

Masculinity discourse on media text: A critical review about news about violence on online news portals

Wacana maskulinitas dalam teks media: sebuah tinjauan kritis atas berita kekerasan dalam situs berita online

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Abstract

Media as a medium plays a significant role in strengthening gender concept in society. Female's sexualities are viewed as an object of judgement for the media. For the sake of men readers' satisfaction, media justifies itself in its attempts to exploit women sexuality. Masculine's way of thinking has been perpetuated in reports about women. Masculine men are considered empowering female's bodies. Violence acts are considered as the form of masculine domination over feminine beings. This research aims to dismantle how media construct their texts on masculine discourses on online news portals. Online news portals are required to be swift in uploading news and using their acquired resources; thus, they perpetuate this masculine discourse. Critical discourse analysis of Van Dijk was employed to unravel masculine discourse structures on media texts at the largest news portals in Indonesia, Alexa.com; and Tribunnews.com; which belong to a corporate media, Kompas Gramedia. The findings of this research state that online news portals and their acquired resources strengthen violence labelling as a part of masculine domination over feminine beings.

Keywords: masculinity discourse, media text, online site news, violence news

Abstrak

Media sebagai medium, berperan signifikan dalam menguatkan konsep gender dalam masyarakat. Seksualitas perempuan dipandang sebagai sesuatu yang layak dihakimi oleh media. Demi kepuasan pembaca laki-laki, media membenarkan dirinya dalam upaya-upaya eksploitasi seksualitas perempuan. Cara-cara berpikir maskulin ini telah menjadi upaya-upaya yang dilanggengkan dalam memberitakan perempuan. Mereka yang dianggap maskulin dianggap berkuasa atas tubuh perempuan. Tindakan kekerasan dianggap bentuk dominasi maskulinitas atas mereka yang berlabel feminim. Penelitian ini berusaha membongkar bagaimana media melakukan kontstruksi dalam teks-teks berita utamanya dalam wacana-wacana kekerasan pada situs berita online. Situs berita online yang memiliki karakteristik dituntut cepat dalam mengunggah berita, menggunakan sumber daya yang dikuasainya turut andil melanggengkan wacana maskulinitas ini. Metode analisis wacana kritis Van Dijk digunakan sebagai metode yang bertujuan mengurai struktur wacana maskulinitas dalam teks media di situs berita online terbesar Indonesia versi Alexa.com, Tribunnews.com, yang merupakan unit usaha milik korporasi media, Kompas Gramedia. Hasil dari penelitian ini adalah situs berita online telah dengan segala sumber daya yang dikuasainya menguatkan pelabelan kekerasan sebagai bagian dari keistimewaan dominasi maskulinitas atas mereka yang dilabelkan feminim.

Kata kunci: berita kekerasan, situs berita online, teks media, wacana maskulinitas

Introduction

Discussing about masculinity on media texts cannot be separated from how media frame female sexuality. Female sexuality is viewed as a commercial object and insinuated as a privilege for male. Those kinds of insinuation cannot be separated from binary opposition's way of thinking and always attached to female bodies. A reverberating label of "good woman" is always attached to women who act in accordance with women-related myth, and media conveniently attaches "not a good woman" label for women (Santi 2006:7-8). Raped-victim women are so conveniently attached as "not good women" using masculine standpoint.

Susilo (2015:223) explained that online portals news put forward fantasy satisfaction and sexual image for readers on some rape news. Meanwhile, Poerwandari (2016:36) explained that it is influenced by values and myths among society which consider female sexuality as value-free. Poerwandari (2016:36) further described that females are more demanded than males to defend their “self-value” (purity) and muffle their sexualities.

Vasiliadou et al. (2005:8), a team of gender and women studies from Northern Cyprus, found that media systematically conducts some oppressive acts toward women. Those acts are conducted using a combination of resource and space, which are inaccessible by women. Vasiliadou et al. (2005:9) also concluded that media is a part of women’s problems and not as a solution for women vulnerability. Media intensifies women’s position as those who need to be treated passively, instead (Tong 2010:44, Susilo 2015:221).

