

# Youtube as an expression media to trans people: content analysis of Stasya Bwarlele's Youtube channel

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## ABSTRACT

The paper aims to examine one of the transgender celebrities based on their YouTube videos. The method of this research was using content analysis. This method examines the video theme, transgender-specific issues, physical changing of Indonesia transgender celebrities Stasya Bwarlele's YouTube channel during 2018-2020 with a total of 78 YouTube videos. These current studies identify that from all of 78 YouTube videos of Stasya Bwarlele's, video themes of no trans or beauty/make-up/shopping such as daily vlog are mentioned 34 times (44%). Meanwhile, based on trans specific issues, dating themes are mentioned 19 times (28%), such as in relationship vlog. This frequency has the same value as terminology variables, which is 19 times (28%). Meanwhile, to express her gender identity as transgender, she could be seen in physical transition mentions such as surgery, which is mentioned ten times (50%). According to those variables, Stasya Bwarlele has shown that her videos indicate that she has the same videos as other YouTubers who mostly discussed daily vlog and dating. Based on the data, it has indicated that YouTube is being used by Stasya to express her daily activity (no trans or beauty/make up/shopping) as trans people, the same as a cisgender people do for traveling, cooking, shooting and modeling.

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## 1. Introduction

Gender is not only about biological issues, but also identity. Gender is a topic, deal with social construction among people and sometimes it is triggered prejudice, myth, and negative stigma among people in community related to male and female [1]. People believes that male and female are different, where male are more intelligent, stronger and female are more sensitive, weak and so on. In patriarchy system like Indonesia, this values are more acceptable by people. Therefore, for those who are not classified as male or female but transpeople either transman or transwoman, they are not belong to community and the worst thing, they even disgrace by their love ones.

Since Indonesia's is the largest muslim country in the world, therefore all norms and values should be based on religion. Indonesia muslims believes that Allah prohibits His people to become an LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) and they must lives based on His guidance that strictly mentioned in the Qor'an [2].

There is a negative stigma among people related to trans-people either transwoman or transmen who is classified as a LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender). They thought that Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender will create social problems in community and they are not belong to them. People said the transpeople is a sick person or even a sinner. People mostly are using

violences for religious, norms and morality reason. Those reason is more acceptable to gather mass support in against the transpeople [2].

In some cases, Thai's transgender often facing a negative stigma in both families and public space. They even could not afford the same facilities as a citizen who has the same rights with others people, such as education and health care, finance, access to housing and unfit for dignified workplaces [3] and they even are not belong to their family anymore. More over, for some transpeople have to leave behind the bar for using public facilities [4].

Unlike Thailand, Sweden is become one of the most highly tolerate countries related to transpeople (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) rights [5]. In Sweden, transpeople can live in harmony with other citizen, and they even has the same rights to afford the same facilities such as education, financial support, housing, public restroom, and so on.

Media has the big roles to change the stigmanization towards to transpeople. Public can absorb any information towards to transgender specific issues. Their representation of transgender could influence general public's attitudes towards transpeople [6]. The information which provided by media, is inaccurate, incomplete, biased and ignore the real context of the news [7][8]. Over decades, the news which produce by media is often prejudice, bias and consits of hatred towards to trans people [9]. One of cases was Christine Jogersen, an American transpeople in the 1950's to cause headlines [9]. Those information could have a negative impact to the audience such as a transphobia syndrom.

Transgender often portrayed misrepresented by the news [10]. Mostly, Transgender are portrayed as a villain by using an offensive language [11] in media mostly by conventional media. They can also marginalize and suppress the trans people [12] with their news. They routinely asked by a sensitive question about their biological and genitalia changes [12] either as a transmen or trnaswomen, family and collague responses, bullying, stigmanization and so on.

Based on GLAAD after more than 10 years of examined, they indicates that media often has negative impact related to transgender, where 54% of tansgender were portrayed as a negative representations at the time of their airing, 35% were portrayed from "problematic" to "good," and only 12% were portrayed fair and accurate [13].

