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The reconstruction of women's dignity in the age of social media: A discourse on the subject of cancel culture and the illusion of gender solidarity

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of cancel culture has transformed digital spaces into arenas of moral judgment, where public outrage frequently functions as a mechanism of social control. In the Indonesian context, this phenomenon unveils pronounced gender asymmetries, particularly in the form of symbolic punishment endured by women, which is disproportionate and enduring. This study aims to examine how cancel culture functions as a gendered practice that undermines women's dignity and reframes solidarity through conditional moral standards. Employing a virtual ethnography approach, this study analyzes digital interactions, public narratives, and mediated responses surrounding selected cases of online cancellation involving women. The findings suggest that cancel culture functions not merely as an expression of collective accountability; rather, it constitutes a structured process shaped by patriarchal moral hierarchies, algorithmic amplification, and selective public empathy. Women's purported moral transgressions are characterized as character flaws, whereas analogous actions by men are frequently contextualized and pardoned. In addition, the discourse of Woman Supporting Woman frequently functions as a normative instrument that disciplines women rather than cultivating authentic solidarity. This study makes a significant contribution to contemporary feminist and communication scholarship by conceptualizing cancel culture as a form of gendered power practice and emphasizing the need to reposition digital solidarity as a structural, ethical, and political commitment to achieving gender justice.

Keywords: cancel culture; virtual ethnography; women's dignity; gender inequality; digital feminism; woman support woman.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Digital Moral Policing and the Paradox of Women's Solidarity

The phenomenon of cancel culture, which emerged in the mid-2020s, is a reactive response to social transgressions that has evolved into a multifaceted mechanism for enforcing digital norms. This initiative has been initiated as a collective expression of solidarity to demand accountability, and it has frequently evolved into a form of social retribution that precludes the possibility of dialogue or reconciliation (Salisah et al., 2025; Shank, 2025). In Indonesia, this phenomenon is becoming increasingly apparent on social media platforms such as Twitter (will be summoned as X like the new name of that platform), Instagram, and TikTok. Hashtags and viral conversations on these platforms have emerged as instruments for evaluating individuals' actions based on the perceptions of the majority of the online public. It is not uncommon for individuals, especially women, to be punished not only for violations of social codes of conduct but also due to highly subjective moral interpretations by the broader digital community (Salisah et al., 2025). This fact occurs concurrently with the global impetus for gender equality encountering significant challenges, as evidenced by UN Women's findings that the pursuit of global gender equality by 2025 has encountered stagnation or regression in several pivotal indicators of SDG 5 (World Economic Forum, 2025).

Achieving global gender equality by 2025 represents a considerable paradox. The UN Women Gender Snapshot 2025 report indicates that if current trends persist, the objective of achieving gender equality by 2030 is likely to be unattainable, with hundreds of millions of women and girls still experiencing extreme poverty and inequitable access to social and economic opportunities. The Global Gender Gap Report indicates that significant disparities persist in economic participation, political empowerment, and educational equality in numerous countries worldwide, including those in Southeast Asia. This phenomenon is part of a broader global trend (World Economic Forum, 2025). In this context, it is imperative to interpret solidarity slogans such as *Woman Support Woman*, which resonate in Indonesia's digital public sphere, not solely as an expression of moral disapproval but as an articulation of a response to the prevailing structures of inequality that persist in impeding the realization of women's rights and well-being.

In Indonesia, a distinctive circumstance manifests in which moral infractions, such as extramarital sexual indiscretions by prominent individuals, act as catalysts for cancel culture. A significant number of internet users engage in the immediate social condemnation of women involved in such incidents, while men in analogous circumstances frequently encounter narratives of tolerance and social justification. This phenomenon is indicative of an underlying structural gender bias within the fabric of social media, wherein the moral standards applied to evaluate conduct are often more stringent for women (Yadav, 2025). Such discourse serves to perpetuate existing gender stereotypes, instilling the idea that women are the custodians of social morality and that they must acquiesce to certain norms to be regarded as deserving of the community's moral support. In practice, this has led to the obfuscation of the goal of solidarity and the reinforcement of the logic of mass condemnation, as opposed to the promotion of collective dialogue based on justice.

Given the prevalence of rapidly evolving digital interactions in contemporary society, cancel culture has become an inevitable consequence, exerting a substantial impact on both the psychological and social spheres. This phenomenon is characterized by its rapid dissemination and emotional nature, which has emerged as a significant concern given its potential to engender deleterious psychological and social consequences. The dissemination of viral content often results in the formation of echo chambers, which serve to reinforce prevailing majority views while concurrently isolating divergent perspectives. Furthermore, this practice strengthens social sanctions against specific target populations (Salisah et al., 2025). This phenomenon is further compounded by the prevailing social pressures in digital networks that swiftly judge public missteps, often without considering the requisite contextual depth or providing the relevant parties with the opportunity for constructive dialogue. Consequently, women at the center of controversies often experience double stigmatization: as violators of norms and as objects of unlimited criticism from the digital community.

