

# The Impact of TikTok on Changing Partner Selection Standards for Indonesian Women

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## Abstract.

*TikTok is one of the social media platforms with the most users globally, with a total of 1.94 billion users as of July 2025, and Indonesia is the country with the largest number of TikTok users, with a total of 194 million users as of July 2025. Indonesian TikTok users are dominated by women with a percentage of 50.8 percent and men 49.2 percent. The influence of the development of the social media world has had a significant influence on the formation of partner standards. The purpose of this study is to examine and analyze how TikTok influences partner selection standards among Indonesian women. The study was conducted using the Qualitative Content Analysis (Qualitative Content Analysis) or Netnography method. The method of analysis includes observation of viral videos or analysis of the comment column on certain accounts. The results show that Indonesian women have experienced a significant shift in partner selection standards due to exposure to TikTok content. These findings identify an increase in expectations focused on aspects of economic stability, having a high-income job, and meeting comprehensive emotional needs through the concept of the five love languages. Furthermore, these standards include demands for the absolute availability of material resources, time, and energy from men without any demands for balanced reciprocity in the relationship. TikTok's influence plays a role in determining women's criteria, which requires men to provide all of a woman's needs, both physical and spiritual, as well as other basic needs.*

**Keywords:** *TikTok; Social Media; Standard; Couple and Girl.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Social media in today's era is an integral part of modern society. Social media usage experiences a massive increase almost every year, supported by developments in the digital world, or the process of digitalization, which is a major driving force behind the rise in social media usage. Not only digitalization but also globalization further supports the rise in social media usage. According to Cahyono (2020), social media can also be considered one of the digital platforms most frequently used by people as a means of obtaining information and entertainment. Driven by the need for information and entertainment, the trend of social media usage continues to rise. This increase actually opens up access for users to find social media platforms that better meet their needs. The arrival of TikTok during the COVID-19 pandemic has seen significant growth compared to other social media platforms such as Instagram, X, WhatsApp, Facebook, and others. This demonstrates TikTok's ability to adapt to users' needs for fast, interactive, and easily accessible content compared to other social media platforms. TikTok is a social media with the most users globally with a total of 1.94 billion users as of July 2025. Social media users, especially TikTok in Indonesia, are the largest globally as reported by DATAREPORTAL in 2025. In total, TikTok users in Indonesia numbered 194 million as of July 2025. When viewed from users based on gender, women are the most TikTok users, namely 50.8 percent or 98.55 million users, while men are 49.2 percent or 95.45 million users. These results indicate that TikTok users in Indonesia are predominantly female. Social media usage among women demonstrates a wide variety of needs. Utomo & Pawito (2017) explain that women use social media not only to make friends but also for financial reasons.

Therefore, women fundamentally have needs related to their personal well-being. Women's basic needs have changed significantly with the advent of social media platforms. Some experts refer to McLuhan's thinking on the relationship between technology, media, and society as technological determinism, the belief that technology is a determinant in shaping human life. The development of the digital world, the internet, and technology, including digital platforms like social media, has brought about developments in human social life, especially for women. Current social media also influences women's

lives, as seen by the predominance of female social media users (Utomo & Pawito, 2017). Indonesia, a society with unstable behavioral patterns, adopts social standards from digital media and follows majority opinion in the digital space. Indonesian women, in particular, whose role in society is often underestimated due to persistent issues of gender inequality and patriarchal patterns, leave them without the control or will to establish their character. This is compounded by the proliferation of digital media and social media, which can hinder women from developing assertiveness and independent decision-making. This exacerbates the issue of women's vulnerability to changing standards for choosing a suitable partner.

