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Gendered responses to the killing of cosplayer Ai Kirishima in Indonesian social media comments: A qualitative content analysis

Syaqrah Karara Azzen[*1]

[1] Universitas Airlangga, Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia

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Abstract:

Comments on violence against female cosplayers can shift attention from victims' experiences to their appearance and alleged behavior. This study examines how social media users positioned the victim and perpetrator in comments about the killing of cosplayer Ai Kirishima. Using qualitative content analysis, the study examined 120 purposively selected comments from four posts on TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram. Each comment was read in full, coded by its primary meaning, and assigned to one thematic category. Objectification theory, *belief in a just world*, and a feminist critical discourse perspective informed the interpretation. Four categories emerged: victim blaming (35 comments; 29.2%), empathy for the victim (32 comments; 26.7%), objectification of women's bodies (28 comments; 23.3%), and defense of the perpetrator (25 comments; 20.8%). Victim-blaming comments contained allegations about the victim's behavior, while empathetic comments expressed sadness and concern. Objectifying comments focused on appearance, whereas comments defending the perpetrator speculated about his emotional state in ways interpreted as excusing his actions. The study concludes that acknowledgment of the victim's suffering coexisted with appearance judgments, behavioral allegations, and excuses for the perpetrator, revealing tensions in victim positioning and responsibility for violence. Its theoretical contribution is a contextual interpretation that links objectification, blame attribution, and the perpetrator's excuses through these perspectives. In practice, the findings can inform digital and gender literacy, comment moderation, and victim-sensitive reporting, although their effectiveness requires evaluation. Conclusions apply only to the selected comments; allegations were not treated as established facts.

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***Corresponding author:** Syaqrah Karara Azzen, Master of Media and Communication, Faculty of Social and Politics, Universitas Airlanga, Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia, e-mail: syaqrahkarara03@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Cosplay (*costume play*) is a popular cultural practice that provides opportunities for creative expression and identity formation through the portrayal of fictional characters (Pushkareva & Agaltsova, 2021; Rahman et al., 2012). Cosplayers may also explore gender expression through their bodies, costumes, and collaboration with others (Nichols, 2019; Yang, 2022). However, opportunities for self-expression do not eliminate the possibility that women cosplayers will be judged on their appearance. Rouse and Salter (2021) discuss the relationship between women cosplayers' creative labor and the visual demands of digital platforms. In Indonesia, Zulfalia Az Zahra et al. (2024) examined women cosplayers' experiences of harassment on Instagram, while Satifa and Ramailis (2025) investigated online sexual harassment of women cosplayers on Platform X. These studies highlight the importance of attending to women's experiences within cosplay culture. The present study specifically examines how comments about a case of violence position a woman cosplayer's appearance, alleged behavior, and suffering.

This study organizes the existing literature into three areas. The first addresses cosplay as a practice of identity and gender, including identity formation, women cosplayers' agency, and gender performance in cosplay (Rahman et al., 2012; Yang, 2022; Putri et al., 2021). The second examines women cosplayers' experiences on social media, with attention to creative practices on digital platforms and experiences of harassment on Instagram and Platform X (Duffy et al., 2021; Drenten et al., 2020; Felmlee et al., 2020; Kumar et al., 2021). The third concerns victim blaming, both in students' views and in social media comments about alleged intimate partner violence (Shopiani et al., 2021; Jacobus et al., 2025; Suwana & Lily, 2017; Taccini & Mannarini, 2025; Whiting et al., 2019). Taken together, these studies have examined identity practices in cosplay, harassment experienced by women cosplayers, and victim blaming in other contexts. The present study brings these concerns together by examining how the victim and perpetrator are positioned in comments about a single case involving a woman cosplayer. It focuses on variation in the selected comments rather than on the effects of how the posts presented the incident.

To address this gap, the study aims to identify and interpret social media users' responses to the victim and perpetrator in 120 selected comments from four posts concerning the Ai Kirishima case. It asks three questions: (1) How do the four posts present the incident and the victim's visual identity? (2) What forms of response appear in the selected comments? (3) How do the comments position the victim and perpetrator when discussing appearance, alleged behavior, and responsibility for the violence? Using qualitative content analysis, the study identifies patterns of meaning in the comments and examines four categories developed through coding: victim blaming, objectification of women's bodies, defense of the perpetrator, and empathy for the victim. Its contribution lies in examining these four patterns together within a single sample of comments concerning a woman cosplayer, while attending to the context of the posts in which the comments appeared.

