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Deconstructing the Male Gaze: Digital Short Films as an Alternative Space for Gender Representation

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Abstract: This study analyzes how Indonesian short films, particularly *Demi Nama Baik Kampus* (2021), challenge the dominance of the male gaze and present more critical and inclusive representations of gender. While previous studies on the male gaze in Indonesian cinema have primarily focused on mainstream feature films and representations of women as objects of patriarchal narratives, limited attention has been given to digital short films as alternative spaces for resisting gendered visual regimes. This study addresses this gap by examining how a digitally distributed short film constructs resistance to the male gaze across textual, discursive, and socio-cultural dimensions. Using Norman Fairclough's (1995) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach, this study examines three levels of analysis: text, discourse practice, and socio-cultural practice. At the text level, the study reveals how the film's dialogue, visual symbols, and narrative deconstruct the objectification of women by presenting a protagonist who actively fights against sexual violence on campus. At the discourse practice level, YouTube expands access to gender issues and challenges conventional distribution and censorship practices. At the socio-cultural practice level, the study links the film's representation to the context of campus patriarchy, state regulations related to sexual violence, and the dynamics of digital capitalism that shape the visibility patterns of short films. The results of the study show at least six forms of resistance to the male gaze displayed through the character of Sinta: rejection of sexual objectification, resistance to threats, rejection of institutional intimidation, reporting to the PPKS (*Pencegahan dan Penanganan Kekerasan Seksual*) Task Force, public disclosure of cases, and solidarity among women. These findings confirm that digital short films in Indonesia can serve as an alternative medium for deconstructing patriarchal discourse and expanding the audience's critical awareness of gender relations in the digital age.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis; gender representation; Indonesian short films*;* Male Gaze*; YouTube*

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Introduction

Mulvey's (1975) concept of the male gaze emphasizes how visual media, especially films, often objectify women through a male perspective, where the world must be seen through male eyes, reinforcing patriarchal norms. This phenomenon has been further explored in contemporary research, which highlights the inherent nature of the female body gaze, contributing to sexual objectification, in line with research findings that the male lewd gaze towards women's bodies correlates with attitudes towards sexual violence(Hollett et al., 2022). The male gaze objectifies women as visual objects to be enjoyed by male viewers, while men themselves become active subjects of the narrative. Women are reduced to “objects of gaze” whose presence is limited to fulfilling the visual desires of men.

This practice is not only found in Hollywood films, but also in the film industries of almost all countries, including Indonesia. Portrayals of women in Indonesian films are often based on traditional patriarchal concepts, resulting in stereotypes of passivity, dependence, and sexual objectification, in line with the male gaze that dominates visual media. This phenomenon can be understood through the framework of sexual harassment reproduced by the media, where excessive sexual representation plays a role in normalizing harassment practices, shifting gender constructs, and reinforcing misogynistic mindsets (Galdi & Guizzo, 2020). Furthermore, the persistence of hegemonic masculinity in cultural narratives reinforces the idea that gender inequality is structural, whereby male dominance is legitimized and reproduced through various institutions and social practices (King et al., 2021). Despite extensive research on women's issues, misogyny continues to operate latently, affecting women's agency and their self-construction in both public and private spaces (Lundquist & Adams, 2023).

Indonesian films, the male gaze is not only seen in commercial films, but also in films that are considered “serious” or based on social criticism. For example, films that raise women's issues such as *Perempuan Berkalung Sorban* (2009) or *Marlina si Pembunuh dalam Empat Babak* (2017) are still often trapped in sexist narratives that place women as victims or objects that need to be (waited to be) saved by men. Despite attempting to raise women's issues, they are

still trapped in the logic of the male gaze that dominates the film industry. This shows that the patriarchal perspective is so strong that even films that are considered progressive are often trapped in it. Studies show that the Indonesian film industry, from the New Order era to the post-Reformation period, continues to present narratives that often portray women as passive objects who have no agency. Films such as *R.A. Kartini* (1982) and *Kartini* (2017) reinforce the image of patriarchy, despite attempts to highlight issues of empowerment and equality (Pratidina & Pasaribu, 2023). Including the film *Yuni* (2021), which depicts a strong patriarchal culture, showing how cultural and religious norms limit women's roles and rights (Febiola et al., 2023).

Short films serve as an alternative medium that is more independent from censorship and commercial pressures. Their shorter duration and lower production costs allow them more freedom to explore themes that may be sensitive for the commercial film industry. Their emergence is considered important for addressing social and political issues, including gender dynamics, due to their independence from commercial and censorship pressures. This freedom is based on the history of Indonesian cinema, where short films have become a practical solution for independent media, facilitated by communities and events that support their production and distribution (Barker, 2021). For example, the short film *Tilik* (2018) captures the power dynamics between female characters, focusing on how patriarchal structures influence their patterns of interaction and power relations, thereby offering a critical representation of gender issues that are largely ignored by mainstream cinema (Angjaya, 2021). Directors such as Maya Deren also used short films to challenge traditional narratives and explore feminist themes, thereby contributing to a more inclusive representation of gender (Zhu, 2023).