Wood (2005:234) explained that media illustrates men and masculinity in a narrative as aggressive, dominant, and major decision maker. Media describes those characters as some gifts for men as the consequences of masculinity. Meanwhile, media displays femininity in a contradictive narrative with the masculine one. Females are illustrated as dramatic beings. Media are occupied with binary opposition’s view. Good women are narrated as women focusing on their households, beautiful, love their families, obey their men, and love other people. While bad women are narrated in contrast with those labels (Wood 2005:234).

Based on research data revealed by Independent Journalist Alliance – *Aliansi Jurnalis Independen* (AJI), it was reported that in 2014 there was a shift in accessing news among society. Conventional methods in accessing news (newspaper, television, radio) have been abandoned and shifted to digital method through online news portals (Margianto & Syaefullah 2012:38-39). AJI’s findings are in line with the growth of internet users in Indonesia. The data from Indonesia Internet Service Providers – *Asosiasi Penyedia Jasa Internet Indonesia* (2015:22) indicated a significant increase of internet users from 7.8% in 2005 to 34.9% in 2014. The 27.1% increase in one decade indicated a positive correlation with AJI data. These dynamics and trends shifting are examined by several media giants, such as *Kompas gramedia* which launched Kompas.com and Tribunnews.com to solidify its domination in the media market. Tribunnews.com was established by *Kompas gramedia* using regional newspaper network all over Indonesia. Surprisingly, Tribunnews.com was the number one online news portal in Indonesia at the first semester of 2016 according to Alexa.com version (website traffic measurement site).

This article re-questions how news texts on online portal constructed violence discourse on females. It sets a fundamental question for researches on media feminism, particularly how females are discoursed on journalists-written texts. Specifically, this research focuses on media texts uploaded on online news portal which are demanded to upload news swiftly and on real time. News on Tribunnews.com are selected as the object in this research.

Research Method

The author utilizes critical discourse analysis from Van Dijk. Referenced to Sobur (2001:74), the author specifically observed three structures, namely macro (thematic), superstructure (schematic), and micro (semantic, syntax, stylistic, rhetoric). Van Dijk’s critical discourse analysis lucidly and painstakingly unveils a hidden discourse on the media. This approach means to dismantle hidden discourses on media texts and specifically unravel social constructs spread by the media on its news’ texts, particularly those related to masculinity discourse on rape news. Paltridge (2006:9) explained that discourse at the same time shapes and be shaped by the world; thus, the meaning of text itself is always influenced by discourse.

The author researched news texts uploaded on Tribunnews.com and its regional channel networks. The author specified news about violence on women from 2014 to 2015. Those news were selected by their significance in reporting violence on women.

Results and Discussion

Masculinity Discourse

Irigaray (1985) argued that the source of every female-related texts is originated from sexuality, femininity, and female bodies. Irigaray grounded this posit based on the context of patriarchal culture in society. Patriarchal viewpoint causes various writing on women circling around those themes. Aditya (2016:51) explained that socialization of patriarchal culture makes masculinity discourse and construction influence society's interpretation on texts. Aditya (2016:51-52) further affirmed that since we were young, we were indoctrinated that men possess high level of libido and it is perfectly normal if they cannot control it. Terrifyingly, this view is further encouraged by how female bodies are viewed as symbols of powerlessness.

Susilo (2015:221-222) explained that discussing masculinity as the binary opposition of femininity cannot be separated from cultural context which shaped those kinds of interpretation. Walby (2014:193) in her book, which is titled 'Theorizing Patriarchy', stated that masculinity-wrapped-violence conducted by men to women are wide-ranging and encompassing sexual assault, domestic violence, rape, workplace's sexual harassment, and sexual harassment toward children. Walby (2014:193-194) further concluded that masculinity-wrapped violence characterizes a common social relationship pattern between men and women.

