MULTIDISCIPLINARY SCIENCE JOURNAL

RESEARCH ARTICLE
Published Online: January 15, 2026
https://doi.org/10.31893/multiscience.2026200

Pick-me girl identity on Tiktok: A critical discourse analysis

Nadiyah Zulfah[a] | **Yazid Basthomi**[a]

[a]Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia.

Abstract Social media has recently attracted the attention of researchers from various disciplinary backgrounds, including those in linguistics. Social media has triggered the burgeoning of a huge number of neologisms. For example, the development of the “pick-me girl” trend on TikTok has created a new identity for women. The term pick-me girl has become a topic of discussion on social media and has been widely discussed through posts. The term pick-me girl has been widely employed to label a particular woman exhibiting certain characteristics. There have been some variations of the definition of the term pick-me girl on the internet, which may lead to some confusion as regards the usage. Previous research has interpreted pick-me girl based on specific case studies that fall short of comprehensively describing the term pick-me girl. This lack of description has led to stereotyping of women on the platform in relation to cyberbullying and body shaming. This study discusses the pick me girl identity and the mislabeling of women by analyzing the language used using Fairclough's three-dimensional analysis. Through critical discourse analysis of the language employed by pick-me girl characters, this study has revealed that the level of femininity exhibited by the pick-me girl depends on the targeted potential partner. This degree of femininity can be classified into two primary categories: the pick-me girl who seeks to align herself with men by adopting a more boyish style and the pick-me girl who relies on male protection while showcasing a more feminine style. Pick-me girls engage in internalized misogyny by engaging in self-presentation, self-objectification, and demeaning other women in order to gain approval from potential partners. These behaviors are displayed differently depending on the character of the potential partner targeted by the pick-me girl.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, pick-me girl, TikTok POV

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The term "pick-me girl" has been used to label a particular woman who exhibits certain characteristics and is frequently mentioned on social media platforms. The definition of the term pick-me girl is subject to variation on the internet, which can lead to confusion regarding its usage. According to Ward (2023), the term pick-me girl refers to a girl who does anything to attract males and obtain their validation. Jbara & Heiderscheit (2023) link pick-me girls with classic feminine behavior by differentiating themselves from other women so that they can attract masculine energy. The discussion regarding pick-me girls was further elaborated by Bell (2023) by analyzing pick-me girl YouTube videos from black women to attract the attention of the black manosphere. The manosphere here refers to a group of men who are anti-feminists and want themselves to be more dominant in the relationship. The article states that the actions taken by the pick-me girls are to restore traditional feminine energy, which shows that they have true womanhood that is suitable for being a housewife, unlike other women who have a feminist ideology.

The term pick-me girl has eventually become a topic of discussion on social media and has been widely discussed through posts. The viral post about pick-me girls is the point of view (POV) content on TikTok (Wilson, 2023). Currently, POV content appearing on the TikTok platform has become a trend that shows certain characters from a specific point of view. In addition, some of these POV videos address several problems that occur in a society. Two studies have discussed the use of POV videos and their influence on social problems (Aparicio, 2022; Cervi & Divon, 2023). The first study shows that efforts to spread antiracism against Black Spanish can be made by creating humor and education through TikTok content (Aparicio, 2022). In line with this campaign, Cervi & Divon (2023) reported that content creators also supported Palestine through POV videos. These studies both show that POV content has a significant influence on conveying ideas about current social issues and is worth researching. Unfortunately, the POV contents regarding pick-up girls lead to various interpretations and the emergence of pros and cons regarding the level of femininity of women.

A research project conducted by Rosida et al. (2023) more specifically discusses the emergence of internalized sexism from feminist lenses in POV trends that show the behaviors of pick-me girls. In addition, other previous studies define pick-

 Received: May 22, 2025 | Accepted: July 23, 2025

me girls in different ways and examples. Hence, the large number of POV videos about pick-me girls adds new interpretations for TikTok users in line with the increasing number of mislabeling and cyberbullying events against women (Means, 2021). Research shows that the average degree of psychological distress experienced by women after a pick-up girl tends to exist is greater than that experienced by men, as women are the target of allegations (Azizah et al., 2023). According to Eckert (2021), this POV trend has turned toxic because women start being called pick-me girls unreasonably either through posts or comments columns. For example, the TikTok creator @chrislin.chrislin uploaded a video to reply to one of the comments, "*bibirnya pikmi hehe*" (her lips are like a pick-me girl's lips, lol), which shows that the comment writer categorized the creator of the video as a pick-me girl just because of the shape of her lips. This video was then filled with up to 9727 comments debating who were actually categorized as pick-me girls.

The mislabeling of women who are considered pick-me girls is an issue on social media due to its tendency to elicit negative commentary, including hate speech and cyberbullying. The primary cause is the lack of comprehension regarding the context of the term and the manners in which it is utilized. Therefore, through a POV video that explicitly shows the pick-me girl character, this study examines the interpretation of this term to narrow down the meaning of pick-me girls in TikTok society to reduce the possibility of stereotyping toward women. As such, the focus of the discussion in this study is as follows:

1) How TikTok users define term pick-me girls on the basis of their depiction of POV trends,

2) How does the mislabeling of pick me girl occur in women on the basis of only a certain body shape?

3) How pick-me-girl labeling of women relates to feminist ideology.

