

Sexist Concepts in Javanese Comedy: A Critical Discourse Analysis on Segawon's Dagelan

Raden Handoyo¹, Asrofin Kholifah²

¹Universitas Jenderal Soedirman

¹handyjojo@gmail.com

²Universitas Jenderal Soedirman

²asrofin.kholifah@unsoed.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

Dagelan or Javanese comedy shows are the favorite entertainments for many people living in Java Island, Indonesia. They present male and female characters performing acts and dialogues specifically produced for comical effects. In such interaction, gender differences may easily become the topic of conversation as one gender (male, in particular) exploits them in such a way as to arise laughter. The concepts of ideal women in Javanese culture are used as a base to mock, criticize or underestimate female characters. Of course, sexism should be observed in its context as a part of a humorous presentation. It is still interesting, however, to analyze how cultural values are employed to discriminate against women, as done by a comedian named Segawon in his shows. The data were five dagelans of Segawon's from which expressions of sexism were collected and analyzed to find the sexist concepts. It used CDA approach using Mills' model as the tool of analysis. The findings show that there are six sexist concepts expressed by Segawon in his comedy shows. They are: 1) males as the norm, women are dependent, 2) women are weak, lacking in strength and ability, 3) negative evaluation of women, 4) glorifying the maltreatment/mistreatment of women, 5) women are no more than possessions, 6) valuing women based on their appearance rather than their intelligence or personality. These concepts were expressed using various ways like imperative utterances, questions, metaphors, associations, hyperboles, vulgar words and idioms.

INTRODUCTION

Dagelan is a Javanese word meaning 'a comedy' or 'a humorous show'. There is no exact indication of when it first started but according to a document, comedy shows were performed in the era of King Gjayana, 760 AD (Sumarno, 2012). Over the centuries, dagelan had developed into various types of show with specific forms and functions. Long dagelans can stand as single shows, while the short ones are usually parts of bigger shows like *kethoprak* (Javanese dramas), *wayang kulit* (puppet shows), or *campursari* (music shows). Javanese *dagelan* is unique in that it uses Javanese language, is performed in local costumes and settings (sometimes with Javanese percussion and song played at the beginning and the ending), following a recent, historical or fictional plot happening in Java, and containing Javanese thoughts and philosophy.

The Segawon's Dagelans were short comedies, ranging between 5-10 minutes in duration and performed as parts of *campursari* (traditional music) shows in special events, mostly Javanese weddings. They presented Segawon (not his real name), a locally famous male comedian, singer and MC, as the main performer with one or two female stage partners who were usually member(s) of the *campursari* singing troupe. The *dagelans* did not seem to follow a particular story plot; instead Segawon and his partners relied heavily on improvisation to keep the conversation going. For instance, Segawon would go up to the stage, make a

random comment on the surroundings, call in his partner to come onto the stage, and then the two made reciprocal comments continuously. In this interaction, comments which degrade the other gender (female, mostly) were often produced to make humor. It is interesting to know how the concepts of gender in Javanese culture were presented in comedy to arise laughter. This will make us realize that sexism still exists overtly or covertly in some forms of entertainment which, in some ways, represent the current state of mind of our society.

Sexism is the assumption that the members of one sex collectively are superior to those of the other, together with the resultant differentiation practiced against members of the supposed inferior sex, especially by men against women. The term is also used to designate conformity with the traditional stereotyping of social roles on the basis of sex (Percy, 1996). In a linguistic sense, sexism is language to discriminate against women and to belittle and trivialize those activities associated with women. Sexism is defined as "the practices whereby someone foregrounds gender when it is not the most salient feature" (Veterling-Braggin in Mills, 2008). Sexism, just like racism and other discriminatory forms of language, stems from larger societal forces, wider institutionalized inequalities of power and ultimately conflict over who has rights to certain positions and resources (Mills, 2008). According to Mills, there are overt (direct) sexist language, and covert (indirect) sexist language. Overt or direct sexism is the type of usage that can be identified through the use of linguistic markers, or through the analysis of presupposition, which has historically been associated with the expression of discriminatory opinions about women, which signals to hearers that women are seen as an inferior group in relation to males.

