

**Udah Cebol, Bantet Pula Aku: Lexical Cohesion on Body Shaming in IbuHamil.com
Discussion Forum**

Erni Dewi Riyanti¹ ✉, Tofan Dwi Hardjanto²,

¹Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universitas Islam Indonesia, Indonesia, ²Faculty of Cultural Science,
Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia

Article Info

Abstract

Article History:

Received
29 December 2022
Approved
1 April 2023
Published
30 April 2023

Keywords:

Lexical cohesion, Body
Shaming,
IbuHamil.com

Women contribute almost half of the total internet users in Indonesia and millennial mothers are a significant group of internet users, especially social media. This makes the millennial mother group vulnerable to crime in the digital space. One form of crime is body shaming which is part of mom-shaming. In this study, we investigate body shaming from the perspective of Discourse Analysis using Halliday and Hasan's classification on lexical cohesion. We focus on three categories in lexical cohesion, which are repetition, synonymy, and antonymy to illustrate lexical cohesion in IbuHamil.com's discussion forum. Body shaming discussed in the article sources from a thread in Ngobrol Apa Saja forum in IbuHamil.com. The thread discussing body shaming experience receives 37 responses in 18 days. In terms of lexical cohesion, the data display 300 words in repetition with 28 inflected words, 38 words in synonymy, and 16 words in antonymy. There are some typical words in illustrating physical features in body shaming, which mainly highlight weight, height, and attempts to achieve an ideal body mass index. The discussion forum also demonstrates the frequent use of contraction which characterizes the internet chat room communication. Additionally, users' responses express empathy and support to the topic starter. The users also propose advice on handling body shaming and how to avoid it in the future.

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How to cite (in APA Style):

Riyanti, E., & Hardjanto, T. (2023). Udah Cebol, Bantet Pula Aku: Lexical Cohesion on Body Shaming in IbuHamil.com Discussion Forum. *Rainbow : Journal of Literature, Linguistics and Culture Studies*, 12(1), 40-47. <https://doi.org/10.15294/rainbow.v12i1.64165>

INTRODUCTION

Data from Statistics Indonesia (BPS) in 2019, women made up 44.86% of total internet users in Indonesia. In addition, Hootsuite in 2020 mentions that the highest social media user profile in Indonesia is in the range of 18-34 years. The number of users and their age range imply millennial women as active internet users, mostly in social media. Studies indicate that internet plays an apparent role among women in this age group (Lazard, 2022; Morawska et al., 2021)

Hartoyo & Supriadi (2015) indicate that millennial mothers rely on social media to acquire information about parenting and children's development. They live with information technology seamlessly and make maximum use of online sources to deal with their everyday life. It get intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic and its various restrictions (Gjoneska et al., 2022; Mackson et al., 2019; Wong, Adrian; Ho, Serene; Olusanya, Olusegun; Antonini, Marta Velia; Lyness, 2021). Nevertheless, the internet is a jungle with its threats, one of which is cyberbullying

✉ Corresponding author:

Jl. Kaliurang km. 14,5 Sleman, Yogyakarta 55584
E-mail: erni.dewi@uii.ac.id

p-ISSN: 2252-6323
e-ISSN: 2721-4540

which repeatedly occurs anonymously among internet users (Chisholm & Day, 2013).

A form of cyberbullying that aims at mothers is popularly labeled as mom-shaming. It acts as a criticism in terms of different mothering or parenting choices. Savira (2020) in her study illustrates mom-shaming cases, in the form of sharenting of two well-known *selebgram* (Instagram figures) in Indonesia. She identifies that both figures applied different parenting styles; yet they similarly kept their followers updated. These choices received mixed reviews, with mostly negative comments.

A prominent issue that frequently occurs in mom-shaming discourse is body shaming. Body shaming refers to an evaluation directed to one's physical appearance that is different from the socially accepted concepts (Fauzia; Rahmijati, 2019). It is a type of bullying for body shaming aims at maintaining ideal beauty standards (Lestari, 2019) and has become the source of various mental issues, for instance, eating disorders, sexual dysfunctions, and cognitive performance (Moya-Garófano & Moya, 2019). A study indicates that social comparison leads to downsides, and it includes body image comparisons (Yao et al., 2021). Women are particularly vulnerable to social comparison, especially the existing social standard on ideal bodily shape (Clayton et al., 2017). Their engagement with social media platforms has essentially contributed to the vulnerability (Bailey, 2022).

Body shaming in mom-shaming discourse is closely associated with intensive mothering ideology. The ideology is part of multiple mothering ideologies which consists of intensive, competitive, combative, and integrated mothering ideologies (Abetz & Moore, 2018). Intensive mothering is the strongest ideology, especially among upper and/or middle class societies. It grows significantly in the United States and can also be found in Indonesia. Intensive mothering requires a mother to achieve some indicators to achieve the so-called 'good mother' status, which turns out to be unrealistic expectations to those who are in this transition process (Forbes et al.,

2020; Lamar & Forbes, 2020). It implicitly indicates that a 'good mother' is a woman who raises her children intensively; thus, one who cannot perform the required indicators is a 'bad mother'.

