

# POTENTIAL GENDER BIAS IN PUBLIC RESPONSES TO CRITICISM OF FAMILY COMMUNICATION PRACTICES: A COLLECTIVE REFLECTION ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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## Abstract

This study aims to analyze gender bias themes that surfaced in replies to @Denald on the social media platform X and the cognitive process using gender schema theory. A qualitative netnographic approach was used to analyze the research thoroughly. The results show that there are four gender bias themes: Gendered Addressing and Insults, Gendered Expectations and Stereotypes, Motherhood Policing, and Religious-Based Silencing. These four themes are interconnected in constructing a collective social standard and control in which gender schema is internalized. Unexpected findings also show that a combination of gender schema and religious norms was used to silence opinions, surveillance and control were given to the actor who did motherhood policing itself as a practice, and there was resistance to the standard of the ideal mother. This research shows that social media is a public digital platform that strengthens and accelerates the reproduction of digital gender bias, and also shows the phenomenon of resistance to the standard that is not fair to mothers.

Keywords: gender schema, gender bias, motherhood policing, family communication, social media X

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background

Social media X is a form of new media that encourages users to interact and form opinions, with broad themes to discuss. Not only public issues such as politics, like the political discourse about the scandal of “Mahkamah Keluarga” on YouTube (Darmadi, et al. 2025, 105-115), but also domestic issues that were previously considered private are now public discourse themes. Social media has erased the boundaries in socializing (Rosyidah and Nurwati 2019, 14).

The interactions on social media discourse can be inclusive because of the features and convenience provided by social media. When one user expressed an opinion, particularly a critique of family communication practices, there was a wide variety of public response that surfaced. Not just pro-against or positive-negative, these responses to the post criticizing family communication practices were influenced by gender schema.

These responses were opinions channeled through replies to @Denald and reflected gender schemas embedded in the collective cognition of society. Interestingly, in this phenomenon, the replies were not always focused on the critique or the substance of the post, but more on ad hominem aggression and

gendered identities. This phenomenon is essential to discuss in order to understand the interaction dynamics of digital society influenced by gender schema and the potential of gender bias channeled through replies to post criticizing family communication practices.

Some earlier studies on gender bias focused on the phenomenon of gender bias in social media comments (Akmalia and Indrawati 2022, 97-99), cyber sexual harassment on social media (Sitohang, Montessori and Zatalini 2025, 9-16), motherhood policing practice toward mothers (Varadi, Raby and Tardif-Williams 2020, 8-14), the reproduction of gender bias among children from an early age, and social media as an advocacy channel for gender issues (Wijdan, Santoso and Siscawati 2024, 3-6). However, research that specifically discusses how gender bias is expressed in public discourse about family communication practices on digital platforms remains limited.

This research attempts to fill these gaps by analyzing digital interaction influenced by gender schema and the potential of gender bias in public response, especially in replies to @Denald's post criticizing family communication practices by Mama Mega from the Ueno Family. Not only the smallest social unit, the family is also the first educational institution that allows the transfer of knowledge (Putra, Junaidi and Fitri 2020, 251). Gender roles and identities are also socialized by the family.

## 1.2. Research Question

What gender bias themes occur in replies to @Denald's post on social media X and how does the cognitive process based on gender schema theory explain the themes influenced by gender schema?

## 1.3. Purpose and objective

This research aims to identify themes influenced by gender schema in replies to @Denald's post criticizing family communication practices. It also aims to analyze the cognitive process underlying the surfacing of these themes using gender schema theory.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Gender Bias in Social Media

(Rothchild 2007, 1843) explains that gender bias is a behavior that shows favoritism toward one gender compared to another. Not only expressed in everyday interactions, gender bias can also be found in digital interactions. This phenomenon is manifested in various forms, from comments on social media to cyber sexual harassment.

Based on a study by (Akmalia and Indrawati 2022, 98), the phenomenon of gender bias can be seen in social media comments. This study compared comments on Maudy Ayunda's and Belva Devara's Instagram post. Both are equally intelligent and graduates of top universities, but they are of different sexes. According to this study, women tend to be judged and highlighted based on their appearance, whereas men are evaluated based on their accomplishments. Even when Maudy Ayunda's accomplishments were praised, the word "beautiful" still appeared. Maudy Ayunda was also often referred to as a "perfect woman". This study also found a fear of

highly educated women, as well as comments expressing the stereotype that women do not need higher education because in the end they will only focus on domestic matters.