To answer these questions, this study uses critical discourse analysis to determine the power relationships behind the term "pick-me girl", which gives rise to several stereotypes toward women.'

1.2. Theoretical framework

The data used in this study are the language used in videos of the pick-up trend of girls taken from TikTok, a social media platform with 1.7 billion users (GIIPress, 2023). This trend has led to a new interpretation of identity called pick-me girls noted earlier, which is conveyed through narratives and conversations between characters. To answer the previous question, the data need to be investigated to determine the relationship between the discursive process of forming the pick-me girl label and the ideology of society, making the trend appear on social media. The exciting reality of social media is that data are not limited to texts, films, or memes but also include digital practices such as shares, hashtags, community support, tags, and even digital check-ins (Esposito, 2023). These digital practices can support the textual data gained from the video to show community engagement in using and spreading the pick-me girl label. Therefore, this data analysis requires an approach that can identify problems from a broader societal perspective than CDA does.

CDA is a subset of discourse analysis that focuses on how language plays a role in social contexts. CDA has an essential role in uncovering alleged indications of gender inequality, sexism, and discrimination by looking at how reality and ideas are produced and how social changers manifest to change the way reality and thinking are constructed (Waring, 2017). In other words, critical discourse analysis addresses how society communicates, not only through interactions carried out face to face but also through text and spoken language through various media. CDA has the potential to analyze the power behind the language used in social media. Several studies have used CDA as a tool to analyze phenomena that occur on social media, such as analyzing text posts, conversations, and images related to political problems or social issues of certain groups (KhosraviNik & Zia, 2014; Törnberg & Törnberg, 2016; Saragih, 2020; Simon et al., 2023). Therefore, CDA is the most appropriate approach for analyzing the characterization of the term pick-me girl trend on TikTok, which involves social problems such as mislabeling, which leads to cyberbullying toward a particular gender. The pick-me girl trend involves character demonstrations through conversations, intonations, and utterances, which means that the entire video requires a CDA approach to understand.

The CDA plays a role in explaining discourse and ideology across society, with data available on social media (Bouvier, 2017). As the data in the present study are taken from a trend video about pick-me girls in which the conversation is an important focus for analysis, the appropriate method used in this study is Fairclough's three-dimensional analysis, which focuses on how society plays a role in shaping ideology (Fairclough, 2010). According to Fairclough, there are certain underlying assumptions that underpin the use of language. These assumptions are never objective and innocent; instead, they are ideologically driven and motivated (Fairclough, 1989). The three-dimensional stage of analysis can assist in providing a description of the pick-me girl identity because it helps to clarify the assumptions behind the language used on the POV trend.

Analyzing the data from POV videos requires a sociocultural approach by Fairclough, where there are three-dimensional frameworks, including (a) a linguistic description of formal properties from text, (b) an interpretation of the relationship between discursive processes/interactions and text, and (c) an explanation of how discourse and sociocultural reality are connected (Amoussou & Allagbe, 2018). To determine how the expressions of pick-me girls are produced, used, and become a trend in society, research on POV videos that are trending on TikTok needs to be carried out via Fairclough's three-dimensional approach. First, a descriptive transcript is necessary to understand the context of the content that the creator wishes to convey through the POV video. Second, some interpretation is carried out on the basis of the transcript

results to recognize the culture and power relations behind the POV video. Finally, an analysis is performed by explaining the data that have been obtained and compared across several cultural contexts.

2. Methods

2.1. Data collection

The data for this study were obtained from TikTok videos accessed by entering the search term "pick-me girl POV" and selecting videos that matched the specified keywords. The videos selected for inclusion in the study had more than one million views, demonstrated high levels of engagement, and contained a substantial amount of verbal communication. Among the numerous videos, ten met the initial criteria and were utilized as research data sources. Having over a million views and a high level of engagement indicate that the video data have reached a significant number of individuals. Notably, the high level of engagement exhibited by TikTok users reflects their emotional connection with video content. Furthermore, analysis of TikTok data indicates a preference for videos that are controversial or have negative connotations, as evidenced by the higher levels of likes, shares, and comments observed in videos related to the pick-me girl phenomenon (Cheng et al., 2023). Therefore, videos with high engagement from TikTok demonstrate the involvement of TikTok users in the production, utilization, and dissemination of the term pick-me girl. Following the identification of videos that had been viewed in excess of one million times, we proceeded to analyze videos that exhibited a high level of verbal communication. Several videos addressed similar topics and employed comparable vocabulary, resulting in the final dataset comprising ten videos. It needs noting that no exact personal identities were identified and reported in this study; proper names which are used refer to characters, not real individuals, in videos uploaded in Tiktok.

2.2. Data analysis

The data analysis process employs Fairclough's three-dimensional theory, which comprises three stages: description, interpretation, and explanation. In the description stage, the verbal communication in the video is converted into textual form through the process of transcription. This research employs the transcription notation proposed by Jefferson (2004), which enables the capture of both dynamic turn-taking and the characteristics of speech delivery in a simple manner. The transcriptions facilitate the provision of details regarding the conversational context of the pick-me girl video. In the description stage, the text data were subjected to an analysis of their formal linguistic features to clarify the intention underlying the choice of words employed in the portrayal of the pick-me girl character. The description of this analysis is addressed in the findings section as coded language use, which contains the theme of the language used by the pick me girl character. Following the identification of several themes, the discussion section elucidates the results of the linguistic phenomena observed and their relationship to the application of the term pick me girl as interpretative and explanatory.

