

## **Inequality in Reporting Sexual Violence in Online Media During New Normal Era from the Perspective of Feminism**

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### **Abstract**

Issues of sexual violence have been reported being imbalanced by online media. This imbalance can be seen in the media's intensity, object, and motives for writing the news. This tendency indicates that the media is still taking sides in disclosing the incidents of sexual violence that occurred. The purpose of this study is to complement the findings of previous studies by focusing on how online media reports of sexual violence issues. This study uses a descriptive qualitative research based on content analysis through a feminist approach. Data was obtained through primary and secondary sources. Primary

data is obtained from 5 online mainstream media selected using purposive sampling. The five media are *cnnindonesia.com*; *Detik.com*; *Kompas.com*; *Tempo.co*, and *Tribun.com*. At the same time, secondary data was obtained from online sources from several sites related to the research theme, including the Press Council, the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Children Protection, and the National Commission for Women. This study focuses on three months between January - March 2022 to investigate news about sexual violence in online media. The results of this study indicate that first, the high incidence of violence during the three months reached 119 reports. Second, in writing essays, the media tend to lean towards the point of view (object) of the apparatus rather than victims and perpetrators. Third, the media has a high motive for reporting warnings and exploitation motives. Based on the three results of the mapping of sexual violence reporting, the five online media tend to show injustice in writing reasons.

**Keywords:** New Normal, Online Media Coverage, Sexual Violence, Inequality.

## A. Introduction

In the new normal era, issues of sexual violence have been reported disproportionately by online media. The disproportionate reporting can be seen in two dimensions, namely: 1). The media frequently portrays the victim side in exploitative words and diction that arouse readers' urges to engage in sexual behavior through representations of pornographic systems (Rossy & Wahid, 2015);(Choiriyati, 2015; Prihandini, 2021). According to Prihandini (2021), readers have their interpretations of incidents of sexual violence based on what they read in the media. 2). Online media's reporting on sexual violence prioritizes current incidents as the main subject and disregards the social context (Samodro, 2021).. The journalistic code of ethics, which mandates that the media abide by the values of being factual, impartial, and exercising good

faith in protecting the identity of victims of sexual violence, is not in line with this phenomenon, legally or formally (Dewan Pers, 2008). Based on these facts, it can be understood that the phenomenon of media imbalance in presenting news about sexual violence, besides being able to affect public opinion, will also affect people's attitudes towards these kinds of incidents.

According to the year-end notes from Komnas Perempuan for 2020, there were 1,425 cases of cybergender-based violence (KGBC). Comparing this statistic to the prior year, there was a 348% rise. Only 10% of the thousands of cases can be resolved in a courtroom (Lumbanrau, 2021). If such is the case, and the media unfairly reports the news, this will only further the discrimination against women.

The previous studies regarding the imbalance in reporting on the issue of sexual violence tended to emphasize two aspects. First, studies that look at the media in writing cases using a single method that includes content analysis, framing analysis, and critical discourse analysis (Sarjoko; Dewi Sinta Nuriyah, 2021); (Najib, 2020); (Rossy & Wahid, 2015) ; (Puspitasari & Muktiyo, 2017) (Latief, 2019). The study conducted by Latief (2019) focuses on how culturally radical feminist views see women as victims of violence. Women's reporting is still portrayed as the target of discriminatory reporting. Women frequently characterize instances of sexual abuse as victims who are powerless and ostracized. Second, studies that only focus on one particular case as an object of research (Yuliasuti Sahan & Iswardani Witarti, 2021); (Novianty & Burhanudin, 2020); (Ihsani, 2021). As Ihsani (2021) emphasized, victim blaming has been done unilaterally by the media, which will hurt the victim directly or indirectly. Based on this fact, we require a study that can examine instances of sexual violence from the reporting viewpoint and utilize a feminist strategy in presenting the news because the literature in its research is still restricted to using a single approach.

