

Gender Perspective in Reporting Violence against Women: A Study on SuaraMerdeka.com

Retno Manuhoro Setyowati^{1*}, Dwiyan M. Nur¹

¹Ilmu Komunikasi, Universitas Semarang
retnomanuhoro@usm.ac.id, risetkomunikasi2025@gmail.com

Abstract

This study investigates how SuaraMerdeka.com applies a gender perspective in reporting violence against women by analyzing how female victims are portrayed in the news texts. Using Sara Mills' positioning framework and principles of gender-sensitive journalism, 12 news articles were purposively selected for examination. The findings reveal that women are predominantly framed as passive objects rather than active subjects with voices and agency. Dominant narration often comes from external actors such as celebrities, institutions, community figures, or law enforcement, while victims' perspectives are limited, emotionalized, or reduced to personal suffering. News coverage tends to prioritize sensational details and viral public reactions instead of addressing the structural causes of gender-based violence. The study also found that gender-sensitive journalism is not fully implemented, as indicated by the absence of contextual information on legal protection, support services, or the broader patriarchal dynamics that shape women's vulnerability. These findings underscore the need to strengthen gender-sensitive journalistic practices to ensure that the media can contribute meaningfully to public awareness and social transformation.

Keywords: gender-sensitive journalism, Sara Mills, violence, women

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana SuaraMerdeka.com menerapkan perspektif gender dalam pemberitaan kekerasan terhadap perempuan dengan menelaah cara korban perempuan diposisikan dalam teks berita. Menggunakan kerangka pemosisian Sara Mills serta prinsip jurnalisme berperspektif gender sebagai alat analisis pada dua belas artikel berita yang dipilih secara purposif untuk dianalisis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa perempuan lebih sering direpresentasikan sebagai objek pasif dibandingkan sebagai subjek aktif yang memiliki suara dan agensi. Narasi dominan dalam berita umumnya berasal dari aktor eksternal seperti selebritas, institusi, tokoh masyarakat, atau aparat penegak hukum, sementara perspektif korban cenderung terbatas, dinarasikan secara emosional, atau direduksi pada penderitaan personal. Pemberitaan juga lebih menekankan aspek sensasional dan reaksi publik yang bersifat viral dibandingkan dengan pengungkapan akar struktural kekerasan berbasis gender. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa prinsip jurnalisme berperspektif gender belum diterapkan secara optimal, yang terlihat dari minimnya konteks mengenai perlindungan hukum, layanan pendampingan korban, serta dinamika patriarki yang memengaruhi kerentanan perempuan. Riset kualitatif ini menegaskan pentingnya penguatan praktik jurnalisme berperspektif gender agar media dapat berperan secara lebih signifikan dalam meningkatkan kesadaran publik dan mendorong transformasi sosial.

Keywords: jurnalisme sensitive gender, kekerasan, perempuan, Sara Mills

PENDAHULUAN

Violence against women continues to be a persistent social problem worldwide, including in Indonesia. Annual records from Komnas Perempuan show that gender-based violence remains alarmingly high and occurs in various domains: domestic settings, educational institutions, workplaces, and increasingly in digital spaces. This

persistence indicates that violence against women is not merely the result of interpersonal conflict, but a manifestation of deeper structural inequalities rooted in patriarchal norms and unequal power relations (Ross, 2019)

The media plays a significant role in shaping the public's understanding of gender-based violence. News media do not simply relay facts; they construct reality through narrative choices, highlighting what is quoted, how events are sequenced, and what kind of language is employed. Numerous studies have shown that the representation of women in news coverage is often limited, biased, or stereotypical. Women are frequently portrayed as weak, irrational, passive, or responsible for the violence they suffer (Salam 2021). Such portrayals reinforce gender inequality and obscure the systemic nature of violence.

The shift to digital journalism has introduced additional challenges for journalists. Online news outlets operate in a rapid, highly competitive environment that favors sensationalism, emotional storytelling, and clickable headlines (Asriani, 2024). Consequently, cases of violence against women are easily turned into commodities for traffic and virality rather than opportunities for public education or empathetic reporting. To critically examine such trends, this study employs Sara Mills's model, which focuses on how texts position subjects and objects, whose voices are privileged, and how readers are encouraged to interpret events. Mills' approach is particularly relevant for analyzing gender representation because it highlights the power relations embedded in narrative structures (Rahayu, 2023).