On the media, particularly online portals, the news heavily emphasizes on masculinity and greatly overlook femininity. It is easy to encounter news titles which are oblivious to gender sensitivity and fortify masculinity domination instead. Some findings by National Committee of Women – *Komnas Perempuan* (2014:158) illustrated some news titles which reinforced masculinity domination and cornered woman sexuality. Titled like "Palpitating Erotic Dancer in Blora" is uploaded along with a big picture of a dancing and scantily clothed Central Asian woman; "A Tragic Story of a Porn Star" which came along a topless picture of Savannah's movie star; and "Boys of Kalideres Terminal Going Crazy in Ravishing a Pandeglang Girl." Other news titles are similarly sensational by exhibiting female sexuality as men's subordinate, such as "Contractual Marriage with Expatriates in Batam" which also included a topless picture of a young girl.

Ibrahim and Akhmad (2014:3-4) argued that media has power to influence society's future. Ibrahim and Akhmad applicably demonstrated that how media illustrated society's stereotype on sexually and ethnically minority groups further strengthen marginalization toward those groups in the society. According to Ibrahim and Akhmad, it is attached to how strong media's grip toward society is.

Meanwhile, Prabasmoro (2006:80) revealed that amidst patriarchal society, female bodies are "consumed" as objects to stare, touch, be sexualized, of men's desires, and ideology. Generally, females are consumed and perceived as a literal object, which is to accept any kinds of acts (passively).

While in Hyde's research, psychologically both males and females are attracted toward erotic materials. However, the society is also heavily influenced by media's social construction, so that females are "not freed" in sexual expression. It is considered taboo and bad for females to respond to sexuality (Junaidi 2012:39).

Masculinity and females within rape and murder's frame

Females, as stated by Junaidi (2012:39) in his research, are associated as those who “do not deserve to represent their sexualities,” but it is reasonable for them to be an object to satisfy men’s desire. Therefore, we often see rape-murder case in which females become the victim and be turned into a newsworthy material, or a “headline,” by the mass media.

In dissecting masculinity discourse within rape and murder news’ frames, the researcher utilized news uploaded on November 27th, 2014. The news was written by Ervan Handoko (writer) and edited by Agung Budi Santoso. The news told about rape and murder of a woman.

Editorial staffs of Tribunnews.com wrote a title: “Resisting while being raped by 6 guys, this girl was dragged, poured in gasoline, and burnt alive” and put it on international rubric. The discourse brought by Tribunnews implied: ‘because the victim resisted (fighting) the suspects (male) who outnumbered her and possessed some power on her sexuality, so the victim (female) was burnt alive.’ This is considered as an attempt from Tribunnews in concealing the act of sexual harassment, as well as influencing readers that if a woman were to be raped, she’d better obey rather than being burnt alive or murdered.

This news’ lead started from location description in the southeast of New Delhi, India. Then, the news was continued by the main theme of the news, re-affirming that the woman was burnt because she attempted to resist while being raped. The news’ lead was written as: “In the tragedy, a teenage girl died from being burnt outside her residence by six guys who were angry, because she resisted when they tried to rape her.” The sentence structure re-affirmed the initial discourse written on the title, where the editorial staffs seemed to dismiss the sexual harassment suffered by the victim. The diction of ‘six angry guys’ seemed to imply that the act of attempted rape is justified. This diction reiterates that female is male’s sexual object, thus, she is not allowed to resist a rape attempt; and if she resists, the men have the right to be mad.

In line with Wood’s (2005) statement that media presented females as victims and sexual objects for men, the standpoint of rape news is always viewed from male gaze. This standpoint is commonly exhibited by the mainstream media in cinematic studies (Rohman 2013:176). The usage of ‘rape’ diction in the headline portrays female body as an object whose power relation is subordinated by male masculinity (the rape perpetrators).

Krishnan & Dighe (1990) explained that female characters in media representation are labeled as those who must sacrifice, compared to men who are characterized as self-centered (egocentric). Krishnan and Dighe’s research used Indian television as a research sample and explained that the existing media constructions emphasize that females are male supporters. Whatever men do is right, while a good woman should be submissive and willing to sacrifice everything for the sake of men. This statement seems to be in line with what is constructed in the previously mentioned news. Journalists reconstructed (reassured) that the female should have been willing to sacrifice to be raped for the sake of male satisfaction. Because of the resistance, this poorly-labeled female accepted sanctions to be burned alive.

