BIMBOFICATION TO EMPOWER: REPRESENTATION OF HYPERFEMININITY ON TIKTOK

BIMBOFICATION UNTUK PEMBERDAYAAN: REPRESENTASI HIPERFEMININITAS DI TIKTOK

Melanie Rosaria¹, Andika Wijaya²
Universitas Indonesia
Email: melanierosaria120@gmail.com
doi: https://doi.org/10.51817/susastra.v11i1.123

Abstract
Among the diversity of trends and subcultures on TikTok, bimbofication has become a notable phenomenon with its representation of hyperfemininity to dismantle misogyny and patriarchal standards in society. The movement acknowledges and challenges the stigma towards bimbos who are often portrayed as hyperfeminine women, while inviting the audience to engage in traits and attitudes that are associated with the stereotypes. The purpose of the movement is to empower and liberate women from the fear of misogyny. However, due to the layers and complexity in the discussion, bimbofication may provoke mixed interpretations and invite various responses. The complexity of bimbofication can be found in videos posted by Chrissy Chlapecka, a self-proclaimed bimbo figure on TikTok. This paper contributes to gender studies as it explores hyperfemininity representation in relation to the notion of women’s empowerment. Moreover, it also intersects with cultural studies as it examines a social phenomenon on social media, specifically TikTok movement, and how it challenges society's standards. By following Sandelowski purposive sampling method (1995) and Murnen and Byrne’s hyperfemininity scale (1991), it is found that regardless of the ambiguities and varying interpretations, bimbofication has provided a space for women to freely express and explore their unique version of femininity.

Keywords: Bimbofication, bimbo, hyperfemininity, Chrissy Chlapecka, empowerment

Abstrak

Kata kunci: Bimbofication, bimbo, hiperfeminitas, Chrissy Chlapecka, pemberdayaan

©2022 Susastra, All right reserved
1. INTRODUCTION

“Hi! Welcome to Bimbo TikTok. I’m so glad you could finally make it,” opened Chrissy Chlapcka, a content creator on TikTok, the popular video-sharing app which has become one of the most influential platforms within popular culture since 2018. Particularly during the COVID-19 outbreak, TikTok gained significant attention as users turned to the app to share mini vlogs, participate in dance challenges, and express their creativity. Its features such as sounds, stitch, and duet also allow the audience to engage in a certain content and form a trend. Amidst the diversity of trends and subcultures on the platform, one notable phenomenon is the emergence of bimbofication. The term ‘bimbofication’ refers to a movement that challenges the notion of feminism that promotes modesty, academic intelligence, financial independence, and career success as the main idea of empowerment (Haigney, 2022). Such a notion may result in the stigma towards women who may appear as bold yet not as bright as how society expects them to be. Haigney (2022) believed that the stigma is driven by the capitalist and patriarchal society which isolates women, especially the unprivileged ones, from the idea of empowerment. Bimbofication contents represent hyperfemininity, an extreme adherence to the traditional feminine traits (Murzen and Byrne, 1991), as a way to dismantle misogyny which maintains power of the dominant male group through the subordination of women (Piggot, 2004, as cited in Szymanski, et al., 2009). Misogyny can be apparent in the way someone reacts to stereotypical feminine traits, namely the use of makeup, dresses, as well as the color pink, which are strongly considered as feminine attributes.

Moreover, misogyny extends its influence on the stigmatization of femininity as a means solely for catering to men’s desires and needs. The rise of the bimbo image in pop culture has contributed to intensifying the stigma towards hyperfeminine women. Bimbo, often portrayed as a hyperfeminine woman with exaggerated physical attributes and perceived playful as well as lack of intelligence (Granados, 2021), has become a symbol of derision and objectification. This stigmatization not only devalues femininity but also reinforces the notion that women who embrace their femininity are less capable or deserving of respect. This not only limits the individual freedom of women to express themselves authentically, but also reinforces patriarchal norms that prioritize and reward masculine traits and behaviors. It perpetuates the objectification of women and reinforces the idea that a woman’s worth is determined solely based on her appearance and ability to conform to societal beauty standards.

The emergence of bimbofication content on TikTok can be seen as a response to the mentioned cultural dynamics. In bimbofication, the self-proclaimed bimbo content creators reclaim and redefine “bimbo” by challenging the stereotypical traits associated with the term. Bimbofication invites its audience to behave and dress similarly with the stereotypical bimbo image to express empowerment, showcasing hyperfemininity as a valid form of identity and aesthetic choice. Through the creation and dissemination of bimbofication contents, be it in the form of a short monologue, storytelling, or satire jokes, TikTok users aim to disrupt the prevailing narratives that stigmatize attractive and dim-witted women as shallow and unworthy which resulted in the devaluation hyperfemininity. It has eventually become a subculture wherein a certain aesthetic and lingo are endorsed. Subculture refers to a state in which a group of individuals demonstrates distinctive patterns of traits and actions that distinguish them within a cultural or societal context (“Subculture,” n.d.). Bimbofication, in this case, promotes the idea that women could be bimbo, which has long been stigmatized, as long as they do it intentionally as a form of self-expression, which refers to the way they dress, behave, and treat themselves.