A study by (Sitohang, Montessori and Zatalini 2025, 9-16) analyzed forms of cyber sexual harassment that occurred on Instagram. The harassment appeared in forms of spamming, flaming, sexting, victim blaming, religious-based harassment, and body shaming. Not only anonymous accounts, but accounts with real identities also frequently appeared, indicating that perpetrators do not always hide behind anonymity.

These findings indicate that the reproduction of gender bias in public digital platforms, especially social media, still occurs in various forms. Through gendered stereotypes and expectations, as well as practices of cyber sexual harassment influenced by gender and cultural factors, social media functions as a space that reflects and repeatedly reproduces gender bias.

## **2.2. Gender, Family Role Representation, and the Reproduction of Stereotypes in Public Discourse**

Family roles are often defined based on cultural aspects of society. Gender understanding is usually influenced by information and socialization provided by the family. In the McMaster model of family functioning by Epstein, Bishop, and Baldwin in (Galvin, Braithwaite and Bylund 2015, 140), the family's functions include adult sexual fulfillment and children's gender socialization, nurturing and emotional support, facilitating individual development, maintaining kinship and family management, and providing basic needs. (Cook and Cusack 2010, 11) gave an example of gendered stereotype that applies to women and mothers: the belief that being a mother is woman's natural role and fate, without considering the capacity of reproductive health, physical and emotional condition, or individual wishes.

According to a study by (Varadi, Raby and Tardif-Williams 2020, 6), young mothers often face negative stereotypes from society. Instead of getting practical support like home, mental health assistance, or childcare, they often received support in the form of policing. According to this study, the concept of being a good mother acknowledged by the participants was "being there" and "taking care of herself too", which is related to intensive mothering theory. Young mothers were often policed repeatedly, even when there was no one, they engaged in self-policing. This was the result of constant policing from society, through judgment and praise. Although it was rare, young mothers also received praise too, related to the ideal standard on society. Interestingly, several participants acknowledged the inequity of the policing and chose to resist the standard.

A study by (Putra, Junaidi and Fitri 2020, 254-257) shows that gendered stereotypes are still being reproduced. This study analyzed society's perspective about gender and forms of negative labelling toward children. The results of this study show that gender inequity like labelling and differentiating the function and task of boys and girls still occurred. This action refers to different play areas, limitations on play friends, and also different types of roles given to boys and girls.

These findings indicate gendered stereotypes and role expectations are accepted from an early age to adult life as they take on the role of parents. These findings show that gender bias is present in every life stages and forms, along with

the ongoing reproduction of gendered stereotypes and expectations.

### 2.3. Social Media as Public Discourse Platforms

Social media has numerous functions: it facilitates broader user networks, changes one-way communication to dialogic communication among many users, and supports the freedom of users for knowledge and information access, by providing space for users to be the consumer as well as producer of messages (Purbohastuti 2017, 215). The wide range and convenience of social media make it a suitable platform for advocacy and expressing opinions.

A study by (Supratman, Rinekasari and Ana 2023, 224) shows that social media can be used as an educational platform for gender equality. This study was conducted by creating Instagram content for gender equality educational purposes, targeted toward adolescents aged 12-15 within families. While creating the content, the researchers used the PPE approach: Planning, Production, and Evaluation. According to this study, the produced content had advantages because it was developed based on needs analysis and positioned as a new educational platform.

A recent study by (Wijdan, Santoso and Siscawati 2024, 347) also shows that social media can be a digital platform for inclusive and collaborative advocacy. This study investigated the communication strategies of the feminist movement on Instagram. It was found that the strategy used by the communities and individuals included decentralizing information, encouraging audience interaction and involvement, maximizing social media features, and using appealing multimedia content.

These findings showed that social media can function as an educational platform for gender equality and as an inclusive and collaborative advocacy space for gender issues. The distribution of information involved numerous communities and individuals, using audience-needs-based content, encouraging audience involvement, maximizing social media features, and employing appealing multimedia content. These findings confirmed that social media can be used as a digital platform that is useful for gender discourse and education.

### 2.4. Gender Schema Theory

Gender schema theory explains some people process information based on their understanding of gender. (Bem 1981, 355) stated that the tendency to process information based on gender can be explained by three aspects: the process of social construction from an early age that emphasizes gender differences, the tendency to interpret experiences using a gendered cognitive schema, and the self-concept influenced by gender, resulting in behaviors and assessments shaped by sex-typed individuals.

