude, unfriendly, harsh, or disrespectful way. The use of dysphemism can cause something that sounds either positive or negative. The pleasurable effects of harsh speech reveal the wild side of man. A sarcastic speech act that likens a woman, particularly her private body part, to a murky pond constitutes a highly offensive insult that reflects a hurtful and degrading stance toward her. In the above data there is an assertive illusion of Searle (in Leech 1993, 163-164). That is in the form of a suggestion *that you don’t have to do a DNA test*, but RK has done a DNA test on LM’s child. This assertion socially impacts RK by calming him and convincing his family, the community, and netizens that LM’s child is not RK’s biological offspring.

Dysphemism Comparing Humans to Animals

- (3) @jen_ips17 : Knp jadi tobrut gitu kng emil teu salah tangkep eta wewegombel jauh ka mana mana sama bu cinta atuh 😂😂 (Literal translation: Why [dating] such brutally huge tits, Kang Emil? Sure you didn’t mistake her for a *wewegombel* [a female demon]? She’s miles away from Mrs. Love. 😂😂)
- @jen_ips17 : Why [dating] such brutally huge tits, Kang Emil? Sure you didn’t mistake her for a *wewegombel* [a female demon]? She’s miles away from Mrs. Love. 😂
- @zulfibachri2007 : Anak bagong 🐷 (Literal translation: A wild boar’s offspring 🐷)

Context: Two Instagram accounts gave comments using words in data (2) expressing a degrading attitude toward LM’s body size, which is compared to that of a *wewegombel* (a female demon popular in Javanese culture) and a wild boar (Instagram reel comment; <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DIP68RdT2YO/?igsh=MXg5cnFoenVncmtzdQ==>).

Similar to data (2), data (3) also carry a sharp tone, comparing LM to *anak bagong*, a boar offspring in Sundanese (https://www.kamussunda.net/makna/kata/bagong.html#google_vignette). In Allan and Burrige’s classification, such an expression belongs to the third category of dysphemism, in which a human and an animal are perceived as sharing certain characteristics (1991:121). Additionally, the comment contains the Betawi slang word *tobrut*, a portmanteau combining *toket* (slang for breasts) and *brutal*, whose meaning here has shifted from “violent” and “cruel” to “extremely or excessively huge.” Furthermore, *wewe gombel* refers to a female ghost in Javanese culture. Often depicted grotesquely as a female figure with a pair of large breasts, a *wewe gombel* is believed to frequently abduct children and hide them in impossible places (<https://budaya-indonesia.org/Hantu-Wewe-Gombel>).

The comment reflects not only the account owner’s annoyance at the alleged affair but also an attitude that supports Bu Cinta (Athalia, RK’s wife), who is viewed as an ideal woman, wife, and mother, known for her good looks and ideal body. The comment carries a directive illocutionary speech act in that it implies a question requires the addressee (RK) to respond to it. In the comment, @jen_ips17 adds lol (laughing out loud) emoticons, indicating mockery. The account @zulbachri2007 adds a similar emoticon to intensify the mocking effect produced by the insulting epithet “*anak bagong*.”

Dysphemism Related to Mental Disability

- (4) @Irhamrizki : ini ga tau pengalihan issue karena ridwan kamil udah ga dibutuhin lagi sama konco-konconya sekarang jadi dibuka aibnya. tapi kalo sampe ini bener walah banget *sia kehed koplok sing beurat tah hisab geus mah salingkuh nepi ka ngareuneuhan terus mimpin teu baleg koplok* @ridwankamil (Literal translation: got no clue if this is an issue distraction since ridwan kamil is no longer needed by his allies, so now his scandal is being exposed. but if it's true, damn you stupid dick. your reckoning's gonna be severe. you had an affair, got a woman pregnant, and you were incompetent as a leader @ridwankamil)

Context: The issue concerning Ridwan Kamil's affair is also viewed as a political diversion because its emergence coincided with his candidacy in the DKI Jakarta gubernatorial election, in which his political allies were believed to have little faith (<https://x.com/Irhamrizki/status/1904862341730361454>).

