THE MANIFESTATION OF MISOGYNY IN THE PICK ME BOY TREND ON TIKTOK INDONESIA

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Recommended Citation
DOI: 10.7454/irhs.v9i1.1278
Available at: https://scholarhub.ui.ac.id/irhs/vol9/iss1/11

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ABSTRACT
Misogyny is hatred, contempt, or prejudice against women or girls. It is a form of sexism used to keep women in a lower social status than men, thereby maintaining patriarchal social roles. Hegemonic masculinity is the most exalted configuration of gender practices that legitimizes patriarchy. This article draws on the framework of Raewyn Connell’s theory of masculinity and Kate Manne’s concept of misogyny to discuss the phenomenon of Indonesian TikTok videos with the hashtag “Pick Me Boy” or #Pick Me Boy. Pick Me Boy challenge traditional masculinity to gain women’s attention, and then demean women if rejected. This article uses a qualitative research method to explore how the language expressions and comments in Pick Me Boy videos reflect the phenomenon of mixed masculinity and misogyny by collecting and analyzing videos imitating Pick Me Boy on TikTok. The findings show that Pick Me Boy parody videos on TikTok illustrate male competition for female attention, reinforce stereotypes of masculinity while embodying male misogyny and reinforcing sexist behavior. This study highlights the various ways in which the Pick Me Boy trend perpetuates misogynistic beliefs and practices, revealing the complex interplay between gender dynamics and social media in the Indonesian context.

KEYWORDS: Pick Me Boy, TikTok Indonesia, Misogyny, Masculinity

INTRODUCTION
In recent years, social media platforms have become powerful agents of social change, serving as both mirrors and amplifiers of society’s complex dynamics. A large body of literature discusses the relationship between gender and social media. Research shows that social media can challenge or reinforce traditional gender norms. Misogyny is especially prevalent on various social media platforms, perpetuating harmful stereotypes and discriminatory practices. For example, the study about the objectification...
of women by TFM accounts on Instagram examines how the TFM Girls Instagram account, along with its followers, shapes and maintains dominant discourses of masculinity. Mixed-method analyses revealed that women were depicted more in bikinis, posed in overtly sexually suggestive poses. There were also instances of misogyny and objectification manifested in the men’s comments attached to the photographs. (Rodriguez & Hernandez, 2018b). In addition, the existence of gender stereotypes on Facebook (Bailey et al., 2013) show us the dilemma of women’s existence in the Internet space. Except the popular social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and so on that already studied by many scholars, TikTok is a new social media that start become popular these years. TikTok as a rapidly growing platform with a broad and diverse user base has played a key role in shaping contemporary conversations around gender and identity. As a powerful social media platform that allows users to create and share short video content, TikTok is extremely popular in Indonesia, attracting a diverse user base. The #pick me phenomenon that appeared on TikTok Indonesia in 2021 has caused everyone to rush to imitate and criticize. “Pick Me” trends include “Pick Me Girl” and “Pick Me Boy”. The term “Pick Me Girl” refers to someone who strives to impress men and think they are different from other girls. Meanwhile, the term “Pick Me Boy” refers to men who want to work hard to impress women and think they are different from other men.

Among them, Pick Me Girl has aroused popular research on gender issues under this phenomenon. For example, the German writer Sophie Passmann made a harsh criticism of the male gaze in the book Pick Me Girl. Her memoir traces the life of an archetypal woman, asking the question: What if patriarchy didn't exist? She discusses in the book, “I'm not like other women” is what a pretentious girl often says. Most women have probably thought this at one time or another—not just demeaning themselves from the entire gender in an unconsciously misogynistic way to differentiate themselves, but also devaluing themselves: Like, you're not as thin as other women, you skin is not as good as other women's. When you are born a woman, yourself - doubt is preset. When you hit puberty at the latest, you're faced with the unwritten but universal golden rule: the male gaze is the highest currency. Sophie Passman dissects why we all pick my girl and the impossibilities she, and probably every other woman, must endure throughout her life. (Kiepenheuer & Witsch, Köln 2023).