Woman Support Woman, which is predicated on the notion of women's solidarity, is a concept that idealizes collective support for equality and empowerment. When solidarity is associated with digital punishment mechanisms predicated on individual morality, the intrinsic value of solidarity becomes vulnerable. In practice, however, such initiatives risk being reduced to normative calls that do not consider the broader structures of inequality, including biases against women in social and economic spaces (Yadav, 2025). This prompts fundamental inquiries into the extent to which digital solidarity can genuinely promote empowerment, as opposed to merely sanctioning behaviors considered deviant. A close analysis of this phenomenon reveals that responses to public moral conflicts must be evaluated within a comprehensive framework encompassing the influences of social structures, gender bias, and society's capacity for constructive dialogue. Social disapproval propagated through the concept of cancel culture, which does not permit equitable redress, has the potential to perpetuate unfavorable stereotypes concerning women while obfuscating the broader, systemic endeavor to attain gender parity. Therefore, a balanced approach is essential, combining digital responses to social violations with collective efforts that support comprehensive gender rights, dignity, and justice in the digital age. Critiquing cancel culture necessitates the formulation of digital solidarity campaigns predicated on the tenets of sustainable social justice.

According to the aforementioned explanation, the present study focuses on the operation of cancel culture as a mechanism for the enforcement of digital norms for women in Indonesia, the extent to which these practices reproduce gender double standards, and the maintenance of the relevance and effectiveness of the concept of women's solidarity in efforts to promote justice and gender empowerment in the era of digital disruption.

1.2. Cancel Culture as a Digital Social Phenomenon

In the context of digital sociology studies, cancel culture is conceptualized as a mechanism of collective social sanction in the digital sphere, orchestrated through social media platforms such as X, Instagram, and TikTok. This phenomenon entails the withdrawal of support for individuals or entities deemed to have transgressed public norms, morals, or ethics (Mayasari, 2022; Salisah et al., 2025). This phenomenon has emerged as a novel form of social control, enabling online communities to exercise a form of social pressure that can result in the boycott, condemnation, and destruction of the reputation of a target entity without the need for formal legal processes, which are often regarded as either inadequate or slow by the public (Yanuar et al., 2023). In the context of Indonesia, the phenomenon of cancel culture has been observed to emerge as a collective response to the actions of public figures and institutions. This response often prompts internet users to engage in behaviors such as boycotting content, mass unfollowing, and public condemnation of perceived violations (Jaafar & Herna, 2025). Theoretical perspectives on this phenomenon also link it to the concept of social control in classical sociology, where society seeks to uphold norms through public pressure. However, in the digital context, the potency of algorithms has been demonstrated to exacerbate the viral propagation of controversial issues, resulting in excessive social sanction (Salisah et al., 2025; Prasetyo & Andriana, 2025).

According to the findings of Aisha (2025), insufficient digital literacy and deficient platform regulations further exacerbate netizens' inclination to assume the roles of spontaneous moral judges and executors, lacking the requisite dialogue or elucidation. Studies in Indonesia have shown that cancel culture is often perceived in a contradictory manner, being regarded as both a legitimate form of social control and a form of digital bullying that exerts significant psychological pressure on its targets (Salisah et al., 2025; Septiani et al., 2025). The theoretical framework under consideration positions cancel culture as a complex digital social phenomenon, with implications for the dynamics of moral power, public bias, and shifting sanction mechanisms in an increasingly digitized society.

1.3. Digital Patriarchy in Indonesia's Social Media Ecosystem

The term digital patriarchy refers to the process of reproducing patriarchal power relations through digital technology and social media culture that appears egalitarian, but is structurally unequal. In this context, social media and digital platforms are not neutral entities, but instead function as social spaces

that play a crucial role in mediating, reinforcing, and perpetuating patriarchal values. This perpetuation occurs through the implementation of algorithms, the norms of the online community, and the discursive practices of the users who inhabit these spaces (Novianti & Nugroho, 2021; Fitriani, 2022). Within Indonesian society, the phenomenon of digital patriarchy manifests itself through social media's pervasive monitoring, evaluation, and regulation of women's bodies and moral conduct. This dynamic is often accompanied by a diminution or normalization of male agency and responsibility in analogous circumstances (Salsabila & Prasetyo, 2023).

According to Utami (2022), in the context of gender communication studies, the observation of women's bodies in digital spaces is regarded as a manifestation of symbolic surveillance. This concept encompasses social surveillance grounded in moral standards, orchestrated by the public through the actions of commenting, reposting, and labeling. This phenomenon has transformed the physical form of women into a contested space within the realm of moral politics, wherein their appearance, intimate relationships, and emotional expressions become subjects of public scrutiny by internet users. Research conducted in Indonesia indicates that women are more frequently the subjects of moral policing compared to men, particularly in matters concerning sexuality, domestic relationships, and conventional gender roles (Rohmah & Kurniawan, 2023; Lestari, 2024). Digital patriarchy is further facilitated by the language and symbols employed in online interactions. Derogatory terms such as *pelakor* (home wrecker), cheap woman, or immoral serve to dehumanize and objectify women, thereby reinforcing social control over their behavior (Azzahra & Hidayat, 2022). In contrast, men involved in analogous cases are often assigned milder labels such as mistaken, weak in faith, or naughty which mirror cultural tolerance for men's ethical transgressions (Putra & Wahyuni, 2023).