In data (4) this type of swear or expression is related to swear words and nicknames that show the mental disorder experienced by a person, as expressed by Allan and Burrige (1991, pp. 148-149). The word *sia* meaning 'you' in Sundanese is a very rude second-person pronoun; *kehed* and *koplok* generally mean stupid, while *kehed* means "fuck." It is often also used as a swear word, while *koplok* is a swear word equivalent to "stupid." This word is often used as a swear word or becomes a rude term for someone (<https://www.detik.com/jabar/jabar-gaskeun/d-6326647/20-kosakata-kasar-dalam-bahasa-sunda-jangan-sembarangan-ucapnkan>).

The above comment from @irhamrizki contains an assertive illocutionary act, as it states that RK appears to be no longer needed by his political allies and that the emergence of the alleged scandal was a political diversion. At the same time, the comment also constitutes an expressive illocutionary act because of its use of swear words. The swear words refer to RK's leadership as the former West Java governor, with irhamrizki describing it as 'teu baleg' meaning 'incompetent'. RK's affair issue has a wide impact not only on his family but also on his public image. His political career and dignity, once the pride of many of many in West Jawa, came into the spotlight, prompting sharp questions and criticism that ultimately brought the case to court.

Swear Dysphemism on Activity

- (5) @di.na_chy : Beuki kebongkar karunya atuh eta iih bapak mangan gubernur *jajan* hal biasa sih cuma karunya ibu @ataliapr (Literal translation: Even more is being exposed. Have a heart, sir. An ex-governor seeking paid companionship is a common thing, but poor Mrs. @ataliapr)

Context: This context indicates that the BJB bank corruption case involving RK has been exposed, and his affair with LM has further worsened his public image. Conversely, public sympathy toward Bu Cinta has increased (Instagram reel comment: <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DIW118IzKBI/?igsh=djZtMmZtOGNhNnJo>).

Comment (5) above uses the verb *jajan*, which means "to buy a snack" in Indonesian. In the context of the comment, however, the word has a negative connotation, for it refers to the act of having sex with a sex worker. In the comment, @di.na_chy wrote that although such a practice is common among married men, it can hurt the wife, in this case Bu Cinta, RK's wife. According to Wijana and Rohmadi (as cited in Laili, 2017, p. 112) this curse is included in an "activity, while according to Allan and Burrige (1991) this curse

is included in activities involving sexual organs (1991, p. 115). Its negative connotation is further strengthened by its paradoxical juxtaposition with RK's status as a former governor. In other words, a person with a high public profile such as RK is socially expected not to engage in what is perceived as a morally degrading act, such as having sex with a prostitute. The comment not only further tarnishes RK's reputation but also condemns his moral conduct.

The comment above carries an expressive illocutionary act in that it shows empathy for RK's wife, while passing a moral criticism of his "snacking" act. At the same time, it also serves as a directive illocution, inviting the reader to also share a negative sentiment toward RK. The phrases *makin terbongkar* ("more is being exposed") and *malu* function to compel the reader into seeing such an act as shameful and to judge the individual in question negatively.

- (6) @aisutasiha : Masih boga duit nya keur mayar pengacara, eta meres keur sedot lemak (Literal translation: So, you still have some money to pay for the lawyer; that's extorting money for liposuction.)

Context: The comment is intended to mock LM, who appears to have substantial financial resources to pay to a lawyer and to demand compensation and responsibility from RK. In the comment, aisutasiha insinuates that the amount would still be sufficient because she might need more for liposuction to achieve a slimmer body (Instagram reel comment, <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DITVwIOyEJR/?igsh=MWpsYmtoMnYycHVzbQ==>).

The sarcastic remark, indicated by the negatively charged word *meres*, an informal form of *memeras*, literally meaning "to squeeze" (e.g., fruit) or "to wring out" (an article of clothing after washing), is directed at LM. When used in the context of juicing fruit or washing clothes, the word generally carries a neutral or positive connotation, as it refers to a functional and purposeful action. However, when used metaphorically to mean extracting money from someone by force, it acquires a negative connotation. The comment also contains an implicature concerning an activity that an overweight person may undertake to reduce body weight and achieve a slimmer and more conventionally attractive appearance. Furthermore, the comment contains an assertive illocutionary act, as the commenter asserts that LM still has sufficient financial resources to pay for her attorney. In addition, the comment conveys an expressive illocutionary act in the form of mockery. A directive illocutionary act is also implicitly expressed, as the comment invites readers to look down on LM, who is accused of extortion, and to share the commenter's negative sentiment.