The study proceeds from the view that comments about violence can position victims and perpetrators in different ways. Expressions of sadness may appear alongside judgments about the victim's appearance, allegations about her behavior, and speculation about the perpetrator's reasons for acting. Fredrickson and Roberts's objectification theory helps explain how attention to a woman's body may shift the discussion away from the violence she experienced. Lerner and Simmons's concept of *belief in a just world* helps interpret comments that seek explanations in the victim's choices or alleged behavior. Lazar's feminist critical discourse analysis provides a perspective for examining how reasons attributed to the perpetrator may reduce emphasis on his responsibility. Empathetic comments, meanwhile,

indicate that some users focus on the victim's suffering. Accordingly, each comment is read in full to distinguish judgments about the victim, empathy, and defense of the perpetrator. The analysis does not establish commenters' motives or the truth of allegations about the case, nor does it infer that the presentation of the posts influenced users' responses.

METHOD

Research Approach

This study employed qualitative content analysis to examine social media users' responses to the victim and perpetrator in the Ai Kirishima case (Orth et al., 2020). The analysis focused on the meanings conveyed in comments, particularly judgments about the victim's alleged behavior, attention to her physical appearance, explanations of the perpetrator's actions, and expressions of empathy. Categories were developed through repeated reading, coding, and grouping of related codes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The four posts provided the context in which the comments appeared. The study did not test whether differences in how the posts presented the incident influenced users' responses.

Data Sources and Selection

The data were drawn from four posts about the Ai Kirishima case on TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram. The posts were purposively selected for their relevance to the case, user engagement levels, platform diversity, and differences in how they presented the incident. As summarized in Table 1, P1 featured CCTV footage and video showing the victim. P2 and P4 combined cosplay images with the same headline, which explicitly mentioned violence against the victim. P3 displayed two cosplay photographs of the victim, along with a statement about the incident. Although P3 had fewer comments, it was included because it presented the victim's visual identity differently from the other posts.

At the end of data collection on July 3, 2024, the four posts contained 1,276 comments: 650 on P1, 190 on P2, 22 on P3, and 414 on P4. Of these, 120 comments were selected for analysis: 40 from P1, 40 from P2, 9 from P3, and 31 from P4, as shown in Table 2. Comments were selected based on their relevance to the victim or perpetrator, sufficient content for interpretation, and diversity of responses, including expressions of empathy. The number selected from each post was not proportional to the number available because the study aimed to examine variation in meaning within the sample rather than estimate the distribution of responses among all social media users. Differences in comment counts across posts were not used to compare the frequency of response patterns across platforms or to infer that the posts' presentation influenced users' comments.

Data Analysis and Coding

All selected comments were read in full and coded according to the meanings they conveyed. Related codes were then grouped into four thematic categories: victim blaming, objectification of women's bodies, defense of the perpetrator, and empathy for the victim. Category development followed the qualitative content analysis approach described by Hsieh and Shannon (2005), while the identification of patterns of meaning drew on Kiger and Varpio (2020).

Victim blaming included comments that linked the violence to the victim's choice of partner or alleged behavior, thereby assigning her partial responsibility for what she experienced. *Objectification of women's bodies* included comments that primarily emphasized the victim's beauty or physical features in response to the case. *Defense of the perpetrator* included comments that invoked speculation about heartbreak, resentment, financial exploitation, infidelity, or psychological distress to explain the perpetrator's actions in ways

that reduced emphasis on his responsibility. *Empathy for the victim* included expressions of sadness and concern about the violence she experienced.