Alongside this, the study uses the framework of gender-sensitive journalism, as outlined by UNESCO (UNESCO, 2020), which demands that the media:

- (1) avoid gender stereotypes,
- (2) refrain from blaming victims,
- (3) center women's voices,
- (4) contextualize violence socially and structurally
- (5) Provide information that supports victims' rights and safety.

Despite the growing literature on gender and media in Indonesia, studies integrating Sara Mills' positioning framework with gender-sensitive journalism remain limited. Most research uses Fairclough or framing analysis (Sarasati, 2020), while only a handful explore deeper relational positioning within the text. Therefore, this research offers new insights by combining the structural analysis of narrative positions with normative assessments of gender-responsive journalism.

SuaraMerdeka.com was chosen as the case study because it is one of the largest regional media outlets with a strong national readership. During the selected period, the

platform published numerous articles about violence involving women, many of which went viral on social media. The main objective of this research is to analyze how women are positioned in these news texts, how their voices are constructed or marginalized, and whether the reporting aligns with the principles of gender-sensitive journalism. This study contributes to gender and media scholarship by revealing how narrative structures in digital news can reinforce or challenge gender inequalities and by emphasizing the importance of centering women's perspectives in reporting violence.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design with a critical textual analysis approach. This research does not focus on measuring audience reception or newsroom production processes but on examining how women are represented within news texts through narrative positioning and journalistic framing. This study applies Sara Mills' positioning framework to analyze how subjects and objects are constructed in news narratives, whose voices are privileged, and how readers are positioned to interpret cases of violence against women. Rather than treating discourse as a macro-institutional system, this framework emphasizes relational power within the text, particularly in terms of gender representation (Rahayu, 2023).

To strengthen the normative dimension of the analysis, this study incorporates the principles of gender-sensitive journalism as articulated by UNESCO (UNESCO, 2020). This combination allows the research to examine how women are positioned discursively and whether journalistic practices align with ethical standards for reporting gender-based violence. The data consisted of 12 news articles published by SuaraMerdeka.com that reported cases of violence involving women. The articles were selected using purposive sampling based on the following criteria:

1. This article explicitly reports violence against women, including physical, sexual, psychological, and digital violence.
2. Women appear as victims or as central figures in news narratives.
3. The articles received public attention, as indicated by viral circulation, public responses, or follow-up reports.
4. The articles were published in the same thematic period, allowing for a comparative analysis of narrative patterns.

SuaraMerdeka.com was selected as the research site because it is a prominent regional digital news outlet with national reach and a strong position within Indonesia's online media ecosystem. In addition to representing local perspectives, the platform plays an important role in shaping public discourse at a broader level through its digital news dissemination. The unit of analysis in this study was news text. The analysis focused on the narrative elements that structure each article, including headline construction, lead paragraph framing, quotation patterns, the sequencing of events, lexical choices related to women and violence, and the attribution of agency and responsibility to the actors involved. Each article was examined as a complete and coherent narrative unit in order to identify recurring patterns of representation.

The analytical process was conducted in several stages. The first stage involved close textual reading and coding, during which each article was read repeatedly to identify narrative structures related to subject-object positioning, the dominance of particular voices, and the positioning of readers within the text. This was followed by a positioning analysis using Sara Mills' analytical framework. At this stage, the articles were analyzed across four key dimensions: subject-object positioning, voice and narrative authority, reader positioning, and the ways in which narratives are embedded within power relations. The results of the positioning analysis were then evaluated using the principles of gender-sensitive journalism as outlined in UNESCO's guidelines.

This evaluation focused on several core criteria, including the avoidance of victim-blaming, the inclusion of women's voices, adequate contextualization of violence, the avoidance of sensationalism, and the provision of educational or supportive information for victims. The final stage of analysis involved a comparative synthesis, in which the findings from all 12 articles were compared to identify recurring patterns and dominant tendencies across the dataset. The analytical findings are presented in the form of a thematic discussion, supported by a comparative table that highlights similarities and differences in narrative positioning across the analyzed articles.