In Indonesia's media itself, mostly the offline media consits of trnasphobia elements, where trans-gender and trans-sexual are portrayed in a negative way which contains prejudice and hatred. It is kind of social construction that divide individual by their sex, both female and male [14].

Framing in mass media in describing LGBTQ groups has an impact on the limited marginal people to express themselves. This happens because gender is a form of social construction that can give an idea of how sexual identity and minority gender become marginalized status [14].

After decades, transgender people lately are becoming visible, *Rolling Stones* magazines proclaimed 2014 as "*The Biggest Year in Transgender History*" when actress and transgender Laverne Cox became the first cover of *Time* magazine under the headline "*The Trangendering point*" [15].

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1. Gender, Transgender and Transexuality

According to American Psychological Association, gender refers to the attitudes, feelings and behaviors that associates with a person's biological sex [16].

Unlike Gender, transgender is a person whose gender identity and expression are differs with the sex when they were born [17]. They classified astransmen or transwomen and they are not comfort about their physical and sex issue [18].

In some cases, most trans-people already relized that they are differs from common gender (male or female). Mostly, it was occured in their childhood. People has a perception that males should play a challenging game such as football and female should playing with dolls, cookings and so on. Meanwhile the trans people are usually choosing the games tthat are differs from those perception.

Transgender is differ with “trans-sexuality”, where “trans-sexuality” is a medical process for those who wish to ‘change sex’ [8]. Trans-sexuality term is being popular around 19-20th century. Trans-gender identities may seem marginal in community, concerns of ethics, norms, moral and religion issue [19]. By the trans-sexual technologies, these people has an opportunity to be more visible in society. Like in Thailand, this kind of technology is more acceptable to help transpeople to be more confident and being accepted in a public. This is a common process among transgender to change their physical and sex identity with adjustments to the body by using hormones, name changes in order to live in harmony with the desired gender identity [20].

According to (Whittle 1996; Kates 2001) changing sex through medical interventions on (and in) the body has a history dating from the first part of the twentieth century. This is to be distinguished from cross dressing in some temporary way for various practical or erotic purposes and from transgender, which involves psychological and social transformation into the other sex in terms of identity and behaviour [19].

## 2.2. Trans-people and Stigmatization in Both Offline and Online Media

According to Goffman (1963) stigmatization indicates rejection, and they even pointed a person with socially devalued or undesirable characteristics [21]. According to Jacobs and Potter 1998, transphobia is the consequences of hate crime where hates is not always about hatred, but also about bias and prejudice. Hate crime is caused by dislikes, fanaticism, illogical thoughts, unpleasant experiences with the object, therefore the object then becomes the target of hatred [14]. The meaning of Transphobia is “a prejudice towards individuals trans-gender or trans-gender communities and it is often triggered by feelings of fear or worries” [22].

Transgender individuals as a users of technology express their ideas and experiences by using media. By technology allowing them to speak on their own behalf to represent the transgender individual and communities on their own terms [23]. The portrayed of LGBT in offline media, has triggered transpeople to use social media as an alternative media to show their visibility and identity. Construction of transgender identities can arise due to the use of feminine signs that are used together with masculine signs as in male beauty vlogger who displays his gender identity on YouTube [24].

Marciano (2014) indicates that transgender are using a social media in many of ways. First, the social media can serve as a better media to portrayed the transgender which cannot be portrayed in offline media. Second, there is no boundaries between vloggers and viewers in social media [25] such as television, newspaper, magazine.

Social media like YouTube has become an alternative media to show gender and sexuality expression, with the description that gays are people who have the same characteristics with other people [26]. Lately, social media with differs features like YouTube could demonstrate the transpeople to show off their identity, to express their thought and voices, so they are more visible by the public.