The term sex-typed individuals refers to individuals who adhere to the concept of sex-typing and process information based on that concept. (Bem 1981, 354) explained that sex-typing is the way society changes men and women to masculine and feminine. Thus, sex-typed individuals are those who process information using a cognitive gender schema. Some studies suggest that sex-typed individuals tend to process information using gender schemas, even when the information concerns themselves (Bem 1981, 354).

This theory emphasizes the process by which gender schemas develop, rather than the specific content of gender schema themselves. Thus, it does not focus on

gender stereotype, which may vary across cultures, but rather explains why individuals use gender stereotypes to process information. This theory is suitable for sorting and organizing expressions of gender bias.

### 3. Research Methods

This study uses a qualitative netnographic approach. This approach is used to thoroughly explain the expression of gender bias in replies to @Denald's post criticizing family communication practices. (Kozinets 2010, 60) stated that netnography is a form of participant observation conducted in digital platforms to ethnographically understand and represent cultural phenomena or online communities. The research object in this study is the discourse interaction of digital society, which reflects social and cultural phenomena. The process was conducted by noting and categorizing replies influenced by gender schema to understand the cultural context of communication on social media X.

This study used replies to @Denald's post on 29 August 2024 as the primary source. A total of 1.610 replies were collected using data scrapping method. From this number, only replies written in Indonesian popular language, influenced by gender schema, and with the potential of gender bias were included in the analysis, resulting in 470 relevant replies. These replies, influenced by gender schema and potentially gender biased, are manifestations of cognitive processed among sex-typed individuals. (Bem 1981, 356) stated that sex-typed individuals are those who process information and adjust themselves according to gender schemas, namely the cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity.

The expression that potentially considered as gender bias in replies to @Denald's post were categorized into forms such as gendered addressing (e.g., "bu" or "ibu"), condescending remarks, gendered expectations and stereotypes, motherhood policing, and religious-based aggression. This research employed purposive sampling, analyzing a total of 470 replies influenced by gender schema and potentially expressing gender bias. This number was chosen because the themes appeared repeatedly and had exceeded the 25% of the total replies, ensuring that the identified patterns were varied and the analysis remained in-depth. (Creswell 2014, 187) stated that the idea of qualitative research is to purposefully select participants or sites that can best help in understanding the research question.

This study also used of earlier research as a secondary resources to support the analysis and interpretation of the phenomenon. Gender schema theory (Bem 1981, 354-364) serves as the main theoretical foundation for discussing the findings. In processing the data, several previous studies were also used, such as studies on gendered (Putra, Junaidi and Fitri 2020, 251-262), motherhood policing (Varadi, Raby and Tardif-Williams 2020, 374-390), and forms of cyber sexual harassment (Sitohang, Montessori and Zatalini 2025, 6-21). Thematic analysis was conducted using NVivo software to categorize the themes appearing in the replies. In this way, the themes influenced by gender schema could be identified and explained.

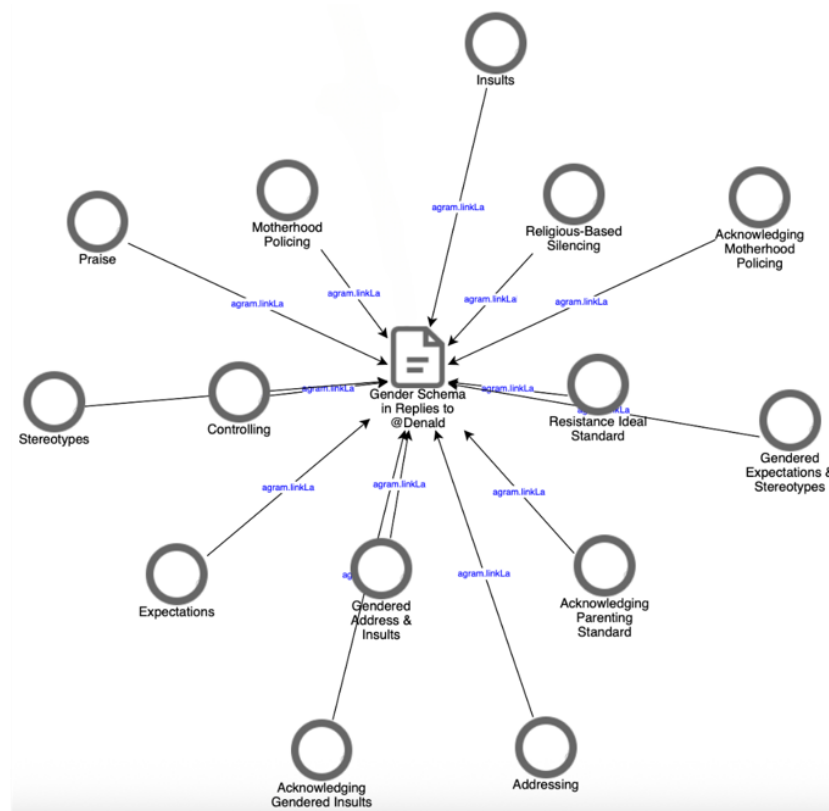
(Creswell 2014, 197) stated that qualitative validity means that the researcher uses multiple methods to verify the data, while qualitative reliability means that the methods used are consistent with other studies. Data validity maintained through triangulation with studies on gender bias, gender schema, and earlier research. Secondary resources were also used to maintain the validity of the