This study aims to complement the previous studies, which view reporting on sexual violence in the media as monodisciplinary and pay little attention to aspects of media alignment that tend to harm the victims. The study's intended partiality relates to the news's intensity, the news subject's viewpoint, and the news's motivations. Meanwhile, sexual violence is understood as an act or attack that is carried out on a person's physical, mental, or psychological integrity. The existence of unequal power or strength in a culture and skewed gender preconceptions are the leading causes of this sexual violence (Fakih, 2020). Therefore, sexual violence is a severe violation of human rights because it has deprived victims of their rights as citizens with dignity.

The media have publicly reported on instances of sexual violence in society. Unfortunately, not all media sites report this event objectively based on the principle of balance according to the journalistic code of ethics. This study is based on the argument that media balance in reporting cases of sexual violence is essential in the framework of upholding human rights following the 1945 Constitution. Following this, the media's function is crucial in defending society against discrimination and supporting justice.

This study focuses on reporting sexual violence in the new normal period by documenting the intensity, issues, objects, and motives for reporting sexual assault in online media for three (3) months, from January to March 2022. This time was chosen based on the high number of cases of sexual violence in Indonesia at the beginning of 2022. This descriptive and qualitative research takes a feminism approach to content analysis (Creswell, 2015); (Eriyanto, 2013). Content analysis is used to identify and classify the object of study into several study themes that are appropriate to the research objectives. Meanwhile, the grouping is intended to get a clear picture of the media attention's articles. In line with this, a feminist approach is used to sharpen the analysis of to what extent incidents of sexual violence have relevance to gender

issues (Fakih, 2020) so that media sensitivity to social problems can be seen. Nine TPKS Law-based criteria were used to select the sexual violence theme, including rape, sexual harassment, forced marriage, forced contraception, sexual exploitation, forced prostitution, forced abortion, and sexual slavery.

Data was obtained through primary and secondary sources. The primary data was obtained through news tracking by five mainstream online media, which were selected using a purposive sampling. CNNIndonesia.com, detik.com, Kompas.com, Tempo.co, and Tribun.com are the five media. Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained from online sources from several sites linked to the research theme, including the Press Council, Indonesian Broadcasting Commission, Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, and National Commission on Women.

Data collection started with a search for articles reporting sexual violence in five media sites within three months, from January to March 2022, using the keyword 'sexual violence'. News that doesn't fit the theme will be excluded from the data. The news with the keyword 'sexual violence' shows 119 reports from five online media outlets with different portions. The collected news is then grouped (coded) into five themes: education, exploitation, defense, judgment, and warning. Each article is arranged into a table and then calculated based on the number and percentage. The results of these numbers are read and discussed again to be presented (display data) as research results. After the data is interpreted into results, the next step of this study is to analyze it by providing meaning related to why and how news is constructed. The feminist approach is applied as an analytical tool to hone the perspective on the content of reporting on sexual violence.

## **B. Discussion**

Three significant findings were made by this study on the disparity in the reporting of sexual violence by online media. First,

the issue of sexual violence has received unequal attention from five online media during the first quarter of 2022. This inequality is shown by the results of studies, which reveal significant media coverage differences. Second, the press carries out the imbalance in reporting, which tends to be more partial to one of the parties who are the object of the news, namely victims, perpetrators of violence, and the apparatus or government. Third, the motive for reporting on sexual violence tends to tend to exploit and warn rather than defend and educate. The three critical findings of this study will be described and analyzed carefully in this study.

### **1. The intensity of reporting on sexual violence**

This study found that for three months during the post-Covid 19 (new normal) recovery process, reporting on sexual violence incidents in five online media sites reached high numbers, with an average of 40 monthly stories. This phenomenon was revealed from the findings of a study in which digital search results using the keyword "sexual violence" obtained data on 119 reports distributed into nine (9) forms of sexual violence based on the 2022 Sexual Violence Crime Law (TPKS). According to the data, TribuneNews.com devotes 33% of its news space to stories about sexual violence. Contrarily, just 16% and 14% of the area on detik.com and tempo.co, respectively, is dedicated to discussing incidents of sexual violence in society. The attention of the two media in quantity is far below the coverage by tribunnews.com.