Nelli et al. (2025) stated that this emphasizes that an ideal partner must possess a strong sense of faith, piety, patience, justice, and be a source of happiness and harmony in marriage. They also emphasize the importance of choosing a life partner who has the ability to encourage good and prevent evil, and also has the ability to be a teacher and advisor if mistakes or bad deeds are made. Essentially, choosing a partner is very simple, without requiring many specific criteria. However, the advancement of human civilization has transformed this simplicity into a complex, open, free, unbinding, and related to personal needs. Media representation—the way media present information and social or political issues—has a significant impact on public opinion and can shape opinions, build stigma, or even stimulate social mobilization (Febriana, 2024). Exposure provided through content on TikTok can change perspectives because the brain processes information and processes it into a necessity, especially when it relates to needs. This phenomenon results in the dissemination of information not only from trusted sources but also from various forms of content, such as personal opinions, propaganda, or fake news (Alen, 2023). The impact of social media representation, particularly TikTok, on the perceptions of Indonesian women is a significant concern, given its ability to shape public views and attitudes in a short time. This study aims to analyze the impact of TikTok's influence on the selection of mate criteria among Indonesian women experiencing shifting standards. Direct analysis of content and comment sections is conducted to understand the majority perspective. Furthermore, this study provides a different perspective on the influence of TikTok on women's perceptions of their personal preferences.

## II. METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach through Qualitative Content Analysis combined with netnography. This approach was chosen to gain a deep understanding of the meaning, pattern formation, and changes in partner selection standards formed through content and user interactions on TikTok. The object of this study is TikTok content that represents opinions regarding ideal partner standards among Indonesian women, while the research subjects are TikTok users themselves, especially young Indonesian women who actively create content and interact in the comments section. The research data consists of primary data obtained through non-participant observation of viral videos and their comments, as well as secondary data sourced from scientific journal articles and previous research.

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of Qualitative Content Analysis (QA) or netnography by directly observing TikTok content that represents opinions about ideal partners, not focusing only on content but also interaction patterns in the comments column that have a direct relationship to the problem, the following are the results of research on the impact of TikTok social media on changes in partner selection standards for Indonesian women:

### **Educational Background as an Indicator of Partner Readiness**

Education is one of the criteria women consider when choosing a partner. A higher educational background is perceived as an indicator of a man's readiness for a long-term relationship, including in terms of emotional maturity (emotional intelligence). Husbands' awareness and responsibility as decision-makers align with their level of education (Wulandari et al., 2022). Therefore, women place greater emphasis on men with a well-educated background when searching for partners, as they are more prepared in terms of character, while women prefer men who are responsible and highly aware of their role as the pillar of the relationship. These findings are reinforced by user responses in TikTok comments, which explicitly express

women's views on the importance of a partner's educational background. In one of the videos analyzed, the creator explicitly stated that women judge men more based on their academic performance (Video V1), with the content "Wuraka melihat laki-laki dari adik-anak." Another support comes from the second video which reveals that men with a good education are superior beyond just physical (facial) superiority, as expressed "Champions see guys from their education because being handsome is not enough" (Video V2).

The results of the comment analysis also revealed the same thing, namely that men with a good education remain the top choice of women as a type as expressed "Educated men are always top tier of my type" (Comment V1). This analysis shows that education is not only viewed as academic achievement, but also as a reflection of a man's way of thinking, emotional maturity, and readiness to fulfill roles in relationships. The emphasis on educational background indicates a shift in women's ideal partner standards, from a previous emphasis on physical aspects to intellectual qualities and character. Conversely, there was no evidence that women, driven by egalitarian views, tend to choose male partners with lower levels of education. Therefore, further research is needed to confirm these findings. (Instead, there is no evidence that women, driven by egalitarian views, tend to mate with less educated men. Further studies that can corroborate these findings are needed) (Trimarchi, 2022). Although women hold egalitarian views or support gender equality, this does not automatically lead them to choose male partners with less education than themselves. In other words, egalitarian attitudes do not necessarily change women's preferences regarding a partner's educational standard. This condition shows the existence of ambiguity in the standards of non-patriarchal couples, because even though the idealized relationship leads to equality, the responsibility for the readiness of the relationship, both emotionally, intellectually, and structurally, is still more attached to men as the main figures in the relationship.