3. Results

3.1. Descriptive analysis

In the initial stage of analysis, the formal linguistic features were examined. This revealed the presence of three distinct categories of characteristics commonly associated with the "pick me girl" persona in the ten datasets. The grouping is based on the selection of words and analysis of utterances put forth by the Pick Me Girl in the video until the characteristics are identified.

3.1.1. Self-presentation to gain potential partner attention

The pick-me girl POV content demonstrates a high level of self-presentation tendencies and can be defined as a conscious effort to construct self-branding for oneself within society. The pick-me girl's self-presentation is often vocal, emphasizing aspects of her identity that differentiate her from the typical woman. This self-presentation is influenced by societal stereotypes of characteristics typically associated with both men and women, evident in the language she employs in the POV content. The self-presentation observed in these instances either demonstrates similarities to masculine characteristics or a feminine appeal, suggesting that she is worthy of being an ideal partner for men.

The first self-presentation displayed by the pick-me girl is implied through her lifestyle. For instance, the dialog presented in the narrative content uploaded by @julitteweg illustrates the following exchange:

3.1.1.1. Lily, here is a green juice. Boys like it when you eat clean

“Lily” represents a female name that poses a threat to the pick-me girl to gain the attention of potential partners. The pick me girl handing “green juice” refers to the nutritious as a symbol of her healthy lifestyle. In the subsequent sentence, the pick-up girl refers to “boys” as potential partners. The pick-me suggests that men are drawn to women who adopt a healthy lifestyle. This is conveyed through the use of the phrase “like it when”. The phrase “eat clean” at the end of the sentence can

be interpreted as a reference to a healthy lifestyle, namely, the consumption of nutritious foods such as vegetables and fruits. This aligns with the eating habits of pick me girl, who had previously demonstrated her commitment to health. In the same video, a pick-up girl responded when asked about her lunch menu within the statement to show-off her healthy lifestyle.

3.1.1.2. Oh, just a salad. I have it every day

The term "salad" refers to a dish composed of vegetables and fruits, categorizing it as healthy food. The use of "just" before "salad" implies that the pick-me girl exclusively consumes foods considered healthy. Additionally, the phrase "every day" suggests that this behavior has become a daily practice for her. These statements illustrate self-presentation strategies that convey her ability to maintain health, thereby establishing her reputation as someone capable of sustaining a high quality of life. The overall message conveyed in both sentences is that pick me girl has lived a healthy life, which she presents to potential partners as a demonstration of her suitability as a partner.

Another self-presentation pattern exhibited by the pick me girl can be described as her desire to be perceived as having many similarities with men, to the extent that she titles herself "one of the boys"; these similarities include preferences in music genres, favorite games, and other personal interests. The POV content was uploaded by @kqtiewhitney, which states,

3.1.1.3. I cannot believe I'm about doing this. hhh Yepp! I'm gonna be trying on girly clothes.hhh and as you can tell I pretty much life in oversized sweatshirts

The pronoun "I" signifies the pick-me girl, who expresses her astonishment at trying on "girly clothes", a term for attire traditionally associated with femininity, such as dresses and skirts. Her use of "cannot believe" indicates her surprise in this choice. The verb "trying" suggests that she has not previously engaged in this behavior, further supported by the phrase "pretty much live," which implies a history of wearing nonfeminine attire. The term "oversized" is used to describe the large size of the clothes, which indicates that she does not wear clothes that accentuate her curves in the same way as other girls do. Overall, the self-presentation of the pick-me girl highlights her usual preference for boyish styles, reinforced by subsequent dialog in the narrative.

3.1.1.4. Huh, please tell me you girls do not wear this every day

The utterance "huh" at the beginning of the sentence suggests that the pick-me girl feels discomfort in wearing feminine clothes. The pronoun "me" indicates her need for an explanation from others, as expressed in the "Please tell me". The negative marker "do not" in relation to "wear" suggests that she is commenting on the behavior of other women who wear these clothes. The phrase "every day" serves as a marker of routine, implying that she sarcastically doubts the prevalence of women wearing such feminine attire daily. This expression reveals her preference for styles traditionally associated with femininity. Consequently, the selection of oversized sweatshirts reveals that she prefers a style typically associated with men, suggesting that this item of clothing is relatively simple to wear in comparison to feminine clothing typically worn by women.

Another self-presentation conveyed by pick-up girls is related to music taste. A video uploaded by the @thatgirllllels account illustrates the pick-me girl's response when asked about her music preference. The pick-me girl states:

3.1.1.5. Ow, I am listening to, like, old country, like the 1950s. You will not know it no no no, you will not know it

The term "I" is used to refer to the pick-me girl, whereas "old country" followed by "the 1950s" is used to refer to the musical genre that was popular during that year. At the end of the sentence, the pick-me girl reiterates the assertion with the phrase "no, you will not know it", directed at other females that she poses as a threat, thereby indicating her conviction that other women are unaware of the genre. This same sentiment is also evident in the subsequent statement from @riribibi_'s account:

3.1.1.6. Stop, no! I did not put on this music. It is her, I do not know why you put Taylor Swift on

The pronoun "I" is used to denote the Pick Me Girl, who claims she does not play the song that is being listened to. The pronoun "her" is used to refer to another woman viewed as a competitor to obtain the potential romantic partner. In addition, "Taylor Swift" is a pop singer whose songs are predominantly centered on romantic themes. Therefore, the pick-me girl asserts that she is disinclined toward love songs in comparison to other women. The two POV videos are related in that pick-up girls do not want to be seen as having ordinary tastes or simply following social media trends.