Despite the stigma that society imposed on hyperfemininity as one of stereotypical bimbo’s traits, this research, aligned with the academic disciplines of gender and cultural studies, believes that hyperfemininity can be used as an empowering tool as what is done by bimbofication. This interpretation is supported by the rich representation of hyperfemininity by the contents of Chrissy Chlapcka, a self-proclaimed bimbo figure on TikTok. Chrissy Chlapcka is considered to be one of the most prominent icons of bimbofication on TikTok. In addition, she has also been covered on numerous media outlets discussing the emergence of bimbofication. This research mainly focuses on how Chlapcka has redefined bimbo and developed it into an empowering subculture that liberates...
Bimbofication to Empower....

women from the concern of misogyny and encourages them to go after their desire through hyperfemininity. To provide evidence for this argument, the current research uses Murnen and Byrne’s hyperfemininity theory and Sandelowski’s purposive sampling technique to discuss the following points: 1) What is the reclaimed and refined interpretation of the term “bimbo” that bimbofication aims to promote? 2) How is hyperfemininity visually and behaviorally represented as a part of bimbofication’s attempt to redefine “bimbo” in Chlapecka’s TikTok?

To answer the first question, the research will first clarify the notions of reclaiming and refining interpretations. The difference between the reclaimed and refined interpretation exists in the notions that bimbofication aims to uphold. The reclaimed definition is intricately linked to the historical stigma of the word “bimbo”, which was used as a slur to degrade women. In this process, bimbofication acknowledges the negative connotations of the term with the intention of transforming it into a liberating identity. On the other hand, while affirming the initial stereotype and claiming it as a matter of personal choice, the refined interpretation of bimbofication also adds a new meaning to the term: While intelligence may not be prioritized, they remain cognizant of current issues and actively utilize their voices to advocate for important causes.

Numerous researchers (Crepax, 2020; Lopez et al., 2018; Coles & West, 2016; Cayley, 2021) have studied how feminism is discussed on various social media, such as Twitter—currently rebranded as X—and Instagram, based on each platform’s content format. Crepax (2020) highlights the simplified view of feminism on Instagram, which is often portrayed through sparkly clothes, soft makeup, and pink background with the message to embrace and celebrate natural feminine beauty. It creates the impression that feminism solely focuses on stereotypical feminine beauty and visual aesthetics. On the other hand, Lopez (2018) found that although Twitter content is ideal to start a political discussion, including feminism protest, rallies, or online campaigns, it also allows anonymous disrupt feminist discussions by embarking on unnecessary arguments. This trolling culture have established Twitter as a disruptive environment, including for feminism (Coles & West, 2016). While these studies have covered the patterns and challenges of social media feminism, not many have explored the rise of TikTok and its users’ contribution to feminism. Past research done by Cayley (2021) has elaborated on how TikTok bimbos contribute to the study of social media activism and argued that bimbofication is a valid form of feminist expression. However, there has been little discussion of the representation of traits that are displayed and promoted in bimbofication as a tool to empower and liberate women from misogyny. Therefore, this research explores the complexity of bimbofication to empower women by discussing its meaning and representation of hyperfemininity while acknowledging the various interpretations the movement may provoke. By defining bimbofication, this paper aims to establish bimbofication on TikTok as a legitimate movement within academic discourse, highlighting its significance in promoting women’s empowerment.

2. METHOD

The current research analyzes the representation of hyperfeminine traits as a part of bimbofication in Chrissy Chlapecka’s TikTok videos by using qualitative content analysis. This research adopts the theory of hyperfemininity proposed by Murnen and Byrne in 1991 that supports the traditional feminine gender roles and links it to women’s attitude in maintaining sexual and romantic relationships with their male partner. Hyperfemininity theory believes that women with hyperfeminine traits tend to adhere to the traditional beliefs of rights and roles of women in society, such as the notion that relationship with men is more important than having a career. Murnen and Byrne created and used the Hyperfemininity Scale as an indicator to determine whether a woman is hyperfeminine based on the choices they make related to sexual activities and romantic relationships. The Hyperfemininity Scale includes three major traits that are believed to identify hyperfeminine women: Using physical attractiveness as a tool, expecting men to be conventionally masculine, and prioritizing romantic relationships with men. The selection of the hyperfemininity theory by Murnen and Byrne for this research is based on its framework that can be used to explore the extent of extreme adherence to femininity, which is the key aspect of bimbofication: A movement that embraces femininity, even for its “extreme” form. By employing this theory, the research delves into how
bimbofication signifies a bold expression of hyperfemininity, challenging conventional societal norms and redefining femininity on the individual’s terms.