From the standpoint of digital feminism, the current condition indicates that Indonesian social media has not yet become a fully emancipatory space for women. Instead, it tends to reproduce preexisting gender hierarchies in novel forms (Kurniasih, 2021; Saraswati, 2022). Platform algorithms that prioritize emotional and sensational content have been shown to reinforce exposure to misogynistic narratives, thereby accelerating the process of mass judgment against women who are considered to deviate from the norm (Fadhilah & Ramadhan, 2024). This phenomenon is referred to as gendered visibility, a state in which women's visibility is heightened, yet they become more susceptible to symbolic violence. The digital patriarchy in Indonesia is also closely related to the socio-cultural context, which continues to assign women the role of guardians of family and community morals. Sociological research indicates that these cultural expectations have migrated to the digital space, manifesting as demands that women maintain their image, modesty, and loyalty, even in the private sphere that is exposed to the public (Hapsari & Nugraha, 2023; Yuliana, 2025). The transgression of these expectations results in a dualistic assessment of women. On one hand, they are regarded as having committed an individual transgression. On the other hand, they are judged to have violated the collective moral order.

Based on the explanation above, we can conclude that in general, digital patriarchy can thus be understood as a power structure that functions through technology, culture, and online communication practices in a simultaneous manner. This phenomenon not only imposes limitations on the agency of women but also fosters the illusion of equality within the digital domain, a milieu that is, in reality, characterized by pervasive inequality. It is imperative to develop a comprehensive theoretical understanding of digital patriarchy in order to effectively dismantle gender bias within the context of cancel culture. This theoretical framework is particularly crucial for assessing the justice and solidarity claims that are often invoked in conjunction with social punishment practices on Indonesian social media.

1.4. Women's Solidarity in the Perspective of Structural Feminism and the Digital Context in Indonesia

In the context of feminist theory, the concept of female solidarity is understood as a collective consciousness that emerges from the recognition of the structures of social, economic, political, and cultural inequality that systematically place women in a subordinate position. This solidarity is not intended as a justification for individual behavior; rather, it is a form of recognition of structural and interrelated experiences of oppression (Kurniasih, 2021; Hapsari, 2022). In feminist solidarity, the focus must shift

from personal morality to an analysis of power relations. This analysis must consider women not as individual ethical subjects, but as part of a collective experiencing systemic injustice. In contrast, a multitude of recent studies have revealed that the phenomenon of women's solidarity within Indonesia's digital public sphere frequently encounters a misinterpretation of its underlying implications. In the context of gender relations, solidarity is frequently influenced by prevailing moral standards that are deeply entrenched in patriarchal norms. These norms encompass concepts such as sexual purity, monogamy, and ideal domestic roles (Lestari & Nugroho, 2023; Rahmawati, 2024). In such circumstances, solidarity becomes contingent upon adherence to specific moral standards, thereby rendering women eligible for support solely in accordance with these predefined criteria. In the event of a violation of these standards, solidarity rapidly devolves into a mechanism of social exclusion.

According to an intersectional feminist framework, the establishment of solidarity grounded in individual morality has the capacity to engender novel inequalities among women. Crenshaw (in Saraswati, 2022) posits that women's experiences are not homogeneous, but rather, they are influenced by a variety of social factors, including class, marital status, and religion, among other considerations. Research conducted in Indonesia indicates that women who do not conform to traditional gender norms, including single women, women with unconventional sexual expression, or women involved in domestic conflicts, face a heightened risk of exclusion from the collective societal support system (Azzahra, 2023; Fitriyani, 2024). As a result, selective solidarity has the effect of exacerbating the fragmentation among women. This phenomenon is further complicated in the social media ecosystem, in which platforms tend to prioritize visibility, affection, and expeditious judgment. A study of feminist communication in Indonesia indicates that social media fosters performative solidarity, defined as symbolic support intended to showcase one's moral stance rather than to establish sustainable collective advocacy (Putri & Widodo, 2023; Maulida, 2025). In practice, performative solidarity frequently coincides with cancel culture, wherein women who are regarded as having transgressed moral standards become the subject of censure from their own gender in the name of solidarity.

As posited by scholars in the field, this condition is understood as a manifestation of internalized patriarchy, defined as the unconscious propagation of patriarchal values within horizontal relationships among women (Salsabila & Prasetyo, 2023; Yuliana, 2025). The principle of solidarity which should be understood as a form of emancipatory ideology, is often employed as a tool of social discipline, thereby serving to reinforce the moral boundaries of women. This finding aligns with the sociological research conducted in Indonesia, which indicates that social control over women is not solely imposed by men or formal institutions but also emanates from the female community itself (Utami, 2022; Rohmah & Kurniawan, 2023). This phenomenon, predicated on individual morality, has the potential to obfuscate the underlying causes of systemic issues that ought to be the focal point of feminist endeavors. When public attention is absorbed in judging women's personal behavior, issues such as gender-based violence, economic inequality, legal discrimination, and access to justice are marginalized (UN Women, 2025; World Economic Forum, 2025). A similar phenomenon can be observed in the Indonesian context, where the prevailing moral discourse within society tends to overshadow the advocacy for policies that would offer protection to women in the digital space.