findings.

The research object was not analyzed based on the morality or rightness of the content. Instead, the focus of this research is the cognitive process of sex-typed individuals as shown in their replies to @Denald’s post, particularly those influenced by gender schema and with the potential to reproduce gender bias. This study departs from the assumption that gendered addressing and expressions of gender bias in social media X replies reflect the way sex-typed individuals process information based on gender categories.

#### 4. Results and Discussions

Figure 1. Gender Schema Theme in Replies to @Denald



Source: Author’s field observation and thematic analysis, 2025.

There were four major themes that surfaced in replies influenced by gender schema and potentially expressing bias gender on @Denald’s post, namely Gendered Addressing and Insults, Gendered Expectations and Stereotypes, Motherhood Policing, and Religious-Based Silencing. These four themes, including their subthemes, will be discussed from a cognitive process perspective.

##### 4.1 Gendered Addressing and Insults Theme

Gender schema theory examines the cognitive process of processing information by sex-typed individuals. According to (Bem 1981, 355), sex-typed individuals are those who understand, evaluate, and organize information based on the internalization of gender schema. This theme is the essential foundation

that depicts how individuals with the tendency of being sex-typed process information based on gender schema. The use of gendered role addressing (e.g., “ibu” or “bapak”) shows how individuals with the tendency of sex-typing process information, particularly when identifying the interlocutor.

Table 1. Quotes from Gendered Addressing and Insults Theme

Theme Gendered Addressing and Insults	
Subthemes Gendered Addressing	“Bu aku pun seorang ibu. Dan kebetulan aku lahir dr rahim seorang ibu yg jg didikannya lebih keras dr Mama Mega. Aku bukan fans Mama Mega. Cuma mau berpendapat dr sisi aku ya. Aku sampai skg Alhamdulillah nggak ada trauma apa2. Malah bersyukur aku jd kuat bgt ngadepin -”
Subthemes Gendered Insults	“Udah bagus bahas keunikan hewan malah julid ama ibu ibu. Bye unfoll bapak bapak julid”
Subthemes Acknowledging Gendered Insults	“wah gila standar orang twitter beda pendapat dikit bukan umpatan sekedar tolol goblok ya? tp lacur wah keren bgt kakaknya. merasa hebat bgt ya ngatain orang pelacur? wah didikan siapa ya?”

Source: Author’s field observation and thematic analysis, 2025.

Individuals who show a tendency to process information in a sex-typed way use gendered role addressing (e.g., “ibu” or “bapak”) when responding to @Denald’s post. They identified @Denald as a woman and mother, and addressed her accordingly. Moreover, individuals with the tendency of being sex-typed also identified other users according to their identity and gender role expectations. The subtheme “Addressing” is a manifestation of cognitive processes influenced by the internalization of gender schema. The act of addressing can take the form of conscrutive remarks without any intent of mockery, condescension, or aggression. However, this subtheme also serves as a trigger of gender schema, functioning as an entry point to subsequent evaluations, whether postive or negative.

The subtheme “Insults” represents one form of escalation in the evaluative process following gendered addressing. Beyond identifying the interlocutor through gendered role addressing, replies also included condescending, belittling, and aggresive remarks toward the interlocutor. This subtheme reflects the next stage of identifying and evaluating the interlocutor, where aggresive remarks are a manifestation of information processing and evaluating based on the internalized gender schema by sex-typed individuals. Such remarks may surfaced consciously or unconsciously. Another subtheme “Acknowledging Gendered Insults”, indicates awareness among reply authors that gender-based insulta were present in the discourse. These individuals process information in a sex-typed manner while simultaneously recognizing the

use of gender categories in aggressive remarks, acknowledging that such insults are closely tied to gendered roles. This reflects an evaluative process based on gender schema within social interaction. Interestingly, this finding also reveals a critical awareness of gender and social phenomena, as well as a form of resistance to gendered insults, particularly within discourse on family communication practices.