To complete this research, the author uses purposive sampling technique which involves selection for in-depth examination of patterns (Sandelowski, 1995). By using in total 94 videos that have gained more than or equal to 1 million views as it is considered as far-reaching as the data, this research generalizes the contents and captures samples that represent significant cases of the topic. The 94 videos that are collected are from Chlapecka’s TikTok account as she is the focus of the study. The chosen videos are used because there are keywords in the contents whether spoken or written. Moreover, by focusing on the spoken or written messages as well as gestures and body language, this research is conducted by doing two analytical steps: First, an analysis of the refined and reclaimed meaning of “bimbo” in relation to its history and stigma. To do this, the research explores prominent icons, namely Marilyn Monroe and Paris Hilton as the representation of bimbos in their respective eras and compares them with the present-day bimbo image promoted by Chlapecka’s bimbofication contents. The second step is explaining how the content creator represents and promotes hyperfeminine traits as a form of empowerment. In this step, the major attributes of hyperfemininity according to Murnen and Byrne’s theory, such as women prioritizing physical attractiveness and expecting men to be conventionally masculine specifically in relation to maintaining heterosexual relationships, are applied to identify the representation. In accordance with Chlapecka’s persona on the internet as someone who speaks up on women’s rights, this paper argues that Chlapecka aims to spread empowerment through the representation of hyperfemininity in bimbofication. However, the current research acknowledges that interpretations in relation to the complexity of bimbofication can be varying. Hence, a further discussion is also conducted to challenge whether the representation of hyperfemininity in bimbofication can effectively deliver the intended message of empowerment and contribute to the current discussion of the topic.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis found that there has been an attempt to not only reclaim the word “bimbo” as an identity that one can intentionally choose to become, but also to refine it as a physically attractive woman who is very aware of herself and the current issues. It is found that there are at least three prominent icons with a very strong persona connected to the term “bimbo”, whether given or self-proclaimed, who have contributed to the establishment of the persona as a pretty and shallow minded woman. The image eventually resulted in the demeaning of those who are attempting to take care of their physical appearances and are not as bright as the occurring societal expectation. However, Chlapecka aims to challenge the stigma by promoting hyperfemininity that aims to prioritize physical well-being as a form of self-care to gain physical attractiveness. She embraces the physical and behavioral traits of hyperfemininity as a part of bimbofication, which is a valid form of self expression. From the result, it is important to note the complexity of bimbofication that may provoke different interpretations.

Reclaiming and Redefining Bimbo Through Bimbofication

Bimbofication is a subculture that emerged initially on BimboTok (Young, 2022), the side of TikTok wherein content creators promote self confidence in relation to physical attractiveness for all body images through the variety of self-care tips, makeup hacks, as well as outfit inspirations (Kato, 2022). The bimbo fashion often features vibrant colors, tight-fitting and pink-dominated clothing, and accessories such as high heels and statement jewelry, creating an eye-catching and alluring style that represents boldness and celebrates unapologetic femininity. The discourse is often combined with the hints of left-wing ideologies (Haigney, 2022) such as social equality and individual freedom. Through this belief, the subculture aims to shed the negative connotation (Richards, 2022) of the word “bimbo”.

The term “bimbo” was originally borrowed from the Italian word meaning “baby” (Cresswell, 2021). As it was initially used in America as a slang, the term takes on a pejorative meaning in the 1920s to describe a physically attractive woman who is unintelligent (Dalzell, 2018). A bimbo’s
personality usually revolves merely around their care for how they look and how they utilize it to please and attract men. The stereotype is eventually popularized through the portrayal of “dumb blonde” in pop culture (Granados, 2021). As pop culture continues to evolve, it reveals three prominent icons representing the bimbo persona, namely Marilyn Monroe, Paris Hilton, and the modern day, social media bimbo, Chrissy Chlapecka. Each of these figures represents different images of bimbo in their respective eras.

Marilyn Monroe, the pop culture icon of the 1950s, played a significant role in popularizing the bimbo representation in film. Through her portrayals of charming but intellectually limited characters, Monroe became synonymous with the archetype of bimbo. Her iconic character as Lorelei Lee in Gentlemen Prefer Blondes (1953) is depicted as a dim-witted, gold-digging blonde with a breathy voice who relies on her physical attractiveness to navigate the male-dominated world. This representation reinforced the idea that a woman’s worth was tied to her looks and her ability to attract men, enforcing traditional gender roles and societal expectations, while also stigmatizing women who took pride in maintaining their physical attractiveness.

In the early 2000s, the bimbo image was perpetuated by the reality show star, Paris Hilton. Hilton’s public image as a party girl who is regularly seen at high-profile parties and nightclubs reinforced the idea of a superficial rich woman who lacks substantial achievements and is disconnected from societal issues and intellectual pursuits. Her character in The Simple Life (2003–2007), a reality show in which Hilton with her costar Nicole Richie left their luxurious, socialite life to reside within the middle-class (The Simple Life | Apple TV, n.d.) and were challenged to survive, also established Hilton’s persona as a dim-witted blonde girl with limited practical skills. The reputation was further intensified with the infamous New York Post headline “Bimbo Summit” in 2006 with Hilton, Britney Spears, and Lindsay Lohan in the cover (Fleming, 2021). The headline referred to the high-profile parties during the early 2000s where Hilton was often seen with the other socialites, which shaped the public’s opinion and perpetuated the notion of shallow yet physically attractive celebrities. The “Bimbo Summit” headline adds to the broader discussion of the media representation and society’s judgment toward the “bimbos”.