HASIL DAN PEMBAHASAN

Narrative Positioning and Power Relations in News Reporting

This section discusses the findings of the study by examining how narrative positioning operates within news reporting to construct and reproduce power relations. News texts do not merely convey information about events; they actively shape meaning through narrative choices that determine who is positioned as a subject or object, whose voices are prioritized, and how readers are guided to interpret social reality. In this sense, news discourse functions as a site where ideological assumptions and social hierarchies are embedded and normalized.

Drawing on Sara Mills' positioning framework, this discussion foregrounds the relational dynamics within news narratives, focusing on the interaction between representation, voice, and authority. Rather than treating news texts as neutral reflections of reality, this approach highlights how narrative structures reflect broader power relations, particularly in the context of gender and institutional dominance. The framework enables an examination of how women, institutions, and readers are positioned within the text, and how these positions shape the interpretation of violence and responsibility.

1. Subject-Object Positioning in News Narratives

The analysis reveals a consistent pattern in which women are predominantly positioned as narrative objects rather than active subjects within news reports on gender-based violence. In many articles, women are described primarily through what is done to them—being assaulted, reported, rescued, or processed legally—while institutional actors, particularly law enforcement agencies, occupy the role of narrative subjects who act, explain, and interpret events. This asymmetrical positioning limits

women's agency and reinforces a representation in which authority, action, and rationality are associated with institutional and predominantly male actors. Such narrative construction aligns with Sara Mills' argument that subject-object positioning is central to how power relations are naturalized in discourse.

2. Voice and Narrative Authority

In terms of voice distribution, the findings indicate a strong dominance of official and institutional voices, particularly police officers and legal authorities. Quotations from these actors are frequently used to structure the narrative and legitimize interpretations of events, while women's voices are often absent, indirect, or paraphrased. Even when women are mentioned, their perspectives are commonly mediated through institutional statements rather than presented as firsthand accounts. This pattern not only marginalizes women's experiential knowledge but also positions institutions as the primary definers of truth and credibility. As a result, narrative authority is unevenly distributed, reinforcing hierarchical power relations within the text.

3. Reader Positioning and Emotional Alignment

The way narratives are constructed also plays a significant role in shaping reader positioning. Several articles guide readers toward a detached or sensational mode of consumption by emphasizing dramatic elements, chronological details of violence, or procedural developments in legal cases. In such narratives, readers are positioned as spectators rather than empathetic participants, which risks normalizing violence as an object of public curiosity. Conversely, articles that foreground women's experiences and provide contextual explanations of violence tend to position readers as empathetic and critically engaged audiences. This finding supports Mills' assertion that texts actively construct readers' ideological and emotional alignments, rather than merely transmitting information.

4. Power Relations Embedded in Textual Representation

Beyond explicit narrative choices, the analysis uncovers how patriarchal power relations are embedded implicitly within news texts. Language that frames violence as an isolated incident, a personal tragedy, or a legal case often obscures its structural roots in gender inequality and power imbalance. Moreover, the normalization of institutional authority and the marginalization of women's voices reflect broader patriarchal norms that privilege male-dominated systems of control and knowledge. From this perspective, the representation of women in news discourse is not simply a linguistic issue but an ideological process shaped by entrenched social hierarchies.

Gender-Sensitive Journalism

The findings of this study indicate that the application of gender-sensitive journalism principles in news reporting remains limited and inconsistent. According to UNESCO (2020), gender-sensitive journalism requires media practices that do not reproduce discrimination or normalize violence, particularly through careful language use, ethical framing, and the inclusion of marginalized voices. However, the analysis reveals that many news articles have not fully aligned with these principles.

In terms of language use, while explicit victim-blaming is generally avoided, subtle forms of gender bias persist. Women are often described using passive constructions that emphasize their victimhood rather than their agency, which indirectly shifts attention away from structural causes of violence. Such linguistic choices, although seemingly neutral, contribute to the normalization of unequal power relations between men and women.