Meanwhile in Indonesia, an article titled The Manifestation of Internalized Sexism in the Pick Me Girl Trend on TikTok discusses the inherent sexism in TikTok videos tagged with the hashtag#PickMeGirl. This article utilizes Kate Manne's theoretical framework of misogyny and the concept of internalized sexism to explore Pick Me Girl's sexist behaviors and attitudes and investigate the relationships between the women. The results show that Pick Me Girl on TikTok presents concepts such as different beauty standards for women, competition between women to attract male attention, women's self-objectification, and humiliation of other women. Although competition ultimately destroys other women, this trait brings joy to the Pick Me Girl women. Internalized misogyny then leads women to insult other women, hate other women, and lower the value of other women. The inherent sexism is evident in their behavior on social media. This article mainly studies the Pick Me Girls phenomenon in the pick me fashion trend phenomenon, focusing on studying the Indonesian pick me girl phenomenon from the perspective of women in gender studies, but does not study the gender discrimination in the Indonesian Pick Me Boy trend in detail. (Ida Rosida, Meka Mona Ghazali, Dania Dedi, Fanya Shafa Salsabila, 2022)

However, compared with the phenomena of Pick Me Girl, the equally problematic Pick Me Boy phenomenon is subconsciously ignored by everyone. There are only some
comments and interpretations about the *Pick Me Boy* phenomenon. Like Alice Porter wrote a discussion about what is a “*Pick Me Boy*”—and How to Spot One? in online website Refinery29. She explained “*Pick Me Boy*” is a completely different story. The goals are similar—trying to differentiate themselves from everyone else—but their methods are completely different. *Pick Me Boy* is a kind of boy think of themselves as a self-deprecating boy and seeking compliments as a form of flirting. (Alice Porter, 2021)

Therefore, when scholars focus on the study of *Pick Me Girl* and use women as the objects of observation, they neglect to study men as the subject. Studying *Pick Me Boy* can fill the gap in this research and thereby better understand and analyze this phenomenon. This article explores representations of misogyny in Indonesia’s *Pick Me Boy* trend, delves into its complexities, and reveals how it intersects with theories of hybrid masculinities. The *Pick Me Boy* trend is a fascinating microcosm of contemporary Indonesian society, providing a unique perspective on evolving gender norms and the persistence of traditional stereotypes. In this trend, young men compete for women's approval by appearing to be more sensitive, narrow-minded, and “better” than men. However, the dynamics within this trend raise fundamental questions about the underlying motivations, implications, and potential impact of such manifestations.

To fully understand how misogyny plays into the *Pick Me Boy* trend, we must examine the intersectional elements of hybrid masculinity theory, which provides a valuable framework for dissecting the impact of traditional gender norms on modern masculinity. This article aims to shed light on how this trend challenges and reinforces popular notions of masculinity, and how it inadvertently perpetuates harmful gender dynamics. As TikTok remains an important platform for expression and debate, it is necessary to critically analyze trends such as *Pick Me Boy* to recognize their significance within the broader context of gender relations in Indonesia. This research is not only an exploration of digital phenomena but also a contribution to the ongoing discussion of the complexities of gender, identity and misogyny in the digital age. In doing so, we hope to deepen our understanding of the changing gender dynamics and promote productive dialogue on the path to a more equitable and inclusive society.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This article is a qualitative study framed within the framework of misogyny theory and concepts of masculinity. First, data was collected by following *Pick Me Boy* videos on TikTok between 2021 and 2023. There are hundreds of videos imitating and satirizing *Pick Me Boy* on TikTok in Indonesia, and the contents are all similar. Therefore, a few representative videos with many likes, comments and high attention were selected as samples for article analysis. Second, using the theoretical frameworks of Kate Manne's misogyny and Raven Connell's masculinity, a critical understanding of the language used by men and women in the video is provided. Finally, interpret the collected data in terms of the concepts of misogyny and masculinity and categorize the data obtained and explore other sources such as previous studies and papers, journal articles, expert theories and use them to support data analysis. Kate Manne believes that the source of misogyny comes from a group of people (men) who believe that they are inherently deserving of attention. In other words, the attention, affection, praise, sex and other beautiful things that women give are regarded by men as their natural rights. They are so horny that they get angry when women ignore them, plus there are many people (of both genders) who believe that women are naturally givers and givers. (Kate Manne, 2017). In the *Pick Me Boy* trend, although they claim that they are different from traditional masculinity, respecting women, and understanding women, in fact, what is reflected behind such words is to gain women's attention, rather than truly supporting and understanding women.
Hegemonic masculinity is the most exalted configuration of gender practice that legitimates patriarchy (Connell 1995; Kaiser 2012). Multiple masculinities result from men’s various social identities. Masculinities are marginalized by race or class and subordinated by sexuality. These multiple masculinities comprise configurations that are both fluid and conflicted (Connell 1995). Bridges and Pascoe (2014) defined hybrid masculinities as men’s selective and dynamic incorporation into their gender performances of identity elements associated with subordinated and marginalized masculinities, as well as with femininities. Research on hybrid masculinities suggests that hybrid masculinities reproduce and reinforce hegemonic masculinity while distancing themselves from traditional masculinity norms (Bridges and Pascoe 2014). While all men are granted privilege as a result of being men—what Connell (1995) calls the “patriarchal dividend”—their other social identities posit their status as men differently in distinct contexts. The ways men do hybrid masculinities are therefore based on an interplay between their identities, settings, and patriarchal structures. Hybrid masculinity harnesses marginalized aspects of gender expression into the gender performance and identities of privileged men. Hybrid masculinities allow men to negotiate masculinity in ways that reflect more inclusive behaviors and attitudes but leave the larger institutional systems that maintain gender inequality intact. Michael A. Messner said in his artikel, “Some privileged male groups are developing a 'softer', more 'sensitive' masculinity, but this does not necessarily contribute to female liberation and may in fact be quite the opposite.” (Michael A. Messner, 1993). Pick Me Boy trend that claims being different from other boys on the one hand reinforces hegemonic masculinity, and on the other hand emphasizes one's own male privilege by emphasizing a more subordinate and marginalized masculinity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