#### **Representation of Non-Patriarchal Characters in Ideal Partner Standards**

In the modern era, men who adhere to patriarchal principles are no longer considered ideal partners by some women. Advances in modernization, particularly the advancement of social media, have opened up space for the emergence of new perspectives, driving a shift in societal values. Digital platforms serve not only as a means of communication but also as a medium for building collective awareness regarding women's empowerment and gender equality. Men play the primary role of control in society, while women have little or no influence, or even no rights, in public areas of society, including economic, social, political, and psychological matters, including the institution of marriage (Irma & Hasanah, 2017). This situation leads to patriarchal principles being perceived as restrictive, detrimental, and limiting women's autonomy and rights. Consequently, women have a tendency to reject patriarchal traits and idealize partners with non-patriarchal values, who are considered more equal and just in relationships. This shift in values is then reflected in discursive practices on social media, particularly in the content and interactions of TikTok users, which represent the ideal partner for women. The discovery of a shift in values is reflected through (Video 3) entitled "Pov: Marrying a man who does not adhere to Patriarchy culture" implicitly conveying that women prefer that women's roles can be carried out by men. In the column (Comment V3), in the delivery, namely "Keep me away from patriarchal men, O Allah", and in (Video 4) it reveals "further strengthening Comments V3 and Video 4 which imply that "Women are judged by their past, men are judged by their future – Patriarchy Final Boss!! The mindset gap cannot be revised, making you stressed to death.

So you must be careful, don't eat your heart out every day. You only live once, don't choose the wrong man". The analysis reveals that patriarchy, from women's perspective, is frightening. The increasing development of human civilization, particularly advances in social media, has driven changes in cognitive psychology (thought processes) and social psychology (interactions and beliefs). Findings from videos and comment sections, in particular, indicate that women are increasingly able to objectively assess the standards of partner selection to meet their needs. Women reject structural male domination. Women need partners in which men can support, provide a sense of security, provide healthy freedom, and provide guidance without binding or restricting women's rights. However, in romantic relationships, women are also not fully capable of providing equal reciprocity to their partners. Relationships still tend to be built on demands for women's emotional needs to be met, without a balanced contribution. According to Rosa et al. (2025), this is demonstrated by the first participant's continued need for a partner in her life, the second participant's desire

to be controlled and not resisting or wanting to be understood, the first participant's lack of attention from her family, and the second participant's desire for a partner to understand her. This condition is influenced by personal factors, such as a lack of attention from family or a desire for partners to be able to understand their emotional needs.

### **Fulfilling Emotional Needs through the Five Love Languages**

Fulfilling emotional needs through love languages is a crucial indicator of women's ideal partner standards. According to Permana et al. (2020), the Five Love Languages categories include Words of Affirmation, Quality Time, Receiving Gifts, Acts of Service, and Physical Touch. Emotional needs through love languages vary depending on each partner and gender. For women, men who can convey and understand their love languages will bring happiness because women fundamentally desire to be understood by their partners. According to Nainggolan & Wijayani (2024), reading and responding to a partner's love language is a crucial skill in building and maintaining a happy relationship. This statement is supported by an analysis of TikTok content and comment sections. Video 5 states, "The type of love every girl dreams of:." The video depicts the love languages women desire to fulfill their emotional needs in relationships, such as holding hands, kissing cheeks, taking photos together in photo booths, and so on. This content is further reinforced by (Comment V5) from a female TikTok user who stated, "May this kind of love finds me," implying that women yearn for partners who are able to provide and fulfill their emotional needs.