3.1.2. Self-objectification behavior of pick-me girls

Self-objectification is an extension of Fredrickson and Robert's objectification theory. This refers to the phenomenon where women place value on their appearance due to social and cultural pressures (Daniels et al., 2022). Women who self-objectify often describe themselves as objects and compare their bodies to those of other women. Influenced by various

beauty standards, many women evaluate their bodies through a societal lens to determine if they meet the ideal. In the case of pick-me girls, self-objectification manifests through language that suggests superiority, employing comparative adjectives to highlight their body shapes in relation to others. The most prevalent form of self-objectification in POV pick-me girl content is the labeling of being small in comparison to other women. Some examples of this include the content uploaded by @b3ckymonster, in which the subject appears to be self-objectifying by giving a statement about her body size.

3.1.2.1. Iiiiih↑ I'm so small, geez, the clothes I'm wearing look too big

The word "I" refers to the pick-me girl who is monologing. She uses the word “small” to describe her size and adds the word “so” to emphasize that her body is indeed small. She emphasizes her judgment of her own body by describing the clothes she wears as oversized using the phrase “look too big”. A comparable expression is also evident in an upload by @mariamshem, in which she references another woman's large body size in the dialog:

3.1.2.2. Yes, because you are so enormous, like, oh my God!

The sentence is expressed by a pick me girl, so "you" refers to the other girl. In the sentence, the pick me girl expresses her judgment of the other girl's body size by using the word “enormous”. Similar to the previous sentence, the word “so” is used to emphasize that the other girl's body is indeed very large, unlike the pick-me girl's body, which is considered small. Direct comparisons also appear in a post uploaded by @ttrippiereed, in which she states:

3.1.2.3. Oh, that is just a joke, Lovebug. They constantly make fun of how small I am, and I make fun of how enormous you are

In the sentence, “I” refers to the pick me girl, where she considers herself to have a small body size with the word “small” and points to “you”, who is another girl with a larger body size using the word “enormous”. The assessment demonstrates that the pick-up girl's desire is to be perceived as possessing an ideal small woman's body.

The phenomenon of self-objectification is evident in the video uploaded by @kqtiewhitney, which features dialog such as.

3.1.2.4. Why am I so tiny? Nobody told me I was thick, bruh!

The choice of the word “tiny” followed by the statement “thick” described the pick-me girl’s desire to be recognized as having a natural appearance with an ideal slim thick body. A similar desire to be recognized as having an ideal natural appearance also appears in the video posted by @audreytrullinger:

3.1.2.5. Where do you get your lashes done? Yeah, they’re just truly fluffy

The question is addressed to “you”, who is the other girl whom the pick me girl is talking to. “They're” in the dialog refers to the other girl's lashes. In the sentence, pick me girl also objectifies the other girl's lashes by using the word “fluffy”. The use of this term indicates that the pick-me girl views eyelashes as a visual object to be judged. This assessment is sarcastic, as evidenced by the following line:

3.1.2.6. There must be so much to upkeep, I'm just so low maintenance

The “I” in the sentence refers to the pick me girl where she self-objectifies herself by using the word “low maintenance” to describe that she does not need much body care. Rather than suggesting that the female body requires additional treatment, the term “maintenance” is employed, which is typically used to describe the upkeep of machines. Hence, this trend indicates that self-objectification is frequently employed by pick-me girls to increase their self-esteem by valuing their bodies as objects. This, in turn, can lead to the objectification of other women's bodies.

3.1.3. Demeaning other women: making one's own identities stand out

In addition to self-presentation, the pick-me girl also engages in demeaning behavior toward other women to enhance her own identity. Many of these demeaning behaviors occur in the context of appearance, such as by stating that she does not wear makeup like other women do, yet they feel that they already look naturally beautiful. For example, in the dialog:

3.1.3.1. Never Done it Before! Like, I wear clear mascara. Yeah, I like to keep it simple. I do not wear any makeup at all

The sentence is spoken by the character Pick-Me Girl, with the pronoun “I” referring to her. She employs a negative statement to convey her lack of experience with makeup. Through a negative statement, she expresses her lack of experience with makeup, emphasizing that she has “never done it” before. The term “clear mascara” describes a transparent gel used to enhance eyelashes, distinguishing itself from the predominantly black or colored mascaras on the market, thereby signifying exclusivity. The phrase “keep it simple” reflects Pick-Me Girl's belief that other girls adopt an overly elaborate makeup

routine, featuring a full face of cosmetics. The POV uploaded by the account @audreytrullinger shows the subject without any makeup, contrasting sharply with the typical application seen among other women. This stance contributes to a broader narrative that devalues women, as she suggests that a significant amount of makeup is excessive. The demeaning of other women is similarly evidenced in the POV content uploaded by @sarahklait in the dialog:

3.1.3.2. Lizzie, why are you putting on makeup? Are you trying to impress the boys in the middle of my class? You guys see that? She's trying to impress you