Meanwhile, two other online media sites; kompas.com, and cnnindonesia.com, placed their reporting in a moderate position on the issue of sexual violence, with a proportion under 20%. Incidents of sexual violence tend to be seen as a normal phenomenon that occurs in social life. This shows that the two media outlets do not yet consider instances of gender unfairness to be

newsworthy. These data made it clear that online media, as a means of informing the public, has not yet expressed a balanced concern regarding incidents of sexual violence in society.

**Table 1. Distribution of News on Sexual Violence *Online Media***

No	Media	Total	%
1	Tribunnews.com	39	33
2	Kompas.com	23	19
3	Cnnindonesia.com	22	18
4	Tempo.co	19	16
5	Detik.com	16	14
	<b>Total</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>100</b>

Based on the data in Table 1 show that, on average, 40 incidences of sexual violence are reported each month, filling the news section of online media. This phenomenon indicates that cases of sexual violence have colored the face of online media in Indonesia every day with varying intensities, whether through the repetition of the same case reports or the reporting of distinct cases. Meanwhile, from the high number of pieces of sexual violence in online media, this study found the two most frequent forms of sexual violence, namely rape and sexual harassment, which were spread evenly in five online media. Rape cases occupy the highest rank in terms of the number of reports, namely 38 (58%). This number was followed by claims of sexual harassment, which became the topic of 22 articles (33%). Thus, cases of sexual violence in the form of acts of rape and sexual harassment occupy the dominant theme in online media coverage during the new normal period.

The above facts can be interpreted as indicating that the media has made cases of sexual violence an

event that must be brought to the public. Although the intensity of the coverage has a different purpose. The intended aim is to demonstrate the media’s sensitivity and support for instances involving women. However, there is also possible that the press just uses this intensity to attract readers.

On the other hand, online media pays less attention to the five types of sexual violence listed in the regulations—sexual torture, sexual exploitation, forced prostitution, sexual slavery, and forced abortions. Only one or two reports totaled the five issues’ publications. At the same time, the five online media that are the subject of this study do not publish two cases of sexual violence: forced contraception and forced marriage (Table 2). Based on these data, it can be seen that there is an imbalance in reporting on the issue of sexual violence by the media. This inequality is marked by the high number of reports on cases of rape and harassment on the one hand and the neglect of issues of forced contraception and forced marriage. The phenomenon is inversely related to the social reality that child marriage is prevalent in Indonesia (Aisyah, 2022).

**Table 2. Sexual violence in its various forms in online media**

No	Violence Forms	Media					Total
		Tribun	Kompas	Cnn	Tempo	Detik	
1.	Rape	13	4	8	4	9	38
2.	Sexual harassment	4	2	5	4	7	22
3.	Sexual abuse	1	0	1	0	0	2
4.	Sexual Exploitation	1	0	0	0	0	1
5.	Forced Contraceptive	0	0	0	0	0	0
6.	Forced marriage	0	0	0	0	0	0
7.	Forced prostitution	0	0	1	0	0	1



8.	Sexual slavery	0	1	0	0	0	1
9.	Forced abortion	0	0	1	0	0	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>66</b>

The extensive media coverage given to incidents of sexual violence suggests that this problem still affects women. Based on the explanation above, it can be seen that the reality of online media reporting on the issue of sexual violence deserves appreciation on the one hand, considering that the five online media in this study are mainstream media that already have a place for readers. On the other hand, it is crucial to serve as a sign of the condition of society, which is still insecure about perpetrators of sexual violence. The large number of reports can also be seen as a sign of increasing efforts to report cases. The public is becoming more aware to speak up and report cases of sexual violence that occur around them.

The results of this study indicate an increasing trend, both in terms of the number of cases published and the level of public awareness of sexual violence. The reality presented by the online media above is in line with the annual records (CATAHU) of Komnas Perempuan in 2021, which show that violence against women is still high yearly. Following physical violence (31%), sexual violence is ranked second (30%). During this phase, the media participates in efforts to highlight sexual violence as a common trigger. The media's alignment may create a new thing for the existence of the media in Indonesia, as the online press Tirto.id has been done in reporting cases of sexual violence. Tirto.id even encouraged establishing policies on handling and preventing sexual violence (Sarjoko; Dewi Sinta Nuriyah, 2021).