These findings indicate that addressing the interlocutors based on the gendered roles is common in discourse surrounding critiques of family communication practices. Regardless of the post’s context, which is inherently tied to gender role and domestic issues, the information in the post can act as a stimulus triggering cognitive processes aligned with internalized gender schemas. This, in turn, becomes the trigger for further gendered evaluations.

#### 4.2 Gendered Expectations and Stereotypes Theme

(Bem 1981, 354) stated that sex-typed individuals have greater readiness to process information based on gender schemas. They differentiate and evaluate others' behavior according to gender categories internalized in their cognition. This theme reflects the collective reproduction of gendered expectations and stereotypes. According to (Putra, Junaidi and Fitri 2020, 254-257), the reproduction of gender stereotypes is continuously recurring and even socialized to children from an early age. This factor reinforces the collective presence of gender expectations and stereotypes, which emerges in this theme. In this theme, the replies represent a form of evaluation of others' behavior based on gender schemas.

Table 2. Quotes from Gendered Expectations and Stereotypes Theme

Theme Gendered Expectations and Stereotypes	
Subthemes Expectations	“suami udah dimasakin bu??”
	“mo ikut papa dali ga? seengganya kalo ga sehebat papa dali yg bs masak sambil gendong luar negeri bareng baby sendiri ketikannya jgn lemes udah bnr nulis masalah satwa aja”
Subthemes Stereotypes	“Ibu ibu emg doyan gosip yak”
	“Kak lu liat deh sisi positifnya Umma selalu melibatkan mas dan adik di kegiatan sehari-hari ex: menjemur dan memasak. Mas dan adik juga gak kenal gadget lhoo sampe sekarang. Itu berkat siapa kalo bukan karna didikan ibunya?”

Source: Author’s field observation and thematic analysis, 2025.

This theme is the evolution of gendered addressing that emerged in previous theme. At this stage, the authors of the replies not only identified the interlocutors based on gender schemas, they also evaluated others’ behavior based on internalized gender schemas. The processing of information goes beyond mere understanding and identification, it extends to categorizing and

evaluating others' behavior according to the social expectations and collective beliefs based on prejudice. In this theme, individuals with the tendency of being sex-typed were responding to @Denald's post by identifying, demanding, and organizing information using internalized gender schemas.

The subtheme "Expectations" discusses gender-based expectations, particularly in relation to family communication and domestic issues. The authors have internalized gender schemas in cognition, which they used as a foundation in demanding gender roles within family communication and domestic contexts. When they received the stimulus information from @Denald's post, individuals with the tendency of being sex-typed processed it using gender schemas that they understood. They identified @Denald as a mother, and automatically they organized based on gender, such as the belief that a mother and wife is supposed to cook for her husband. The evaluation that "mother should cook for her husband" is not a spontaneous remark, but rather the result of internalized gender schemas that subsequently reproduces in digital spaces. Moreover, gender expectations toward men's roles in family communication also emerged. This finding shows how parenting roles also apply to fathers, who are likewise expected to be present and take care of their children.

The subtheme "Stereotypes" indicates that the information in @Denald's post can serve as a stimulus triggering individuals with the tendency of being sex-typed to reply with remarks tied to collective gender stereotypes. When processing information in the post, these individuals identified and organized the information, then expressed gender stereotypes in response. The use of the word "gossip", closely tied to women, is a manifestation of cognitive process using gender schemas. As (Wulandari 2023, 99) stated, activities are still tied to women. In addition, the stereotypes in parenting matters are still tied to women and mothers. Likewise, the stereotypes of mothers' roles in parenting remain associated with mothers, without reference to fathers. Even though @Denald's post only mentioned Mama Mega as a mother without referencing a father, such remarks nonetheless reproduce the gender stereotypes, whether consciously or unconsciously. This is consistent with the study by (Putra, Junaidi and Fitri 2020, 258), which stated that parents and adults indirectly embed gender stereotypes in children from an early age.

These findings indicate that the reproduction of gender bias, namely gendered expectation and stereotypes, has occurred in digital interactions. If the Gendered Addressing and Insults theme was just limited to identifying and mocking the interlocutors, the Gendered Expectations and Stereotypes theme progresses toward evaluating others' behaviors based on internalized gender schemas. Social media, with its accessibility, plays an important role in reinforcing and accelerating the reproduction of gender bias, which can influence the collective internalized comprehension. Beyond narrowing gender roles in digital spaces, the gendered expectations and stereotypes also reinforce gender bias in everyday life. These findings further indicate that critical digital literacy is essential in digital interactions.