Both Monroe and Hilton faced the consequences of being perceived as bimbos by society. Nevertheless, their experiences were notably different. Monroe, as an iconic “bimbo” representation in pop culture, had to deal with the constant objectification and sexualization due to her infamous sexy yet dim-witted persona (Banner, 2008) that she had to sustain throughout her career. On the other hand, Hilton utilized her bimbo persona as a strategic mask, allowing her to hide her true self and mental struggles from the media (Hilton, 2023). Eventually, it is found that the image has somehow become deeply associated with her to the extent that Hilton was constantly perceived solely as a ‘dumb blonde’, overlooking her potential as a capable businesswoman and a model. The stigma toward blonde, physically attractive, and pampered women has been contested through the movie Legally Blonde (2001), wherein the blonde heroine exhibits strong traditional feminine traits while also being academically intelligent. However, Monroe and Hilton’s cases reflect how bimbo persona has been ingrained by the media to demean women who exhibit interests in taking care of their physical attractiveness, as well as those who are considered as extremely traditionally feminine. The stigma underscores the detrimental effects of seeing women merely as a visual creature and perpetuating harmful stereotypes and culture in the society, namely bimbo-shaming.

Bimbo-shaming, similar to slut-shaming, is a phenomenon where women are criticized based on their appearance, particularly makeup, clothing, hair, as well as how they behave. Although it intersects with the slut-shaming culture in terms of contributing to misogyny and sexism, bimbo-shaming does not focus on women's sexuality or their engagement in sexual activity. Instead, bimbo-shaming believes that women who dress a certain way, such as in skin-revealing or close-fitting attire, are lacking in intelligence and moral character, assuming these women would rather spend their time making themselves look more attractive and doing stereotypically feminine things such as dressing up only to attain male’s attention. This belief perpetuates the notion that femininity is inferior to masculinity, and that in order to be considered an equal member of society, women have to be academically smart, wearing modest attires, and aligning themselves with traditional masculine traits.
The negative connotation and impact associated with bimbo, including the bimbo-shaming culture, are what Chrissy Chlapecka and the self-proclaimed bimbo community figures on TikTok strive to contest through bimbofication. The movement aims to redefine its meaning by embracing qualities such as unabashed self-confidence in practicing hyperfemininity, promoting body positivity in all forms, and prioritizing physical well-being as a form of self-care which results in physical attractiveness. By doing so, they are fighting the stigma that women who pay attention to their appearance are slow-witted. As they advocate for authenticity and unapologetic self-expression through the representation of hyperfemininity, it is found that bimbofication has been spreading the awareness that associating feminine traits as an attribute merely to please men is a part of misogyny and sexism which the society have to dismantle.

Therefore, being a “bimbo” according to bimbofication means being aware and embracing how one wants to express themselves, especially by performing hyperfemininity which has been stigmatized as inferior and undervalued under the influence of patriarchy. In one of Chrissy Chlapecka’s videos explaining the modern-day bimbo, she defines it as follows:

* A modern-day bimbo doesn’t need to know what a “mortgage” is, or “how to file taxes”, but we do know it’s time to let go of those who are in prison for marijuana charges when the states that they’re in have decriminalized marijuana, you dumb f***s. And we also know that capitalism is the root of all evil, but it’s almost impossible to consume ethically in a capitalist society. So, let’s stop blaming each other and let’s blame pieces of sh*t like Jeff Bezos. F***k you, Jeff Bezos! ((Giggles)) Oh my God! Anyway, fractions are dumb and I’m a hot bimbo. And my IQ is probably a lot higher than yours.

In the video, Chlapecka satirically exhibits foolish behavior such as “reading” an eyeshadow palette and walking straight to a closed door. Through these gestures, she represents the stereotypical bimbo image as an empty-minded and whimsical figure. The first examination may imply that Chlapecka is perpetuating the stereotype of being empty-minded that “bimbos” have been receiving in the past years. However, the intended message conveys that bimbofication empowers women who prioritize self-development through performing hyperfemininity, rather than engaging in intellectual pursuits like STEM disciplines or economics. This allows women to express playfulness without facing detrimental repercussions from society. They are still worthy of respect and should be considered equal to women who pursue aforementioned fields as well as those who align themselves with societal expectations of intelligence and agency. Upon deeper examination, it becomes evident that the concept also challenges misogynistic views on femininity.

On the other hand, being a present-day bimbo based on Chlapecka’s explanation also means being aware of the emerging social issues and actively addressing them. In the video previously mentioned, Chlapecka delivered about the social injustice regarding legalization of cannabis, as well as the moral issues within capitalist society. These portrayals introduce a contrasting perspective that challenges prevailing perceptions of bimbos. Eventually, the term “bimbofication” was coined to refer to the process of becoming and embracing the present-day bimbo.