The digitization of film distribution has further strengthened the role of short films as alternative spaces for social criticism and gender advocacy. Through platforms such as YouTube and Vimeo, filmmakers can bypass traditional distribution channels, censorship barriers, and high distribution costs while reaching broader audiences (Sekarnegara & Handriyotopo, 2022; Zurian, 2023). These platforms not only facilitate access to independent films but also foster audience engagement and community formation around social issues. Nevertheless, digital distribution is not entirely democratic, as platform visibility is influenced by algorithmic systems that tend to privilege highly engaging content and may marginalize alternative voices (Rieder et al., 2020). In Indonesia, YouTube has also become a contested arena for shaping public memory and social narratives (Parahita & Yulianto, 2020). Despite these challenges, the popularity of gender-themed short films such as *Wedok* (2018), *Dua Detik* (2020), *Dani* (2018), and *The Last Room* (2021), which have attracted substantial viewership, demonstrates the potential of digital short films to disseminate critical gender discourses to wider audiences.

The short film *Demi Nama Baik Kampus* (2021) also offers strong criticism of the male gaze by raising the issue of sexual violence on campus. The film depicts how women become victims of a patriarchal system, where perpetrators of sexual violence are often protected by institutions in order to maintain their reputation. *Demi Nama Baik Kampus* (2021) challenges the male gaze by showing how women try to fight injustice and seek justice in a corrupt system.

The Indonesian film industry has historically been dominated by narratives that often portray women as passive objects, a trend that has persisted from the New Order era to the post-Reformation period. This portrayal is largely influenced by the male gaze, which positions women as sexual objects or secondary characters without agency. However, there has been a gradual shift in recent years, with films beginning to challenge these stereotypes by presenting women as active subjects with their own agency. The short film *Demi Nama Baik Kampus* (2021) exemplifies this change by depicting its female protagonist, Sinta, as a strong and resilient character who faces sexual harassment and challenges the status quo to maintain her dignity and agency.

Short films play an important role in challenging the male gaze that has long dominated visual media, including films. With shorter durations and lower production costs, short films have the flexibility to explore themes that are often considered "risky" by the commercial film industry. In addition, short films are easier to distribute through digital platforms such as YouTube, Vimeo, or online film festivals, allowing them to reach a wider audience without having to go through a strict censorship process. This makes short films an alternative space for exploring more inclusive and critical representations of gender.

Previous studies have examined gender representation and patriarchal discourse in Indonesian cinema, highlighting how women are frequently positioned as passive subjects and objects of the male gaze (Angjaya, 2021; Pratidina & Pasaribu, 2023). Other studies have also explored the role of digital platforms in expanding the distribution of independent and short films (Sekarnegara & Handriyotopo, 2022). However, limited attention has been given to how Indonesian digital short films simultaneously challenge the male gaze and operate within contemporary digital media environments. In particular, studies focusing on the intersection between gender representation, digital film distribution, and audience accessibility through platforms such as YouTube remain scarce. This study addresses this gap by examining how the short film *Demi Nama Baik Kampus* (2021) constructs resistance to patriarchal discourse and how YouTube facilitates the circulation of alternative gender narratives. By integrating Critical Discourse Analysis with discussions of digital media distribution, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of Indonesian short films as alternative spaces for gender advocacy and social criticism in the digital era.

Based on these considerations, this study seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) How does *Demi Nama Baik Kampus* (2021) construct resistance to the male gaze at the textual level through its dialogue, narrative, and visual representations? (2) How do discourse practices, particularly digital distribution through YouTube, facilitate the circulation of alternative gender narratives in the film? (3) How does the film reflect and challenge broader socio-cultural structures related to patriarchy, sexual violence, and digital media in contemporary Indonesian society?

Methods

This study uses the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach developed by Norman Fairclough (1995). This method was chosen because it enables the analysis of media texts while

simultaneously examining the discursive processes and socio-cultural contexts that shape and are shaped by those texts. The short film *Demi Nama Baik Kampus* (2021) was selected through purposive sampling. The film was chosen because it explicitly addresses sexual violence in higher education, presents a female protagonist who actively resists patriarchal domination, and has been widely distributed through YouTube, making it a relevant case for examining the intersection of gender representation, digital media, and resistance to the male gaze. In addition, the film has gained substantial public attention and directly engages with contemporary discussions surrounding sexual violence prevention policies in Indonesian universities.

The primary data consist of scenes, dialogues, visual frames, character interactions, and narrative sequences contained in the film. Data collection was conducted through repeated viewing of the film over several stages. During the first viewing, the researchers identified scenes related to gender representation, sexual harassment, institutional responses, and women's agency. During subsequent viewings, relevant dialogues were transcribed, visual elements were documented through scene descriptions and screenshots, and narrative sequences were organized chronologically. The collected data were then coded according to recurring themes related to the male gaze, resistance, power relations, institutional control, and female solidarity.