**Pick Me Boy in TikTok Indonesia reflect hybrid masculinity and toxic masculinity under patriarchy**

The sociologist Sylvia Walby defines patriarchy as a system of social structures, and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. She proposed that there are six main patriarchal structures which together constitute a system of patriarchy. These are: a patriarchal mode of production in which women's labour is expropriated by their husbands; patriarchal relations within waged labour; the patriarchal state; male violence; patriarchal relations in sexuality; and patriarchal culture. (Sylvia Walby, 1989). Discourses on femininity and masculinity are institutionalised in all sites of social life, not only in those institutions such as religions, media and education, which have cultural production as a central goal. (Sylvia Walby, 1989). People’s discourse expressions about men and women in the emerging social media TikTok also reflect the patriarchal characteristics rooted in Indonesian society. For example, the criticism and discussion of the phenomenon of Pick Me Girl far exceeds that of Pick Me Boy. When searching for #pick me on the TikTok web version, among the 24 most popular videos displayed on the homepage, only two popular videos are about #pick me, while the remaining 22 videos all satirize the Pick Me Girl phenomenon. In fact, the Pick Me Boy phenomenon is also a serious problem, but under the male gaze under the patriarchy, it is more emphasized that criticizing Pick Me Girl is a harmful internal sexism phenomenon among women.

According to Sylvia Walby, there are two main types of patriarchy: the private and the public patriarchy. (Sylvia Walby, 1989). Although women have now entered the public sphere compared to the past when women were only in the private sphere, they are still in a subordinate position. The phenomenon of imitation and criticism of Pick Me Girl...
reinforces stereotypes of traditional femininity. The avoidance of talking the *Pick Me Boy* phenomenon does not mean that there is no problem with *Pick Me Boy*. On the contrary, the *Pick Me Boy* phenomenon is more serious. The mixed masculinity and toxic masculinity reflected in the video of *Pick Me Boy* have aggravated the dominance situation among men in the public sphere and gender inequality and sexism between men and women.

Diverse and dynamic social situations make masculinity no longer monolithic but pluralistic. Michael Kimmel (2004) identifies the diversity of masculinities in four ways: First, masculinities vary across cultures. Second, masculinity in society is not static but develops over time. Third, masculinity changes over the life cycle. Fourth, the meaning of masculinity can vary even within the same society. (Michael Kimmel, 2004). But the similarity found in these diversity of masculinities is that every society has a concept of an ideal that is used by men as a reference and as a standard to judge whether a man is masculine enough.