According to Indainanto (2020), excessive media coverage is an attempt to legitimize sexual violence

against women. This normalization occurs when the media reports misrepresenting facts by focusing on the controversy and inordinately speculating about the victim's identity. This is found in several online media. For instance, while reporting on news stories, the press still favors using the word "obscene" as opposed to the legal term "sexual violence" to describe acts of sexual violence as crimes against humanity rather than as ordinary occurrences.

Experts have criticized the reporting of instances of sexual violence in Internet media (Ihsani, 2021; Lase, 2021; Novianty & Burhanudin, 2020). Criticism that is related to reporting by online media is more directed at victim-blaming bias and leading public opinion to create panic. In its article highlighting how the media cover cases of sexual assault, Komnas Perempuan underscores the importance of reporting based on two principles: first, writing based on a journalistic code of ethics. Second, news that emphasizes securing the rights of sexual assault victims. Articles 2, 4, 5, and 8 of the journalistic code of ethics provide the fundamental guidelines on conduct that result in sexual harassment and exploitation in particular (Komnas Perempuan, 2015).

However, the frequent reporting by Internet media also demonstrates the significance of the news. Additionally, the media that do the reporting do not have a specific ideology with what is being reported, namely the ideology of feminism. *Tribunnew.com*, *Kompas.com*, *Cnnindonesia.com*, *Tempo.co* and *Detik.com* are five popular online media used in this study that do not adopt a feminist perspective as their reporting philosophy (Yuliastuti & Iswardani Witarti, 2021).

The findings of this study reinforce previous studies, which noted that rape cases occupy the highest position,

followed by topics of sexual harassment (Fahima, 2021). In line with this phenomenon, Komnas Perempuan pointed out that the highest form of reporting on sexual violence was rape (34%), followed by sexual harassment (22%) and trafficking of women for sexual purposes (21%). This is consistent with Komnas Perempuan's Annual Notes (CATAHU), which show increased sexual assault cases yearly. Data shows that in 2020 there were 226,062 cases, and in 2021 it increased to 338,496.

## 2. Objects of Sexual Violence Reporting

The findings of these two studies reveal the partiality of online media in disclosing parties involved in incidents of sexual violence. This alignment is evident from the numerous reports emphasizing the security forces more than the perpetrators and their victims. As shown in Table 3, the apparatus generally gets more attention from online media, which is indicated by the number of reports of 49, or 41%. Victims and perpetrators followed this pattern, receiving 32% and 27%, respectively. The dominance of reporting that favors the apparatus is found in three online media, namely Tribunnews.com, Kompas.com, and tempo.co. Meanwhile, the other two media show different tendencies, with detik.com emphasizing the criminals and cnnindonesia.com being more pro-victim.

**Table 3. Objects of Sexual Violence Reporting**

No	Media	Objects		
		Victims	Perpetrators	Apparatus
1	Tribunnews.com	13	8	18
2	Kompas.com	8	3	12
3	Cnnindonesia.com	10	8	4
4	Tempo.co	2	6	11

5	Detik.com	5	7	4
	Total	38	32	49
	Percentage	32	27	41

Based on the figure of the Table 3, it is clear that the five online media sites that report incidents of sexual violence give the apparatus more room and emphasis. The media is more interested in investigating the actions and viewpoints advanced by the apparatus than in writing about the victims or perpetrators. This shows that the parties' interests in an incident of sexual violence have not been accommodated in media coverage as a channel of information for the public.

This study finds that there are new facts in media studies related to their reporting on the issue of sexual violence. This fact demonstrates how the media emphasizes the side of the apparatus when reporting about sexual violence rather than the side of the perpetrators and victims. In every case of sexual violence, the apparatus took on a more dominant role. This phenomenon is in line with Choiriyati's opinion (2015), which states that the media has a significant influence over influencing public opinion and simultaneously working to increase public awareness of sexual violence incidents.