The analytical framework consists of three levels of analysis: text, discourse practice, and socio-cultural practice. At the textual level, the coded data were examined to identify linguistic expressions, visual representations, symbolic meanings, and narrative structures that either reproduce or challenge the male gaze. Particular attention was given to dialogue, gestures, camera framing, character positioning, and key narrative moments that construct women's agency.

At the level of discourse practice, the analysis focused on how the film was produced and distributed as a digital short film and how its circulation through YouTube enabled wider access to gender-related discourse. This stage examined the role of digital platforms in facilitating the dissemination of alternative narratives, as well as the broader conditions of production, distribution, and consumption that shape audience engagement with the film.

At the socio-cultural practice level, the analysis explored the broader social, political, and cultural contexts surrounding the film, including patriarchal norms within higher education institutions, public discussions on sexual violence, and the implementation of policies such as Permendikbud No. 30 of 2021 concerning the Prevention and Handling of Sexual Violence in Higher Education. The film was therefore interpreted not only as a cultural text but also as a response to ongoing social debates regarding gender justice and institutional accountability in Indonesia.

To enhance analytical rigor, the researchers employed repeated data review and cross-checking among the three levels of Fairclough's analytical framework to ensure consistency of interpretation. Interpretations were continuously compared with the film's narrative context and relevant scholarly literature on the male gaze, patriarchy, and gender representation. The researchers acknowledge their position as scholars concerned with gender equality and media representation; therefore, reflexive attention was given throughout the analysis to minimize

subjective bias and to ensure that interpretations remained grounded in observable textual and contextual evidence.

Results

Demi Nama Baik Kampus (2021) is a short film with a duration of approximately 32 minutes and 15 seconds, released on December 14, 2021, on the YouTube channel Cerdas Berkarakter Kemdikbud RI. The film was produced by Aco Tenri and directed and written by Andi T, as part of an initiative by the Character Strengthening Center of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology as part of an educational campaign against sexual violence on campus.

The film tells the story of Sinta (played by Laras Ardhia), a student who is completing her thesis and has to attend night tutoring sessions with her lecturer, Pak Arie (played by Bismo Satrio). During this process, Sinta experiences sexual harassment and threats from her professor not to report it in order to protect the "good name of the campus." Supported by her friend, Abi (Anne Yasmine), Sinta seeks justice through the campus's internal complaint system and the Task Force for the Prevention and Handling of Sexual Violence (Satgas PPKS). The main themes of the film are sexual violence in higher education, the conflict between reporting and protecting the institution's reputation, and the struggle of victims to have their voices heard and responded to fairly.

Based on a critical discourse analysis of the short film *Demi Nama Baik Kampus* (2021), this study finds that the film presents six main forms of resistance to the male gaze, represented through the female protagonist, Sinta. These findings were obtained through observation of the dialogue, narration, body language, and plot of the film.

Table 1
Summary of the key findings

No	Form of Resistance	Scene/Key Indicator	Description of Findings
1	Rejection of sexual objectification	Minutes 04:44–05:14	The character Sinta shows discomfort with the lecturer's sexual comments about her body, rejects physical contact, and tries to return the interaction to an academic context.
2	Resistance to personal threats	Minute 05:56–06:19	Sinta receives verbal threats not to report the harassment, but continues her efforts to seek justice.
3	Rejection of institutional intimidation	Minute 11:23–15:00	Sinta refused to sign a letter withdrawing the report filed by the campus on behalf of maintaining the institution's reputation.
4	Reporting through formal channels	Minute 20:11-23:55	Sinta used the campus's official mechanism by reporting to the PPKS Task Force as a form of active action by the victim.
5	Disclosure of the case to the public	Minute 28:09–29:01	The perpetrator's confession in front of other parties opened the case to an intersubjective space and broke the attempts to silence it.
6	Solidarity among women	Throughout the narrative (character Abi)	The presence and support of the character Abi strengthened Sinta's courage to fight back and report the case, demonstrating collective support among women.

Discussion

Text Analysis: Representations of Resistance to The Male Gaze

In text analysis, this study focuses on how the short film *Demi Nama Baik Kampus* (2021) challenges the male gaze through dialogue, narrative, and visual symbols. This film raises the issue of sexual violence on campus, which often occurs in patriarchal systems. The text that is considered to best represent the effort to oppose the concept of the male gaze is as follows:

Rejection of Sexual Objectification

The dialogue between Mr. Aries and Sinta at 04:44 – 05:06. It began with him complimenting Sinta's body, saying, "You have a nice body. It's firm. Like a model's." However, Sinta had already shown her discomfort with the topic of conversation, which was very private and not related to her thesis. Sinta then suggests returning to the topic of her thesis. Mr. Ari continues the dialogue: "Sinta, do whatever you need to do. If you are nice to me, I will be even nicer to you. If you are very nice to me, wow, you could get a perfect score." This scene shows how the male gaze works through two layers of power: visual power and institutional power. On the visual level, Sinta's body is placed as an object of assessment through Mr. Arie's comments that highlight parts of her body that are not academically relevant. Mulvey (1975) explains that the male gaze always functions to place women in a position of being looked at, so that women's existence is constructed through desirability rather than intellectual capacity.