Each comment was assigned to one primary category and counted once. When a comment conveyed more than one meaning, its category was determined by the main point of the comment as a whole. For example, mentioning the victim's beauty did not automatically result in a code for objectification if the comment primarily blamed the victim. Similarly, speculation about the victim's behavior was coded as a defense of the perpetrator when it was primarily used to reduce the perpetrator's responsibility. These rules were applied to comments with overlapping meanings, including several examples presented in Table 3. Coding placed 35 comments in the victim-blaming category, 28 in objectification of women's bodies, 25 in defense of the perpetrator, and 32 in empathy for the victim.

Trustworthiness of the Analysis

The trustworthiness of the analysis was supported by recording the source post and platform for each comment, documenting the numbers of available and selected comments, clarifying the boundaries between categories, and presenting illustrative quotations that connect the categories to the data (Elo et al., 2014). Each comment was read in its entirety so that statements about appearance, relationships, or the perpetrator's circumstances could be interpreted in context (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). The quotations in Table 3 are presented in Indonesian. Users' claims about the victim's and perpetrator's relationship, behavior, circumstances, or motives were analyzed as comment content and were not treated as established facts of the case.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Characteristics and framing of the four social media posts

The researchers purposively selected four posts from TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram as sources of comments. Selection took into account the level of user engagement, platform diversity, and differences in how the incident was presented. P3 was retained despite having fewer comments because it presented the victim's visual identity differently from the other posts. Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the four posts.

Table 1

Characteristics and Framing of the Four Social Media Posts

Characteristic	P1	P2	P3	P4
Image				
Platform	TikTok	Facebook	Instagram	Instagram
Account name	@anigemsloreid_	Seputar Otaku	@live_anime_id	Seputar Otaku
Post link	https://www.tiktok.com/@anigemslor	https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=445037754957802&id=1	https://www.instagram.com/p/C8rpOjUygsd/	https://www.instagram.com/p/C8qkxBFSdzW/

	eid /video/7385073311035788560	00083547437275&set=a.127452226716358		
Narrative framing	A criminal mystery presented through video footage	A violent tragedy presented through an explicit headline	Violence presented with emphasis on the victim's visual identity	A violent tragedy presented through an explicit headline
Post description	Features CCTV footage and video showing Ai Kirishima, creating the impression that the incident warrants further investigation. The post received 155,600 likes, 4,081 shares, and 650 comments.	Combines a cosplay image with a headline stating that the victim was killed by her boyfriend, her body was dismembered, and body parts were reportedly discarded in the mountains. The post received 190 comments.	Displays two cosplay photographs of the victim alongside an opening statement alleging that she was killed and dismembered by her boyfriend. The post received 22 comments.	Combines a cosplay image with the same headline used in P2. The post received 414 comments.

Source: Authors' analysis, 2025.

Table 1 shows how the four posts presented the same incident in different ways. P1 featured CCTV footage and video, foregrounding the incident's visual aspects and creating the impression that further investigation was needed. P2 and P4 used cosplay images and the same headline, which explicitly referred to violence against the victim. P3, meanwhile, displayed two cosplay photographs of the victim alongside a statement about the incident. The main differences among the selected posts, therefore, concerned the use of incident footage, the emphasis on the victim's visual identity, and the extent to which the post text described the violence.

The number of comments also varied across the four posts. P1 received 650 comments, followed by P4 with 414, P2 with 190, and P3 with 22. P1 also received 155,600 likes and was shared 4,081 times. These figures indicate the engagement recorded for each post and were considered when selecting sources of comments. However, differences in comment counts cannot be attributed directly to how the posts framed the incident, because the accounts, platforms, reach, and observation times also differed.

In this study, the four posts provided varied presentation contexts for the comments analyzed. This variation allowed comments appearing beneath posts with different visual and narrative emphases to be examined, without assuming that the four posts represented all reporting or social media discussion of the case.

Distribution and selection of online comments

This study examined comments on four posts concerning the Ai Kirishima case across TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram. By the end of data collection on July 3, 2024, the posts contained 1,276 comments. Of these, 120 were purposively selected for analysis based on their relevance to the victim or perpetrator, sufficient content for interpretation, and diversity of responses. Comments were not selected in proportion to their availability on each post because the study focused on variation in meaning within the sample. Table 2 presents the number of available and selected comments for each post, indicating the sources and scope of the qualitative data.