The name “Lizzie” identifies one of the students in the scenario. The pick-me girl questions Lizzie's choice to wear makeup, suggesting that it is an attempt to impress boys. The phrase “trying to impress” serves to undermine Lizzie by implying that her makeup is aimed solely at attracting male attention. When the pick-me girl asks, “you guys see that?” she directs her comment toward the boys, seeking to draw their focus and reinforce her assumption about Lizzie's intentions. This dialog highlights the pick-me girl's intent to embarrass Lizzie publicly for her appearance, framing her actions as a bid for male approval. A similar sentiment is echoed in the POV content uploaded by @riribibi_:

3.1.3.3. She put on £makeup£ for you guys! It is literally Jason and Travis, you do not have to impress them!”

In this context, the term “she” is used to refer to a woman perceived as a potential competitor by pick-me girls. The phrase “for you guys” addresses the man accompanying the pick-me girl. “Literally” is an expression of “just”, whereas “Jason and Travis” are male names. The pick-up girl's statement demonstrates her intention to demean other women in front of men. She implies that the other woman's goal is to “impress” Jason and Travis, who are the pick-me girl's friends. This is an attempt to humiliate the other woman by suggesting that she is close to Jason and Travis and does not need to wear makeup just to meet them. The two dialogs both assert that other women wear makeup when the situation is simply being in class or meeting familiar faces. This suggests that wearing makeup may be perceived as excessive action on the basis of the situation.

The demeaning attitudes toward other women are further illustrated in the portrayal of the pick-me girl character when she encounters women perceived as more complex or emotionally intricate. This is exemplified in several dialogs, such as the following:

3.1.3.4. I prefer to be friends with a man because men have no drama and are not complicated

The pronoun “I” is used by a pick-me girl. She expresses her aversion to forming friendships with other girls. This is conveyed through her statement. The term “men” is used to denote the opposite gender of the pick-me girl. By describing men as “no drama” and “not complicated”, she implies that women are more emotionally complex, a characterization that demeans other women. This comparison suggests that men are less prone to emotional intricacies than women are. By framing women as dramatic and complicated, the pick-me girl positions herself as distinct, suggesting to men that she will not cause them any trouble if she becomes their partner. Similarly, a video by @thatgirlllels shows the reaction of a pick-me girl toward two women in a conflict. The pick-me girl stated that she did not want to become involved in the ongoing drama.

3.1.3.5. No, I am not getting involved. I don’t do drama. No, no, no, n- no, NO!

“I” refers to the pick-me girl as the person who said the sentence. Similar to the previous statement, the pick-up girl states that she is not like other women by using the phrases “not getting involved” and “do not do drama”. As in the previous analysis, this sentence demeans women by saying that women have complicated characters and often dramatize events. Therefore, the pick-me girl makes her character more prominent by stating that she is different from women, who are often involved in conflict. This is also emphasized by the repetition of the word “no” to show her unwillingness to become involved.

Demeaning other women is also accomplished through the gossiping behavior displayed by the pick-me girl character. Gossip is one of the primary mechanisms by which people influence others’ opinions. Gossip behavior is evident in the POV post by @thatgirllels.

3.1.3.6. Look at the fckn orange is. Oh my God, Lij could never be me, like what you gonna do with all that color? you know? Like you dont look like its awf-, you know? Ugh! Disgusting!

The name “Lij” refers to a girl perceived as a rival by the pick-me girl. In this context, “me” indicates the pick-me girl herself. She demeans Lij by uttering the expletive “fuckn orange”, invoking that the color of Lij's outfit is perceived as unconventional. The expression “could never be me” suggests that she would not wear clothes with such a flashy color scheme because she believes that she has a superior understanding of fashion. She reflects a negative assessment of Lij’s outfit using the exclamation “awf-”, likely shorthand for “awful”, and words such as “disgusting”. The dialog, directed at another woman, serves as gossip. The pick-me girl is asserting that the woman in light-colored clothes is not well dressed. The act of publicly criticizing Lij's outfit is an attempt to demean other women in a social setting.

4. Discussion

4.1. Interpretation and explanation stage

At this stage, the characteristics identified in the descriptive analysis are interpreted and explained within the context of the conversation and prevailing cultural norms. This interpretation is particularly relevant to the pick-me girl trend, where the character's portrayal reflects the cultural beliefs held by TikTok users. A comprehensive understanding of the pick-me girl's intentions is essential. The trend on TikTok has emerged from high user engagement through comments, shares, and likes (Klug et al., 2021), indicating significant interest in the topic. The rapid growth of this trend is also fuelled by users actively producing and consuming short videos that are widely shared (Valino et al., 2022). The pick-me girl POV trend represents a new identity among TikTok users, characterized by behaviors that many consider unpleasant. This depiction appears to resonate with the audience, as evidenced by the engagement numbers exceeding one million views. Such engagement underscores the collective approval of these portrayals within the TikTok community, further reinforcing the cultural dynamics at play.

4.1.1. Pick-me girl characteristics to gain recognition from potential partners

This study analyzes the language used by pick-up girls and identifies three common characteristics: self-presentation, self-objectification, and demeaning behavior toward other women, all aimed at enhancing their identity. Self-presentation is a strategy employed in the early stages of interaction to share personal information and establish interpersonal relationships (Svennevig, 2014). The pick-up girl's POV content reveals a pronounced tendency toward self-presentation, with the aim of making a favorable impression on the listener (Larry, 2019). She employs two forms of self-presentation to gain recognition as a suitable partner. The first highlights her potential as a mate, illustrating her commitment to health and well-being through healthy eating habits. For example, content posted by @julitteweg shows her regularly consuming salads for lunch, a routine believed to support women's health and ideal body shape. Consequently, the pick-me girl sought acknowledgment as someone capable of taking care of herself and her future family.