Mostly, the topics which made by transgender YouTubers are related to the community, narration, representation, everyday language, accessibility, legitimacy, gender bodies which can be accessed by everybody [27]. The photos which uploaded by LGBT communities has triggered the public to againts them, because it is contrary to the concept of binary opposition. the identity is considered "chaotic" and incorrect [28]. Gay people in the disclosure process himself on the Tinder application chose to reveal himself further in a relationship development on Personal Messenger applications, such as line and also WhatsApp [26]. Facebook media is used as a forum to show themselves, so that their existence is accepted in the social environment [29]. The use of Facebook as an alternative media for the LGBT groups is very effective to voice their idea, opinion, thought as well as educational media to the public [30]. Trans-gender youtuber use their content to help both trans-people and others people with their self-representation to promote their strength and skill ability in a positive ways [31].

The improvement of representation of transpeople in online media shows positive value. They are portrayed in a positive ways, even though they are still depicted as a gender binary in a public space. Even so, social media has indicates that social media has a better ways than offline media in representing the trans-people in the right direction [6].

In this study, researchers had chosen the transgender YouTuber Stasya Bwarlele. With over 1 million video viewers, and has 259 thousand subscribers, Stasya Bwarlele is a transgender YouTuber celebrities. She has been interviewed by TV station (insert live Trans TV) and walked the runway at fashion week. Stasya Bwarlele has uploaded 78 videos during August 31<sup>st</sup> 2018 to February 10<sup>th</sup> 2020. Unlike others YouTube beauty vlogger, Stasya is a trans-gender YouTuber. At the beginning of its appearance, she is mostly discussing about her daily make up. In the second term of her youtuber career, she slowly began to show her real identity as a trans-gender. Among her most popular videos are: “*Aku Operasi Kelamin di Thailand*” (1.6 M viewers), *Life Update Operasi Lagi* (463 K Viewers), “*1 Bulan Setelah Operasi*” (388 K viewers), *3 Bulan Gak Sembuh-Sembuh, 2019 is a Blessed* (295 K viewers), “*Update 3&4 Bulan Setelah Operasi*” (358 K viewers).

Stasya is one of the transgender YouTuber celebrities who choose online media to document their gender transition, either to attract an audience, or for the purpose to inform the audience about the existence of transgender by her stories in YouTube channel.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Population and Sampling

Population is an objects or subjects that have some characteristics which determined by researchers to be studied and to draw the conclusions [14]. In this study, the population is a whole Stasya Bwarlele's YouTube video (78 videos) starting from August 31<sup>st</sup> 2018 – February 10<sup>th</sup> 2020. According to Sugiyono, 2013 [14] and Arikunto [32], sampling is a number of characteristics which is derived from total of population. Sample must represent the whole of population.

Based on Arikunto, since the population is not greater than 100, reserchers took 100% of the total population of the YouTube video of Stasya Bwarlele with total 78 videos that we called it as a census techniques

#### 3.2. Coder Training

Two graduates communication studies as a coders to examine those YouTube videos. Both coders received training of terminology in trans specific videos (e.g bathroom, passing, dilation and tucking). Terminology such as bathroom means discussing about her activities in the bathroom, her dilemmas of using public restroom and so on. Terminology of passing means what people do to pass or to ignore her as a transpeople. Terminology of dilations such breast implant, botox to support her physically changes from male to female (MTF). Coders were trained 4 weeks before coding Stasya Bwarlele's YouTube videos.

#### 3.3. Unit of Analysis and Operationalization of Variables

Total of unit analysis of Stasya Bwarlele's YouTube video ( $\alpha=78$ ). Coders were instructed to make adjustment of the whole videos Judgements were made based on variables such as video as a whole, physical transitions and transgender issues.

#### 3.4. Basic Video Charateristics

Judgement were made regarding each videos as a whole. The main theme of each video ( $\alpha=78$ ). This assessment was based upon self identified labels as a transgender woman (MTF).