Through the process, bimbofication aims to challenge the patriarchal society’s authority in determining women’s value based solely on their physical attributes. While the media has traditionally portrayed and stigmatized bimbos as beautiful yet foolish, bimbofication seeks to reclaim the notion that prioritizing visual appearance over academic intelligence is acceptable and empowering. Women have the right to prioritize and pursue whichever subjects they desire, define their own capabilities, and hold an equal position in society. Ultimately, being a modern-day bimbo has become a choice to shape and liberate one’s identity, rather than a stigma imposed by society.

The bimbofication first emerged on TikTok in 2020, wherein Chlapecka became a subject of ridicule for being labeled as a “bimbo”. However, Chlapecka embraced it as her identity and proudly claimed that it is acceptable, especially for women, not to know certain things. Chlapecka’s unapologetic approach gained attention from numerous TikTok users. Her video captioned “BIMBOS RISE !!!!! #bimbo #ily #fyp #proudbimbo #ihatencapitalism” in which she quoted the comments insulting her with the term and responded it with a satirical “omg NO! I never learned fractions” has
Chlapecka made more contents regarding her bimbo persona. One of her most popular videos captioned “who is the gen-z bimbo? here’s ur answer 💕 luv y’all xoxo #bimbo #ihatecapitalism #ily” explaining the traits of modern day bimbo, such as being a radical leftist, pro sex work, pro black lives matter, pro LGBTQIA+, pro choice, and having emotional intelligence, attracted 11.4 million views, over 2.5 million likes, and coverage from mainstream media. Seeing the opportunity in her newfound popularity, Chlapecka created a series of videos detailing the traits of the modern bimbo, sparking discussions and contributing to the development of bimbofication subculture. Evidently, Chlapecka’s candid expression has resonated with a wider audience, giving rise to a significant trend that challenges the "bimbo" persona, traditional notions of intelligence, and femininity in digital spaces.

Chrissy Chlapecka’s Bimbofication Through Hyperfemininity

As previously mentioned, bimbofication is using hyperfemininity as a way to dismantle the perception that femininity is equal to inferiority. The advocacy is found to be articulated clearly in Chrissy Chlapecka’s TikTok videos. The most prominent hyperfeminine traits portrayed in Chlapecka’s videos are women using sexuality or physical attractiveness as a mighty tool to go after their desire and expecting men to conform to the traditional masculine roles (Murnen & Byrne, 1991). On the other hand, the major belief of hyperfeminine women prioritizing their relationship with men cannot be found in Chlapecka’s videos. The reasoning behind this is the lack of exposure of Chlapecka’s romantic relationship as well as her status as an openly bisexual who is attracted mainly toward women, which is irrelevant to the hyperfemininity theory’s emphasis on heterosexual relationship dynamics.

A. Sexuality and Physical Attractiveness as a Tool

The most apparent characteristic of hyperfemininity shown in Chlapecka’s content is prioritizing and utilizing physical attractiveness as one’s mighty tool. Contrary to popular belief, the meaning of attractiveness in bimbofication goes beyond the traditional standard and societal expectation of feminine beauty. By endorsing self-love through promoting body positivity in all forms and believing that physical appearance maintenance is a form of self-care, bimbofication defines beauty as something that is given, yet needs extra effort to maintain. Considering one of the issues bimbofication tries to fight is the prejudice that women who pay extra attention to their appearance are unintelligent or superficial, embracing physical attractiveness as a powerful tool can be empowering as it also requires agency and skills. In this research, it is found that self-affirmation and empowerment content related to physical appearance has been one of Chlapecka’s niches to promote bimbofication.

In one of her videos, captioned “h8rs r my motiv8rs #slay #bimbo” (haters are my motivators), Chlapecka delivers flippant advice regarding the concern of being judged. In the short video wherein Chlapecka flaunts her all-pink tight-fitting outfit combined with rainbow-colored, Chlapecka addresses,

Honey, stop caring about what other people think of you. Other people are ugly. Other people are ugly. I don’t have another thing to say other than that, you heard me.

The repetition in calling other people ugly is intended to boost up the viewers’ confidence. Through this attitude, Chlapecka emphasizes that one’s opinion should not matter if they are not physically attractive, suggesting that appearance defines one’s value as a person. It mirrors the criticism directed toward women who are perceived as “bimbo” back then, and even until now.

Initially, the previously mentioned remark can be perceived as an act of body-shaming. However, upon closer analysis, this research argues that the underlying meaning of “ugly” in Chlapecka’s note pertains to the absence of self-care. Considering attractiveness is positively related with self-esteem (Mathes & Kahn, 1975, as cited in Lennon, et al., 1999), bimbofication believes that public criticism is only a manifestation of the feeling of insecurity due to internalized misogyny and fear of being judged by the society. The insecurity eventually becomes a mental burden that triggers a projection onto others, expecting women
to limit their self-expression based on what is acceptable for the patriarchal society. For that reason, bimbofication emphasizes that any form of baseless as well as deconstructive criticism should not deter women from pursuing their desired actions and choices.