- (7) @momy_rosalin : da angger we setidaknya eta pak RK pernah ah uh ah jeng c lisdut ttep we rahet manah Bu cinta na MH. (Literal translation: but still Mr. RK must've once been like ah, oh, mmmh (sounds of one moaning during sex) with lisdut and that must've hurt Mrs. Cinta's heart.)

Context: The comment contains a derogatory insinuation that RK and LM had sexual relations (Instagram reel comment, <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DNkZuUDvhNM/?igsh=MXN1eWd0Z3djZ3JndA==>).

In this data (7), the irony of *ah uh oh* reflects someone who has sexual relations with LM, which is in the spotlight of netizens, so it evokes empathy for Mrs. Cinta. The saying "must have hurt your heart" is a form of linguistic practice that appears in the digital space, especially on social media. From a pragmatic perspective, the speech engages in a communication strategy that passes moral judgement and condemnation toward RK and LM while simultaneously expressing sympathy toward Atalia (Mrs. Cinta). Austin and Searle's speech-act theory, along with Allan and Burridge's concept of dysphemism, frames this analysis. Based on Austin's categories, the comment contains both expressive and assertive functions.

As an expressive act, the locutor shows empathy toward the injured party (“that must’ve hurt Mrs. Cinta”), indicating the commenter’s emotional attitude toward the issue. As an assertive act, the comment also implies a claim or conviction concerning what is believed to have happened (“must’ve been like ‘ah, oh, mmmh’”), despite such a statement being an assumption or an opinion. Through Searle’s lens, these assertive and expressive functions complement each other to establish the speaker’s position as a moral interpreter of the event.

Seen from Allan and Burridge’s perspective of dysphemism, the comment utilises several forms of linguistic manipulation. The term “intercourse” is a dysphemism because it is used in gossip to harm the reputation of the subject. In addition, the derogatory epithet “si lisdut” (short for “Lisa Gendut” or “Fat Lisa”) is a form of referential dysphemism that aims to be demeaning, because it uses a label that is not a real name and has pejorative nuances. The use of the word “si” before a name or epithet in Indonesian further reinforces the demeaning effect, as it is commonly used in informal discourse to mark familiarity and an evaluative stance, often directed toward individuals perceived negatively or positioned as socially inferior. This form of dysphemism functions to express moral condemnation while simultaneously constructing a contrast between those portrayed as morally wrong and those positioned as victims.

Dysphemism Concerning Physical Characteristics

- (8) @fitria_vina01 : Teu nyangka eta si akang boga pamajikan jangkung leutik geulis pinter mahal sholehah eh salingkuh jeung bal bekleun 🤔 (Literal translation: I didn't expect it. Though RK already has a tall, slim, beautiful, smart, classy, religiously pious wife, he still cheated with a *beklen* ball.)

Context: The sarcastic comment is directed toward RK while simultaneously vilifying LM, who is compared to a “bal bekleun,” or a rubber ball commonly used in a children’s game called *bekel* (the word “bekleun” in the comment is a misspelling). The phrase “bal bekleun” itself functions as a derogatory metaphor for a bouncy, overweight woman (Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/p/DIVkMiapsxZ/?igsh=MXE2YmVyb2V1NHRkZA==>).

The noun phrase “*bal beklen*” refers to a ball used in a game called *beklen* or *bekel*. *Beklen* itself is a game played using a rubber bouncy ball and several small pieces, usually made of metal or seashells, that are small enough to be held in the palm. Players toss the ball and pick up the pieces from the ground in successive attempts until all pieces are collected while catching the ball before it falls. In the comment, the metaphor “*bal beklen*” implies that LM is comparable to a ball that can be thrown and caught, thereby objectifying her and reducing her to a trivial, playful object. According to Allan and Burridge (2006), dysphemism refers to the use of expressions that carry rough, demeaning, or negative connotations compared with their neutral equivalents. In this context, the expression functions as a referential dysphemism that degrades the target’s physical and social identity. The lexical choice creates a strong evaluative effect and reinforces the contrast with the representation of the “ideal wife”. This dysphemistic strategy also serves as a form of moral affirmation, suggesting that the act of cheating is portrayed as even more unjustifiable because it involves a person constructed as inferior to the legitimate partner.