Language can be claimed as overtly sexist if in the use of the language sexism is used intentionally to affect conversation, somebody's views of other people and somebody's own place within society. The categories of overt sexist language are words and meaning which include naming, dictionaries, pronouns (e.g. 'man' to refer both man and woman), and insult terms for women (e.g. bitch, whore, cunt). Meanwhile, covert or indirect sexism is sexism which is masked by humor and irony therefore it is difficult to classify as sexism. The difference between overt and covert sexism is the way it is used, and it does not change the sexism itself, but it changes the way it can be responded to (ibid). Covert sexist language categories are humor, presupposition, and scripts and metaphor. Humor often exaggerates certain features associated with a group or draws on and plays with stereo-typical knowledge for comical effect (ibid). Sexist humor, then, puts the one gender in a position of superiority, while the other gender is the object of laughter. This is made by exaggerating the features of one gender to create incongruity in the mind of the audience. The forbidden thoughts about the other gender which are kept hidden in the audience's mind are released, resulting in laughter.

To analyze subtle or indirect sexism, conventional linguistics is not enough. Mills (2008) suggests a model that can analyze more than a phrase in isolation; a model that looks above the level of sentence to the level of discourse. Sexism in a discourse can be analyzed using Critical Discourse Analysis or CDA, defined by Wodak as a study that highlights the substantively linguistic and discursive nature of social relations of power in contemporary societies. This is partly the matter of how power relations are exercised and negotiated in discourse. It is fruitful to look at both 'power in discourse' and 'power over discourse' in these dynamic terms' (Wodak, 1996).

'Javanese women' are women who think, speak and behave according to the culture and mindset of people living in the Javanese region (Suharti & Suyata, 1986). They follow the philosophy and etiquette of Javanese even if they are no longer relevant to modern way of living. Traditionally, Javanese women are those who are calm, polite and loyal, with the willingness to sacrifice her personal comfort and happiness for the betterment of their family. This view is led by Javanese main principles, that is, togetherness, peace and harmony (Suseno, 1984). People are expected not to trigger conflict by avoiding tension between members of society. In the family, it is mainly the women's duty to keep the peace and harmony. The role and

responsibility of women are handed down through generations: parents tell their daughters, entertainers tell the audience, and poets (who were mostly male in the past) write them down in their works.

Some quotes of the concepts of ideal Javanese women are the following (Suharti & Suyata, 1986; Handayani & Novianto, 2010): 1) *Wani ditata*, which means women should let themselves (or in this sense, brace themselves) to be managed (by men). An ideal women are those who follow the convention of the society, and eagerly take suggestions or orders (from husbands, parents or the elderlies) on how to behave 'correctly'. 2) *Konco wingking*, literally meaning 'partner in the background'. The word 'wingking' means 'behind' or 'back part of the house' either of which positions women as partners or companions of men but they stay off stage. They are not supposed to perform as leaders; they support their men from behind, giving their men comfort and a sense of peace at home. 3) *Swarga nunut neraka katut*, meaning women should follow their husbands either to heaven or hell. Women are inseparable from their men; they work together through the bad and good times in their life. Handayani & Novianto (2008) takes more positive view at it by saying that women are supposed to support their husbands, and that in every successful man there is a woman assisting him from behind. In a negative view, however, it implies that women are unable to make important decisions for their life, and put loyalty above anything else, even if their husbands take unlawful ways. 4) *Menang tanpa ngasorake*, means that women can gain strength and authority without overpowering men. They keep themselves calm, passive, and silent but they build their power underneath. Instead of making confrontation, they make their counterparts feel understood and accepted hence they 'surrender'.