In the book titled “*Menjadi Laki-laki: Pandangan Laki-laki Jawa tentang Konsep Maskulinitas dan Kekerasan Dalam Rumah Tangga*” written by Nur Hasyim, Aditya Putra Kurniawan and Elli Nur Hayati finds that two things play a role in constructing Indonesian male gender identity, that is, texts derived from religious and socio-cultural norms. (Nur Hasyim, Aditya Putra Kurniawan, Elli Nur Hayati, 2007). Arum Budiaswati shows in “*Konstruksi Maskulinitas Ideal Melalui Konsumsi Budaya Populer oleh Remaja Perkotaan*” (2017) that gender values related to the concept of older men (fathers) are adolescent ideal masculinities which is an important symbol of construction. This male form is closer to the Javanese ideal of aristocratic masculinity, associated with responsibility, reliability, patience and protector. Young men also associate muscles with values such as being responsible, caring, protective, polite, muscular, and lighter-skinned as norms for ideal masculinity. (Arum Budiaswati, 2017). In addition to this, masculinity is often constructed in Indonesian popular culture. Romi Comando Girsang’s semiotic analysis of masculinity in the Gudang Garam Merah TV commercial version of “*Cafe*” (2014) found that men known as masculine are physically strong, tough, manly men who can warm the atmosphere, and being able to show compassion for others. In contrast, gentleness, carefulness, dependence, etc. are easily attributed to female characteristics. (Romi Comando Girsang, 2014). Society requires everyone and every individual to use this as a criterion to restrain themselves, so that shared gender role characteristics will be formed. These characteristics are strengthened and transmitted through channels such as family, school, friends, and society during the socialization process. Violating these “consensus” will result in pressure and criticism from society. When gender differences are increasingly exaggerated, it forces men to be strong, independent, forbearing, resolute, and not allowed to show vulnerability, implying that women can be weak, inferior, timid, and have no personal pursuits and values.

Raewyn Connell believes that hegemonic masculinity is the most sublime configuration of gender practices that legitimizes patriarchy. But masculinity is not something inherent in biological sex, but a classification caused by social gender. With the development of society, the hegemonic masculinity under patriarchy is not just the strong and brave temperament reflected in the division of labor in primitive society in the past, but is more inclusive and reflects a mixed masculinity. (Raewyn Connell, 1995). The *Pick Me Boy* phenomenon on TikTok attracts women by expressing characteristics that are different from hegemonic masculinity, such as strong, powerful, etc., and more inclined to feminine characteristics, such as gentleness, patience, softness, etc. But at the same time, the expression “*Pick Me Boy*” is usually just a means to attract and control the opposite sex. For example, the Indonesian blogger @yourfawkboi released a video on
May 24, 2022 that imitated some of the *Pick Me Boy*'s expressions when he wanted to get close to girls. He said in the video, “I am different from other men. I am not as handsome and strong as other boys.” “I am a soft boy and a good guy.” He also said that he likes to play games at home and most boys like to run around outside. *Pick Me Boy* attracts women's attention by emphasizing standards of masculinity that are different from traditional Indonesian masculinity. It devalues hegemonic masculinity and also reflects insecurities about being different from traditional hegemonic masculinity.

In addition, the “*Pick Me Boy*” trend on TikTok involves users, usually men, vying for attention by demonstrating their loyalty and willingness to support or defend women. They usually have the following characteristics: showing themselves to be ugly, denying masculinity in the traditional sense, belittling other masculinity, showing themselves to be a “good” man, such as loving to do housework, etc., but at the same time embodying the statement that women only like bad men, demeaning the status of women. The phenomenon of *Pick Me Boy* imitating and satirizing *Pick Me Boy* reflects the hegemonic stereotype of men under patriarchy. *Pick Me Boys* on TikTok often adopt styles that are not typically considered “manly”. They will laugh at themselves for not having hegemonic masculine traits in the general sense, but in fact these traits are used to reaffirm male dominance and maintain universal gender norms. For example, blogger @ciafarizahra imitated the conversation between *Pick Me Boy* and a girl on a date on March 13, 2022, saying, “I'm not like other boys. I don't smoke. I'm a good boy, not a bad boy, but girls all like bad boys.”