From the Discourse Analysis viewpoint, body shaming can be analyzed based on the evidence from various texts, for instance, body-shape stigma from the perspective of Facebook group's members (Ginting & Wiradharma, 2023), the way body criticism articulated in a celebrity magazine (Hirdman, 2017), and the depiction of body shaming in television series (Amri, 2020). Discourse is a complex language unit used in communication within a particular social context. The unit can be a series of sentences or utterances, in oral or written form, and for transactional or interactional purposes (Situmorang, 2014).

As discussion forums provide both space and support needed by mothers (Kinloch & Jaworska, 2021; Mackenzie, 2017; Matley, 2020), similar study needs to be conducted in local setting, especially from discourse analysis viewpoint. Hence, this study focuses on lexical cohesion to illustrate the elements composing body shaming discourse in IbuHamil.com. The study examines the forms of women who discuss in *Ngobrol Apa Saja* forum to negotiate or seek support for the body shaming issues they encounter in real life.

Brown & Yule (1983) mention that the primary determinant of whether a set of sentences do or do not constitute a text depends on cohesive relationships within and between the sentences, which create texture. Halliday and Hasan (1976, in Malah, 2020) argues that cohesion demonstrates essential semantic relation between different elements to create a unity in text. Lexical cohesion in Halliday and Hasan standpoint covers repetition, synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, meronymy, and collocation (Paltridge, 2012). Paltridge defines repetition as the words used repeatedly in a text. Repetition includes inflected words for tense or number and can be derived from particular items. Synonymy deals with words which are similar in meaning in the text. Paltridge asserts that repeating the same word in a text can be tedious; hence, synonymy is a good strategy to

build style in composing a text. Antonymy explains opposite or contrastive meanings in a text. Paltridge illustrates hyponymy as classes of lexical items where the relationship between them is one of general-specific, example-of, or class-to-member type of relationship. Meronymy is where lexical items are in a 'whole to part' relationship with each other and hyponymy. Finally, collocation describes relations between vocabulary items which tend to co-occur.

In the study, I focus on three reiteration categories, which are repetition, synonymy, and antonymy to illustrate lexical cohesion in IbuHamil.com's discussion forum. In addition, the use of synonymy, antonymy, and repetitions in defining lexical cohesion of text tends to be dominant in a discourse (Situmorang, 2014). Mackenzie (2017) and Kinloch & Jaworska (2021) describes that a discussion forum is a digital space for mothers whose lives limited by various norms are able to negotiate or defend their choices. The study provides an explanation of the way the body shaming discourse is portrayed in discussion forums from the choice of words used and identified through the lexical cohesion of the text.

METHODS

Main data source of the research is a thread entitled Stop body shaming, stop other people's physical comments in the *Ngobrol Apa Saja* forum on the IbuHamil.com website. The thread started with a post from HK, one of the forum members, on 10 April 2020, at 12:37 am (western Indonesian time). The post started getting responses in approximately 1 hour until the last recorded response was on 28 April 2020, at 10:16 am (western Indonesian time). There were thirty-seven responses from ten forum members (coded as HK, B, L31, V, Y, H, M, S, D22, and A) involved in the discussion. One characteristic of this discussion forum is the use of emoji or emoticons that appear in almost all responses. I put aside these emojis or emoticons and focused on the utterances written in each response. Data is collected and recorded in Google Docs. Then, the data are coded and classified based on Halliday and Hasan's

reiteration category in discourse analysis, especially on the use of synonymy, antonymy, and repetitions (Paltridge, 2012). Results of the data analysis are presented in the results and discussion section.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ngobrol Apa Saja Discussion Forum in IbuHamil.com

IbuHamil.com is a website specializing in discussion on maternity, motherhood, and parenting. It claims to be the biggest maternity community in Indonesia. The community membership is free and the web provides privacy for both users and visitors. It also outlines types of personal information received and used. The web has several features for its users and visitors. First, visitor who wishes to be part of the community can register in *Daftar* section and provides information, such as, username, password, sex, full name, date of birth, mobile phone number, education, residence, unique cue, and privacy options. The second feature is *Kalkulator Masa Subur* (fertility calendar) which provides information about fertility or ovulation period. Additionally, the section also provides a pregnancy calculator to estimate the due date for its users and visitors.