Studies on sexism in the media have been extensively done, for instance by Das (2015), Li (2014), El-Falaky (2015) which reveal how women were portrayed as subordinate gender in the societies where the works belong to. In Indonesia, the issue has also been discussed by some researchers like Sudarini (2010), Hermawati (2007) and Pikatan (2012) whose studies on Javanese women found that cultural aspects strongly affect men and women's perceptions of their place in professional, social and personal settings. Some of these studies aimed at observing and documenting the phenomena of gender inequality, while others aimed at criticizing and if possible, eliminating the injustice resulting from the inequality. They took the data from various sources, mostly works of literature, and then tried to describe sexism in connection with the aspects of cultures where the works were produced. However, not many studies have been conducted to observe sexism in entertainment in exotic regions like Java, Indonesia. Therefore, this research was aimed mainly to describe what sexist concepts existed in the expressions produced by Segawon in his comedy shows and how they represent concepts of ideal Javanese women.

METHOD

This is a qualitative research aimed at describing sexist concepts found in the dialogues of Segawon Dagelan. There were five videos of Segawon Dagelan ranging between 5-10 minutes in duration as the data sources. Their titles are 'Segawon & Nyimut', 'Segawon & Tini', 'Segawon & Weski', 'Mister Mendem' and 'Segawon Lucu'. All of the videos were retrieved from Youtube website.

This research used a model applied by Darweesh & Abdullah (2016) in their study to analyze sexism in discourse. The model is adopted primarily based on Mills' model of sexism and Van Dijk's socio-cognitive framework. The basic elements are: 1) Negative evaluation of women, 2) Males as the norm, that is, females appear as dependent beings and as followers. 3) Women are weak, lacking in strength and ability, 4) Comparing women to inanimate objects, 5) Semantic derogation/disparagement of women. 6) Women are no more than possessions, 7) Valuing women based on their appearance rather than their intelligence or personality, 8) Glorifying the maltreatment/mistreatment of women, 9) Vulgarity when speaking about women, and 10) Negative presentation of women. Darweesh and Abdullah (2016) also compiled the strategies of the above elements, i.e. rhetorical strategies, metaphor, simile, semantic strategies,

presupposition and implication, insult terms, negative lexicalization, proverbs, words or statements with a negative connotation, sexist slurs and disgusting statements, structural strategies, and disclaimers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Sexist concepts in Segawon' Dagean

After analyzing the videos, there are 6 concepts of sexism exist in Segawon's dageans. Those concepts are the following:

1. Males as the norm, that is, females appear as dependent beings and as followers: Women should take care of the house; Women should talk politely

In Segawon' dagean there is one data in which Segawon stressed out women's role as homemakers. He was arguing with Nyimut, his wife, over some matters which led to her annoyance. She suggested him to stop bothering her. However, Segawon interpreted this as an indication that his wife had gone out without his knowing:

Nyimut: *Kowe ki rasah ngurusi aku, urusono demenanmu sing ning Gunung Kemukus kae.*

(English: You don't need to take care of me. Just take care of your lovers in Mount Kemukus)

Segawon: *Lha kok kowe klitikan mrana. Kowe ki bojoku. Kowe ki wong wedok takkon ngurusi ngomah. Ojo yak-yakan tekan nggunung.*

(English: Why the hell are you going there? You are my wife. As a woman you are assigned to take care of our house, not to go around a mountain.

Segawon blatantly said that Nyimut as his wife should stay and take care of the house. He used the word '*wedok*' (female) to emphasize Nyimut's gender as subordinate and command word '*takkon*' (I assign you) to claim his authority as a husband. In traditional Javanese role, men are the breadwinners while women are the homemakers. A woman's world is her house where she is assigned to do domestic duties. The words says, women belong to 'three -urs', i.e. *dapur* (kitchen), *sumur* (well) and *kasur* (bed) referring to women responsibilities to cook, to wash clothes and to entertain their husband in bed. Women who leave their houses to have fun are frowned upon by the society. There was even an era in Java when young women would be forbidden to go outside their homes for weeks, months or even years prior to their marriage, a practice known as 'pingitan'. Although the practice is now shortened into just days, the view that 'women should stay at home' is still hold by men in modern time and made its way to the joke above.