Table 2
Distribution of Available and Selected Comments Across Four Posts

No.	Post	Platform	Account	Available comments	Selected comments
1	P1	TikTok	anigemsloreid	650	40
2	P2	Facebook	Seputar Otaku	190	40
3	P3	Instagram	live_anime_id	22	9
4	P4	Instagram	seputarotaku	414	31
	Total			1,276	120

Source: Social media comment data, processed by the researchers, 2025.

Table 2 shows that the number of available comments varied across the four posts. P1 had the most comments (650), followed by P4 (414), P2 (190), and P3 (22). By the end of data collection on July 3, 2024, the posts contained 1,276 comments in total. Of these, 120 were selected for analysis: 40 from P1, 40 from P2, 9 from P3, and 31 from P4. These figures identify the sources and scope of the comments analyzed at the time of data collection. The comments recorded across the four posts were not intended to represent the distribution of all social media discussions about the Ai Kirishima case.

Comments were not selected in proportion to the number available on each post. For example, P1 and P2 each contributed 40 selected comments despite having different numbers of available comments. P3 was retained, with 9 of its 22 available comments selected. In line with the study's aim, the selection focused on examining meaning variation within the sample. Thus, the figures in Table 2 describe the sources and scope of the data; they do not estimate the proportions of response types among all users. Differences in comment counts across posts were also not used to compare the frequency of response patterns across platforms or to infer an effect of how the posts presented the incident on users' responses.

Patterns of response and gender constructions in online comments

A total of 120 comments from four social media posts were analyzed to examine how users responded to the victim and perpetrator. The identification of patterns of meaning drew on Kiger and Varpio (2020), while coding and category development followed the qualitative content analysis approach described by Hsieh and Shannon (2005). The researchers read each comment, assigned a code based on its primary meaning, and grouped related codes into four thematic categories: victim blaming, objectification of women's bodies, defense of the perpetrator, and empathy for the victim. Each comment was assigned to the category that best reflected its primary meaning, although some comments conveyed more than one tendency. The concept of belief in a just world (Lerner & Simmons, 1966), objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), and a feminist critical discourse perspective (Lazar, 2007) were used to help interpret the gender-related findings. These perspectives were not used to establish commenters' beliefs or psychological motives. Table 3 presents the distribution of categories and illustrative comments.

Table 3
Distribution of Thematic Categories and Examples of Online Comments

No.	Thematic category	Number of comments	Percentage	Example comments (English translations)
1	Victim blaming	35	29.2%	1. "I don't think he was in love; he was just obsessed, and the woman treated him like a cash machine. That's what I think."

				2. "Don't be too quick to blame the man—we don't really know what happened. Maybe the woman in the post thought she was far better than him and just treated him like a slave. Who would want to be treated like that all the time? I don't know; this is just my guess. Remember the Fat Cat case? What actually happened turned out to be very different from the initial reports."
2	Objectification of women's bodies	28	23.3%	1. "She's so beautiful, but she likes a pig-like lump." 2. "What a shame, her skin was so smooth … but she chose the wrong boyfriend."
3	Defense of the perpetrator	25	20.8%	1. "I think the man killed her because he was heartbroken. He weighed around 150 kg; maybe she just used him as a source of money to buy costumes or something." 2. "Personally, I think this case was driven by deep resentment—it couldn't have been over something trivial. If you remember the Fat Cat case (for those who know it), maybe this case is similar. Maybe the woman only used him, cheated on him, or did something that hurt his pride so deeply that he couldn't take it anymore." 3. "Maybe it was because he was heartbroken. Some people say the woman often treated her boyfriend that way, constantly putting him under psychological pressure, until he eventually killed her. Don't think you can do whatever you want just because you're rich or beautiful."
4	Empathy for the victim	32	26.7%	1. "It's so sad … in the anime she had already died after being stabbed, and now in real life she was dismembered." 2. "So tragic … she died in such a cruel way."
	Total	120	100%	

Source: Social media comment data, processed by the researchers, 2025. The comments were originally in Indonesian and have been translated into English.