Male satisfaction (rapist) is symbolized by how they mastered the sexuality of the victim. While the victim (female) (attributed to femininity) is represented to be subject to the power of masculinity. The consequences of such defiance can lead to death for women.

Furthermore, the author also used a news uploaded on November 14th, 2014 by Tribunnews.com and edited by Sugiyarto. The editor titled the news as: "Molesting his domestic worker, a government official in Malang will soon be examined by police" and placed it in the Regional rubric. The discourse highlighted in this news is rape committed by one of Malang government official to his underage domestic worker.

This news' tone was rather positive, as the journalist underlined employment administration issue of the perpetrator. However, using 'molesting' as the news title to replace 'rape' semantically undermined the woman's dignity. Molestation, based on Dictionary of Bahasa Indonesia, means violating a woman's honor. This phrase contains a derogatory meaning toward woman, because it implies that woman is a helpless object who has no right over her own honor. This phrase is even more derogatory than 'rape,' which means 'subjugating someone by force' based on the Dictionary of Bahasa Indonesia. In line with Prabasmoro's (2006:80) statement that within a patriarchal society, female bodies are "consumed" as an object of gaze, touch, sexual, men's desire, and ideology.

The news was built from fact exposure that the underage victim experienced sexual violence. It is also evidenced through the statement of Kanit PPA, Polres Malang, regarding the suspect's summoning process. Overall, the news presented by Tribunnews Surabaya bureau (SURYA) was rather positive and chose the status of the suspect as a civil servant as the news standpoint.

Other standpoint which degraded a woman was presented by another news from SURYA about a rape case in Gresik, 40 kilometers from Surabaya. The author compared it to a news uploaded on December 2nd 2014 and edited by Sugiyarto. Editorial team of Tribunnews titled the news as "Three boys in Gresik raped their neighbor in the middle of a field," and put it on regional rubric. The discourse adopted for this news is a girl is being raped in turn.

The author observed that the news' schematic was arranged in bits and pieces. It can be seen from six paragraphs which consist of merely one sentence, particularly from the third to the eighth paragraph. This fragmented scheme shows that the journalist was lack of in-depth information before writing this news. It is evidenced from journalist's incapability to write a factual and well-organized report. Lack of information problem is further reinforced by the minimum number of direct quote (only one) in the article, which was from the Kasatreskrim (Head of Investigation and Criminal Unit) of Polres Gresik. It indicates that journalists did not cover both sides as the basic ethics of journalism. Instead, the journalist only used the Police's version, which indicated that the information was not 100 per cent accurate. The journalist also did not interview or collect information from the victim, perpetrator, and witnesses of such an abominable act. This journalist's inadequacy shows that she/he did not have the sensitivity of female as victim, which regrettably also escaped the editor's radar and observation so that this news' schematic is lack of credibility.

Meanwhile, the semantics compiled in this news started with the relationship background between the perpetrator and the victim who are neighbors in one of the villages in Gresik (the village name was clearly mentioned in the news). The prejudice was built around the fact that the victim was initially caught by the perpetrator while she was making out with his boyfriend whose name was not disguised in the news. These undisguised naming can be considered as journalism *faux pas*, as it will make it easier for readers to identify the victim of this rape case. In addition, there is a hidden meaning from this phrase: "The lecherous act of perpetrator began when SA was making out with her boyfriend, Wahyu (17), beside a local rice field," at the third paragraph; and also "while the couple was engrossed in making out on a motorcycle, they were caught in the act by the perpetrators who threatened to bring the victim to the Village Hall," at the fourth paragraph. The journalist wrote it as if the rape happened as a sanction of "immoral" act by the victim and his boyfriend who were making out on the motorcycle. The news flow was induced by male gaze and did not place the rape as a result of the perpetrators' out-of-control lust; instead, the readers were steered to think that the rape was a sanction for the victim's 'immoral' act with her boyfriend. The journalist's logic is questionable, particularly regarding her/his sensitivity to the female victim, because it seemed to say that "immoral" act should be sanctioned by "immoral" act as well. Wood (2005) noted that media portray the male (masculine) figure as being aggressive, dominant, and involved in decision-making activities. The media further describes it as rewards of masculinity. This reward is possessed by the male perpetrators who punished the female victim for making out with her boyfriend at the rice field.