#### 4.3 Motherhood Policing Theme

This theme departs from the acts of supervising and evaluating mothers' behavior, which must conform to social standards. A study by (Varadi, Raby and

Tardif-Williams 2020, 12-13) stated that young mothers are often watched and evaluated, even by themselves. Although they may also be praised, it is only when they act according to social standards. As a result of this injustice, quite a few young mothers become aware of and resist such unfairness. This phenomenon is tied to the intensive mothering theory and is also in line with gender schema theory. In gender schema theory, sex-typed individuals interpret the world using gender categories and evaluate mothers' behavior based on internalized social standards of gender. The findings in this theme can thus be examined through gender schema theory and associated with the study by (Varadi, Raby and Tardif-Williams 2020, 374-390).

**Table 3. Quotes from Motherhood Policing Theme**

Theme Motherhood Policing	
Subthemes Acknowledging Motherhood Policing	“sesimple gasuka ya di skip aja parenting org beda2 parenting umma mega ok banget kok nat dan ritsuki minim dikasih gadget mereka sering eksplor lingkungan rumahnya. kalo hanya dari cuplikan mungkin memang terlihat begitu tapi sebelum komentar harusnya dicari tau dulu sih :)”
Subthemes Controlling	“Jadi penasaran parenting ibu deny gimana? Ibu ngga pernah bercanda kaget2an kayak gitu ke anaknya bu?” “setuju bgt jatohnya jd kek mother as the child's first bully”
Subthemes Praise	“Orang bahagia aja masih dimasalahin. Parenting Umma aja udh bagus banget buat mereka berdua udh serba mandiri itu juga Umma sama papa nya yang ngajarin. Masalah konten itu kan hiburan jangan yang bikin bahagia dicari terus celah kesalahannya iri kah?”
Subthemes Acknowledging Parenting Standard	“buk buk kayak parenting ibuk dah bener aja”
Subthemes Resistance Ideal Standard	“Jadi pada sebel coz gak ada ibu atau orang tua sempurna”

Source: Author's field observation and thematic analysis, 2025.

This theme indicates that when processing information, sex-typed individuals understand, evaluate, and categorize received information based on gender schemas, and then use it as a foundation for evaluating behavior considered deviant. The post by @Denald, acts as a stimulus triggered individuals with the tendency of being sex-typed to provide evaluations of

mothers' behavior deemed inconsistent with internalized gender schemas. Five subthemes emerged, which are interconnected within each other. The "Acknowledging Motherhood Policing" subtheme discusses the awareness of motherhood policing practices performed by @Denald. This subtheme is closely related to other themes because, whether consciously or unconsciously, the reply authors were aware that @Denald was supervising and controlling Mama Mega's family communication practices. The replies did not only evaluate Mama Mega but also supervised @Denald, making the positions of perpetrator and target interchangeable. Just as @Denald evaluated what she considered inappropriate behavior in Mama Mega's family communication, the reply authors also understood and evaluated inappropriate behavior in @Denald's post as part of their information processing.

This finding indicates that when a mother engages in motherhood policing toward another mother on social media X, she may also receive motherhood policing from third parties. The forms of supervision directed at @Denald varied, such as giving private critiques, telling her not to control another family's communication practices, or questioning @Denald's own parenting. Interestingly, behaviors considered inappropriate, such as failing to differentiate between a playful moment and serious parenting interaction, carry layered dynamics. On one hand, some reply authors internalized the playful family moment as appropriate behavior, but on the other hand, others engaged in motherhood policing toward Mama Mega because the same moment was considered inappropriate according to maternal standards.

Mothers's standards were also evident in the three subsequent subthemes. The "Praise" subtheme indicates that the stimulus from @Denald's post triggered reply authors to praise Mama Mega's behavior as a mother because it aligned with internalized standards. The "Acknowledging Parenting Standard" subtheme shows that collective standards for mothers' behavior in parenting and family communication are internalized. The information in @Denald's post was processed with the belief that there is an ideal standard for mothers in family communication practices. This belief departs from the concept of intensive mothering, which states that mothers are the most responsible for child-rearing (Hays 1998, 97). Conversely, the "Resistance Ideal Standard" subtheme indicates a different perspective, as reply authors expressed resistance toward ideal maternal standards, particularly in family communication, as part of their response to @Denald's post.