Table 3 presents four response patterns among the 120 comments analyzed. Victim blaming was the largest category, comprising 35 comments (29.2%) that speculated about whether the victim's behavior within the relationship contributed to the violence she experienced. Empathy for the victim appeared in 32 comments (26.7%) through expressions of sadness and concern about the incident. Twenty-eight comments (23.3%) were categorized as objectification of women's bodies because they emphasized the victim's beauty or physical features. A further 25 comments (20.8%) were categorized as defending the perpetrator because they offered speculative explanations involving heartbreak, financial exploitation, or psychological pressure. The quotations in the table illustrate each category. Each comment

was counted once according to its primary meaning. These percentages describe only the selected sample, not all comments on the four posts or the views of social media users more broadly.

Victim blaming

Comments in this category linked the violence experienced by the victim to speculation about her behavior within the relationship. The first example accused the victim of exploiting the perpetrator financially. The second urged readers not to blame the perpetrator immediately and then speculated that the victim had treated him like a "slave." Both placed allegations about the victim's behavior at the center of their assessment of the incident. These allegations were analyzed as users' statements; the quotations provide no evidence that the allegations about the victim were true.

Lerner and Simmons's (1966) concept of *belief in a just world* helps interpret the tendency to link a person's suffering to their own decisions or behavior. In this study, the concept was used to interpret the direction of judgment expressed in the comments, not to establish individual commenters' psychological beliefs or personal motives. The second example also implicitly defended the perpetrator. It was assigned to the victim-blaming category because its primary emphasis was the allegation that the victim's treatment of him caused the conflict.

Objectification of women's bodies

Twenty-eight comments (23.3%) were assigned to the objectification of women's bodies category. The two examples in Table 3 foregrounded the victim's physical appearance when responding to the violence she experienced. The first mentioned her beauty while insulting her partner's appearance. The second drew attention to her skin before stating that she had chosen the wrong partner. Both comments thus made the victim's appearance a prominent element of their assessment of the case.

Fredrickson and Roberts's (1997) objectification theory offers a perspective for examining attention to women's bodies and appearance in these comments. However, a reference to appearance did not automatically result in a code for objectification. The second example also overlapped with victim-blaming because it judged the victim's choice of partner. It was assigned to the objectification category because the victim's physical features were treated as the main point of the response. This decision followed the coding rule of considering each comment as a whole.

Defense of the perpetrator

Twenty-five comments (20.8%) were categorized as defending the perpetrator. The examples in Table 3 proposed various explanations for his actions, including heartbreak, resentment, financial exploitation, infidelity, and psychological pressure. Commenters offered these explanations without evidence concerning the relationship between the two individuals. Some comments also linked the perpetrator's actions to alleged behavior by the victim, potentially reducing the emphasis on his responsibility.

Lazar's (2007) feminist critical discourse perspective helps interpret how the comments positioned the perpetrator as hurt or under pressure and the victim as a possible source of that pressure. This perspective was used to discuss the findings of the content analysis, rather than as an additional analytical procedure. Some comments in this category overlapped with victim-blaming. Their placement depended on their primary emphasis: whether they focused on judging the victim or on defending the perpetrator's actions. All speculation about either

person's behavior and motives was analyzed as comment content, not as established facts of the case.

Empathy for the victim

Thirty-two comments (26.7%) expressed empathy for the victim. The examples in Table 3 conveyed sadness and emphasized the violence she experienced. In contrast to comments focused on her appearance or alleged behavior, comments in this category placed the victim's suffering at the center of the response.

Empathy was the second-largest category in the selected sample. Its presence alongside the other three categories shows variation in how users positioned the victim and perpetrator in comments beneath the posts. This finding is limited to the 120 comments analyzed and cannot be used to infer the views of everyone who viewed or commented on the four posts.

Synthesis of gender constructions in the comments

Overall, the analyzed comments reflected different responses to the case. Some focused on the violence experienced by the victim, while others highlighted her body, appearance, or alleged behavior when judging her or explaining the perpetrator's actions. These patterns show how gender-related judgments appeared in comments beneath the four posts examined.