This news illustrated the flaw of news editor responsible for the news in maintaining news quality and credibility. It further strengthens the posit of Vasiliadou et al. (2005:9) which stated that females are powerless and tend to be passive in the face of media. Wood (2005) affirmed that as long as media structure is owned by those consider themselves masculine, females will always be exploitation object of their ignorance.

Female as an object of masculinity exploitation

To reveal the discourse that females are the exploitation object of masculinity, the author used news uploaded on November 4th, 2014 and titled “Latif smothered Rofingah to death in order to end their affair.” This news was written by a Tribun Jateng’s journalist, Radlis, and edited by Y. Gustaman. This news was put on regional rubric. The adopted discourse was related to a murder of the perpetrator’s affair partner.

Schematic of this article was similar to the Gresik news on rape discourse where the scheme was put in bits and pieces. The first two paragraphs were started by the journalist’s opinion and fantasy. Using sentences like “What was done by Akhmad Latif Arifin (28) was silly,” at the first paragraph and “He looks even more silly for ending Rofingah’s life merely to end their affairs and ends up arrested and detained by Polres Kebumen on Monday (3/11/2014) for further investigation,” at the second paragraph illustrate journalist’s personal opinion (that the deed was silly), as if saying that the perpetrator’s act of killing a woman was funny and laughable. Using such pattern for news introduction shows that the journalist did not obtain adequate in-depth information before writing the news. It is also evidenced from his inability to construct a well-organized fact report. In line with the previous news from Gresik, the lack of information depth is also worsened by merely using one direct quote from the police. Again, it indicates that the journalist did not cover both sides of the news as the basic journalism ethics. The journalist only used police’s version; thus, this information could not be considered 100% accurate. Moreover, he did not interview or collect information from the victim, perpetrators, and witnesses. Worse, he turned a murder news into a laughable news, showing his carelessness, incompetence, and inadequacy in putting information together before writing a news. Therefore, based on the schematic, this news can be considered lack of credibility.

Using “finishing off” diction to replace “murder” at the second paragraph reflects that the journalist considered the victim (female) as an object (a thing) which has no power over her own life. Prabasmoro (2006:80) explained that among patriarchal society, female bodies are “consumed” as the objects of gaze, touch, sexual, men’s desire, and ideology. Female is generally “consumed” and perceived as an object who literally accepts any acts or conducts (passively). Likewise, the victim whose life was taken against her will is considered as an object and treated as one.

Stylistic or emphasis used to write the news is a third person’s point of view. It perceives that the victim was murdered, because the perpetrator had no other way to hide their affair; thus, the point of view is highly patriarchal, as it positions a male in power to decide the life and death of his partner (a female). Using an excuse of ending their affair, he murdered the victim; however, it was not considered as something malevolent by the journalist. He considered it silly, instead. A journalist without empathy needs to be a concern for an editor before the editor uploads the news online. Unfortunately, editorial staffs of Tribunnews keep missing such thing and remain uploading similar news which degrades females.

Masculine domination over female’s bodies: a discourse on violence against women

In order to reveal a discourse on violence against women, the author selected a news uploaded by Tribunnews’ editorial staffs under this link: <http://www.tribunnews.com/metropolitan/2014/11/27/nisa-prt-di-perumahan-elite-menteng-ngaku-disetrika-majikannya>. This news was written by Glery Lazuardi, edited by Hasanudin Aco, and uploaded on November 27th, 2014 under the headline of “A domestic worker in Menteng elite residence admits being ironed by her boss.”

In this news, editor gave a bombastic, extravagant, and borderline exploiting the victim. The title identifies a domestic worker who is associated with poverty, then contrasted with "Menteng elite residence" which implies rich, high class, and only accessible to those wealthy enough to buy it. Contrasting these two words illustrated a harassment from editor (Hasanudin Aco) toward domestic worker as a profession for the poor. Using "admits being ironed by her boss" also contained a tendency of degrading a woman, as if implying that a female domestic worker is whiny, spoilt, and merely invented the facts. This news editor seemed to judge the victim before the court did and indirectly abused the victim using his headline.