The backbone of the web is its third section, *Community* and it is divided into two sub-sections, *Diskusi Seputar Kehamilan* and *Miscellaneous Stuff*. Only registered users of IbuHamil.com who can post or comment in both sub-sections. In *Diskusi Seputar Kehamilan*, the users can discuss various problems or issues on pregnancy and baby and toddler developments. In the second subsection, the users can start a discussion under *Kenalan Yuk!* to get to know one another, *Ngobrol Apa Saja* to talk about daily life issues, and *Area Promosi* to advertise or promote products related to pregnancy or maternity. *Ngobrol Apa Saja* has 29,141 threads and 456,013 posts, the highest in numbers compared to *Kenalan Yuk!* and *Area Promosi* sections.

The thread understudy entitled *Stop body shaming, stop mengomentari fisik orang lain*. It started with a story from HK, the topic starter on

body shaming she experienced. She shared her story in *Ngobrol Apa Saja* forum on 10 April 2020, 12:37 pm and the discussion concluded on 28 April 2020, at 10:16 am. HK's thread receives 37 responses in approximately 18 days. The outline of HK's story was started by a phone call from her mother-in-law and sister-in-law. It initially talked about HK and her husband's condition as they lived in different regions and, due to the pandemic, they had not had the chance to meet their relatives. The in-laws then joked about HK's physical condition and ended up as body shaming. The users' responses to HK's story were empathetic and supported her decisions to live a healthier life, for instance, starting a diet program, avoiding supper, and consuming juice. They also propose advice on handling body shaming and how to avoid it in the future.

Lexical Cohesion Analysis on the Thread

Repetition

The lexical cohesion analysis based on Halliday and Hasan's classification, specifically in repetition, synonymy, and antonymy categories, to the thread indicates 300 words classified as repetition, including 28 inflected words. The repeated words mainly refer to pronoun (i.e. *aku*, *bun*, *dia*), adjective (i.e., *gemuk*, *kurus*, and *tinggi*), noun (i.e., *suami*, *mertua*, and *tetangga*), and preposition (i.e. *dan*, *yang*, *di*, and *juga*). Figure 1 illustrates the words in the repetition category.



Figure 1. Words in Repetition Category

The use of repetition in the thread discussing the body shaming experience is illustrated in excerpt 1.3.

Aku tinggal jauh dari mertuaku. Bahkan beda pulau. Tapi dengan kecanggihan teknologi, hampir setiap hari video call. Setiap video call, paling suami

yang selalu ngobrol. Aku gak pernah mau ikut nimbrung. Nanti alasannya aku kasih tau. (HK)

The excerpt shows HK as the topic starter using *aku* to start the discussion in several sentences. *Aku* in this context are pronouns functioning as subject or object. The word also gives emphasis on the narrative she tries to build, the way technology connects the communication between H's husband and his nuclear family (in this case, mother and sister) even though they live distantly.

Another example of repetition is in the excerpt 6.1.

Semangat bun, dulu aq sadar gemuk pas ibu aq sendiri bilang ih gendut skrg, ternyata gara2 aq d bilang PCOS dan konsumsi banyak obat2an hormon naiknya ga kira2 9 kg dalam 2 bulan. (V)

V responds by repeatedly using *aq*, the variation of *aku*, in sharing her experience related to excessive body mass. She suffered PCOS (polycystic ovarian syndrome), a hormonal disorder impacting a woman's fertility, which treatment has caused her weight to improve rapidly. The word *aq* in this context uniquely functions as a pronoun to replace *-ku*, other than the functions of subject and object.

Synonymy

Next, data classification also indicates 38 synonymous words. The words are in the form of adjective (i.e. *kesal*, *bete*, *kurus*, and *gendut*), verb (i.e. *mengomentari*, *membanding-bandingkan*, *dituruti*, and *dibeliin*), and noun (i.e. *sodara*, *kerabat*, *anak*, and *momongan*). Figure 2 portrays the words in the synonymy category.



Figure 2. Words in Synonymy Category

Excerpt 13.1 provides an example of synonymy in discussing posture which is a common source of body shaming.

Di lingkungan aku, sering bertemu dengan sodara dan kerabat, tp ga ada bun yang ngejek aku kayak gitu. Aku mah biasa aja juga sebenarnya kalau dibilang "gemukan ya" wong emang bener gemuk kok. (HK)

In the excerpt, HK describes her experience regarding her physical condition from the perspective of her side of the family. She mentions *sodara* (the informal form of *saudara*) and *kerabat* which basically mean family or relatives. These words indicate the circle which HK grew up with and the respect she received related to her physical condition.

Another example of synonymy is in the excerpt 6.1.

Apa kabar aku yg tinggi cuma 149 BB 48 ya bun, udah cebol bantet pula aku tapi suami malah nyuruh dinaikin lg BB nya. (Y)

The excerpt indicates that Y uses two synonymy words in Bahasa Indonesia, *cebol* and *bantet*, to imply her petite figure. As a context, Y praises H's height as the previous user asking for H's height and weight to know her physical proportion. The word *cebol* has been preceded by Y mentioning her height (149 cm). To show her empathy, she added *bantet* to emphasize her weight (48 kg) which is considered tiny in Indonesian context.