The diction of the second dialogue is also unusual in the context of a lecturer guiding his students because it has an implicit meaning of sexual invitation. The repeated use of the word "good" indicates a euphemism for the transactional relationship between women's bodies and academic value. Here, women's bodies are reduced to commodities, while men are positioned as the determining authority. This shows the lecturer's dominance over students by exploiting academic power relations. The lecturer uses his academic authority to offer rewards in the form of grades in exchange for sexual compliance. Thus, academic grades in this scene no longer function as the result of a learning process, but as a commodity that can be exchanged for a woman's body. This condition confirms that the patriarchal culture of campuses in Indonesia still provides space for powerful men to exploit women.

Figure 1

The scene where Mr. Arie seduces Sinta

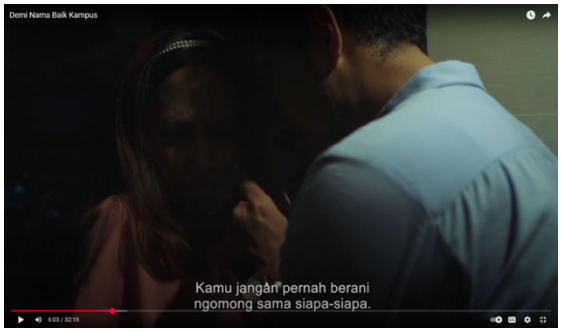


At minute 05:09 – 05:14, there is a scene depicting gestures of bringing faces closer and forcing physical contact. Although the dialogue is incomplete, this scene shows that the woman (Sinta) is the object of physical interaction without consent. Her resistance can be in the form of rejecting body movements or expressions of rejection from Sinta. These parts place Sinta as an object who must "please" the lecturer in order to gain academic benefits. Sinta's actions of rejecting or not following this logic are a resistance to the logic that women's bodies or behavior can be exchanged for value/intimidation. This response also serves as a form of affirmation of bodily boundaries, understood as an initial act of resistance against oppressive power. This resistance is important because it shifts women from the position of object to subject, capable of regulating their own bodily space. This dismantles the logic of the male gaze that positions them as objects, with the climax of their resistance in the film being the filing of a report.

Resistance to Threats

At 05:56 – 06:19, Mr. Arie threatens the victim not to spread the word about the harassment (verbal threat). This is a form of non-physical violence through verbal threats. Sinta's decision to continue spreading the word and reporting the incident is an act of resistance against patriarchal control. The threat in the form of dialogue, "Don't you dare tell anyone," shows a strategy of verbal intimidation as well as a control mechanism that is typical in patriarchal structures.

Figure 2
Scene Mr. Arie threatens Sinta



This discourse of threats is directly aimed at silencing the victim. The perpetrator tries to control the narrative so that the abuse case remains hidden. This also shows the reproduction of a culture of silence that often surrounds cases of sexual violence, where the perpetrator attempts to maintain complete control over the narrative and ensure that the abuse case does not enter the public sphere. However, Sinta's decision to report the incident shows resistance to this domination. She not only rejects individual threats, but also rejects the social structure that forces women to remain silent. This action shifts the position of the victim from a passive object to an active subject who articulates her own experiences and truths.

This resistance is even more significant because it occurs in the context of a campus that historically has a strong hierarchy and tends to protect its internal reputation. Thus, Sinta's

resistance is not only personal but also political, as it questions broader power structures and opens space for institutional cultural change.

Rejection of Institutional Intimidation

At 11:23 – 15:00 minutes, there was an institutional attempt to intimidate Sinta into signing a statement retracting her accusations against Mr. Arie. When the university (through the rector) tried to force Sinta to sign a letter withdrawing her complaint for the sake of the university's reputation, Sinta's refusal was a direct act of opposition against the patriarchal institution that wanted to close the case. Her resistance took the form of refusing to sign the letter. The coercion to sign a statement to withdraw the report shows how educational institutions can use administrative language as a tool of repression. Institutions attempt to control individual behavior and choices through the formulation of language that appears formal and legitimate.