This news' schematic is pretty detailed in describing the facts about the abuse of domestic worker; however, using 'woman' term implies that gender association in this news is not correctly positioned. 'Woman' term is rather derogatory for female as a gender. Susilo (2014) stated that 'woman' is derived from Javanese term, *wani ditata* (*wani* = willingness; *ditata* = being set up; can be implied as 'submissive'), which positions female as a subordinate of those controlling them (masculine), males. The antonym of 'women' is 'men', which in Javanese derived from *priya* (those who are in control) and usually attached to the term *priyayi* (a title for a noble); thus, using 'woman' term causes inequality in explaining gender relationship (gender identification). Susilo (2014) further explained that 'female' is a more suitable term to identify and label those who are feminine. 'Female' is derived from Sanskrit, *Empu*, which means "the owner"—those who own. This context clearly positions female identity equals to those identify themselves as masculine.

The discourse adopted by Tribunnews' editorial was about abuse against Indonesian migrant workers in Hongkong. This eye-catching headline, according to the author, seems to exaggerate and exploits violence against the victim. Using 'vacuum cleaner' term highlighted the tool used by the boss to abuse the victim, so that the readers could imagine how cruel the abuse is. Indirectly, it exploited the violence suffered by the victim. Hermes (2007:203) affirmed that female is a beneficial object to be commercially exploited by the media.

This news' schematic was composed by the victim's testimonial on the court, along with the evidences strengthening the verdict against the boss (perpetrator). The details of torture were written clearly by the journalist. The physical abuse was also circumstantially explained as the news' core. Violence, which becomes the news' nuance and color, is a part of media commodification in commercializing female suffering

Viewing masculine domination on media discourse

The strength of masculine domination on media texts becomes the root of problem about media. It needs an explosive fight to go against such power. Media has extensive power, resources, and spaces which is posited by Vasiliadou et al. (2005) as hampering justice for female. On the other hand, injustice keeps being created by media texts and reinforces oppression against female.

In order to fight for the discourse of equal dominance on the media, education for journalists who are aware of masculinity domination can be done. Many doubt the struggle against media power. The media power, which is described by Ibrahim and Bachrudin (2014) and Vasiliadou et al. (2005) as the power of capital and publication permit (from the state), can drive the discourse on what is good and bad and the power to perpetuate values. It needs a thorough suggestion which comes from a traditional criticism to turn the media into a channel to voice injustice and equality.

Wood (2005) explained that control over the editorial staffs, as the headquarters of media production dominated by masculine power, cannot be controlled by females. The number of females in media editorial staffs is less than 10 per cent and they do not occupy stakeholder positions in mass media industry. However, it does not eliminate a chance for educational opportunities in gender sensitivity education for journalists and editors. Education shall bring enlightenment to those media texts producer to prioritize ethics and gender sensitivity. Aren't their mothers, their wives, and their sisters, all female? The media text producers should also put

themselves into the victim's shoes, imagining what if the rape victims were their wives or their sisters; or what if the burnt survivors are their mothers? This gender sensitivity will create empathy in producing media texts.

To oppose patriarchal powers does not have to go through a frontal way, such as boycotting media texts. Such resistance can be done through education to the media. It requires seriousness and support of media owners and government in arranging gender-based education, started from formal school and early education for prospective journalists. In line with Bourdieu's thought in Ritzer (2014), the traditional gender order must continue for the sake of continuity and common benefit of the world in general.

Conclusion

Media (specifically Tribunnews.com in this research) lies in dilemmatic position. On the one hand, it faces the demand to swiftly present news for people as an online media. On the other hand, it needs to fulfill news credibility and ethics. Based on the descriptive analysis on the news, a dilemma is detected in this cyber era.

Meanwhile, female as a gender identity keeps facing oppression from media constructions. Females have no access to power and media keeps commercializing women as news commodity. Masculinity is discoursed as a natural advantage of men to subjugate those with feminine attributes. Helplessness over masculine domination is commodified by media as something commercial and beneficial for business. Misfortunes befallen on females are deemed natural if those females attempt to fight such masculine domination.

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