Public understanding of the role of this apparatus should not conclude that the media is used as a vehicle for forming a good image of the government (Aulia, 2021). To develop a more objective public perception of incidents of sexual violence, it is crucial to have fair reporting that gives balanced attention to authorities, perpetrators, and victims.

### 3. Motives for Reporting Sexual Violence

The third finding of this study is the identification of different motives used by online media in reporting sexual violence. These differences indicate an imbalance between defense, exploitation, judgment, warning, and education. These five motives were discovered based on the outcomes of data coding performed on media reports. The author categorizes and collects based on reasons that have essentially the same or similar characteristics.

The percentage of media pieces with a warning motivation stands at 36.1%, followed by exploitation motivations at 21% and judgment at 19.3%. Meanwhile, online media with motives for defense and education received a small amount, respectively 10.1% and 13.5% (Table 4). This tendency is carried out by two online media outlets, Tribunnews.com and Kompas.com, which focus more on warnings to the public regarding incidents of sexual violence. Meanwhile, only CNN Indonesia.com emphasizes the exploitation side more than other motives.

**Table 4. Motives for Reporting Sexual Violence**

No	Media	Motives				
		Defense	Exploitation	Judgment	Warning	Education
1	Tribunnews.com	4	4	6	20	5
2	Kompas.com	1	3	3	10	6
3	Cnnindonesia.com	3	9	6	4	0
4	Tempo.co	3	2	3	6	5
5	Detik.com	1	7	5	3	0
	Total	12	25	23	43	16
	Percentage	10.1	21	19.3	36.1	13.5

The high warning motive in reporting on the issue of sexual violence indicates that the media considers cases

of sexual violence that have occurred to have seriously endangered social life. This condition is reinforced by the high motive for exploitation, which can be used as an indicator of the increasing vulnerability of society, which has reached a level where it is no longer safe from sexual violence. The exploitation motivation suggests that women who experience sexual violence suffer many victims of media attention.

Even the exploitation motive does not imply a low number in the reporting of occurrences of sexual violence in five online media, which creates a paradox when one considers the high number of warning motivations. Women will become even more of a target for the patriarchal system if this motive of caution is directed toward them, encouraging them to be more vigilant and take better care of themselves. Women are disciplined in conduct to prevent them from being sexual violence victims because, like in the patriarchal paradigm, they are seen as a source of defamation (Kodir, 2021). However, if communicated to all spheres of society and the government, this is a positive first step to facilitate the reporting service system, enhance security, boost education, and tighten prevention so that cases do not worsen.

The high motive for exploitation also indicates that the media is involved as a subject in carrying out structural violence against women. Violence is a form of gender injustice caused by an imbalance of societal power (Musyafak, 2015; Fakhri, 2020). The media indirectly contributes to continuing other violent reporting practices through written narratives. Despite conducting a study on television media, the findings (Santoso, 2011) emphasize the existence of stereotypes and stigma presented by the media in the form of misogynistic values and ideologies that are not beneficial to women. Women

have been hegemonized by the values that society and culture have developed, making it challenging to remain apart from them.

### **C. Conclusion**

The most crucial finding in this study is that the online media's reporting of sexual violence in the new normal era is imbalanced in intensity, object, and motive. The tendency of the media to write news from the apparatus' point of view, even though it has many interpretations, with the passing of the Sexual Violence Act (UU TPKS) as an effort to encourage and support the government. Meanwhile, regarding reporting motives, the media does not fully carry out its role of imparting balanced information to the public due to high warning and exploitation motives, and education and defense purposes have not been given enough attention.

It is hoped that the results of this study can contribute to the scientific journalism of online media so that they are more gender-sensitive in producing news. In addition to having the necessary tools and referring to rules governing the Press Law and the Journalistic Code of Ethics, the media must also comprehend reporting on a topic that involves numerous parties and takes a gendered perspective to preserve its continuity, credibility, and identity.

This research has limitations on online media scope, coverage period, and the nine types of sexual violence used as parameters for reporting sexual violence. In addition, this research did not examine each report's diction. Diction research is required to understand the precise meaning of each word the media uses. Further research is needed to obtain more comprehensive results.

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