Relevance to the explanation above, contemporary feminist theory places significant emphasis on the imperative to redefine women's solidarity as a political practice grounded in structural empathy, as opposed to moral obedience. Feminist solidarity should enable the expression of criticism without compromising the dignity of the individual, and it should also repudiate exclusionary mechanisms that erode the collective position of women (Maulida, 2025). The concept of women's solidarity functions not as a mechanism for determining the deservingness of support, but rather as a collective space to challenge the persistent reproduction of gender inequalities within the Indonesian digital society.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach by integrating virtual ethnography and critical discourse analysis to comprehend cancel culture against women as a social practice that functions through language,

affection, and power relations in the digital sphere. This methodological choice stems from the understanding that contemporary social media has transformed into the primary arena of moral legitimacy, where mass social judgment occurs horizontally (Postill, 2021; Pink et al., 2022). In the context of Indonesia on 2025, the phenomenon of cancel culture must be understood not merely as an expression of individual emotion, but rather as a collective mechanism that systematically produces meaning, moral hierarchies, and symbolic exclusion. Virtual ethnography is regarded as the most pertinent approach due to its capacity to facilitate the documentation of digital social practices within their contextual and continuous milieu. Contemporary social media platforms such as X, Instagram, and TikTok are not merely passive communication channels, but rather active social spaces where values, norms, and identities are actively negotiated (Kozinets, 2022). This approach aligns with recent studies that emphasize the predominance of moral and political practices in contemporary society, which are increasingly taking place within online communities characterized by affective interactions, digital memory, and the logic of virality (Pink et al., 2022).

Despite this, merely observing digital interactions does not suffice to elucidate the selective allocation of public sympathy. In this context, critical discourse analysis is employed to interpret language as a means of wielding power. In the academic literature, recent advancements in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) studies have emerged that offer novel perspectives on the role of digital discourse in society. These studies posit that digital discourse functions as a social practice that actively shapes reality, rather than merely representing it (Flowerdew, 2021; Wodak & Meyer, 2023). This approach reveals that terms such as *pelakor*, *nusyuz*, and *elegant women* are interpreted as ideological constructs that regulate who is worthy of being positioned as a victim and who deserves to be punished.

Digital feminism provides the conceptual foundation for understanding the ambivalent nature of political practice among women. Recent studies demonstrate that while social media facilitates feminist expression, it concurrently reproduces exclusion and hierarchies grounded in prevailing moralities (Keller et al., 2021; Banet-Weiser, 2023). In the Indonesian context, women's solidarity in the digital space is often not rooted in structural awareness, but rather in compliance with norms of monogamy, patience, and self-control. This can result in support becomes conditional and easily withdrawn. The concept of digital patriarchy serves to complement the aforementioned analysis by elucidating the reasons why gender inequality does not weaken in digital spaces, but rather adapts. Recent literature indicates that algorithms and the attention economy have the potential to both increase women's visibility and vulnerability to moral surveillance and symbolic violence (Noble, 2022; D'Ignazio & Klein, 2023). This framework is imperative for the analysis of digital double standards, wherein women's missteps are perceived as lasting dishonor, while men's missteps are more readily relativized or excused.

The data for this study was collected through the documentation of digital discourse related to public cases throughout 2024–2025. This documentation included posts, comments, and archives of viral conversations. The selection of data was based on the intensity of moral judgment and the density of gender discourse, rather than on the legal validity of the events. The analysis was conducted thematically and critically to identify binary oppositions, victim narratives, and the transformation of women's subject positions in the circulation of digital discourse, as recommended in contemporary CDA studies (Wodak & Meyer, 2023). The methodology employed in this study is meticulously designed to serve as an analytical conduit to the case study that is forthcoming in the next chapter. The ensuing case study will delve into the intricate dynamics of virality, with a particular emphasis on the construction of the ideal victim who aligns with prevailing feminine norms. In the context of contemporary digital culture, there has been a discernible erosion of solidarity, precipitated by the infringement upon moral consistency imperatives dictated by the digital public. Gender double standards find legitimization through linguistic nuances, humor, and the normalization of male transgressions, a phenomenon that aligns with the findings of recent digital feminism studies (Banet-Weiser, 2023).

From an epistemological perspective, this research provides a fresh perspective by conceptualizing cancel culture as a gender-based power practice, rather than merely an issue of freedom of expression. The integration of virtual ethnography, critical discourse analysis, digital feminism, and the concept of digital patriarchy facilitates a more comprehensive reading of the relationship between morality, solidarity,

and gender inequality in Indonesia's digital space. The methodology under scrutiny in this instance is not only contextually relevant but also contributes to the development of communication studies, feminism, and contemporary critical discourse studies (Postill, 2021; Kozinets, 2022; Banet-Weiser, 2023).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The study utilizes case studies that transpired in Indonesia throughout 2025 to facilitate the review process, as previously elucidated. The following is a description of each case that has been adjusted to the context of the study.

3.1. Chronology of the Conflict and Allegations of *Nusyuz* (Case A)

First case is a divorce dispute involving two public figures from the Indonesian entertainment industry that came to light in the first half of 2025. This case is of particular academic significance insofar as it illustrates the genesis, legitimization, and discourse surrounding moral accusations against women, as they intersect with Islamic family law and the digital public sphere. The divorce suit was filed by Male Subject A (BW) with the primary allegations that Female Subject A (PV) had committed *nusyuz* and adultery, two categories that have substantial legal and symbolic ramifications in the Indonesian religious court system (Nurlaelawati, 2021). In the initial stage of the proceedings, the relevant religious court ruled in favor of the petition, thereby declaring PV culpable of actions that fell under the purview of *nusyuz*. This ruling directly impacted the loss of alimony rights for PV and the consequent award of child custody to BW. In the context of Islamic family law, the concept of *nusyuz* not only serves as a foundation for legal analysis but also functions as a symbolic mechanism that engenders stigma against women following divorce (Utami, 2022).