The subthemes of "Motherhood Policing" theme often appeared simultaneously within a single reply. This shows that the five subthemes all reflect evaluations of mothers' behavior based on internalized gender schemas. These findings align with (Varadi, Raby and Tardif-Williams 2020, 5-14), who stated that mothers are not only constantly supervised and evaluated but also experience interactions that mix critique, praise, and resistance. This theme thus demonstrates how reply authors' responses to @Denald's post revealed recurring evaluative patterns toward mothers based on gender schemas, which in turn fueled resistance to the ideal standards.

These findings indicate that the motherhood policing practices are layered and interrelated across subthemes. The information in @Denald's post served as a stimulus for sex-typed individuals to evaluate mothers. The

evaluative practices varied, ranging from recognizing motherhood policing, participating in it, praising mothers' behavior based on internalized gender standards, acknowledging ideal maternal standards, to resisting those standards. Whereas the previous themes highlighted gendered addressing, expectations, and stereotypes, this theme highlights the evaluative process specifically directed toward mothers, with standards reproduced through the concept of intensive mothering. These findings suggest that social media reinforces and facilitates the policing of mothers, creating a space in which the roles of perpetrator and target become blurred through reciprocal, layered, and intersecting dynamics. This shows that motherhood policing does not occur in one-way manner but rather circulates in ways that reinforce collective standards considered unjust toward women and mothers.

#### 4.4 Religious-Based Silencing Theme

The findings in this theme indicate that reply authors identify @Denald's gender and social identity as the author of the post, and then process that information to understand and evaluate it based on gender schemas and religious norms. A study by (Sitohang, Montessori and Zatalini 2025, 15) on the phenomenon of cyber sexual harassment on Instagram stated that one form of sexual harassment in the digital space is religion-based abuse. In this theme, religious norms and morals serve as the foundation for evaluating @Denald's post.

Table 4. Quotes from Religious-Based Silencing Theme

Theme Religious-Based Silencing
"Buk suudzon dosanya besar lho"
"km tu muslim buk. muslim ga mengajarkan seperti ini kalo mau menasehati ya gak di ruang publik. gaada adab sama sekali anda. bahkan yg bersangkutan pun sudah bilang untuk DM/CHAT ADMINNYA tapi masih aja balesin komen disini. bisa baca ga sih? paham ga sih?"
"Idih jgn sok iye bu mentang2 lo di belanda asal main literasi rendah di indo. Yg rendah mah literasi situ kali. Cuma nonton video sepenggal langsung ambil kesimpulan sendiri berkedok opini padahal lu julid. Tobat bu malu sm kerudung punya hati masih aja iri gatel ngejulid."

Source: Author's field observation and thematic analysis, 2025.

If in the previous theme the evaluative actions were limited to gendered aspects, in this theme the evaluative actions are layered with the presence of religious norms. In this theme, social and cultural elements merge in gender schemas that serve as an internalized foundation for evaluating. Reply authors with a tendency to be sex-typed identify not only the gender identity of the interlocutor but also their religious beliefs and associate them with religious norms. This theme shows that the trigger in @Denald's post was processed through gender and individual identification, and then linked to internalized gender schemas and religious norms. In other words, religion and gender work

together in extending the evaluative base toward women, particularly mothers. Sex-typed individuals have greater readiness to process information through gender schemas influenced by religious norms, so their responses contain both gendered and moral dimensions. This theme indicates that religion and gender as schemas mutually reinforce social standards and controls toward mothers, so the silencing of opinions also reproduces bias. These findings align with (Sitohang, Montessori and Zatalini 2025, 15), who stated that religion-based abuse is a form of abuse related to personal belief.

These findings further indicate that gender and religion work together as schemas to reinforce social standards and controls toward mothers. The silencing of opinion or behavior is rooted in internalized gender and religion, making mothers not only expected to be the most responsible for parenting, but also expected to behave in accordance with religious morals. If in the three previous themes the evaluative actions were still related to gender roles and identity, in this theme gender goes together with religious norms in the evaluative process. These findings also indicate that besides religious norms, social and cultural contexts work together with gender as schemas to reinforce standards and controls toward gender identity in social phenomena, particularly in social media interactions, which ultimately strengthens the reproduction of gender bias in digital spaces.

#### 4.5 Gender Scheme and the Potential for Gender Bias

If in the previous parts the focus was on the cognitive process based on gender schema theory in each theme, this part discusses how the emerged themes are interrelated, how they relate to previous studies, and the unexpected findings. The emerged themes are manifestations of social interactions influenced by gender schemas.