This utterance performs an expressive illocutionary act, as the speaker conveys feelings of distrust, disappointment, and insinuation toward men who are perceived as incapable of respecting their wives. At the same time, it also functions as an assertive illocutionary act, as the speaker advances a claim presented as truthful regarding the alleged infidelities. The statement, “I didn’t expect it. Even though RK already has a tall, slim, beautiful, intelligent, classy, and religiously pious wife, he still cheated with a *bekel* ball”, posted by the account @fitria_vina01, reflects the dynamics of digital discourse that emerge in social media responses to public figures’ alleged infidelity. From a pragmatic perspective, the utterance demonstrates

the construction of the speaker's evaluative stance toward the subject under discussion using moral judgement and dysphemistic expressions. This analysis draws upon speech act theory as developed by Austin and Searle, as well as Allan and Burridge's concept of dysphemism.

- (9) @strowbrewy : Sekarang RK jadi alat nutupin isu kah? Cape cape pak *kandel beungeut* sana sini ke orang bandung sama jakarta, eh akhirnya dijadiin penutup isu doang 🤪 (Literal translation: So now RK is being used to cover up another issue? After all that, Sir—showing your face shamelessly to both Bandung and Jakarta people, only to end up as a diversion 🤪)

Context: The issue about RK's scandal with LM appeared around the time when RK was running as a candidate for the DKI Jakarta governorship. Many speculated that the issue emerged as a political diversion (<https://x.com/strowbrewy/status/1904886137770172906>).

In data (9), the comment posted by @strowbrewy contains the Sundanese idiom *kandel beungeut*, shortened from the complete *kandel kulit beungeut*, which literally means “thick facial skin” and figuratively “shameless”. The comment is directed at RK, criticising him for continuing his gubernatorial campaign despite the intense public scrutiny surrounding his alleged affair.

From Austin's perspective on illocutionary force, the comment performs both expressive and assertive illocutionary acts. The expressive act is reflected in how the locutor conveys irritation, fatigue, and disapproval of the political situation (e.g., “cape cape pak” and “akhirnya dijadiin penutup isu doang”). The comment also carries an assertive function, as the commenter advances a claim or belief that RK is being used to divert public attention. Within Searle's framework, the comment may additionally be interpreted as an implicit directive act, as it encourages readers to view RK as a victim of political manoeuvring and to evaluate his public actions as insincere or ineffective.

The comment “Sekarang RK jadi alat nutupin isu kah? Cape cape pak *kandel beungeut* sana sini ke orang Bandung sama Jakarta, eh akhirnya dijadiin penutup isu doang 🤪” demonstrates a combination of political criticism, emotional expression, and linguistic strategies used to convey negative judgement. Its occurrence in digital discourse reflects how social media has become an arena for expressing political stances in informal, evaluative, and often dysphemistic ways. This analysis draws upon speech act theory (Austin and Searle) and Allan and Burridge's definition of dysphemism to examine the function and effectiveness of the language used by speakers.

Dysphemism Concerning Matters Related to Death

- (10) @sugarsunss : Modar sih karir RK wkwk
 @fhmirezap_ : pejabat" indo angger taluk na mah ku modelan lc nyak RK's career is finished hahaha
 Indonesian politicians often succumb to LC-type women (LC means lady companion, a term commonly referring to nightclub/karaoke hostesses or paid social/sexual companions).

Context: the dialogue reveals the phenomenon of public officials who often visit certain nightlife establishments (clubs, bars, karaoke lounges, etc) accompanied by LCs (lady companions) (: <https://x.com/sugarsunss/status/1905008995854921925>).

In Sundanese, in which a system of speech levels (*undak-usuk basa*) is recognised, the word “*modar*” belongs to the coarse or low register (*basa kasar*), which is typically used when speaking to close friends

or younger people or in the contexts where respect is intentionally reduced. Literally, "*modar*" means "to die," but its coarse register imparts it a sarcastic and derogatory tone in this context. This expression constitutes a metaphorical dysphemism that intensifies humiliation and signals satisfaction with the deterioration of an individual's public status. The speech in Data (10) contains expressive speech acts that convey cynicism, disappointment, and ridicule toward a public figure. From the perspective of Austin's and Searle's speech act theory, the utterance performs an illocutionary function in the form of evaluation, criticism, and negative prediction regarding an individual's reputation.