Besides the data demanding women to stay at home, there are three data in Segawon's dageanin which Segawon expressed his view that women are obliged to talk politely. Prior to the following dialogue, Segawon was wondering where the wedding couple (whose parents hired the troupe) was. He assumed that after the couple married at KUA (marriage bureau) they went somewhere else. He then made play on the word 'KUA':

Segawon: *KUA ki sing diombe kae to?* (English: KUA is a kind of drink, right?)

Nyimut: *Kuwi AQUA. Cangkem kok ra tau pener.*(English: That is AQUA. Your mouth never works)

Segawon: *He-he. Nek ra ngilingi neng kene wis tak clurit. Wis tau krungu po, enek lanangan kok diunekke cangkeme.* (English: Ha ha. If I'd lost my mind I would have slashed you. Never heard before, a woman condemns her husband's 'mouth').

In the dialog above, Segawon mixed up the word 'KUA' with 'AQUA' (a brand of drinking water). This was corrected by Nyimut who later commented on how Segawon never says things correctly. She used the word '*cangkem*' which literally means 'mouth'. However, this word belongs to the lowest register in Javanese, so saying it to refer to the speaking partner's mouth is considered rude. Segawon then used threatening,

hyperbolic expression '*wis tak clurit*' (I would have slashed you) to express his disagreement on Nyimut's choice of words. He called himself '*lanangan*' (husband) to make it clear that a wife should never talk impolitely to her husband otherwise she deserved a severe punishment.

Javanese etiquette, known as *tatakrama* (rules of conduct), is expected to be followed in all social situations. Women, in particular, should be aware of these rules in speaking or behaving. A breach to these rules is frowned upon, especially if it is done by women as they are considered as the guardians of morality who will pass down the rules to the next generation. Like in the dialog above, the breach was done by Nyimut when she referred to her husband's mouth using the word of the lowest register, regardless the fact that her husband had said numerous other harsh words before. Women are expected to be calm, polite and reserved all the time, so Nyimut's choice of word shocked his husband and the audience in general.

2. Women are weak, lacking in strength and ability: Women should be accepting and thrifty

There are parts in Segawon's dagelans where Segawon expected women to be thrifty with the money they get from their husbands, and to be always accepting and grateful. It happened when Segawon saw his wife approaching him. He said, "*Kowe ki kurang piye to? Mbok le nganggo biru-biru kuwi leren.* (What are you lacking? Stop wearing that blue thing (on your eyelids)) Segawon made a question concerning the significance of wearing make up for women. He called eye-shadow 'that blue thing' and demanded his wife to stop using it. With these questions and referring expression, he implied that women like to spend money on unnecessary things.

Traditional Javanese concept says that men work, while women stay at home. Men are the breadwinners and it is their responsibility to provide for the family. Women get money from their husbands and they should use it very wisely. Especially when the money is tight, women are expected to focus on the necessities. In Javanese concept, an ideal wife is the one who accepts whatever her husband gives to her and never complains. It is the woman's job to work it out to make it enough for the family's expenses.

There is also another datum in sketch 1 where Segawon told Nyimut to be thankful to have him as husband. It happened when Nyimut complained on his attitude. He said, "*Kowe ki kudune maturnuwun dadi bojoku. Kowe ki ketiban wahyu* (English: You must be grateful for being my wife. It is like a blessing from the God). Segawon used imperative '*kudune maturnuwun*' (must be grateful) to criticize his wife. He went on saying that marrying him is like getting a direct blessing. This association was a claim that he was above his wife whatever happened.

In Javanese there is a saying that women should "*suarga nunut neraka katut*", literally meaning women should follow their husbands' steps, be it leading them to heaven or hell. The ideal women are those who are loyal and obedient to their husbands, and be supportive even if their husbands' deeds are morally or legally wrong. This saying stresses on women's dependency on their men and their incapability of making their own important decisions in their lives. Women are nothing without their men, so they should always be thankful that they finally get ones for to confirm their existence (in marriage, as it is an extremely important phase in Javanese people's life). This 'thankfulness' is highlighted by Segawon in his joke.