The prioritization of victims' safety and dignity is also not consistently observed. Several articles include excessive or unnecessary details about violent acts or personal circumstances that risk exposing victims to further harm or public scrutiny. This tendency reflects a journalistic emphasis on newsworthiness and emotional impact over ethical responsibility, particularly in cases involving gender-based violence.

Furthermore, the provision of structural context remains largely insufficient. Violence against women is frequently presented as an isolated incident or personal tragedy, with minimal discussion of broader issues such as patriarchy, power imbalance, or digital vulnerability. As a result, readers are less likely to understand violence as a systemic problem rooted in social and cultural inequalities.

Sensationalism continues to shape news narratives, particularly through dramatic headlines and narrative emphasis on shocking elements. This framing positions violence as a spectacle rather than as a social issue requiring critical reflection. Consequently, women's experiences are often commodified for public consumption, undermining efforts to promote empathy and awareness.

The inclusion of women's voices is another area where significant gaps are evident. Women are rarely positioned as primary sources of information, with their perspectives often mediated through institutional or third-party voices. This marginalization limits women's narrative authority and reinforces institutional dominance in defining the meaning of violence.

Additionally, most articles do not provide educational, legal, or support-oriented information for victims, such as references to legal rights, reporting mechanisms, or available support services. The absence of such information reduces the potential of news reporting to function as a tool for public education and victim empowerment.

Overall, the findings are consistent with previous studies conducted by the Center for Gender and Child Studies at the University of Indonesia (PKGA UI, 2021) and Manuhoro (Setyowati, 2022), which highlight the tendency of mainstream Indonesian media to frame violence against women as scandal or spectacle. These recurring patterns indicate that gender-sensitive journalism remains more aspirational than operational, underscoring the need for stronger institutional commitment and journalistic reflexivity in reporting gender-based violence.

Table1. Analysis: Subject–Object Positioning in 12 SuaraMerdeka.com news

Article Title	Dominant Subject	Object of Narrative	Dominant Voice	Reader Positioning	Notes
Celebrities Show Support for Cut Intan Nabila After Domestic Violence (Suara Merdeka.Com , 2024b)	Celebrities	Female victim	Celebrity	Invited to sympathize emotionally	Victim appears passive
Online Driver Spreads Female Student’s Photo (Suara Merdeka.Com , 2024d)	Online driver, netizens	Female student	Netizens & media	Encouraged to condemn	Missing legal/educational context
Female Student Punished by Being Submerged in Drain Water. (Suara Merdeka.Com , 2024c)	School authority, community	Female student	Community	Directed to react to controversy	Lacks power-relation analysis
Pertashop Employee Becomes Victim of Assault. (Suara Merdeka.Com , 2024j)	Police	Female employee	Police	Sympathy encouraged	Victim not quoted
University Responds to Sexual Misconduct Allegations (Suara	University	Female student	University reps	Neutral–institutional	Ignores gendered vulnerabilities

Merdeka.Com , 2024c)					
Election Committee Head Accused of Misconduct (Suara Merdeka.Com , 2024a)	Election body	Female victim	Election institution	Morality-centered	Focus on institution, not victim
Murder of Ex-Girlfriend Under Psychological Review (Suara Merdeka.Com , 2024e)	Police	Woman victim	Police	Empathy encouraged	Reduces woman to relational label
Young Woman Slapped Before Independence Day(Suara Merdeka.Com , 2024g)	Residents	Young woman	Residents	Sympathy	No systemic discussion
Investigation into Spread of Woman's Video(Suara Merdeka.Com , 2024i)	Police	Female victim	Police	Neutral	Misses digital safety context
Audrey Davis Case: Former Boyfriend Arrested (Suara Merdeka.Com , 2025)	Police	Female figure	Police	Emotive	Clickbait construction
Religious Institutions Respond to Hijab Issue (Suara Merdeka.Com , 2024h)	Religious leaders	Women involved	Religious leaders	Guided toward public debate	Women absent from narrative

Responses to Viral Incident Involving Woman	Public & media	Female victim	Media	Emotion-driven	Violence treated as content
---	----------------	---------------	-------	----------------	-----------------------------

Women’s Positioning, Voice, and Ideological Meaning in News Discourse

This sub-section examines how women are positioned within news texts, the extent to which their voices are represented or marginalized, and how narrative structures shape readers’ interpretations of events. By integrating Sara Mills’ positioning framework with gender-sensitive journalism principles, the analysis provides a multilayered understanding of the ideological processes operating within news discourse, particularly in relation to gendered power relations and ethical representation.