Then, in Video 6, the statement "An act of service feels different when you don't ask for it. So grateful to be loved and cared for." The video implicitly explains that women feel happiest when their partners provide meaningful touches. This is supported by Chapman's (2010) theory, which states that wives or women feel loved when their partners help them. This love language is quite unique because a husband's willingness or sincerity in helping his partner can make the wife feel loved (Permana et al., 2020). Results from the analysis of video content and the comments section indicate that women feel happy and loved when their partners can fulfill their love language needs. Women also appreciate acts of service and receiving gifts. This is supported by research (Permana et al., 2020). Women tend to appreciate men who are highly emotionally sensitive, respectful of women, and demonstrate spontaneous and unexpected affective actions. These attitudes are perceived as a sign of deep understanding of their partner's emotional needs, thus strengthening the quality of the relationship.

### **Financial–Material Security as a Form of Relational Security**

The emphasis on financial and material readiness indicates that women's ideal partner standards are still strongly based on economic rationality. Romantic relationships are not merely understood as emotional bonds, but also as a form of long-term social investment that requires stability and the ability to meet needs. Thus, men are positioned as the ones who must first achieve material stability before a relationship is considered worthy. Women view relationships more long-term, so relationships based solely on love are not sufficient; they also require factors such as financial and material maturity, such as employment, assets, and so on. According to Aulia & Putra (2023), however, several studies also show that women's financial literacy levels tend to be lower than men's. This illustrates a contradictory phenomenon related to gender stereotypes in financial management. Another widely discussed theory, the Ideal Standards Model (ISM), developed by Fletcher, further supports this. This model explains that individuals have specific standards for ideal partners that encompass several dimensions: warmth and trust (such as honesty and empathy), vitality and attractiveness (such as physical appearance and energy), and status and resources (such as financial stability and education). Women highly value long-term relationships, leading to marriage, so determining financial maturity is a key factor in establishing a sustainable relationship. This is supported by research by Nelli et al. (2025), who found that having a stable job and financial readiness are key considerations in determining the ideal time to marry.

This representation of financial and material standards is then clearly reflected in TikTok user content and discourse. Through content analysis of (Video 7), which states, "According to Gen Z: If your boyfriend is financially below you, do you want it?", the woman in the video/content expresses her rejection of her partner's financial and material situation, which should at least be equal. Because, if the woman desires something and her partner cannot provide it, according to the woman, there is an imbalance.

Supporting evidence from (Comment V7), one of the comments states, "I agree with her sister. I've dated someone who was financially below me. Initially, I accepted it, but over time, problems arose. It's as simple as having to protect the guy's ego because he's insecure. And dealing with an insecure guy is uncomfortable." The results of the TikTok content and comment analysis show that women pay close attention to their partner's financial and material situation as a way to avoid discomfort in their relationship. Equality in meeting needs is perceived as the ideal relationship. Conversely, men who lack financial preparedness and a clear life vision are often associated with relationships that are potentially full of conflict and emotional instability. This view is reflected in various user comments emphasizing the importance of financial stability as a prerequisite for a sustainable relationship.

#### **Ability-Providing as an Indicator of Relational Commitment**

Commitment in a romantic relationship is measured not only by verbal statements or relationship status, but also by a partner's ability to actually meet relational needs. The concept of ability-providing is used to explain how the provision of time, energy, and material resources is a crucial indicator in assessing relational commitment. Early relationships are crucial for women to assess a man's ability to provide for others. This assessment aims to assess their partner's responsibility in their role, as the relationship will ultimately develop into marriage. Men view their role as the family's economic provider as a key aspect of their role as fathers and as a measure of their commitment to the family (Hatten et al., 2002). Therefore, one aspect women assess is the ability to provide for others, particularly financially, when assessing commitment. If a man fails to fulfill this obligation, women perceive him as lacking commitment and seriousness in the relationship.