Another typical self-presentation presented by pick-me girls tends to show similarities between pick-me girls and men. The act of self-presentation expressed by the pick-me girl in POV content brands herself as a woman who understands men, with the self-presentation displayed focusing on similarities in lifestyle and hobbies. One way is by rejecting the conventional norms associated with femininity and instead adopting a more masculine style of outfit. This is often manifested in the choice of clothing items such as hoodies and sweatshirts, which are typically associated with men. As observed by Lower (2018), clothing is a highly effective means of conveying nonverbal messages and expressing one's self. Clothing serves as a conduit for conveying a multitude of nonverbal cues, including aspects of one's personality, mood, and impressions. Therefore, the pick-me girl aims to convey a simple and uncomplicated style through her choice of outfits. This is evident in her preference for pants and sweatshirts over skirts and dresses.

The three behaviors are attempts by the pick-me girl to gain male validation through the use of demeaning language toward other women, which in turn serves to reinforce her position; therefore, it can be categorized as internalized misogyny. Internalized misogyny can affect women's self-expression in social environments (Rische & Jessica, 2023), through the language used by pick-me girls. A review of the language category used in the findings above reveals that pick-up girls frequently overstate their value as a woman to be a partner. The tendency for women to overclaim themselves has a negative effect on the self-esteem of other women. Hence, it can be concluded that the pick-me girl depicted on TikTok is a woman who performs three characteristics—self-objectification, self-presentation, and demeaning other women—to attract the attention of potential romantic partners.

4.1.2. Self-objectification: mislabeling of the pick-me girl identity

The judgment of women's bodies as visual objects tends to affect beauty standards in certain societies. While beauty standards always vary, current research indicates that social media has a significant influence on women's beauty standards and affects women's body image (Yamout et al., 2019). Self-objectification is associated with approval motivation, whereby the performers seek a positive response to their self-assessment (Chen et al., 2021). In the content uploaded by @mariamshem, the pick-me girl used the word 'fragile' to describe her body, which can be interpreted as a reference to her perceived weakness, suggesting a need for protection from the opposite gender. This interpretation aligns with the patriarchal culture that views women as needing male protection. This is corroborated by the findings of research conducted by Wang et al. (2022), which demonstrate that self-objectification in women arises when there is a belief that particular genders hold greater power over others.

In addition to gender dominance beliefs, self-objectification behavior in women is activated in competitive situations (Wang et al., 2022). In the context of pick-me girl POV, the competition that arises is perceived as more ideal by men in patriarchal culture. This competition involves the pick-me girl who desires to be seen as an ideal partner and the other girl who becomes the object of their comparison. In this POV content, the pick-me girl used the words ‘enormous’ and ‘small’ to describe the physical characteristics of the girls, in which the pick-me girl claimed herself to be the small one, indicating her

aspiration to be regarded as more ideal for male partners. The choice of words reflects the gendered stereotypes and dominance that shape the social perception of larger women as less dependent on male protection, thus positioning the pick-me girl as an ideal female figure in the male gaze.

The term "slim thick," commonly used in the TikTok discourse, describes women with a flat stomach, small waist, larger hips, and a fuller figure (Burcham and Fargo, 2023). This term reflects the pick-up girl's attempt to highlight her ideal body shape to attract male attention. The self-objectification behavior of the pick-me girl leads to new characteristics, resulting in the mislabeling of women with body shapes similar to those of pick-me girls. For example, when a pick-up girl emphasizes her full or sensual lips, it can lead to the misclassification of other women with similar features. This is illustrated in a comment on a TikTok post by @chrislin.chrislin, which states, "Her lip is pick-me girl's lip." Despite the fact that the woman in question did not self-objectify on TikTok, her similar physical attributes led her to be mislabeled by others.

4.1.3. Internalized misogyny: women with different levels of femininity

Internalized misogyny refers to the tendency of women to engage in discriminatory behavior against other women due to a fear of losing social rewards, which can manifest as demeaning attitudes in society (Constantinescu, 2021). Certain women display intolerance and engage in competitive behavior against other women who threaten their social standing, particularly to attract potential partners (Vaillancourt & Sharma, 2011; Fink et al., 2014). In addition to self-presentation aimed at appearing compatible with men, pick-me girls tend to secure their position by making their value superior. This competitive characteristic can cause reputational harm to other women (Reynolds et al., 2018). The reputation-damaging behaviors of pick-me girls are not only demeaning to other women but also serve to maintain the position of the pick-me girl as superior to that of other women who suffer from this behavior. Some of the expressions used by this pick-up girl are designed to humiliate other women and undermine the value of other women by using words such as "disgusting," "complicated," and "full of drama."