In the context of cancel culture, allegations of infidelity directed toward female public figures often serve as the primary catalyst for collective social censure. Recent studies demonstrate that women are frequently the recipients of more intense and prolonged moral sanctions in matters pertaining to sexuality and domestic relations. This phenomenon can be attributed to the societal perception of women's bodies and morality as symbols of social values that must be publicly upheld (Banet-Weiser, 2023). In this particular instance, however, the observed dynamics exhibited a deviation from the conventional pattern of condemnation. In contrast to the passive reproduction of the husband's narrative, certain segments of the public, notably women's communities on social media, have exhibited a more critical interpretive disposition. The skeptical attitude in question did not emerge spontaneously but was instead influenced by the historical context, specifically the husband's digital track record. Over the years, this record has consistently commodified the domestic sphere as entertainment material. From the perspective of digital media studies, repeated exposure to such practices has the potential to erode the moral authority of public figures when they make normative or juridical claims that demand public trust (Kozinets, 2022).

This digital trace thus functions as a social archive, accessible to the public for the purpose of assessing the distribution of power relations in ongoing conflicts. While the wife adopted a strategy of limited communication by abstaining from the construction of a counter-narrative on social media, the husband possessed the experience, visibility, and symbolic resources that enabled him to produce public opinion with greater systematicity. This discrepancy serves to validate the notion that collective digital memory plays a pivotal role in shaping assessments of credibility, thereby underscoring the notion that public trust is not solely determined by legal status, but rather by the aggregate of past digital representations (Noble, 2022). From the vantage point of critical discourse analysis, the accusation of *nusyuz* in this context cannot be regarded as a mere neutral legal category; rather, it functions as an ideological instrument that enforces gender compliance norms. A substantial body of research indicates that within the context of religious court practice, the concept of *nusyuz* is frequently interpreted in an asymmetrical manner, with more stringent compliance standards imposed on wives compared to husbands. This phenomenon contributes to the perpetuation of an idealized conception of femininity that places significant emphasis on qualities such as patience, submission, and self-control (Nurlaelawati, 2021; Utami, 2022).

Translated into the digital realm, the concept of *musyawarah* transcends its legal definition, metamorphosing into a foundation for moral legitimacy, thereby enabling social judgment. In this context, social media functions as a space where legal categories become politicized and are reinterpreted through collective sentiment, frequently without the verification mechanisms characteristic of formal legal procedures. While the initial court decision establishes a patriarchal structure, the public's response through social media platforms exhibits a counterforce to the monolithic narrative promoted by legal entities. This phenomenon is indicative of a broader transformation in Indonesia's digital culture, where the public is increasingly engaging in contextual readings informed by collective experience, moral intuition, and digital affections. This stands in contrast to the traditional submission to institutional authority or public figures (Pink et al., 2022).

Relate to the explanation above, the initial phase of this conflict represented a family law dispute, it also became an arena for negotiating the meaning of moral accusations against women. The interplay among the law, the media, and public opinion underscores that moral legitimacy is not exclusively determined by formal decisions. Instead, it is a subject of negotiation through discursive processes within the digital realm. The chronology of these *musyawarah* allegations is therefore a critical analytical foundation for understanding why public sympathy did not completely collapse. It is also important to consider how these conditions enabled a later reversal of the narrative.

3.2. The Collapse of Solidarity and Digital Moral Punishment (Case B)

Case B is diametrically opposed to the preceding case, wherein public support for the female subject underwent a precipitous and substantial decline. Female Subject B (IR) was formerly established in the public sphere as a symbol of a lawful wife's resistance to adultery, thereby acquiring substantial moral legitimacy. This symbolic position elevated her to the status of a reference figure in the discourse on domestic justice. A notable shift in narrative status in 2025 underscores the fragility of gender-based solidarity in the digital realm, emphasizing its profound reliance on the ethical integrity of the individual (Sari & Nugroho, 2022). This shift in perspective emerged following the reporting of IR to the authorities for purportedly transgressing established marital norms, thereby positioning her as a figure potentially capable of causing harm to other women, at least in the public's perception. This accusation caused a shift in the discourse surrounding IR's position, moving from that of a victim to that of a perpetrator. This shift had the effect of undermining her previously established moral legitimacy. In the study of Indonesian digital culture, this kind of symbolic shift in position frequently elicits a more intense backlash than violations committed by individuals who were not initially constructed as victims (Putri, 2023).

The loss of the victim's position had a direct impact on the collapse of public trust in IR, which was evidenced by a decline in public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the international relations system. The support that was previously offered on the basis of empathy evolved into criticism based on collective disappointment. Research on digital morality indicates that the Indonesian public tends to evaluate female figures based on narratives of ethical consistency. When these figures are perceived to have violated the values they once espoused, the public response shifts from sympathy to symbolic punishment (Wibowo & Prasetyo, 2021). In the context of Case B, the phenomenon of cancel culture was operationalized through the process of examining digital archives. IR's prior statements denouncing relationships with married men were revived and disseminated extensively, serving as evidence of moral incongruity. These digital archives functioned as a tool for legitimizing social punishment, whereby the past was recontextualized to assess the moral suitability of the subject in the present. Research conducted through netnographic studies in Indonesia indicates that this practice is frequently employed to enforce collective moral standards on social media platforms (Rahmawati, 2022).