The notion is frequently promoted in more of Chlapecka’s contents. In another video captioned “WHO CARES! #slay #ily #gayrights”, wherein she wears a soft pink cropped tank top, hot pink miniskirt, soft pink high platform boots, with colorful feather boa, Chlapecka once more starts off her delivery with “Honey!” which has been her signature phrase signaling the proceeding content requires full attention from the viewers.

It’s time to start being yourself! So, if you wanna dye your hair pink, dye your hair pink! If you wanna show tits on the internet, show tits on the internet! Life is short, nothing matters! This video has reached 3.9 million views, 1.1 million likes, and over 12 thousand likes as of June 4th, 2023. Aside from the message delivered, Chlapecka has once again conformed to the stereotypical feminine traits by the choice of outfit that is dominated by the color pink, as well as adopting the stereotypical bimbo style with the “provocative” choice of clothing.

![Picture 1. Chlapecka in tight-fitting all-pink outfit, representing hyperfemininity in bimbofication](image)

As the camera was placed in a low angle, Chlapecka had to bend over as an attempt to balance her eye level with the camera. The gesture was intended to draw more attention from the viewers through eye contact. Unfortunately, though the gesture might not intend to be sexually provocative, one can argue that the body language can potentially increase the risk of objectification under the impression of self-sexualization by showing her cleavage. This can also be considered as a byproduct of the movement. By endorsing hyperfeminine traits that are closely related to the traditional gender roles, ambiguities in terms of interpretations become inevitable. Knowing the threat of being sexualized because of her content, Chlapecka claims to agree with the idea that associating hyperfeminine traits with impurity intersects with misogyny.

It is important to note that sexualization and objectification happens regardless of the victim’s behavior. According to Chlapecka, people from any gender, even those who claim themselves as feminist, have the tendency to shame others who display attributes of hyperfemininity (Reilly, 2022). This phenomenon reflects the bimbo-shaming culture wherein women’s agency is evaluated solely based on their physical appearance. This viewpoint explains her aforementioned remark about exhibiting breasts in cyberspace. By including such a notion in a “be yourself” narrative, Chlapecka implies that showing breasts is something that women have been holding themselves back from doing, mainly because society has conditioned them to do so in order to avoid the risk of being sexualized. Through these quips, Chlapecka aims to empower and liberate her audience from the fear of misogyny.

Moreover, other than conforming to the idea that sexuality and attractiveness could be used as a powerful tool through choice of outfits and makeup, Chlapecka also promotes the notion by embracing limited intelligence and social awareness. Since bimbo-shaming has been cultivated in our society, women have been conditioned to think that it is a shame to be perceived as intellectually inadequate or to lack knowledge. Meanwhile, such societal expectations and mental burden are rarely directed towards men due to the patriarchy and
sexism. Chlapecka affirms her audience that it is acceptable and normal for women not to grasp or be aware of certain things. This viewpoint has constantly been made clear through various Chlapecka’s videos. To name an example, in a video captioned “LISTEN UP!!!!! ♥ #slay”, Chlapecka delivers a monologue:

Listen! It’s okay if you don’t know math. It’s okay if you don’t know what an ‘Elon Musk’ is, but you know that it has to end. It’s okay if you don’t know how an airplane works. It’s okay if you don’t understand what a car is. Like, all these things are fine. If you just, probably, like pink and sparkles and sitting down, you are okay!

In the statement, Chlapecka mentioned male-dominated fields such as STEM and economics, wherein women face intense competition and those who excel in these fields are regarded as reaching the highest level of success and respect. She emphasizes that women do not need to feel compelled to master these areas and can pursue their own interests, including subjects that are associated with traditional femininity. The reasoning behind this attitude is the principle that despite women’s engagement in activities that may not align with the standard made by the patriarchal society, they should still be recognized as capable and equal.

Upon initial observation, it may seem that the narrative is putting women at the risk of being perceived as shallow and uneducated instead of capable and equal. It emphasizes the bimbo stigma and fails to acknowledge gender inequality in education. While women’s right for education is crucial to discuss, Chlapecka effectively challenges societal misogyny’s authority to evaluate women’s competence by reaffirming her audience that it is acceptable not to understand certain things. This attitude endorses the notion that women are free to choose their own pursuits. There is no reason for shame for subjects that revolve around the traditional idea of femininity, since dismissing such pursuits solely based on its connection to the conventional gender roles is misogynistic. In the process, she has succeeded in amassing more than 5 million followers on TikTok and encouraged more users to participate in the movement. The proof of bimbofication’s continuous emergence can be found with the amount of users engaging in the tag #bimbofication on TikTok, which has gained over 216 million views as of July 13th, 2023. This approach of bimbofication diminishes the societal norms that perpetuate judgment and grants women agency in determining their own paths, while also embracing one’s limited intelligence. It is also crucial to note that this particular message of bimbofication does not mean to encourage people to be ignorant.