3. Negative evaluation of women: Women get special treatment because they are women

There is a datum in which Segawon thought that women got special treatment in term of payday. Segawon was having a conversation with another male comedian when the topic suddenly turned to his payment. He blatantly expressed his doubt whether he would be paid properly for doing the comedy. When his partner said not to worry, Segawon made a remark on the group of female singers sitting in the backstage: "*Nek seng beres ki sing wedok-wedok tapi nek aku durung cetho*" (English: These women might have been paid, but it

is not clear whether I'm going to be paid or not). Segawon used generalization when referring to the female singers. Instead of calling them by name or by profession, he simply called them 'wedok-wedok' (women). This is an implicature that women were better treated than he was, a man. Segawon's assumption that female singers got their pay earlier seems to stem from his view that women have privilege of being sexually attractive; hence their hirer (a male, the patriarch where the wedding was held) prioritized the female singers over him. It is a common thought among men that women, in spite of being considered as physically weaker sex, possess a 'power' to subdue men. This power, in men's thought, is not attributed to their professional skill or intelligence, but their physical attractiveness, fragility and guile.

4. Glorifying the maltreatment/mistreatment of women: Women are sexual objects

There are at least eight data in which Segawon treated women as objects of sexual desire. They vary from commenting on or staring at women's body parts (breasts, crotch, buttocks), to touching his female partners' body. The first example is when Nyimut asked Segawon's opinion on her look. She was wearing traditional Javanese dress 'kebaya' consisting of batik skirt, a corset, and a long-sleeved top which covered most of her body. The top, however, was sheer and it quickly caught Segawon's attention. He said, "Koyo ning akuarium. Kuwi lohane ning kono." (English: It is like the inside of an aquarium. And those are the lohan fish (pointing at Nyimut's chest)) Segawon made an association by saying that Nyimut's dress resembled an aquarium, then went on with another association by saying he could see the 'fish' in it, referring to women's breasts. On another occasion, Segawon and Nyimut had to move to another spot for better lighting. On the way, he bumped himself on Nyimut's bottom. When Nyimut expressed her objection, Segawon bumped her again and said that he might go further since Nyimut did not seem to be angry. In Javanese view, one of women's most important duties is serving their men in bed. Like the old saying, women belong to three places i.e. dapur, sumur lan kasur (kitchen, well and bed). The ideal women are those who can satisfy their husband in bed, be available whenever their husbands want intimacy. However, this should only be displayed in bedroom. Talking about sex in public is taboo for women as they are expected to guard the norms and etiquette by giving good examples and restraining themselves. Men, on the other hand, have less restriction in expressing themselves, so it is more common for them to talk about sex in social setting, like what Segawon did in his shows.

5. Women are no more than possessions: Women should restrain themselves

For men, showing romantic or sexual interest to women in public is common. Women, on the contrary, should restrain themselves from obvious display of desire, as suggested by Segawon in his sketch. The scene started when the female character (Tini) entered the stage with a song 'Tak Gendong' (I'll Carry You on My Back) played in the background. She grabbed Segawon from behind, pretending to ride on his back. Segawon seemed to be unhappy with this and asked her to stop. Segawon made a metaphor, in which he associated Tini with a plague, then made an implication (I have never seen...) that it was absolutely uncommon for women to purposely make body contact with men in public. The best women in Javanese culture are those with princesses' quality: shy, elegant, mannered and restrained. They should have high level of self-control to bring themselves in the society because they represent not only themselves, but also their husbands and families. Women with loose behavior are ridiculed by people, as in the sketch above. Segawon condemned his comedic partner for grabbing his back, calling it a display of lust.