One method of manipulating reputation involves the dissemination of information through gossip (Wittek & Giardhani, 2023). Gossip can be employed by a pick me girl" as a means of damaging the reputation of another woman. Furthermore, this gossip includes instances of internalized misogyny, where the pick-me girl devalues other women. For instance, other women's dressing styles are labeled "too flashy." In addition, the pick-me girl highlights that women who wear much makeup are considered excessive and tend to say this in front of many people, as evidenced by the accounts @riribibi_ and @sarahklait. Although makeup is often regarded as a means of attracting the opposite sex (Mafra et al., 2020), it can also be viewed as a positive tool for enhancing self-esteem (Tran et al., 2020). Consequently, when pick-up girls assert that the primary objective of other women who wear makeup is to attract the attention of potential partners, this can cause distress to other women.

To secure her position as the partner, the pick-me girl employs strategies that involve demeaning others. Another method employed by pick-up girls to devalue other women is by identifying them as having complex personalities. The TikTok account @thatgirlllels shows this phenomenon when confronted with the reality of two women engaged in conflict. The pick-me girl asserts that she is disinclined to become involved. She emphatically states that she does not wish to become involved in the kind of drama that other women are prone to. This is further evidenced by the repetition of the word "no," which serves as a clear indication that she is unwilling to become involved in the situation. A comparable viewpoint was also expressed by @b3ckymonster, who presented a dialog asserting that men are less complex than women.

An analysis of the three behaviors displayed in the pick-me girl's POV through language use reveals that the three behaviors attract potential mates, which in turn leads to competition between the pick-me girl and other women as objects of comparison. To appear as the most suitable mate, the pick-me girl uses a variety of techniques, depending on her intended target. Previous research has discussed how pick-me girls brand themselves as antifeminists and emphasize their feminine side as good future wives (Bell, 2023), which has led to the perception that pick-me girls are antifeminists. However, this study revealed that the behavior of pick-me girls differs depending on the target potential mates they are trying to attract. In the video, pick-me girls who want to appear compatible with men brand themselves as being good at online games or soccer so that they are perceived as being able to engage in men's activities without being a burden. In contrast, other pick-me girls in patriarchal environments present themselves as weak and need protection, which makes men sympathize with them and choose them as partners. Therefore, this pick-me girl character has a different concept of femininity depending on the target potential partner she wants to attract.

5. Conclusions

The growing trend of "pick-me girl" POV is gaining level of empathy and approval for the short videos distributed on TikTok. The analysis of the language used by pick-up girls on TikTok led to the conclusion that pick-up girls perform three behaviors simultaneously: self-presentation, self-objectification, and the demeaning of other women. These behaviors are employed with the aim of securing validation as ideal companions from potential romantic partners. This study revealed that the level of femininity exhibited by the pick-me girl depends on the targeted potential partner. This degree of femininity can

be distinguished into two primary categories: the pick-me girl, who seeks to align herself with men by adopting a more boyish style, and the pick-me girl, who relies on male protection while showcasing a more feminine style. The various strategies employed by pick- up girls are manifestations of internalized misogyny, whereby they are willing to devalue other women to appear more prominent. As the popularity of the trend increases, TikTok creators have the opportunity to produce content related to the pick-me girl phenomenon in a manner that can also educate users about the appropriate use of these terms. The discussion of "pick-me girl" behavior provides an opportunity for TikTok users to gain insight into the findings of this study and disseminate the results through social media, thereby reducing the adverse impact on women due to the emergence of new stereotypes. The present study is confined to the TikTok platform and focuses on the analysis of the spoken language employed by the "pick-me girl" demographic. A comparative analysis of different social media platforms may facilitate the identification of additional characteristics exhibited by pick-me girls. It is therefore hoped that future research will build on this work by analyzing data from other platforms and focusing on other aspects of the pick-me girl identity, such as body language or gestures.

Acknowledgment

We would thoroughly acknowledge the supports from the Dean and Vice Dean for Research, Faculty of Letters, Universitas Negeri Malang, which has made the writing and publication of the study possible.

Ethical considerations

Ethical permission was obtained from the Head of the Institutte for Research and Community Services, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest

Funding

This research received financial support the Faculty of Letters, Universitas Negeri Malang.

References

Amoussou, F., & Allagbe, A. A. (2018). Principles, theories and approaches to critical discourse analysis. *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature*, *6*(1), 11-18.

Aparicio, A, M. (2022). POV: When you are Black+ Spanish: A discursive approach to Black antiracism on TikTok in Spain.

Azizah, M., Fitri, N. K., Maura, N., & Salsabila, J. (2023). Internalized misogyny, psychological distress, cyber bullying pada trend pick me girl/boy di TikTok. *Parade Riset Mahasiswa*, *1*(1).

Bell, D, P. (2023). "Pick-me" Black women: tactical patriarchal femininity in the Black manosphere. *Feminist Media Studies*, 1-19. https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2023.2262163

Bouvier, G., & Machin, D. (2020). Critical discourse analysis and the challenges and opportunities of social media. *Critical Discourse Studies and/in Communication*, 39-53

Cervi, L., & Divon, T. (2023). Playful activism: Memetic performances of Palestinian resistance in TikTok# Challenges. *Social media+ society*, *9*(1), 20563051231157607.

Chen, S., van Tilburg, W. A., & Leman, P. J. (2022). Self-objectification in women predicts approval motivation in online self-presentation. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, *61*(1), 366-388.

Constantinescu, S. (2021). How does the internalization of misogyny operate: A thoretical approach with European examples. *Research in Social Change*, 13, 120 - 128. https://doi.org/10.2478/rsc-2021-0013.