Figure 3
The rector asked Sinta to sign the Letter of Withdrawal of Charges



The conflict escalated when the rector said, “For the sake of the university's reputation” (14:27). The phrase “for the sake of the university's reputation” indicates a bureaucratic effort to prioritize the institution's reputation over justice for the victim. Thus, the campus is positioned as an entity that must be protected, while the victim becomes a threat to the symbolic stability of the institution. Administrative language is used as a tool of pressure, revealing the hegemony of educational institutions that side with the perpetrator. This depiction reflects a structural patriarchy in which institutions protect perpetrators more than victims, especially when the perpetrator is male.

Sinta firmly refuses through dialogue, “I cannot sign.” This refusal is a direct discourse of opposition and shifts the position of the victim from an object forced into silence to a subject capable of asserting her agency. In the context of cinema, this scene becomes an important representation of how films can explicitly reveal and challenge institutional patriarchy. The film not only portrays that sexual violence occurs because of individual perpetrators, but also because of the system that protects them and silences victims.

Reporting to the PPKS Task Force

Using the formal campus channel by reporting to the PPKS Task Force (Task Force for the Prevention and Handling of Sexual Violence) shows that victims should not remain silent, but rather that they have the right to seek justice through institutional mechanisms. This is evident in the scene at 20:11-23:55, where women are active subjects, not passive objects. When Sinta states that she is willing to report to the Task Force, she demonstrates her active role as a subject seeking justice through formal mechanisms. This attitude is simple but powerful as an affirmation of women's agency. The decision to report using official instruments marks the courage to reverse the dominant discourse.

By choosing legal-institutional action, Sinta not only resists the perpetrator but also intervenes in the social structures that previously marginalized women's experiences. Through this report, she articulates her subjective position as an individual who has a voice, courage, and legitimacy to demand justice. This is in line with the contemporary feminist paradigm that sees agency not only as a revolutionary grand gesture, but also as formal, administrative, and strategic actions that can change power relations. These actions reinforce the evidence of cultural transformation on Indonesian campuses, especially after the introduction of Permendikbud No. 30/2021, which regulates the handling of sexual violence. Thus, the film not only portrays the reality of patriarchy but also presents a space for resistance and transformation.

Figure 4

Scene Sinta accompanied by her friend Abi reporting to the PPKS Task Force

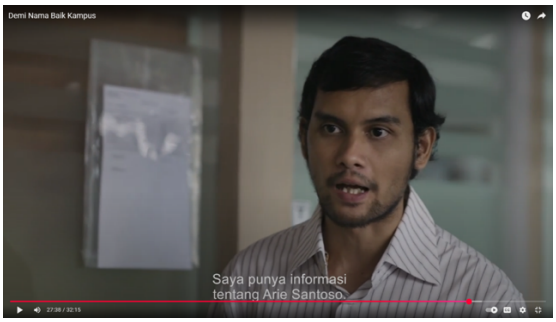


Public Disclosure of the Case

The scene of Mr. Arie's confession (minutes 28:09–29:01) has an important narrative and ideological function in exposing the dynamics of power in cases of sexual violence. The scene in which Mr. Arie admits that he “wanted to kiss” Sinta (done in front of Faisal) does not merely serve as evidence of the incident, but opens up space for interpretation of how truth, power, and resistance work in the context of campus patriarchy.

Figure 5

Scene of Faisal, Mr. Arie's friend, testifying to the PPKS Task Force



This confession could be a moment of public enlightenment, as well as evidence of objectification, but resistance emerged in how Sinta fought for her claim and did not back down. When Arie's confession was delivered in front of another person (Faisal), it gave rise to the narrative that abuse cannot be hidden. This publicity can be a strategy against the silence of patriarchal culture. Faisal's presence as a witness is an important element in countering the narrative of gaslighting, blurring reality, or weakening the victim's claims, which often occur in cases of sexual violence. By presenting this confession not in a private space but in an intersubjective space (attended by a third person), the film shows that the truth about abuse can no longer be monopolized or controlled by the perpetrator. This also marks the tearing of the "veil of silence" that often protects perpetrators in patriarchal social structures.

This scene also shows how publicity can be a form of resistance. In patriarchal cultures, cases of sexual violence are often silenced through mechanisms of shame, stigma, or social pressure directed at the victim. However, when the perpetrator's confession is conveyed in front of others, the film shifts the moral and social burden from the victim to the perpetrator. Thus, the film articulates that bringing the case into the public sphere is an important strategy for dismantling the normalization of abuse.

Solidarity Among Women

This film depicts Abi's character as Sinta's loyal and enthusiastic friend who accompanies and supports her in reporting the incident, showing solidarity among women as a way to resist the isolation often imposed by patriarchy. Abi's presence not only serves as a supporting character who advances the plot but also functions ideologically as a symbol of collective female strength, which is frequently absent in conventional narratives of sexual violence. Abi's support for Sinta illustrates a form of solidarity that counters social mechanisms that often position women as "wrong," "exaggerating," or "making a big deal out of nothing." Abi strengthens Sinta's courage to report the incident, emphasizing that survivors of sexual violence require social support to challenge oppressive patriarchal structures. Abi's presence also demonstrates that women in this film are not represented as competitors, a stereotype commonly found in patriarchal media representations, but rather as active subjects who build networks of support.