Based on the data analysed from a sociopragmatic perspective, in particular, one that relates language use to social context, power relations, social norms, identity, and the dynamics of a speech community, the analysis focuses on how social factors influence speakers' linguistic choices. Thus, the analysis considers not only pragmatic functions but also the social conditions that enable such utterances to emerge. The findings indicate that interactions involving the public figure RK demonstrate asymmetrical social relations. Although public figures generally occupy higher social positions, social media platforms allow netizens to address them without maintaining traditional social distance. This phenomenon is often described as the flattening of hierarchy, referring to the erosion of status boundaries through digital communication. This condition helps explain why speakers feel free to use negatively connoted expressions such as "thick-faced" without adhering to politeness norms that would typically govern face-to-face interactions.

The choice of Sundanese words with a cynical, expressive, and evaluative tone reflects interaction norms typical of online communities, particularly Indonesian netizens on platforms such as Instagram and Twitter. In sociopragmatics, these are referred to as community-specific norms, which are unwritten rules that allow harsh criticism, sarcasm, and dysphemism as part of accepted (or even expected) communication practices in digital spaces. The use of informal expressions such as "cape cape pak" and "closing issue doang" shows that the speaker positions himself as part of a community of netizens who often criticise political issues directly, openly, and emotionally.

From a sociopragmatic perspective, these utterances function as a form of social evaluation of the behaviour of public figures. Netizens interpret RK's actions in these cases as attempts to seek attention or maintain his public image. In the context of Indonesian society, which tends to be sensitive to social ethics, such expressions are interpreted as signalling a violation of the norm of humility. The utterances also illustrate a mechanism of social sanctioning, through which the community imposes social punishment by producing negative comments toward actions perceived as incompatible with the image of a virtuous leader.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Sundanese-language dysphemism and taboo expressions within the digital discourse surrounding the Ridwan Kamil and Lisa Mariana controversy primarily operate through assertive, directive, and expressive illocutionary acts. Netizen responses in the comment sections heavily rely on taboo expressions related to sexual activity and manifest in four distinct categories of abusive language, specifically, human-to-animal comparisons, derogatory nicknames targeting physical characteristics, labels pathologising behaviour through mental disorders, and explicit expressions of contempt directed at individual moral character. These findings illustrate how social media platforms have transformed into aggressive linguistic spaces where regional languages are strategically deployed to execute public shaming and actively shape public opinion regarding the morality of public figures.

From a theoretical perspective, these insights offer a significant sociopragmatic contribution to digital linguistics by illustrating that pragmatic features of online speech are deeply contingent upon shifting social

structures rather than being purely linguistic phenomena. By integrating Allan and Burridge's (1991) dysphemism framework with speech act theory, this study maps how regional languages are actively weaponised to construct moralising social narratives. In contemporary digital spaces, regional dysphemism functions as a complex pragmatic strategy utilised to reinforce collective netizen attitudes, build online solidarity, and intensify public criticism, effectively exploiting the flattening of traditional social hierarchies on social media.

Practically, the empirical evidence yields critical implications for digital ethics, gender dynamics, and public morality. The intense online scrutiny faced by public officials serves as a harsh digital lesson for the younger generation regarding the ethical responsibilities associated with socio-political power. Moreover, the disproportionate moral judgement directed at Lisa Mariana underscores the ongoing vulnerability of women to societal stigma in digital spheres, highlighting an urgent need for greater empathy and gender-equitable framing in public discourse. Consequently, civic and educational institutions must collaborate to strengthen digital media literacy and moral education, while public figures and media platforms must serve as ethical role models to shift public focus from toxic digital spectacles to meaningful dialogues on leadership ethics.

Finally, while this study successfully captures the sociopragmatic structures of Sundanese dysphemism on Instagram, several avenues remain open for future research. Prospective researchers are encouraged to conduct longitudinal and comparative studies across alternative digital platforms, such as TikTok or X (formerly Twitter), to observe platform-specific linguistic behaviours and evolving patterns of online impoliteness. Furthermore, integrating qualitative sociopragmatic frameworks with advanced computational methodologies would provide a broader, macro-level mapping of regional language weaponisation in contemporary Indonesian digital discourse.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Pika Yestia Ginanjar conceived the study, collected and analysed the data, and prepared the initial manuscript. Riza Lupi Ardiati, Nani Darmayanti, and Wagati contributed to the research design, interpretation of the findings, critical revision of the manuscript, and approval of the final version for publication. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors reported no conflicts of interest for this work and declare no potential conflict of interest concerning the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

All relevant data analysed during this study are included within this paper. The raw data sources are publicly accessible directly on platform X (formerly Twitter) and Instagram.

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