As previously discussed, embracing limited intelligence in bimbofication coexists with the awareness of the current social and political issues. Other than reaffirming women to be unapologetically traditionally feminine, Chlapecka incorporates more political sentiments in her videos that are not gender-related. To name an example, in the aforementioned content captioned “LISTEN UP!!!!! ♥ #slay”, Chlapecka makes a remark about the prominent billionaire Elon Musk, questioning his significance by dehumanizing him with the statement “what is an Elon Musk” since Musk is well-known for being the subject of controversy and criticism due to his business practices. His labor relations and treatment of workers have drawn scrutiny and raised concerns about workers’ rights and welfare. By criticizing Elon Musk’s significance, Chlapecka has proven bimbofication’s advocacy for social and political issues on a broader scale.

B. Supporting Traditional Masculine Roles

Another hyperfeminine characteristic manifested in Chlapecka’s videos involves the expectation for men to conform to traditional masculine roles (Murnen & Byrne, 1991). This attitude arises from the aim of fighting the imbalanced pressures and stigma placed on women compared to men. While acknowledging how patriarchy plays a significant role in shaping traditional gender norms as well as perpetuating systemic misogyny and sexism, bimbofication asserts that men should also be compelled to experience similar pressures in order to gain a sense of equality. In this context, considering how traditional femininity also restrains women from freely expressing themselves, bimbofication ventures to limit men’s
freedom of expression and their right to express a broader range of identities and behaviors. It reinforces the traditional viewpoint that men should prioritize traits such as dominance, strength, and emotional restraint, while downplaying or stigmatizing characteristics associated with femininity that are adopted by men.

To name an example, in the video captioned “i will. #ilovewomen”, Chlapecka made a clear point about the attitude men are expected to have in a relationship. She conveys the message in a manner that evokes a sense of intimidation by threatening men will lose their partner if they refuse to conform to the expectations as follows:

*If you don’t text your girlfriend back, I will. If you don’t flirt with your girlfriend, I will. If you don’t buy your girlfriend flowers, I will. If you don’t let her spend all your money, I will. Sorry. Oh me oh my.*

The roles discussed in the video highlight the gender role for men in a relationship, one of them being the initiator in communication within relationships. As traditional masculinity reinforces the idea that men should be the ones to make the first move, initiate conversations, and demonstrate their interest in their partner, Chlapecka places the expectation upon men to actively make an effort for their partner; otherwise, someone else will assume the responsibility. The statement aims to give an equal burden on men as placed upon women who may feel limited in their agency to express their own desires or take an active role in a relationship. It implies that if society can continuously expect women to stay traditionally feminine, men also need to adopt traditional masculine behaviors and be compliant with gender norms. However, it is important to note that her statement also reinforces the notion that women are passive recipients in a relationship who can only wait for their men. It is crucial to critically examine the complexities and contradictions used by bimbofication through hyperfemininity to foster a deeper understanding of women’s empowerment.

Furthermore, the act of buying flowers also holds a symbolic significance within the context of traditional gender roles. In many societies, flowers have been traditionally associated with femininity, beauty, and romance, and are often given to women as a gesture of affection and admiration. This association between flowers and women stems from societal expectations and stereotypical notions of femininity, where women are often seen as delicate, nurturing, and deserving of such romantic gestures. Consequently, men are expected to fulfill the role of the provider in relationships. This expectation reflects the belief that men should assume the role of financial support within the relationship.

By investing resources and effort into purchasing flowers, men are fulfilling the expectation of taking care of their partner’s emotional well-being and ensuring their comfort. This gesture aligns with bimbofication’s trait of supporting traditional masculinity, specifically men’s responsibility as the main provider for their partner’s needs, both emotionally and materially. Moreover, the mention of allowing the girlfriend to spend the partner's money touches upon the perceived obligation of men to assume financial responsibility within the relationship. This expectation stems from the traditional male breadwinner role, where men are expected to earn and provide for their partners and families. By perpetuating such ideas, bimbofication attempts to highlight how the traditional gender roles restrict the freedom of both men and women to engage in relationships based on their individual preferences, needs, and capabilities.

Within the context of bimbofication, these expectations are delivered to address and balance the societal pressure experienced by both men and women. Bimbofication recognizes that women have long been subjected to societal expectations related to traditional femininity, leading to gendered norms and power dynamics. By pushing men to adhere to the traditional masculine roles, bimbofication acknowledges that men, too, face expectations and stereotypes imposed by society, and seeks to challenge the existing gender hierarchy and create a more equitable balance of societal pressures. However, it is important to note that bimbofication should not be seen as perpetuating or endorsing traditional masculinity in an uncritical
Bimbofication to Empower....

manner. It seeks to address the societal pressure faced by women while also acknowledging the need to challenge and deconstruct harmful gender norms and power dynamics.