Popular cultural representations of masculinity depict men as aggressive, emotionally distant individuals whose hard and muscular bodies epitomize these traits. These traditional representations of masculinity are also associated with sexism and male dominance, which encourages many men to distance themselves from these representations. By analyzing some popular videos on TikTok that imitate *Pick Me Boys*, on the one hand, they construct hybrid masculinity by describing themselves as caring about or being in touch with their feminine side to create a gap between themselves and men who adhere to traditional representations of masculinity to create social distance. On the other hand, while men incorporate what they consider feminine characteristics into their identities, they reinforce rather than challenge the symbolic boundaries of gender and the resulting gender hierarchies. Ultimately, men are able to adopt the language of caring to gain more prestige while reinforcing gender inequality and male dominance. For example, Indonesian TikTok blogger @bangleotapialvin posted a video on May 22, 2023, in which he talked about his friend’s *Pick Me Boy* behavior. He mentioned that the characteristic of *Pick Me Boy* is that he always likes to pretend to be a victim, such as blogger mentioned that “*Pick Me Boy* always thinks that he is always hurt by women.” Or he always shows that he is different from other boys. For example, many boys now do skin care, but the *Pick Me Boy* will deliberately show that he is different from most boys. He does not take care of skin but has good skin.

The emergence of *Pick Me Boy* imitation and follow-up complaints on Indonesian TikTok also strengthens hegemonic masculinity from another level. *Pick Me Boy* advocates being different from other traditional male stereotypes. As a result, it has been criticized and ridiculed by netizens. Instead, it has led to deeper gender stereotypes and hegemonic masculinity on social media. If men differ from mainstream hegemonic masculinity, they will be considered *Pick Me Boys*, which will lead to men being afraid to reveal their true personalities, thus exacerbating the emergence of toxic masculinity. Toxic masculinity refers to social expectations and norms that encourage men to adhere to certain traditional and harmful gender roles. These expectations often include suppressing emotions, seeking dominance, and objectifying women. *Pick Me Boy* may
cause men to suppress their true personalities and emotions, leading to more severe sexism.

**Pick Me Boy in Tiktok Indonesian reflect misogyny**

Kate Mann believes that the source of misogyny comes from a group of people (men) who believe that they are inherently deserving of attention. (Kate Manne, 2017). In other words, the attention, affection, praise, sex and other beautiful things that women give are regarded by men as their natural rights. They are so hornny that they get angry when women ignore them, plus many people (of both genders) believe that women are naturally givers and givers. There is a female blogger @hannah.montoyast who imitated the Pick Me Boy video on Indonesian Tiktok. In the video on December 22, 2022, she imitated the behavior of Pick Me Boy after being rejected. They always say “The nice guy always finishes last, all girls are the same”. In the Indonesian TikTok Pick Me Boy parody video, Pick Me Boy labels himself as a good boy, and then blames the lack of girls on girls for liking bad boys. This is a deep-seated misogyny. That is, he blames women for his unpopularity from the bottom of his heart, but he also hopes to be favored by women to reflect his masculinity. Once a woman refuses to pick me a boy, instead of reflecting on themselves, they blame the woman.

Chizuru Ueno also mentioned in the section “The Misogyny of ‘Unpopular Men’” in the book Disgust against Women that attributing “unpopularity” to appearance is a way to protect self-esteem. (Chizuru Ueno, 2015). Just like the Pick Me Boy trend, Pick Me Boy always laughs at himself that he is not liked by women because he is ugly. Such remarks show that it is not so much that he wants to fall in love, but that he wants to “own” a woman. A man does not become a man by being chosen by a woman; a man becomes a man by being recognized and approved by a group of men. Women are only one of the conditions for joining a group of men. No matter how bad a man is, as long as he has a woman to call his own, he can always meet the minimum requirements for becoming a man. In this sense, it doesn't matter whether you are in love or not, whether you are excited or not, whether you are in tune or not, or even the respect, equality, and understanding that are often mentioned in love. Having a girlfriend and “being able to get a woman” will be his ticket into a men's group and a low guarantee for his self-confidence. (Chizuru Ueno, 2015). This is evident in the emergence of the Pick Me Boy, an archetype of a boy seeking female approval. Pick Me Boy seeks to gain sympathy from women and seek praise by demeaning themselves. Blogger @qinomsaurus wrote in the Pick Me Boy video published on October 27, 2021, “Cewek cantik, kayak lo emg mau sama gue yg jelek gini??*pdhl doi ganteng”. “Pick Me Boy” is problematic because it uses self-deprecation as a manipulation tactic and exploits the fact that girls have been socialized and expected to perform emotional labor.