The four themes and their subthemes, Gendered Addressing and Insults, Gendered Expectations and Stereotypes, Motherhood Policing, and Religious-Based Silencing are interrelated. These themes indicate cognitive processes of individuals with a tendency to be sex-typed during information processing. The post by @Denald discussed family communication and domestic issues, so the emerged themes in the replies were influenced by gender schemas. In some replies, more than one theme emerged. These phenomena indicate that all four themes were working together, mutually influencing one another, and creating gendered and family communication social standards. The gendered insults did not emerge suddenly. Instead, they were often triggered by gendered addressing and concluded with the expression of gendered roles and expectations. These were the result of cognitive processes influenced by internalized gender schemas and social contexts. Gender bias in public interactions can be explained cognitively: information serves as a stimulus, individuals evaluate it based on gender schemas and then acts of resistance toward collective internalized standards may emerge. The phenomenon of public discourse in digital space about critiques of family communication practices in @Denald's post indicates that individuals have the tendency to be sex-typed. Whether consciously or unconsciously, gender schemas are already internalized in their cognition.

Interactions in social media are not only discourse platform to interact and exchange information, but also spaces that reproduce gender bias. This

aligns with the study by (Akmalia and Indrawati 2022, 99) that also found gender bias phenomena in social media, as well as a study by (Sitohang, Montessori and Zatalini 2025, 15), which highlighted religion-based harassment in social media interactions. Thus, these findings indicate the recurring reproduction of gender bias. Unlike the studies by (Supratman, Rinekasari and Ana 2023, 224) and (Wijdan, Santoso and Siscawati 2024, 3-6), which emphasized that social media can function as educational and gender advocacy spaces, this research reveals that social media reproduces gender bias. These findings affected the collective internalized gender schemas and social norms, as well as gender social standards and controls. The recurring reproduction of gender bias may narrow gender roles and representation in public. Clearly, this is a challenge to gender equity and women's empowerment. As part of the effort to minimize the reproduction of gender bias, individuals need to improve their digital literacy so that social media can function as platform for education, gender advocacy, and other sensitive topics. In this way, gender equity can be supported through social media.

Several unexpected findings in this research are the presence of religious norms as legitimation of gender bias. This indicates an interrelation between gender standards, religious norms, and socio-cultural values internalized during social interactions. Another unexpected finding is the pattern of supervision and control directed toward @Denald after she carried out motherhood policing practices toward another mother. This indicates that motherhood policing practices is not only directed at the mother being criticized, but also at the actor who performed the policing first, namely @Denald. This shows that the resistance towards ideal standards emerged as counter-control, which further indicates the nature of public discourse in social media as a two-way interactive platform. There are also resistance patterns toward gendered social standards and controls. This is consistent with the study by (Varadi, Raby and Tardif-Williams 2020, 12-14), which stated that several young mothers reject maternal standards. Different from previous findings, however, the resistance in this study was not carried out by the criticized mother, but by other actors participating in the public discourse. This indicates that critical understandings of gender have already been adopted by some users, while also showing opportunities for change. Although this research departed from public discourse about family communication, the process of interaction was strongly related to gender, religion, cultural dimensions.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

This research identified four themes influenced by gender schemas in replies to @Denald's social media X post, namely Gendered Addressing and Insults, Gendered Expectations and Stereotypes, Motherhood Policing, and Religious-Based Silencing. These themes were interrelated and created collective social standards and controls that internalize gender, which reinforce public evaluative actions toward women, particularly mothers. Social media not only function as platforms for discourse, but also serve as spaces that reproduce gender bias. Even so, this research also found phenomena of resistance toward ideal standards, which opened up opportunities for social change and gender equity. This research contributes to family communication studies, gender studies, and media studies, while also opening up a

new study topic about acts of resistance toward gender bias in digital spaces.

Based on the findings, this research gives some recommendations. First, future research can explore the phenomena of gender bias patterns and resistance in other social media platforms, as well as deepen the religious and gender dimensions in creating gender schemas. Second, individuals need to strengthen their gendered digital literacy to minimize the reproduction of gender bias in digital spaces. Third, social media platforms need to tighten policies on content containing gendered and religious insults, as well as provide advocacy spaces that are supportive of women and mothers. Fourth, government policy on gender equity in social interactions is needed so that digital spaces can be safer, more inclusive, and collaborative. These recommendations are expected not only to provide practical contributions but also stimulate new scholarly inquiries about the correlation between gender, media, and public communication.

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