Antonyms

Final classification demonstrates 16 antonyms words. The words are mostly in the form of adjectives (i.e. *gemuk*, *kurus*, *tinggi*, and *cebol*). There are also several verbs and nouns in the data. Figure 3 portrays the words in the antonymy category.



Figure 3. Words in Antonymy Category

On discussing body shaming, excerpt 16.1 illustrates the application of antonymy in conveying sympathy to other user's experience.

Walah itu mulut apa kua seblak? Pedes banget. Kalo aku jadi bunda Y udah aku sumpah serapah kayaknya. Tetangga emang ada yang baik dan yang rese ya Bun. (HK)

The example illustrates antonymy by contrasting attitudes as *baik* (kind) and *rese* (informal form, similar in meaning to *annoying*). HK employs antonyms to comfort Y who suffers body shaming from her neighbor. In addition, HK can offer her sympathy by employing this strategy.

Next sample is excerpt 15.4 which demonstrates the use of antonymy in explaining a user's physical character.

Akhirnya hamil 7 bln 54. Hamil 9 bln naik 65. Hahahha naik 11 kg sendiri dalam 2 bulan. Lalu sy nyesal bun. Skrg ndak bisa turun2 bb sy pdhl anak sy sudah 2.5 th. Pingin balik ke 50 lah minim, ndak perlu 47 lagi. Tp ndak bs bun. Sudah ini mentok di angka 53. (M)

The sample describes M's body shaming experience during her pregnancy. One of M's neighbors comments on her look which triggers her to massively improve her weight. The word *naik* (increase) explains M's weight improvement in the final months of her pregnancy. In contrast, *turun* (decrease) explains her difficulty to achieve ideal body mass after delivery.

DISCUSSION

In general, the findings indicate that diction in describing body shaming experiences has been in-line with Halliday and Hasan classification (in Paltridge, 2016) of repetition, synonymy, and antonymy. I spot some typical or unique words illustrating physical features in body shaming, such as, weight (i.e., *gemuk*, *kurus*, *gendut*, and *obesitas*) and height (i.e. *tinggi*, *cebol*, and *bantet*). There are also words implying attempts to achieve an ideal body mass index, for instance, *diet*, *olahraga*, and *pola makan sehat*.

Another characteristic is the frequent use of contraction in the discussion. (Kadir et al., 2013) assert that abbreviation has been accepted in chatroom interactions even before it is popular in current smartphone era. They elaborate some abbreviation styles used, such as, shortenings, contractions, -g clipping, and acronyms and initialisms. The lack of facial expressions, gestures, and bodily posture in expressing ideas or thoughts demands internet users to improvise; thus, abbreviations come to chat rooms.

Body shaming occurs to the forum users reflects real life situations and it can be seen from the selection of words used in the forum. Fauzia & Rahmijati (2019) mention that body shaming aims at evaluating one's physical condition for deviating from acceptable cultural standards (i.e., slender, tall, and fair). Wang et al. (2020) further elaborate the negative outcomes of body surveillance, body shaming, and appearance control beliefs to women, such as, depression, eating disorder, and low self-esteem. Hence, they encourage body talk as a self-compassion in digital spaces to buffer body shaming.

Additionally, interaction in the discussion forum also confirms both Mackenzie (2017) and (Kinloch & Jaworska, 2021) findings. The thread and the forum indeed provide space to negotiate the cultural norms or to defend the choices made by the forum users in their daily lives. The forum offers consolation in the form of validation in body shaming experience. Moreover, the discussion appears to be solutive as it goes with suggestions on handling the shaming, as well as strategies to live a healthier life.

CONCLUSION

In terms of lexical cohesion, the findings reflect Halliday and Hasan's classification in repetition, synonymy, and antonymy categories. The data display 300 words in repetition with 28 inflected words, 38 words in synonymy, and 16 words in antonymy. There are some typical words in illustrating physical features in body shaming, which mainly highlight weight, height, and attempts to achieve an ideal body mass index. The

discussion forum also demonstrates the frequent use of contraction which characterizes the internet chat rooms for decades.

The analysis on users' interaction in thread reflects real life situations and it is observable from the selection of words used in the forum. Body shaming is a form of evaluation directed to one's physical state and the evaluation exists as there are acceptable cultural standards. The findings also confirm the results of previous studies on the utilization of digital spaces, especially discussion forums, in negotiating cultural norms and or to defend choices made in one's daily life.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank *Puslapdik Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan* and LPDP as the administrators of *Beasiswa Pendidikan Indonesia (BPI)* for funding the research and its publication.

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