1. Women’s Positioning as Narrative Objects

Across the corpus of twelve articles, a consistent pattern emerged: women appeared more as objects spoken about than as subjects who speak. This finding aligns with Mills’ (2004) assertion that discourse often reflects existing power hierarchies by controlling who occupies the subject position in a narrative.

In SuaraMerdeka.com, victims are frequently described from the perspectives of others, such as police authorities, institutional representatives, public figures, or netizens. Their firsthand experiences are rarely quoted in the literature. This absence is not merely a linguistic omission but a structural silencing that reproduces women’s marginality in public discourse.

For instance, in the article “Update Pegawai Pertashop... mengaku tidak berani berontak,” the narration overwhelmingly relies on statements from the police and accompanying institutions, while the victim’s voice is summarized rather than directly presented. This method positions women not as speaking subjects but as grammatical and narrative objects, reinforcing their powerlessness in textual representation (Sihombing, 2019).

Similarly, in the article “Pelaku pembunuh mantan pacar...,” the victim is not named; instead, she is referred to primarily in relational terms (“ex-girlfriend”), reducing her identity to her connection with the perpetrator. The reliance on relational labels is a subtle but powerful form of objectification, as it removes the victim’s individuality and centers the male subject in the narrative frame (Salam, 2021). The consistent absence of women’s direct voices in these articles echoes findings from PKGA UI which show that Indonesian media frequently portray women as passive recipients of harm, rather than agents with perspectives and agency (Pusat Kajian Gender dan Anak, 2021)

2. Dominant Voices: Institutions, Authorities, and Netizens

One of the clearest patterns in this dataset is that institutional voices dominate the narrative space. Police officers, campus representatives, community leaders, and even netizens occupy the subject position far more often than women experiencing violence.

This institutional dominance reflects what Mills describes as “authority-coded voices”, voices already legitimized by societal structures. When these voices overshadow victims’ perspectives, the narrative becomes institution-centered rather than victim-centered. Examples include:

1. Police explaining chronology
2. University officials responding to allegations
3. Religious leaders reacting to hijab controversies
4. Netizens confronting perpetrators in viral clips

In all of the analyzed cases, women were not positioned as narrators of their own experiences. Their perspectives were either omitted entirely or mediated through institutional voices, such as law enforcement or other authorities. From the standpoint of gender-sensitive journalism, this representational practice is deeply problematic, as it denies women narrative agency and limits their ability to define the meaning of the violence they experienced.

UNESCO emphasizes that responsible journalism should prioritize the voices of those directly affected, particularly in reporting cases of gender-based violence, where power asymmetries are already pronounced. When institutional actors dominate the narrative, they not only shape the interpretation of events but also reinforce existing power hierarchies. As a result, the imbalance between victims and authorities is reproduced within the news text itself, transforming journalistic discourse into a site where institutional power is normalized and victims’ subjectivity is marginalized.

Moreover, the reliance on netizen opinions, especially in articles that describe viral events, creates a filter in which women’s experiences are interpreted through emotional reactions rather than factual or empathetic accounts. Digital discourse tends to amplify public outrage while muting women’s genuine experiences online (Dwi Asriani, 2024).

3. Sensationalism and the Commodification of Violence

A prominent feature of SuaraMerdeka.com’s reporting is the use of clickbait headlines, dramatic sequencing, and emotionally charged vocabulary. This stylistic approach turns cases of violence into consumable stories within the attention economy of social media. Typical headline constructions include the following:

1. Extremely long, detailed descriptions
2. Emotional triggers such as “viral,” “outrage,” “shocking”

3. Focus on public reaction or institutional controversy rather than the event itself

For example, the article “Oknum ojol sebar foto pelajar perempuan...” uses multiple emotional hooks in its headline, positioning the violence as part of a spectacle for public consumption. This narrative structure reinforces what Ross calls the media commodification of female suffering, wherein women's pain becomes a form of entertainment and emotional bait for audiences (Ross, 2019).