6. Valuing women based on their appearance rather than their intelligence or personality: Women should be young, beautiful and slim

In five data, Segawon insisted on the view that a female singer should be young, beautiful and slim. The following dialogue happened when Segawon was introduced to his stage partner, a singer named Tini, who happened to be a middle-aged, plump woman. Segawon used association by comparing Tini to Wall-of-Death

rider, then comparing her to a number of women who, according to Segawon, were ideal looking. He set ideals of how women should look like. He then used an idiom 'wis mambu lemah' (close to the grave) to mock Tini's aging profile. In the data, Segawon blatantly said that Tini did not deserve the profession because she was out of the typecast. Tini did not fit the ideal image of a female singer who, in Segawon's mind, should be young, beautiful and slim. This means not only is his joke sexist, but it is ageist as well. In another joke, he said he would die if he marries Tini because her breastmilk would poison him for being expired. The image of beauty in Javanese is well-written in literature. There is even a special set of metaphors (called panyandra) to talk the ideal body parts of women, like 'mripate ndamar kanginan' (her eyes are like candles blown by the wind) or 'dadane nyengkir gading' (her breasts are like yellow coconuts). It extends to the way women should act, like 'lambehane mblarak sempal' (her hands move like fallen coconut leaves), or mlakune koyo macan luwe (she walks like a hungry tiger). These imageries seem to support the notion the ideal women are those who are beautiful, young and slim, as what Segawon expressed in his comedy.

B. Sexism in the context of Segawon's Dagelan as a comedy

As explained above, the analysis found six sexist concepts produced in all five data sources. They show the main character's chauvinistic view towards women on stage where one gender was exploited to arise laughter. It is, however, necessary to observe the phenomena in context; that the sexism is a part of comedic entertainment. Some points that we take note here are: First, Dagelan is a type of comedy in which the dialogues are spoken in such a way to make humor. The sexism expressed by Segawon seems to be deliberately exaggerated to produce shock in audience's mind. For example, there is a scene where Segawon was commenting on his (also real life) wife's make up, calling it a waste of money. It sure is an exaggeration since both Segawon and his wife are comedians who know the importance of makeup. Secondly, Dagelan is watched by a group of audience who enjoyed the show as it is supposed to be: a comedy. Attardo (in Handoyo, 2007) said that there are three conditions for humor to be created: it creates an expectation in the audience's mind, it suddenly breaks the expectation (something out of place), and the break is acceptable (the audience is okay with it). The audiences of Dagelan were male and female. Yet, both were laughing to the dialogues. In this context, the sexist expressions were not perceived as insults but as entertainment. It should also be noted that the audience of the show were of various backgrounds, mostly middle-low class people living in the neighborhood of the wedding host. People of this profile seem to enjoy simple humor with slapsticks or explicit words, and do not mind some sexist remarks or acts on stage. Thirdly, women in Dagelan did not present themselves as passive, powerless counterparts. In response to Crazydog's sexist remarks, the female characters 'fought back' in various ways.

Years of development in Java Island as a part of Indonesia has changed much the demography, behavior and way of thinking of its people. Women of today have achieved high positions in governmental, educational or business sectors. Even in lower class society, women are no longer 'konco wingking' or stay-at-home mothers as national and international access have provided job opportunities to work in different cities or even countries. Women are now a big part of Indonesian economy as they contribute a significant amount to the country's income. Traditional gender roles still exist as values that are handed down to the next generations, but they are taken in more positive view by Javanese people as inheritance of the glorious past.

CONCLUSION

The findings show that there are six sexist concepts expressed by Segawon in his comedy shows. They are: 1) males as the norm, women are dependent, 2) women are weak, lacking in strength and ability, 3) negative evaluation of women, 4) glorifying the maltreatment/mistreatment of women, 5) women are no more than possessions, 6) valuing women based on their appearance rather than their intelligence or personality. These concepts were expressed using various ways like imperative utterances, questions, metaphors, associations, hyperboles, vulgar words and idioms. Further analysis found that they stemmed from the difference in

gender roles in Javanese society which is decided by cultural norms. Segawon' dagelan, hence, is proof that those sexist concepts still exist in Javanese society even in the modern day. However, any judgment on Segawon' dagelans should also take into account its function as a humor presentation in which ideas are often exaggerated to arise laughter.

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