#### 3.5. Physical Transition Elements

Coders were asked to analyze the user 'Physical transition ( $\alpha=20$ ) such as Hormones ( $\alpha=4$ ), Surgery ( $\alpha=10$ ), Hair growth ( $\alpha=1$ ), Binding ( $\alpha=1$ ), Voice ( $\alpha=0$ ), Non-surgical procedures ( $\alpha=1$ ), Packing ( $\alpha=0$ ), Hair removal ( $\alpha=0$ ), Dilation ( $\alpha=3$ ) and Tucking ( $\alpha=0$ ). In total, there are 10 variables of physical transition elements in Stasya Bwarlele's YouTube videos.

#### 3.6 Trans-specific issues

Transgender specific issue variables included Male/Female Stereotypes ( $\alpha=2$ ), Family ( $\alpha=9$ ), Passing ( $\alpha=3$ ), Bullying ( $\alpha=3$ ), Dating ( $\alpha=19$ ), Disclosure ( $\alpha=6$ ), Religion ( $\alpha=2$ ), Terminology/pronouns ( $\alpha=19$ ), Names/name changes ( $\alpha=1$ ), Mental Health ( $\alpha=1$ ), Sex ( $\alpha=2$ ) and Bathrooms ( $\alpha=2$ ). In total, there are 12 variables of transgender specific issues.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Themes in Trans Created YouTube Videos

From the table 1. below it is known that from a total of 78 Stasya Bwarlele YouTube videos that have been examined, the most frequently mentioned theme in the Stasya Bwarlele video is videos with themes *no trans or beauty/make-up/shopping themes* as many as 34 (44%). The videos categorized into *No trans or beauty/Make up/shopping themes* are videos that contain daily activities (daily vlog) which include fashion (attending fashion shows, choosing clothes that fit the program) cooking (cooking tutorials) and shooting activities both for reality shows, TV Series, YouTuber collaboration.

The second most mentioned theme is *multiple trans related topic not otherwise listed* as many as 12 times (15%) which includes themes that are not included in the unit of analysis that has been classified previously. The vlog among them is traveling and shooting. For the third most mentioned theme, it is *dating or sex* as many as 11 times (14%) which contains about her relationship with her boyfriend and activities with her boyfriend. From the results of the study, she showed herself as a woman who has an interest in men and has great expectations together with her partner.

For the fourth most mentioned theme is *beauty/make-up/shopping* as many as 9 times (12%) which contains more about *make up tutorial* and what activities she does to beautify herself as a whole woman such as choosing make-up, shopping, fashion, and so on. This shows that as with other YouTubers, she tells about her daily activities. In the vlog displayed by Stasya Bwarlele, she gave a lot of information about the use of makeup in accordance with the event, the selection of make-up products, the selection of clothes, sharing food recipes, and daily activities.

The fifth most mentioned theme is *surgery or post up updates* which tells more about the operational process that Stasya Bwarlele went through to become a transgender, as many as 8 times (10%). As for some of the surgeries that have been passed are plastic surgery, breast augmentation surgery, and genital surgery which have all been done in Thailand. The video also tells about the impact she experienced after carrying out the operation/surgery process, the costs incurred to carry out the operation/surgery process, the community's burden on her after deciding to carry out the operation/surgery.

The sixth most mentioned theme is *realizing one is transgender* by being mentioned 3 times (4%) tells about the history of a Stasya Bwarlele to become a transgender. In a few of these videos, she begins to realize that she feels that she is in the wrong (transexual) genitals. This can be seen when she tells of her hobbies, where as a man he should prefer to like masculine toys like soccer, on the contrary, she said that she prefers games that are feminine such as playing with dolls, playing cooking with her friends and so on. For the seventh most mentioned theme is *Transition timeline or Chronological comparison*, mentioned once only (1%) tells about her transformation from a man to a transgender who is also supported by the distribution of her photos when she was a man and after she became a transgender.