In a romantic relationship, individuals who willingly invest time, energy, and effort in the relationship will demonstrate a strong commitment to the relationship, leading to positive relationship quality (Angela & Ariela, 2021). The above statement is supported by the discovery of video content and comment columns on TikTok related to men as providers in terms of time, energy and sacrifice for something. In the upload (Video 8) it is stated that "In the #engineerboys #maninlaw #maninfinance #manindoctor fuss - whatever the profession, men with emotional intelligence and a provider mindset are always the top tier type of women" which means that women prefer men with the type or standard/criteria with the ability to be a provider because it is important in the continuity of the relationship. Then, in (Video 9) it shows that "Pov: date a provider man". In (Video 9) it describes that men are able to treat, pay and are also able to be willing to provide for women's needs as partners. Analysis of the comment columns in both videos shows that the majority of users interpret the role of the provider as an important indicator in creating a sense of happiness and relationship stability for women.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

From the various analyses and discussions outlined, it can be concluded that the research findings focus on the overall picture: First, Educational Background as an Indicator of Partner Readiness. Women position education as the primary indicator of men's readiness to build long-term relationships, representing emotional maturity, intellectual capacity, and relational responsibility, as reflected in TikTok users' discourse that prioritizes academic aspects over physical attractiveness. However, despite women's egalitarian views, a preference for more educated partners remains, revealing the ambiguity of non-patriarchal standards, where the burden of emotional, intellectual, and structural relationship readiness still tends to be attached to men as the primary figures in the relationship. Second, Representation of Non-Patriarchal Characters in Ideal Partner Standards. The development of social media in the modern era has driven a shift in women's values in defining ideal partners, where patriarchal principles are increasingly rejected as they are perceived to limit women's autonomy, as reflected in TikTok user content and interactions that explicitly reject male dominance and idealize non-patriarchal relationships that emphasize support, security, and healthy freedom. However, behind this rejection, the practice of romantic relationships still shows ambiguity because women are not yet fully able to realize equal reciprocity, with relationships often built on demands to fulfill emotional needs without balanced contributions, which are influenced by personal factors such as the need for affection and family experiences (Rosa et al., 2025).

Third, Fulfilling Emotional Needs through the Five Love Languages. Fulfilling emotional needs through the Five Love Languages is an important indicator of women's ideal partner standards, where a partner's ability to understand and express love languages such as words of affirmation, quality time, acts of service, receiving gifts, and physical touch is perceived as a form of deep emotional care and understanding (Nainggolan & Wijayani, 2024; Permana et al., 2020). Findings from TikTok content analysis and comments indicate that women greatly desire partners who can spontaneously and sincerely express their love languages, particularly through acts of service and receiving gifts, as these are associated with feelings of love, appreciation, and happiness in the relationship (Chapman, 2010). Fourth, Financial and Material Security as a Form of Relational Security. The emphasis on financial-material readiness indicates that women's ideal partner standards are still based on economic rationality, where romantic relationships are understood as long-term social investments that require stability, material security, and readiness for marriage, as explained in the Ideal Standards Model and supported by empirical findings related to economic considerations in relationships (Aulia & Putra, 2023; Nelli et al., 2025). Analysis of TikTok content and comments confirms that women tend to reject partners with financial conditions below their own because they are perceived to trigger imbalance, emotional discomfort, and potential relational conflict, thus positioning economic stability as a primary prerequisite for a sustainable relationship.

Fifth, Ability-Providing as an Indicator of Relational Commitment. Relational commitment in romantic relationships is understood not only through verbal statements, but primarily through ability-providing, namely the man's ability to provide time, energy, and economic resources as a form of responsibility and readiness for a long-term relationship, including marriage (Angela & Ariela, 2021; Hatten et al., 2002). For couples in general, the results of this study emphasize the importance of mutual agreement on relationship expectations from the early stages. Open discussions about roles, commitments, and ideal partner standards can minimize inequality and conflict later on. Healthy relationships need to be built on a shared understanding that commitment is a reciprocal process, not a one-sided burden. For academics and future researchers, this study can serve as a foundation for expanding the study of ideal partner standards, particularly in the context of social media and digital culture. Further research is recommended to use more diverse methodological approaches, such as in-depth interviews or longitudinal studies, to explore the dynamics of romantic relationships more comprehensively and contextually.

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