The main public demand in this context is no longer focused on formal legal processes, but rather on subjective moral consistency. IR's apology was unable to quell criticism because it was considered disproportionate to the symbolic violation that had been committed. In Indonesian digital culture, hypocrisy is perceived as a more serious moral violation than ordinary normative errors, as it is considered to undermine collective trust (Hidayat, 2023). From a gender perspective, Case B confirms that women's solidarity in the Indonesian digital space is strongly biased towards the position of the first wife in domestic

relationship conflicts. When IR was positioned—both factually and symbolically—as a party that potentially threatened that position, collective support was withdrawn with almost no room for negotiation. This shows that gender-based solidarity is still limited by the dominant morality of monogamy (Rohmah, 2022).

This observation is further substantiated by the findings in Case B, which demonstrate that the discourse of *Women Supporting Women* does not function as an inclusive ethical principle. Rather, it operates as a selective mechanism that necessitates specific moral compliance. The notion of a “clean”, consistent, and morally unambiguous victim is a construct that has been historically and socially imposed upon women, thereby relegating them to a position of inferiority and subjugation. In the event of a violation of these conditions, women become subject to rigorous social discipline (Sari & Nugroho, 2022). Therefore, Case B demonstrates how cancel culture functions as an instrument of gender-based moral surveillance and punishment in Indonesia's digital space. The collapse of solidarity towards IR was triggered by the failure to preserve her symbolic position as the ideal victim. This finding confirms that public support for women is contingent and easily revoked when dominant moral norms are violated, and serves as an important basis for comparative analysis in the next section.

3.3. The Dynamics of Social Punishment of Female Figures in Relational Conflicts (Case C and Case D)

Throughout the 2025 reporting period, a series of cases involving young female figures and social media influencers have revealed patterns of disparate public treatment between men and women. This phenomenon lends credence to the notion of systemic double standards in gender relations within the context of cancel culture in Indonesia, where women are disproportionately subjected to more severe, personal, and prolonged social sanctions. In the Indonesian context of digital communication studies, this phenomenon is understood as a continuation of patriarchal norms that are reproduced through algorithms and social media user interactions (Sari & Nugroho, 2022).

Case C involves a female subject (DK), a young public figure, who became the target of rumor-based speculation about an alleged illicit relationship with a powerful figure. The allegations disseminated extensively despite the absence of compelling visual evidence, culminating in a substantial erosion of DK's reputation. Research on hoaxes and digital rumors in Indonesia indicates that women are more susceptible to character assassination based on gossip, particularly when the narrative pertains to sexuality and power relations (Juditha, 2021). The assertion that this incident lacks veracity does not signify a subjective evaluation on behalf of the author; rather, it signifies a dearth of corroborating evidence for a rumor, despite the fact that the judgment of internet users has been unrelenting in its condemnation of DK. In this case, DK's defensive response and the potential for legal action have, in fact, led to a polarization of public opinion. A considerable number of social media users have articulated the principle of presumption of innocence. However, other groups persist in their misogynistic narratives. In light of this, it is evident that the onus of substantiation is disproportionately placed on DK to validate the veracity or inaccuracy of the allegations. Research conducted in Indonesia indicates that, in numerous analogous cases, women are obligated to proactively *clear their names*, while men implicated in rumors are often subjected to more lenient treatment (Wibowo & Prasetyo, 2021).

Turning to case D, it is evident that this instance introduces an additional dimension, namely a transgression against the established principles of friendship ethics or the unwritten code that governs female friendships. The female subject (J) was accused of having a relationship with a partner from her own social circle, with digital evidence in the form of conversations and visual documentation that was widely circulated. In this particular instance, the phenomenon of cancel culture reached a particularly high intensity, marked by dehumanization and extreme moral labeling of J. Research on social relationship ethics in Indonesian digital media demonstrates that betrayal within a circle of female friends is perceived as a layered moral violation, triggering more aggressive collective anger (Rohmah, 2022). It is noteworthy that although Male Subject (Y) participated directly in the relationship, public ire was predominantly directed toward J. Y was often depicted as a *weak* or *errant* individual, while the role of J was characterized as that of the principal *evil* and *destructive* actor. This phenomenon is indicative of a societal inclination

among Indonesian digital publics to exonerate men from comprehensive accountability for maintaining relational fidelity, while allocating the predominant moral culpability to women (Hidayat, 2023).

A thorough examination of cases C and D reveals that cancel culture in Indonesia is mostly driven by an imbalanced gender dynamic. Women are subject to social judgment based on their actions and the moral symbols associated with their bodies and relationships. These findings confirm that social sanctions in the digital realm still reproduce gendered hierarchies, whereby women's errors are regarded as irrevocable moral shortcomings, while men's transgressions are regarded as excusable deviations (Sari & Nugroho, 2022). This pattern is a critical foundation for comprehending the persistent presence of symbolic injustice within the Indonesian social media ecosystem.