From a visual perspective, the representation of solidarity is reinforced through the film's framing and character composition. In several scenes, Sinta and Abi are positioned within the

same frame using medium shots that emphasize proximity and interpersonal connection. Rather than isolating Sinta as an individual victim, the camera repeatedly presents her alongside Abi, visually constructing a collective identity and shared resistance. This compositional strategy challenges the patriarchal tendency to individualize women's experiences and instead foregrounds solidarity as a source of empowerment.

The mise-en-scène of these scenes further supports this interpretation. The relatively balanced positioning of the two characters within the frame avoids hierarchical visual relationships, suggesting equality and mutual support. Unlike scenes involving Mr. Arie, where framing often reflects unequal power relations, the scenes featuring Abi and Sinta employ more symmetrical compositions that visually communicate trust, safety, and cooperation. Following Mulvey's argument that the camera can function as a bearer of the male gaze, the film resists such visual logic by refusing to present Sinta's body as an object of spectacle (Mulvey, 1975) . Instead, the camera prioritizes facial expressions, dialogue, and emotional interaction between the two women. This visual strategy shifts audience attention away from female bodily display and toward women's subjective experiences.

Therefore, the film's resistance to the male gaze operates not only at the narrative level but also at the cinematic level. Through framing, composition, and character positioning, the camera actively supports the representation of women as subjects capable of solidarity, agency, and resistance against patriarchal domination.

Discourse Practice Analysis

Discourse practice refers to the processes through which texts are produced, distributed, and consumed. Therefore, this dimension examines not only the textual content of *Demi Nama Baik Kampus* (2021) but also the institutional conditions of its production, its circulation through digital media, and the ways audiences interpret and negotiate its meanings.

Table 2
Audience Reception Patterns in YouTube Comments on *Demi Nama Baik Kampus* (2021)

Category of Audience Response	Description	Representative Comments	Frequency (n=40)
Support for Survivors	Comments expressing empathy for Sinta and encouraging victims to report sexual violence.	"Ga kebayang keberanian sebesar apa yg harus dimiliki korban pelecehan buat speak up" (@merin.a5156); "Semoga para korban berani bersuara seperti Sinta" (@ratnanera7790).	14
Criticism of Institutional Responses	Comments criticizing universities that prioritize institutional reputation over justice for victims.	"Nama baik kampus ditentukan dari caranya menangani kasus dan membantu korban" (@khairanakharan); "Percuma jaga nama baik kampus kalau membela pelaku" (@dwkrmn8173).	11

Category of Audience Response	Description	Representative Comments	Frequency (n=40)
Appreciation of the Government Campaign	Comments praising the Ministry of Education and Puspeka for addressing sexual violence through film.	"Salut sama Kemdikbud, berani membuka permasalahan ini" (@qmindra); "Film sosialisasi produksi pemerintah terbaik sejauh ini" (@malkan8853).	9
Personal Testimony and Lived Experience	Comments sharing personal experiences of sexual harassment or institutional neglect.	"Sebagai korban KS yang kasusnya pernah terbengkalai..." (@priscilla4535); "Saya mantan penyintas..." (@nikensavitri119).	6

Unlike most independent short films, *Demi Nama Baik Kampus* (2021) was produced by the Pusat Penguatan Karakter (Puspeka) of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology as part of a public education campaign addressing sexual violence in higher education. This production context significantly shapes the discourse articulated by the film. The narrative promotes institutional accountability, survivor protection, and awareness of the Prevention and Handling of Sexual Violence Task Force (PPKS), aligning with the policy objectives of Permendikbud No. 30 of 2021. Consequently, the film functions not only as a cultural product but also as an instrument of state-sponsored public communication. At the same time, this institutional context shapes the boundaries of criticism within the narrative. While the film openly criticizes abusive lecturers and unsupportive campus authorities, it ultimately presents institutional reform and the PPKS mechanism as the primary solution, rather than questioning broader state structures or systemic inequalities in higher education governance.

The film was distributed through the official YouTube channel *Cerdas Berkarakter Kemdikbud RI*, enabling direct public access without commercial distribution intermediaries. Through YouTube, the film reached a broad audience and facilitated public engagement through viewing, commenting, sharing, and discussion. This mode of distribution reflects the growing role of digital platforms in governmental communication strategies, particularly for reaching younger audiences and disseminating educational messages.

The visibility of the film must also be understood within the logic of platform distribution. As Rieder et al. (2020) argue, YouTube's recommendation system prioritizes engagement indicators such as views, comments, shares, and watch time (Rieder et al., 2020). The substantial audience engagement generated by *Demi Nama Baik Kampus* indicates that the film successfully circulated within the platform ecosystem and reached audiences beyond traditional educational settings. Nevertheless, the visibility of social-issue content remains dependent upon algorithmic mechanisms that determine which content receives broader exposure. Thus, the film illustrates how educational and advocacy messages are increasingly shaped by the infrastructures of digital platforms.