**Table 1.** The Most Frequently Mentioned Theme in the Stasya Bwarlele Video

Category	Freq	Percentage
No trans or beauty/make-up/shopping themes	34	44%
Beauty/make-up/shopping	9	12%
Multiple trans-related topics or a trans related topic not otherwise listed	12	15%
Topics or a trans-related	0	0%
Topic not otherwise listed	0	0%
Hormones or hormone-	0	0%
Related changes	0	0%
Dating or sex	11	14%
Surgery or post-op updates	8	10%
Transition timeline or Chronological comparison	1	1%
Chronological comparison	0	0%
Bullying or harassment	0	0%
Passing or things people do to pass	0	0%
Realizing one is transgender	3	4%
Total	78	100%

#### 4.2. Trans Specific Issues

From the table 2 below it is known that from a total of 78 Stasya Bwarlele YouTube videos that have been examined, the issue most frequently mentioned in Stasya Bwarlele videos is videos with issues around dating a total of 19 mentions (28%). Regarding the dating issue itself, it shows that she is the same as women in general who have an interest in the opposite sex (men). Many of the YouTube videos that have been published about her relationships with her partners, togetherness with her partners, their future plan, and their personality.

For the second most mentioned issue is terminology/pronounce as many as 19 mentions (28%). For this issue category, Stasya more often uses the terms most often used by fellow groups (transgender) and also sometimes uses the Saumlaki regional language to show Stasya's identity as a person who comes from Saumlaki, Maluku, Indonesia.

For the third most mentioned issue is family 9 times (13%), which contained the support of her family for her decision to become a transgender, and told how Stasya was close to her family. In the video also tells about how close Stasya with her parents and she felt hopeless when both her parents died while she was continuing to study in Moscow, Russia for a medical program. With such conditions, this makes her quit her scholarship program due to lack of funds to continue studying after her parents passed away. For the fourth most mentioned issue is disclosure 6 times (9%) which contains more about her self disclosure regarding to her biological changing (the process of becoming women transgender by surgery, changing name which derived from her religion which is catholic from Stanislaus Rian to Stasya, her openness as a transgender person to her partner.

For the fifth most mentioned issue is passing dan bullying 3 times (4%) which tells more about the negative views of society towards transgender people such as herself, the insults obtained as a transgender. This shows that there are still negative views from the community related to their existence as a transgender. She told this in the video how she was shunned by her school friends who found her strange because she was not like a man in general who had an interest in women, but quite the opposite. The form of bullying that she got was more psychological from her friends by calling her "sissy". In addition she also told about how people's attitudes toward her, even though the person is her lover. This is told through the form of attitude shown by her partner at that time (gay) by not wanting to hold hands because of shame.

For the sixth most mentioned issue, two mentions (3%) about religion, sex and bathroom. For the category of religion, it tells about her relationship with her boyfriend of different religions, future plans with her partner who is of different religion, tells about the community's condemnation of sin related to her choice to become a transgender and so on. For the sex category, it tells about her sexual orientation as a woman towards men, her sexual desire. As for the bathroom tells about the dilemma she faced in choosing a toilet after becoming a transgender.

For the seventh most mentioned issue, 1 mention (1%) is about name changes and mental health. For the name changes category, it tells about the origin of the name Stasya from the Catholic language, which is taken from her original name. For the category of mental health tells about the form of depression that was obtained after Stasya got various insults from the community related to her decision as a transgender.