3.4. Immune to Social Law and Gender Bias in Digital Punishment (Case E)

Case E offers the most pronounced illustration of the divergent approaches to gender-based social sanctions in Indonesia's digital domain. Male subject E (AW), a public figure, exhibited a pattern of moral and legal infractions during the period 2024–2025, including recurrent instances of infidelity within domestic partnerships and involvement in narcotics-related cases. According to established norms, this series of violations should have led to widespread public condemnation of AW. In contradistinction, the social response that emerged demonstrated a pattern of relatively high tolerance in comparison with analogous cases involving female subjects (Wibowo & Prasetyo, 2021). In the context of cancel culture, repeated offenses (serial offenses) usually result in harsher social sanctions. However, in the case of AW, the sanctions imposed tended to be temporary, and did not result in the complete cessation of his professional activities. Research on Indonesian digital culture demonstrates that moral violations by men are frequently characterized as a form of *mischief* or individual failure, rather than a permanent character flaw (Hidayat, 2023). This phenomenon, often referred to as *social immunity*, is a significant aspect of the body's response to pathogens and allergens.

An analysis of the responses from internet users to Case E reveals substantial semantic variations. Contrary to the utilization of labels that dehumanize, the public more frequently employs terms that normalize deviant male behavior, such as *kebilaf* (a mistake) or *namanya juga laki-laki* (that's just how men are). In the domain of gender communication studies, this linguistic phenomenon operates as a symbolic mechanism, serving to attenuate the perceived severity of the offense and to enable the process of collective forgiveness (Rohmah, 2022). In comparison, studies conducted in Indonesia demonstrate that women implicated in analogous relational transgressions are frequently assigned labels that are characterized by moral absolutes and enduring implications. Women are often depicted as *kotor* (dirty) or *hina* (disgraceful), while men are characterized as *salah* (wrong) or *nakal* (naughty). This discrepancy is analytically significant because wrongdoing is associated with the possibility of rehabilitation, while dishonor signifies moral damage that is considered permanent (Sari & Nugroho, 2022).

In the context of Case E, the efficacy of the defense mechanism was further substantiated. An open apology, expression of regret, or even silence from AW tended to be sufficient to alleviate public pressure. Research on collective emotions in Indonesian social media shows that men are more likely to gain public empathy because they are positioned as actors who still have social authority, especially within the framework of hegemonic masculinity (Juditha, 2021). Case E thus confirms that cancel culture in Indonesia does not operate neutrally, rather, it is structured by systemic gender bias. A male public figure has a greater chance of regaining his reputation even after repeated violations, while a woman faces harsher and longer-lasting social sanctions. This finding lends further support to the argument that digital punishment in Indonesia reproduces symbolic inequalities between men and women, which is pivotal to comprehending double standards in the digital public sphere.

3.5. Comparative Analysis of Gender Bias in Digital Social Sanctions in Indonesia

To facilitate the analysis of gender bias, readers are encouraged to refer to the table Comparative Analysis of Gender Bias in Case 2025, which illustrates how digital cancel culture in Indonesia operates through gendered moral hierarchies. In this context, women's transgressions are treated as permanent

character flaws, while men's violations are framed as correctable behavioral errors (Wibowo & Prasetyo, 2021; Sari & Nugroho, 2022; Hidayat, 2023).

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of Gender Bias in Digital Social Sanctions in Indonesia on 2025

Analytical Dimension	Female Public Figures (Cases B, C, D)	Male Public Figures (Case E and Similar Cases)
Dominant Social Labels	<i>Homenrecker</i> , immoral woman, disloyal friend, morally corrupt	Playboy, unfaithful husband, morally weak, irresponsible
Primary Focus of Public Attacks	Sexual morality, body politics, personal history, perceived moral worth	Failures in fulfilling family roles, misconduct and legal violations
Nature of Social Sanctions	Long-term and cumulative; digital traces repeatedly mobilized as evidence of moral defect	Temporary and episodic; sanctions tend to decline after a <i>cooling-down</i> period
Impact on Professional Career	Aggressive boycotts, loss of brand endorsement, reputational exclusion	Continued media exposure, podcast appearances, gradual reputational recovery
Mechanisms of Public Defense	Limited and constrained; silence interpreted as guilt, speaking out framed as aggressiveness	Relatively accessible; public apologies or expressions of regret often suffice
Underlying Moral Interpretation	Framed as <i>moral contamination</i> (<i>dirty</i> or <i>unworthy</i>), difficult to rehabilitate	Framed as <i>moral failure</i> (<i>mistake</i> or <i>misconduct</i>), open to forgiveness

The comparative analysis in the [Table 1](#) demonstrates that cancel culture on social media functions not only as a mechanism of social sanction, but also as the primary arena where the dignity of women is negotiated and frequently undermined. Female public figures are predominantly constructed through moral labels rooted in sexuality and personal relationships, thereby reducing their self-worth to collective moral representations. In this context, the concept of women's dignity is not regarded as a fundamental right, but rather as a conditional status that must be perpetually substantiated in the digital public sphere. Temporal differences in the form of social sanctions reveal how punishment against women is continuous and cumulative. The reactivation of women's digital traces serves to reinforce narratives of moral unworthiness, thereby creating a form of symbolic degradation that is difficult to overcome. In contrast, violations committed by men are more often positioned as temporary failures, allowing for a process of reputational rehabilitation. This discrepancy underscores the assertion that the digital realm is not impartial but rather perpetuates established moral hierarchies that impede the restoration of women's dignity.