Audience reception analysis further demonstrates how meaning is negotiated through consumption practices. As shown in Table 2, comments supporting survivors constituted the

largest category (14 of 40 comments). Many viewers expressed empathy toward Sinta and emphasized the importance of believing and supporting victims of sexual violence. These responses indicate that audiences largely interpreted the film through a survivor-centered perspective consistent with the film's intended message.

The second largest category involved criticism of institutional responses (11 comments). Many viewers argued that universities frequently prioritize institutional reputation over justice for victims. Comments such as "Nama baik kampus ditentukan dari caranya menangani kasus dan membantu korban" demonstrate that audiences interpreted the film as a critique of institutional cultures that silence survivors in order to protect organizational legitimacy. This finding suggests that viewers extended the film's narrative beyond the fictional story and connected it to broader realities within Indonesian higher education.

A third category consisted of comments appreciating the Ministry of Education and Puspeka for producing the film (9 comments). Viewers frequently praised the government's willingness to address a sensitive issue that is often ignored or concealed. Such responses indicate that the audience recognized the film as part of a wider educational and policy initiative rather than merely as entertainment content. This reception reinforces the role of the film as a vehicle of public advocacy and awareness-building.

The final category comprised personal testimonies and lived experiences (6 comments). Several viewers identified themselves as survivors of sexual harassment or described experiences of institutional neglect when reporting abuse. These comments reveal that the film functioned as a catalyst for self-disclosure and public reflection. Rather than remaining passive spectators, audience members actively connected the film's narrative to their own experiences and used the comment section as a space for testimony, validation, and collective discussion.

Viewed through Fairclough's second dimension, the discourse practice of *Demi Nama Baik Kampus* emerges through the interaction between state-sponsored production, platform-based distribution, and audience interpretation. The film's meaning is therefore not produced solely within the text itself but is continuously negotiated through institutional conditions, digital circulation, and audience engagement. The predominance of supportive and critical responses toward institutional failures suggests that the film successfully fostered public discussion concerning gender justice, survivor protection, and accountability in higher education. In this sense, *Demi Nama Baik Kampus* demonstrates how digital short films can function simultaneously as educational campaigns, spaces of public discourse, and mechanisms for challenging patriarchal norms in contemporary Indonesian society.

From Discourse Practice to Socio-Cultural Practice

Discourse analysis shows how digital short films are produced, distributed, and consumed in new media spaces colored by algorithms and the logic of digital capitalism. However, to understand the broader meaning, it is necessary to see how these practices are connected to the surrounding social and cultural structures. At the socio-cultural level, digital short films such as *Demi Nama Baik Kampus* (2021) operate in the tension between patriarchy, digital capitalism,

and the ever-changing dynamics of public consciousness. The film *Demi Nama Baik Kampus* (2021) reflects the social reality that sexual violence is often hidden by institutions in order to maintain their reputation. This phenomenon parallels the rampant cases in Indonesia, where campuses, schools, or public institutions tend to care more about their image than protecting victims. The presence of Permendikbud No. 30 of 2021 concerning the Prevention and Handling of Sexual Violence is an important backdrop for this film. The existence of this regulation provides the context that the field of education is undergoing a shift in discourse towards a paradigm of victim protection and transparency. This means that the film's representation is not just a fictional story, but a direct response to the developing legal and political discourse. Digital short films do not merely represent, but also help shape public discourse on how sexual violence should be understood and handled.

Although digital platforms such as YouTube provide space for the distribution of alternative discourses, they are still governed by the logic of digital capitalism. Algorithms select content based on its potential for engagement, not its social urgency. This creates a paradox: on the one hand, short films can reach millions of viewers for free, but on the other hand, they have to compete with lighter, viral entertainment content or commercial content supported by advertising. This hierarchy of visibility risks marginalizing critical films that expose patriarchal domination. In other words, digital space is not a value-free arena, but a field of discourse colored by global economic interests.

The consumption of gender-themed short films on digital platforms shows a shift in awareness among audiences. Data shows that Indonesia is among the countries with high YouTube penetration: around 144 million active users in early 2025. This figure not only shows the potential for distribution, but also the scale of possible public engagement in gender discourse. The audience does not only watch passively, but also produces new discourse through comments, online discussions, and real actions in the offline world. For example, several short films with gender issues such as Wedok or Dua Detik sparked public conversations that then spread to other social media and community forums. This proves that digital short films can serve as catalysts for gender awareness transformation.

Digital short films also contribute to the formation of new cultural identities, particularly among young audiences who constitute a substantial proportion of YouTube users in Indonesia. By portraying female protagonists who reject objectification and challenge patriarchal power structures, *Demi Nama Baik Kampus* offers alternative models of gender identity that emphasize agency, autonomy, and resistance. Through Sinta's character, the film presents women not as passive victims but as active subjects capable of seeking justice and confronting institutional barriers.

