# Violence Against Women in Social Media; (Normalization of Sexual Violence in Whatsapp Conversation Texts)

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**Abstract.** Women are confronted by unfair treatment in the form of violence in media. The violence can be in the form of physical violence or symbolic violence. The current development of technology could provide a space for someone to be abusive towards women. Through Whatsapp conversation media, women are likely to get symbolic violence without them realizing it. The violence may be in the form of harsh words camouflaged in a joke or emotional outburst. The research used qualitative research with a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach. The data collection was done by interviewing several women in the youth educator group. The result of this interview shows that the women were often experience symbolic violence from their partner, such as disrespectful words or vulgarity. This type of violence or sexual harassment is common because the perpetrator is the closest person of the victim, either husband or lover. Due to the lack of firm action from these victims often makes the phenomenon become normalized.

**Keywords:** Violence Againts Women · Whatsapp · Media

## 1 Introduction

The development of communications technology grows rapidly, thus enable society to transform from using mainstream media such as newspaper and television into digital media. Moreover, the use of digital technology is existed in the form of various social media consists of several examples used by smartphone or computer user, for instance Facebook, Twitter, Line, BBM, Whatsapp, Instagram, Path, LinkedIn, Snapchat, and others. All of these social media is mostly used by the user in order to communicate and to search any information needed. The society who previously used SMS (short message service) for sending message or chatting has moved to social media such as WhatApp. Whatsapp allows a person to send a message such as text, audio, and picture. Besides, Whatsapp also provides phone and video call services, and allows the users to create group chat as long as the users have internet quota.

Regardless the convenience, Whatsapp conversation also offers opportunity for someone to act violence towards women. Furthermore, the sexual harassment itself is divided into 15 types, some of them are sexual action or the act of forcing someone to get sexual activity, sexual harassment both physically and verbally, sexual exploitation, forced marriage, forced pregnancy and abortion, forced contraception, sexual assault, and sexual control which discriminated women.

According to the data from National Women's Commission in 2021, the case of online gender-based violence increased in 2020, which the number of the case was about 940 which in 2019 only 241 cases. Based on previous research, it shows evidence that online gender-based violence is mostly founded in social media platform like Facebook, Instagram, and Whatsapp. The violence is varied, such as online sexual harassment verbally, online grooming, and revenge porn by spreading explicit photo or video [2].

The data obtained from Komnas Perempuan indicate that women are still perceived as violence object which the case is still in the high number. Women in society are also commonly involved in domestic realm rather than men in public. Women are defined, seen as object, and are not able to show themselves.

The reason of violence towards women is the influence of patriarchal ideology in a society (Sakina, 2017:87). Patriarchal ideology produces a perspective that the identity of boys from their birth are into masculinity ego, meanwhile their femininity aspect is being ignored. For instance, some people from society tolerate men whistling and seducing women while they are crossing the street. The action of a man is considered normal and acceptable, because as a man, they have to be manly while facing a woman, men are considered as seducer, meanwhile women are believed as object or seduced individual and their body are the main reason of the violance's cause.

Patriarchal culture where the men always dominated the women is also presented in someone's romantic relationship. Women is commonly forced to perform any action based on men's order, due to the perspective that they are engaged in a relation. The example is such as overseeing any attribute used by women, saying harsh words, even asking for sexual intercourse. The existence of this culture in Indonesia indirectly affects the action of the men towards the women become a common thing.

Based on the background, the focus of this research is the researcher would like to discuss the domination of men towards women especially the women in youth educator Whatsapp group that become the reason of sexual harassment normalization in Whatsapp conversation.

## 2   Reseach Methodology

The research paradigm used in this research is critical paradigm, which represents the ideology from the Whatsapp conversation (content) of the members in youth educator Whatsapp group. This research is a critical discourse analysis, since it would expose the act of domination in the text message (social media) sending through Whatsapp. In

addition, the approach of Sara Mills is used in order to understand the meaning of the text. The aspects from Mills discourse are as follows:

a. Character

Mills argued that the character of women and men are different. The element of men is evidenced when they experience direct contact, while the women are the element whom to be observed when a character is showed as a object to be seen. Women is presented differently from men which is not about their sexuality, but also regarding their relation with other individual.

From the character outline, the women discourse is detectable from the existing text. Joana Russ mentioned that the role in women character has determined by stereotypes, related to emotion -not action, revealed in private and public spaces, identified as the complementary for men instead of the character of their own rights.

b. Fragmentation

Fragmentation refers to the description of women' body in which their body are fragmented and categorized since they become sexual object, meanwhile men do not experience it.

The effect of fragmentation according to Mills will create several impacts, in which their body are not humanized, be objectified, and eliminated from the part. Then, since the women is fully undepicted, the focalization that occurs does not come from the women perspective itself.

The fragmentation of women is associated with the focalization of men in which women are presented as male gaze object. Therefore, fragmentation analysis would be used by analyzing any texts mentioning about women' body in Whatsapp chat.

c. Focalization

Focalization is concerned with how the perspective of a text narration is presented. Focalization id divided into two, which are external and internal. External focalization appears from a narrator who is the source of the whole point of view. Rimmon-Kenan suggested that rewrite any texts with first-person pronoun in order to notice the focalization in the text which actually is male oriented but seen as neutral gender.

d. Schemata

Schemata is a discourse construction operated in wider area in a text in order to produce different view related to men and women. Schemata analysis explains dominant narrative in a text which functioned in the same way.

Mills mentioned in the text about female character – several ideas being compiled and created certain ideology views. Mills explained that the narrative structure which determined referring to the female representation is the combination between language and ideology. Sexism for instance, Mills believed that it is operated in some schemata levels which is not about the other members intellection in a group in which women, but there is a narration involve certain way of thinking on them [3].