Kate Manne pointed out that sexism is a patriarchal ideology and theory that rationalizes the male advantage of a patriarchal society by devaluing all women; misogyny is a patriarchal law enforcement agency and police that uses hostility and coercive means to punish those women who do not adhere to the patriarchal order. Rather than pitting all men against all women, misogyny creates an oppositional structure of internally differentiated hostility between the sexes, defined by it, dividing women into “good women” and “bad women” and punishing bad women who overflowing patriarchal conventions and who have the right to make their own sexual choices, while rewarding good women who are obedient and provide services to men. (Kate Manne, 2017). Love for women and misogyny are two sides of the same coin, creating internal conflicts to divide and conquer in order to defend the law and order of the patriarchal world. Pick Me Boys are a group that may not enjoy the benefits of patriarchy in real life. For example, if
no women provide them with emotional or sexual services, they will attract women's attention through self-deprecation on the Internet. This is a manifestation of love for women. But at the same time, if women see through their skills and psychology and once they are rejected, they will blame women for the reasons. For example, as the blogger above said, they feel that women only like bad men without thinking about their own reasons, thus triggering misogyny. This is the embodiment of misogyny.

In another book, *How Male Privilege Hurts Women*, Kate Manne analyzes the phenomenon of involuntary celibacy, which is an extreme form of male chauvinism. They generally refer to men who think they cannot find a female partner. They are generally extremely patriarchal and hate women. They are generally active on the Internet and are good at committing online violence against women. (Kate Manne, 2020). There have been many incel terrorist attacks abroad. *Pick Me Boy* can easily fall into the incel trap if it goes to extremes. They laugh at themselves on the Internet hoping to get women’s attention. Perhaps their original purpose is not really to get women’s love, but to occupy a place in the patriarchal male hierarchy. Girls’s attention is their currency and is used to win over men and a tool for purchasing extraordinary status in a patriarchal male hierarchy. So they target not just women, but men who they think are better than them and holding them back. Just like *Pick Me Boy*, he laughs at himself as a good man, not as good as a bad man who has a good figure and is popular with the opposite sex.

**CONCLUSION**

This article explores the *Pick Me Boy* trend on TikTok Indonesia and its manifestations of misogyny. Through a qualitative analysis of TikTok videos, comments, and user-generated content, this study highlights the various ways in which the “*Pick Me Boy*” trend perpetuates misogynistic beliefs and practices. The findings show that, on the one hand, *Pick Me Boy* constructs hybrid masculinity by describing himself as caring about or being in touch with his feminine side to create social distance between himself and men who adhere to traditional representations of masculinity. On the other hand, while men incorporate what they consider feminine characteristics into their identities, they reinforce rather than challenge the symbolic boundaries of gender and the resulting gender hierarchies. Ultimately, men are able to adopt the language of caring to gain more prestige while reinforcing gender inequality and male dominance. At the same time, *Pick Me Boys* are part of a group that does not enjoy the benefits of patriarchy in real life. On the one hand, they will attract the attention of women through self-deprecation on the Internet, but at the same time, if women see through their skills and psychology, once they are rejected, they will blame women for the reasons without thinking about their own reasons, thus triggering misogyny. *Pick Me Boy* depreciate themselves on the Internet and laugh at themselves in the hope of getting women's attention, not just because they want to get the patriarchal benefits they should get under the patriarchy, but at the same time, they use women as a tool for them to display status from patriarchal hierarchy. So they target not just women, but men who they think are better than them and holding them back.

More than 1 billion people around the world are using tik tok. Based on this *Pick Me Boy* issue that is popular in today’s TikTok culture, this study uses TikTok to observe the performance of *Pick Me Boy* in a patriarchal society. Future research can explore more deeply among men identity in *Pick Me Boy* trend. Since the most recent study was conducted on the social media platform TikTok, further research could identify in more detail the manifestations of misogyny contained in the *Pick Me Boy* phrase through various social media platforms other than TikTok.
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