Daniels, E. A., Zurbriggen, E. L., & Ward, L. M. (2020). Becoming an object: A review of self-objectification in girls. *Body Image*, *33*, 278-299

Eckert, S. (2021, March 29). *There's a big issue surrounding those #PickMeGirl TikToks & we need to talk about It*. Her Campus. Retrieved January 21, 2024, from https://www.hercampus.com/culture/tiktok-pick-me-girl-trend-toxic/

Esposito, E. K. (2023). *Discourse in the digital age: Social media, power, and society* (E. K. Esposito & M. KhosraviNik, Eds.). Routledge.

Fargo, M., & Burcham, C. (2023, October 3). 'Slim thick': What it is & how to achieve it, according to pros. *Women's Health*. https://www.womenshealthmag.com/uk/fitness/a35334392/slim-thick/

Fatimatuzzahro, F., & Achmad, Z. A. (2022). What If It Was You (# WIIWY) digital activism on TikTok to fight gender-based violence online and cyberbullying. *Masyarakat, Kebudayaan & Politik*, *35*(4).

Fink, B., Klappauf, D., Brewer, G., & Shackelford, T. K. (2014). Female physical characteristics and intra-sexual competition in women. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *58*, 138-141

Jbara, I., & Heiderscheit, C. (2023, July 31). *Pick Me Girls: Who They Are and How to Spot Them*. wikiHow. https://www.wikihow.com/Pick-Me-Girl-Meaning

Jefferson, G. (2004). Glossary of transcript symbols with an introduction. *Conversation analysis*, 13-31.

KhosraviNik, M., & Zia, M. (2014). Persian nationalism, identity and anti-Arab sentiments in Iranian Facebook discourses: Critical discourse analysis and social media communication. *Journal of Language and Politics*, *13*(4), 755-780.

Lower, J. (2018). Style speaks: Clothing judgments, gender stereotypes, and expectancy violations of professional women.

Mafra, A. L., Varella, M. A. C., Defelipe, R. P., Anchieta, N. M., de Almeida, C. A. G., & Valentova, J. V. (2020). Makeup usage in women as a tactic to attract mates and compete with rivals. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *163*, 110042

Means, Kira K. (2021). ""Not like other girls": Implicit and explicit dimensions of internalized sexism and behavioral outcomes" WWU Graduate School Collection. 1020. https://cedar.wwu.edu/wwuet/1020

Queirós, A., Faria, D., & Almeida, F. (2017). Strengths and limitations of qualitative and quantitative research methods. *European journal of education studies*.

Reynolds, T., Baumeister, R. F., & Maner, J. K. (2018). Competitive reputation manipulation: Women strategically transmit social information about romantic rivals. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *78*, 195-209

Rische, J. (2023). "I'm not like the other girls": The phenomenology of affect: How is female self-expression affected by internalized misogyny?

Rosida, I., Ghazali, M. M., Dedi, D., & Salsabila, F. S. (2022). The manifestation of internalized sexism in the pick me girl trend on TikTok. *Alphabet: A Biannual Academic Journal on Language, Literary, and Cultural Studies*, *5*(1), 8-19.

Saragih, M., & Arika, A. (2020). Critical discourse analysis on the politicians' social media posts. *English Teaching and Linguistics Journal (ETLiJ)*, *1*(1), 1-4.

Simon, C., Rees, S., & Thomas, R. (2023). Behind the scenes: A critical discourse analysis of Botswana government power plays on Facebook during two post-millennial state-owned organizational crises. *Public Relations Inquiry*, *12*(3), 321-341.

Svennevig, J. (2014). Direct and Indirect Self-Presentation in First Conversations. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 33, 302 - 327. https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X13512307.

Törnberg, A., & Törnberg, P. (2016). Muslims in social media discourse: Combining topic modeling and critical discourse analysis. *Discourse, Context & Media*, *13*, 132-142.

Tran, A., Rosales, R., & Copes, L. (2020). Paint a better mood? Effects of makeup use on YouTube beauty influencers' self-esteem. *Sage Open*, *10*(2), 2158244020933591

Vaillancourt, T., & Sharma, A. (2011). Intolerance of sexy peers: Intrasexual competition among women. *Aggressive behavior*, *37*(6), 569-577

Wang, X., Chen, H., & Chen, Z. (2022). Women's self-objectification under competition when they believe sex is power. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, *51*(6), 2837-2854

Ward, T. (2023, November 29). The 'Pick-me' girl, explained. *CNN*. https://edition.cnn.com/2023/11/29/health/pick-me-girls-wellness/index.html

Waring, H.Z. (2017). Discourse analysis: The questions discourse analysts ask and how they answer them (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315621340

Wilson, M. (2023, July 25). 'Pick-Me Girls': The misogyny behind this notorious TikTok trend. *Empoword Journalism*. https://www.empowordjournalism.com/all-articles/pick-me-girls-the-misogyny-behind-this-notorious-tiktok-trend/

Wittek, R., & Giardini, F. (2023). *The Evolution of Reputation-based Cooperation: A Goal Framing Theory of Gossip*. Cambridge University Press

Yamout, F., Issa, J., & Ghaddar, A. (2019, June). Beauty standards set by social media and their influence on women's body image. In *Politics of the Machine Beirut 2019*. BCS Learning & Development.