## 3   Result and Discussion

Sara Mills' discourse is more emphasized on how women depicted in a text (especially in literature). However, the topic Sara Mills described can also be applied broadly in analyzing news text [4]. The female discourse analysis will be conducted using Sara Mills discourse analysis, consists of character analysis, fragmentation analysis, focalization analysis, and schemata analysis.

### 3.1   Character Analysis in Whatsapp Text Conversation

This research involves five respondents from youth educator Whatsapp group. Three persons from the respondents have experienced violence through symbolic violence or verbal violence. Concerning privacy of the respondents' identity, their name will be substitute. The discussion about female character as a victim is presented through the Whatsapp text conversation.

**Female Victim of Violence.**   The first respondent is Septi, has married for more than 10 years with 3 children. She is a civil servant. She joins youth educator Whatsapp group since she had been friends with the other four members of the group, and being active in providing counseling or guidance to the women living in village. The follow-ing screenshot presents her Whatsapp conversation with her husband stated she could not stand in getting domestic violence and would like to divorce.



Generally, the entire text covers sexual harassment verbally which she experienced and also as the representative of other women whom experience the same issue. The woman in the text conversation tried not to respond the harsh words written by the man. The female character pictured in the text is a powerless woman, according to what written in the text "Astaghfirullah, aku berusaha ga bales dan ga baca chat biar ga sakit" (translated: [saying forgiveness to God], I tried not to reply and read your chat so that I will not get hurt).

A woman is represented with benevolent human, and also has caring and nurturing characteristics. These characteristics, reflected especially in woman's reproductive role thus when a woman does any actions of violence, it is considered contradictory with her role. On the other hand, a man, he is judged for having characteristics of controlling, dominating, aggressive, and the other behavior that tends to support him in doing violence.

In a critical perspective, the issue of violence towards women presented in media is not only about the act of law violation, but also the re-presentation of the subject showed in the arena by the media. Women have sensitive sides in which could be exposed and triggered many attention. Following this, the imbalance of the news started from inequality access control between man and woman in public realm.

The second respondent is Tia. Tia is a lecturer in one of the university in Palembang. She also often receives messages from her ex-partner who has already married, but still contacts her by Whatsapp, the message is as follows.



The text above reveals Tia's ex-partner who asked her to check in at a hotel in order to have sexual intercourse.She refused his request, since she has known that her ex-partner had already married.

The sentence "Ayo kita check in sayang" (translated: let's check in, dear) is included in verbal violence because the woman in the conversation feels uncomfortable with the man's request by arguing "jangan mas, ingat istri mas" (translated: no, please remember your wife). Verbal violence done by the man is a type of sexual harassment that keeps repeated by the man in the conversation.
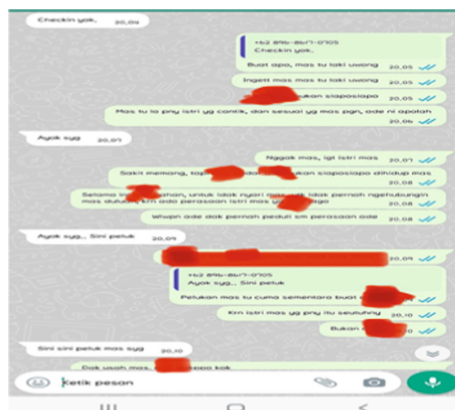
### 3.2  Fragmentation Analysis



The previous text leaks the man's anger towards the woman's statement. The man later sent unpleasant words by saying female genital part. When a female body is being fragmented, she is not herself anymore, but only as an object. There is no herself as her because of her quality is described from the body part which judged and qualified. The woman in this text was not able to stand for herself and tended to be silenced. The conversation also shows that her body is become an object to be rated and evaluated.

### 3.3  Focalization Analysis

Focalization refers to how a narrative perspective of a text is presented. Mills (1995:142) stated that focalization concept is when someone is able to see the 'voice' of a text which seems neutral gender, from what gender point of view the text is.

The text consists of check in request from a man to a woman in the conversation. The woman tried to refuse by reminding the man that he has already married, yet the man did not listen and still persuaded the woman to check in even though he has reminded. However, the believe system in the statement shows that woman is different and inferior towards man.

Focalization from the statement above shows how a sexism statement by using stereotype of feminine character, which because of as a woman, she should be weak and emotional in dealing with a problem.

### 3.4  Schemata Analysis

From the conversation above and from interview result of the writers and the women in the conversation, it is discovered that the two women is in a passive position and be dominated. Women are still the other. Consequently, for postmodern feminists, otherness with all of its relation with oppression and inferiority is more than a condition of being oppressed or inferior condition. Otherness is the way of being, thinking, and speaking which allows openness, plurality, diversity, and difference (Tong, 2010: 286).

Thornham (2010: 221) stated the patriarchal ideology objectified and distorted female body and when women are trapped in this ideology, thus, this ideology will segregate themselves from their body.

## 4  Conclusion

The sexual violence case in Whatsapp conversation of the youth educator shows that if the victim of the violence is a woman, the perpetrator tends to make the female body as a topic and place the woman as a trouble, and to be blamed.

The writers perceive categories and indicators of verbal violence cases as the reference of verbal violence reference format. The categories are such as: saying harsh words, threating, and insulting.

The members of youth educator Whatsapp Group seems to let the sexual violence evidence since there is romantic relation, even though there are several words showing resistance and inconvenience towards what the men have done in the text conversation. The women do not realize that the action performed by these men in Whatsapp conversation text is a sexual violence, thus the patriarchy domination happens reflected in the men' effort in controlling the women' action. The normalization of sexual violence keeps happening since the women let the men to dominate during the conversation.

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