**Table 2.** The Issue Most Frequently Mentioned In Stasya Bwarlele Videos

Category	Freq	Percentage
Male/female stereotypes	2	3%
Family	9	13%
Passing	3	4%
Bullying	3	4%
Dating	19	28%
Disclosure	4	6%
Religion	2	3%
Terminology/pronouns	19	28%
Names/name changes	1	2 %
Mental health	1	2 %
Sex	2	3%
Bathrooms	2	3%
Total	67	100%

### 4.3. Physical Transition

Table 3, it is known that from a total of 78 Stasya Bwarlele youtube videos that have been examined, the category *Physical transition* that is most frequently mentioned in the video Stasya Bwarlele is a video that focuses on the *Surgery* process as many as 10 mentions (50%) which contains about the process of surgery that she has gone through such as plastic surgery, genital surgery, breast surgery for the need to become a complete woman. The second most mentioned physical category is *hormones* as many as 4 times (20%). For this category, Stasya more often tells about the hormonal changes that she experienced after hormone injections, such as changes in emotions, skin color, etc. The third most mentioned physical category is *dilation* with three mentions (15%) which contains the process of enlargement of her breasts that has been carried out through plastic surgery in Thailand. Associated with physical changes in the form of breast enlargement, she also told the form of regret. This is because there is a sense of discomfort that she obtained when she was in the midst of society, for example when she told how the men look immediately directed to her breasts when they first saw her. The fourth most mentioned physical category is *hair growth, binding dan Non surgical procedures*, being mentioned once (5%). For this category, it was found that the videos told more about her daily activities in order to beautify herself and support her appearance as a woman in general. This can be seen from the video which tells about the process of undergoing silicone surgery and planting thread to support her appearance.

**Table 3.** The Most Mentioned Physical Category

Category	Freq	Percentage
<i>Hormones</i>	4	20%
<i>Surgery</i>	10	50%
<i>Hair growth</i>	1	5%
<i>Binding</i>	1	5%
<i>Voice</i>	0	0%
<i>Non-surgical procedures</i>	1	5%
<i>Packing</i>	0	0%
<i>Hair removal</i>	0	0%
<i>Dilation</i>	3	15%
<i>Tucking</i>	0	0%
<i>Total</i>	20	100%

From the results of content analysis that has been carried out by researchers of 78 Stasya Bwarlele YouTube videos from the beginning of her appearance on the date August 31st 2018 – February 10th 2020, if viewed from the Stasya Bwarlele YouTube video theme as a whole, then the theme No trans or beauty/Make up/shopping themes has 34 times more frequency (44%) views in that period. This shows that from the acquisition of data that has been obtained through content analysis related to the YouTube video Stasya Bwarlele starting from August 31st 2018 – February 10th 2020, it shows that as a YouTuber she can be seen to be the same as other YouTubers who talk a lot about daily vlog. From the results of content analysis that has been conducted by researchers of 78 Stasya Bwarlee YouTube videos from the beginning of her appearance, on August 31st 2018 – February 10th 2020, if viewed from the issues raised in the YouTube video, the issue dating and terminology share the most mentioned positions when compared to other issues as many as 19 times mentions (28%). This shows that viewed from the whole video data that has been analyzed, it indicates that she has an interest in men, the same as women in general. This can also be seen from her partner who does not treat her differently, but he also treats her as a woman in general, by giving attention, affection, protection like a man to woman.

## 5. Conclusion

The work was examined the video theme, transgender-specific issues, physical changes of Indonesian transgender celebrities, Stasya Bwarlele YouTube. From the results of content analysis conducted by researchers of 78 Stasya Bwarlele YouTube videos from the beginning of her appearance, on August 31<sup>st</sup> 2018 - February 10<sup>th</sup> 2020, if viewed from the category of *physical transition*, then the most mentioned YouTube videos are related with the operation process that has been undertaken, both genital surgery, non-medical surgery, plastic surgery, breast formation surgery to make her a whole woman with as many as 10 mentions (50%). Stasya Bwarlele's YouTube videos indicates that her presence as the same as other female Youtubers who mostly discuss about her daily vlog, and related to her identity (self disclosure) about her biological changing, history of becoing a transwoman is shown even with a little intensity. Through YouTube channel, Stasya Bwarlele can show herself both as a minor transgender and at the same time as a woman who is no different from other women.

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