As found in the current research, bimbofication has made a progress in redefining and reclaiming the term “bimbo” by representing hyperfemininity. The traits that were formerly considered only as an adherence to the patriarchal standards of society, such as the act of dressing up primarily to attract male attention and intentionally portraying oneself as intellectually inferior to seek assistance from men, have become empowering as it is now a way to embrace one’s unique interpretation of femininity and intelligence. It has provided a space and encouraged women to freely express themselves, as well as dismantled patriarchal standards that define women’s value based on their visual attributes. However, there is still a fine line between celebrating aesthetic hyperfemininity and reducing women to mere objects of visual pleasure. Since the complexity of bimbofication may provoke mixed interpretations and invite various responses, it is crucial to maintain a critical and conscious approach while engaging in bimbofication. Additionally, bimbofication also needs to continually emphasize the multidimensionality of femininity and promote a more inclusive definition of empowerment. That way, it can generate a profound and multifaceted impact on deeper issues faced by women within patriarchal society.

4. CONCLUSION

Overall, there are two questions that have been discussed in this research. The first question explored the development of “bimbo” image as represented in media, and bimbofication’s attempt to reclaim and refine the term. It discussed the current definition of being a bimbo by analyzing Chlapecka’s contents, which challenge the stereotype toward women who prioritize physical attributes over academic intelligence. Secondly, this research discussed the use of hyperfemininity as a tool to show one’s acceptance of their femininity. The hyperfeminine traits as coined by Murnen and Byrne (1991) are represented through the choice of clothing and behavior in Chlapecka’s videos. By doing so, bimbofication strives to fight the stigma pressed on women to gain a sense of equality.

To conclude, this research finds that Chlapecka has notably challenged the “bimbo” stereotype and established a new meaning for the term as an empowering choice for expressing and embracing one’s identity. Through bimbofication, the initial pejorative meaning of the term “bimbo” has been reclaimed by promoting the qualities and attributes associated with the stigma as a valid form of self-expression. This process involves representing hyperfemininity traits, such as prioritizing physical appearance as well as expecting men’s adherence to traditional masculinity. By doing so, bimbofication has contested the idea that physically attractive and sexually appealing women are shallow since they only benefit men and perpetuate the patriarchal standard for women. Instead, bimbofication defines bimbo as a way to express women’s unique feminine identity. Through the portrayal of these discussed attributes, Chlapecka has created a platform for women to explore and embrace their hyperfemininity that were previously regarded as mere adherence to traditional gender norms and undervalued due to misogynistic views of the society.

Nonetheless, it is important to note the complexity of bimbofication. As Chlapecka made her intention of liberating women from the fear of misogyny clear, one may interpret the representation of hyperfemininity as a step back from women’s empowerment, especially in terms of knowledge and education. By acknowledging the limitation in this movement, this research encourages the audience to engage in bimbofication critically and intentionally. In order to promote a more inclusive empowerment, bimbofication needs to acknowledge the multidimensionality of femininity beyond external appearances, as well as emphasizing that embracing limited intelligence is not equal to limiting women’s right for education. Instead, it highlights women’s right to choose and pursue whichever subject they desire. Overall, regardless of the ambiguities and varying interpretations of the hyperfemininity representation, Chlapecka serves as one important perspective out of many in dismantling patriarchal ideas. Bimbofication has been a reminder that the movements against patriarchy are multifaceted and made up of people of varying backgrounds, worldviews, and cultures. The different interpretations may indicate that the harmful effects of patriarchal manifestations affect
so many parts of society, vertically and horizontally. To be or not to be a bimbo, that is every woman’s right and mighty choice to choose. Hence, this research contributes to subverting the traditional gender norms and providing insights into the transformative potential of bimbofication as a legitimate form of women’s empowerment and resistance against misogyny from an academic perspective.

As this research only explores bimbofication in Chlapecka’s TikTok to establish the new meaning of being a “bimbo” through the complexity of the representation, it was unable to go into an in-depth discussion regarding its deeper contribution to intersectionality in feminism. Hence, the contents discussed in this paper may not fully capture the various challenges encountered by women from different backgrounds. Additionally, the utilization of Murnen and Byrne’s hyperfemininity theory (1991) also limits the inclusivity of the discourse, as it only revolves around heterosexual romantic relationships in a heteronormative society. This study also offers insights regarding the complexity of gender identity and a broader understanding of empowerment. Further research should critically evaluate the inclusiveness and intersectionality of bimbofication to determine its effectiveness in promoting women’s empowerment.

5. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Sincere gratitude to the faculty members of the English Studies Program, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Indonesia, for the guidance and support throughout this research.

6. REFERENCES


Megarry, J. (2020, November 28). The limitations of social media feminism: No space of our own. Palgrave Macmillan. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-60629-9](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-60629-9)


The Simple Life | Apple TV. (n.d.). Apple TV. https://tv.apple.com/us/show/the-simple-life/umc.cmc.4lstuk2y3l4iy1q0s6jzqv8lo