The representation of solidarity among women further reinforces the idea that resistance to patriarchy is not solely an individual endeavor but also a collective process. As demonstrated in the relationship between Sinta and Abi, the film emphasizes the importance of emotional support, trust, and collective action in responding to sexual violence. This theme was also reflected in audience reception. As discussed in the discourse practice analysis, many viewers

highlighted Abi's role as a supportive friend and emphasized the importance of support systems for survivors. The prominence of such responses suggests that audiences interpreted solidarity as one of the film's central messages and connected it to broader concerns about victim support and gender justice.

More broadly, the film reflects ongoing socio-cultural transformations in Indonesia regarding public awareness of sexual violence. The positive reception of the film, including supportive comments toward survivors and criticism of institutional responses, indicates increasing public sensitivity toward issues that were previously marginalized or silenced. In this sense, the film can be understood as both a reflection of and a contribution to evolving public conversations about gender equality, institutional accountability, and survivor protection in contemporary Indonesian society.

Ultimately, analysis at the socio-cultural practice level shows that digital short films are not merely entertainment artifacts, but cultural instruments that operate in a complex field of discourse. They reflect resistance to institutional patriarchy, while also confronting the ambivalence of digital capitalism, which can either expand or limit visibility. Furthermore, digital short films open up space for audiences to form solidarity and new critical awareness, making them an important medium in the transformation of gender culture in the digital age. Thus, short films such as *Demi Nama Baik Kampus* (2021) can be understood as part of a broader cultural struggle, namely the effort to redefine gender relations, justice, and representation in contemporary Indonesian society.

Conclusion

This study examined how the Indonesian digital short film *Demi Nama Baik Kampus* (2021) challenges the dominance of the male gaze through Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional Critical Discourse Analysis framework. The findings demonstrate that resistance to patriarchal discourse is constructed not only through narrative content but also through cinematic techniques, digital circulation, and broader socio-cultural contexts.

At the textual level, the film presents six forms of resistance to the male gaze: rejection of sexual objectification, resistance to threats, rejection of institutional intimidation, reporting through formal mechanisms, public disclosure of abuse, and solidarity among women. These forms of resistance are articulated through dialogue, narrative structure, character agency, and visual strategies. The film's cinematography, including framing, composition, character positioning, and the avoidance of sexualized representations of the female body, shifts the audience's attention from women as objects of visual pleasure to women as active subjects capable of agency, resistance, and collective action. In this regard, the film challenges the visual logic traditionally associated with the male gaze.

At the level of discourse practice, the study shows that the meaning of the film is shaped by the interaction between state-sponsored production, digital distribution, and audience reception. Produced by the Pusat Penguatan Karakter (Puspeka) as part of a public education campaign on sexual violence prevention, the film functions not only as a cultural text but also as

an instrument of public advocacy. Its distribution through YouTube enabled broad audience engagement and facilitated public discussion concerning sexual violence, institutional accountability, and survivor protection. Analysis of audience comments further revealed that viewers predominantly expressed support for survivors, criticized institutional failures, appreciated the educational campaign, and connected the film's narrative to their own lived experiences. These findings indicate that audiences actively negotiated and reproduced the meanings offered by the film rather than consuming them passively.

At the socio-cultural level, the film reflects broader transformations in Indonesian society regarding gender justice and the handling of sexual violence. The narrative resonates with contemporary legal and political developments, particularly the implementation of Permendikbud No. 30 of 2021, which promotes victim protection and institutional accountability in higher education. At the same time, the film illustrates the opportunities and limitations created by digital media environments, where alternative gender discourses can gain visibility while remaining shaped by platform logics and algorithmic systems. The positive audience reception identified in this study suggests a growing public awareness of sexual violence and increasing support for survivor-centered approaches.

Overall, this study argues that Indonesian digital short films can function as alternative spaces for contesting patriarchal representations and expanding public engagement with gender issues. By integrating textual analysis, audience reception, and socio-cultural context, the study demonstrates that resistance to the male gaze is not confined to the screen but extends into broader processes of public discourse, institutional critique, and cultural transformation. Future research may expand this discussion by comparing multiple digital short films, examining audience engagement across different social media platforms, or employing longitudinal approaches to investigate the long-term impact of digital films on public attitudes toward gender and sexual violence.

Author Contribution Statement

Deddy Suprapto: Conceptualization; Research Design; Methodology; Supervision; Writing – Review & Editing; **Aris Saefulloh:** Data Curation; Investigation; Methodology; Validation; Writing – Review & Editing; **Rara Mustika Ningrum:** Formal Analysis; Visualization; Writing – Original Draft; Writing – Review & Editing; **Ahmad Jufriyadi:** Review & Editing.

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