Three tendencies were evident in the sample. First, some comments assessed the female victim through her physical appearance or alleged behavior within the relationship. Second, some explained the male perpetrator's actions through speculation about heartbreak, resentment, and psychological pressure, potentially reducing the emphasis on his responsibility. Third, expressions of empathy for the victim formed the second-largest category. Together, these tendencies illustrate the different ways in which the victim, the perpetrator, and responsibility for the violence were understood in comments on the four posts analyzed.

Discussion

The analysis of 120 comments from four social media posts identified four response categories. Victim blaming constituted the largest category, comprising 35 comments (29.2%) that linked the violence to allegations about the victim's behavior within the relationship. Empathy for the victim appeared in 32 comments (26.7%), expressed through sadness and concern. Another 28 comments (23.3%) emphasized the victim's physical appearance and were categorized as objectification of women's bodies. Meanwhile, 25 comments (20.8%) were categorized as defense of the perpetrator because they suggested heartbreak, resentment, or psychological pressure as possible explanations for his actions. These patterns indicate that some comments judged the victim based on her body or alleged behavior, others explained the perpetrator's actions through his presumed emotional state, while others focused on the victim's suffering. These findings are limited to the comments analyzed. Allegations expressed in the comments were not treated as established facts of the case, and the category percentages do not represent all comments across the four posts.

The findings of this study show that digital discussions of violence against women bring together gender prejudice, defense of perpetrators, and empathy for victims. When allegations about victims' behavior or their appearance receive greater attention, the focus may shift away from the violence itself and the perpetrator's responsibility. Zaleski et al. (2016) identified tendencies toward victim blaming and support for perpetrators in online comments about sexual violence. Sills et al. (2016) demonstrated that social media can reproduce sexism while also providing spaces for resistance and solidarity. Wright et al. (2025)

examined the relationship between news framing, gender, and responses to intimate partner homicide, while Satifa and Ramailis (2025) documented harassment directed at women cosplayers on X. These connections highlight the relevance of gender-sensitive digital literacy in distinguishing verified information from allegations and speculation. In this context, empathy should be fostered without making victims' appearance or alleged behavior a criterion for deserving sympathy and respect.

Theoretically, the four categories can be interpreted as different ways of recognizing victims and attributing responsibility to perpetrators. Drawing on Fredrickson and Roberts' (1997) objectification theory, the emphasis on physical appearance becomes problematic when a woman's value is reduced to her appearance, potentially marginalizing her experience of violence. Lerner and Simmons' (1966) concept of *belief in a just world* helps interpret allegations against victims as reasoning that associates suffering with presumed wrongdoing, as though violence were a deserved consequence, even when such allegations remain unverified. Lazar's (2007) feminist critical discourse analysis further draws attention to asymmetrical judgments in which victims are subjected to moral scrutiny, while perpetrators are understood in terms of their emotional circumstances. However, references to emotions do not automatically constitute a defense of the perpetrator; their justificatory function must be established through the context and linguistic choices of individual comments. Conversely, empathy involves recognizing victims' suffering without attributing blame to them. The relationships among these categories suggest that recognition of victims can be contested through language. These interpretations explain possible discursive functions without establishing commenters' psychological beliefs or proving the causes of violence.

A fundamental lesson from this study is that scholarly rigor requires researchers to suspend premature judgments, critically examine their assumptions, and recognize responsibility for the consequences of their interpretations. Comments that appear similar may perform different functions; therefore, analytical categories should be understood as interpretive tools rather than fixed identities assigned to users. Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasize systematic pattern analysis, while Berger (2015) highlights the importance of reflexivity regarding researchers' positionality. In this study, these principles demonstrate that a commitment to victims' dignity must be accompanied by openness to ambiguity in the data. Williams et al. (2017) further emphasize the importance of considering contextual factors and protecting users when publishing social media data. Accordingly, researchers' professional development requires the discipline to distinguish among evidence, allegations, and interpretations while avoiding the reproduction of stigma through the presentation of quotations. For scholarly development, the central lesson is that understanding digital discussions of violence requires transparent, reflexive analysis that acknowledges the limits of available knowledge.