The dimensions of public defense and professional impact increasingly reveal the illusion of gender solidarity in the practice of cancel culture. Women often find themselves in a paradoxical situation where self-expression is interpreted as a threat to norms of decency, while the act of remaining silent is perceived as an admission of guilt. The provision of support from other women is often characterized by selectivity and conditionality. This support is primarily extended to women who align with the prevailing archetype of the ideal victim. Relate to the explanation befor, this phenomenon also underscores the assertion that gender solidarity in the digital realm predominantly functions as a disciplinary mechanism rather than a catalyst for emancipatory practices. The novelty of this finding lies in the understanding of cancel culture as a process of reconstructing the imbalanced female subject, in which dignity is not restored but renegotiated through veiled patriarchal moral standards. Through a meticulous examination of the distinction between forgivable mistakes and moral contamination that is regarded as permanent, this analysis unveils that the perception of gender solidarity, in fact, serves as a catalyst for the perpetuation of symbolic injustice. The reconstruction of women's dignity in the era of social media, therefore, necessitates a critical examination of the manner in which solidarity is asserted, allocated, and rescinded within the discourse of cancel culture.

3.6. Reconstructing Women's Solidarity Amid the Disruption of Cancel Culture

An analysis of the dynamics of cancel culture reveals that this practice has not been effective in restoring the ethical meaning and dignity of the *Woman Support Woman* campaign. Contrary to its purported objective of fostering gender solidarity, cancel culture has been observed to function as an unproductive and reactive mechanism of moral condemnation. The aforementioned practice has a tendency to engender horizontal conflicts between women, supplanting structural empathy with collective emotional judgment. This substitution results in an unfortunate dissociation from the emancipatory objectives of solidarity. Moreover, an examination of contemporary discourse reveals a manifestation of cancel culture that exacerbates the polarization of women's identities, manifesting as narrow moral dichotomies, such as the opposition between *legal wives* and *other women*. This phenomenon hinders the formation of collective gender consciousness and perpetuates digital patriarchy, in which control over women's bodies, sexuality, and morality is legitimized by double standards. In this particular context, public energy that ought to be allocated toward addressing critical structural concerns, including but not limited to gender-based violence, disparities in family law, and economic vulnerability experienced by women, is instead diverted toward the pursuit of sensationalist infotainment consumption.

Notwithstanding, *Woman Support Woman* campaign endures as a matter of consequence, albeit contingent upon a foundational conceptual reevaluation. The concept of solidarity cannot be interpreted as support without criticism, yet it must also be understood to extend beyond women who meet ideal moral standards. The concept of dignified solidarity is predicated upon the safeguarding of fundamental rights, the repudiation of dehumanization, and the establishment of a discernible demarcation between criticism of actions and the subjugation of women's dignity. This methodological approach enables the ethical criticism of power dynamics without perpetuating symbolic violence. Within this framework, gender solidarity also demands the principle of balanced accountability. Cancel culture has been shown to place the blame for problematic relationships on women, while men involved in similar situations receive comparatively milder social sanctions. The reconstruction of fair solidarity necessitates a paradigm shift, moving from an individualization of women's mistakes to a focus on relational accountability, particularly towards men who benefit structurally from patriarchal norms. As a strategic implication, the reconstruction of dignified solidarity necessitates intervention at the level of activism and media practices. It is imperative to implement strategies that promote legal literacy education, facilitate the deconstruction of misogynistic labels, and channel collective energy towards issues of policy and the protection of women. For the digital community, the transformation from cancel culture to counsel, a commitment to information verification, and an orientation towards systemic criticism, rather than individual sensationalism are critical prerequisites for gender solidarity to evolve beyond mere rhetoric and function as a praxis of sustainable social justice.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that cancel culture within Indonesia's digital public sphere functions as a gendered mechanism of social control rather than a neutral form of moral accountability. A close examination of the findings, facilitated by the integration of virtual ethnography and critical discourse analysis, has led to the revelation of entrenched double standards in the realm of digital punishment. These findings indicate that women's purported moral transgressions, particularly those associated with sexuality and relational ethics, are often portrayed as enduring character flaws. In contrast, analogous transgressions perpetrated by men are frequently depicted as transient and excusable. These patterns suggest that digital platforms reproduce patriarchal moral hierarchies through selective empathy, algorithmic amplification, and moral surveillance, thereby undermining women's dignity. As a result, the discourse of *Woman Support Woman* often functions as a conditional and exclusionary practice, reinforcing symbolic injustice rather than fostering genuine gender solidarity.

The reconstruction of women's dignity in the digital era, therefore, necessitates a reorientation of solidarity from moral compliance toward structural feminist consciousness. Solidarity is defined as a political practice that resists dehumanization, challenges gendered accountability gaps, and distinguishes

ethical critique from symbolic punishment. Through the conceptualization of cancel culture as a gender-based power practice, this study makes a significant contribution to contemporary feminist and communication scholarship by underscoring the imperative to transform digital outrage into systemic critique. Such a transformation is imperative to ensure that digital spaces do not function as arenas of moral discipline, but rather as sites for promoting gender justice and sustainable social equality.

Ethical Approval

Not Applicable

Informed Consent Statement

Not Applicable

Author Contribution

Not Applicable

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The author declare that she does not have conflict of interest

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