The findings on victim blaming are consistent with Whiting et al. (2019) in the context of intimate partner violence. Komazec and Farmer (2021) identified differences in comments by the genders of the victims and perpetrators. However, the present study did not compare victim–perpetrator gender combinations and therefore did not examine these differences. Unlike Fairbairn and Dawson (2013), who analyzed news coverage, this study examines user comments as sites where meanings are constructed. Compared with Aldrete et al.'s (2024) review of femicide representations across media, the present study has a narrower scope but enables a focused interpretation of responses to a single case. Research on women cosplayers' experiences by Zulfalia Az Zahra et al. (2024) and Vendemia and Fox's (2024) examination of appearance-related comments provides points of comparison concerning judgments about women's bodies. The present study is a case-based analysis of audience responses that

examines victim blaming, objectification, defense of the perpetrator, and empathy in relation to one another, using a sample of 120 comments from four posts. Its contribution is contextual, without claiming that these patterns are novel or representative of all social media users.

Based on the patterns identified in the sample, the recommendations focus on comment management and strengthening gender literacy. First, social media platforms could clarify reporting mechanisms and moderation guidelines for comments that demean victims or justify violence, while taking the context of individual statements into account. Second, cosplay communities and digital literacy advocates could develop concise educational materials that distinguish among facts, allegations, and speculation using anonymized examples of comments. Third, educational institutions, government agencies, and civil society organizations could incorporate these materials into discussions of empathy, objectification, and the distinction between explaining actions and justifying violence. Fourth, journalists and content creators could strengthen information verification practices and avoid emphasizing victims' physical appearance when it is irrelevant to the incident. These recommendations should initially be tested on a limited scale in collaboration with users and moderators, using indicators such as the accuracy of report handling and participants' ability to distinguish facts from speculation. The effectiveness of these measures has not been established by the present study; therefore, evaluation is necessary before broader implementation.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of 120 comments from four social media posts identified four response patterns: victim blaming, empathy for the victim, objectification of women's bodies, and defense of the perpetrator. Overall, these patterns reveal tensions between judgments about the victim's body and alleged behavior, rationalizations of the perpetrator's actions, and recognition of the victim's suffering. Victim blaming constituted the largest category, but the presence of empathy indicates that responses within the sample were not uniform. Emphasis on the victim's appearance and the perpetrator's emotional state may shift attention away from the violence itself toward personal judgments about those involved. Conversely, empathetic comments focused on the victim's suffering. This synthesis highlights different ways in which the victim's and the perpetrator's responsibilities are positioned in digital discussions of violence. The findings are limited to the selected comments and do not establish the truth of allegations made about the case.

Theoretically, this study makes a contextual contribution to the application of objectification theory, the concept of *belief in a just world*, and feminist critical discourse analysis. These three perspectives are used to interpret judgments about women's bodies, the attribution of blame to victims, and rationalizations of perpetrators' actions within a single case of violence. The contribution lies in the complementary application of these perspectives to interpret social media comments, without developing or testing a new theory. Practically, the findings may support the development of digital and gender literacy materials, moderation guidelines, and reporting guidance for cosplay communities, platform operators, journalists, and content creators. These efforts should focus on distinguishing facts from speculation, avoiding objectification, and maintaining attention to the perpetrator's responsibility.

This study is limited to 120 selected comments from four social media posts concerning a single case. The selection of comments was not proportional to the total number of comments on each post; therefore, the category percentages do not represent the full range of responses. Classifying comments according to a single primary meaning may also

oversimplify statements containing overlapping meanings. The analysis did not establish users' motives, verify allegations, or examine the influence of post framing on responses. Future research could compare different cases, platforms, and observation periods while developing coding approaches that accommodate multiple meanings within individual comments. Further studies could also examine the effects of post-framing and evaluate digital literacy education and moderation mechanisms to assess their effectiveness in improving the quality of discussions about violence against women.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The author declares that the research and publication of this article were not influenced by any interests that could give rise to a conflict of interest.

DECLARATION OF AI USE

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author used artificial intelligence (AI) tools solely to assist with language editing and to improve the clarity and readability of the text. The author reviewed and revised all AI-generated output and takes full responsibility for the accuracy, interpretation, analysis, and content of the article.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Syaqrah Karara Azzen: Conceptualization; Data Curation; Formal Analysis; Methodology; Visualization; Writing Original Draft; Writing Review & Editing.

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