Clickbait narratives also alter readers' interpretive stances. Instead of approaching the issue as a structural problem requiring systemic solutions, readers are guided toward outrage, curiosity, and moral judgment. The story becomes episodic rather than contextual or analytic. UNESCO explicitly advises against sensationalizing violence, as such practices undermine victims' dignity and discourage abuse reporting.

4. Lack of Structural and Gendered Context

One of the most significant weaknesses of the reviewed articles is the absence of a structural context. Reports tend to treat violence as isolated incidents, products of individual wrongdoing, without addressing the broader systems that enable gender-based violence. Key structural factors absent from the reporting include:

1. Patriarchal norms shaping gender relations
2. Power asymmetries in schools, pesantren, workplaces, and families
3. Digital vulnerabilities that disproportionately affect women
4. Community practices that normalize or trivialize violence
5. Legal obligations of institutions in responding to abuse

For example, the article about a female santri punished by being immersed in drain water provides no exploration of the hierarchical power relations within the pesantren system. The narrative focuses solely on the virality of the punishment, ignoring the cultural and institutional norms that allow such punishment to occur. Similarly, articles about digital violence fail to contextualize how violations of privacy, harassment, and non-consensual image sharing disproportionately harm women, a phenomenon that has been widely discussed in global research on online gender-based violence. This omission of structural context aligns with what Mills describes as textual depoliticization, wherein the narrative strips events of their ideological or systemic roots, thereby naturalizing the existing social order (Sihombing, 2019).

5. Subtle Forms of Victim-Blaming

Although not explicit, several articles exhibit nuanced forms of victim blaming, a narrative practice that implicitly attributes responsibility to the victims. Subtle victim blaming appears through:

1. The sequencing of events

2. The descriptive framing of victims' actions
3. The emphasis on victims' behaviors before the incident

For example, in the article involving a female student whose photos were spread by an online driver, the news describes her movements and behavior in unnecessary detail. While these details may appear neutral, they subtly imply that the victim's behavior contributed to the incident, an issue extensively discussed in gender-based violence research.

UNESCO emphasizes that journalists must avoid any wording that allows readers to interpret the incident as resulting from the victim's decisions or lack of caution.(UNESCO, 2020). Victim blaming, even when subtle, undermines victim dignity and influences public perception, discouraging other victims from coming forward.

6. Reader Positioning: Emotionally Charged, Not Critically Engaged

One of Mills' most powerful contributions is her concept of reader positioning, which argues that texts shape the way readers are expected to interpret events. On SuaraMerdeka.com, readers are predominantly positioned to react emotionally.

1. anger at perpetrators
2. sympathy for victims
3. fascination with viral content
4. curiosity toward institutional responses
5. moral judgment toward involved parties

However, readers are not positioned to engage with or understand the following:

1. systemic gender inequality
2. legal procedures for reporting violence
3. victims' rights
4. preventive mechanisms
5. support services available

This emotional orientation aligns with an infotainment model of journalism rather than a public-interest model. Consequently, the reader becomes a passive consumer rather than an informed citizen, which contradicts the principles of gender-sensitive journalism

7. Alignment with Gender Sensitive Journalism Principles

When evaluated against UNESCO's guidelines, the 12 articles showed partial and inconsistent implementation of gender-sensitive journalism. The articles avoid overtly sexist language but still use terms that trivialize or obscure violence, such as the following:

“ex-girlfriend”
“gadis ini” (“this girl”)
“ketahuan pacaran” (“caught dating”)
“wajahnya jadi sorotan” (“her face becomes a focus”)

Such terms often carry moral undertones or reduce women to relational or sensational descriptors. The articles also lack a victim-centered narrative. Women rarely appear as speaking subjects. Their direct quotes are largely absent, and their emotional experiences are narrated through third parties, contradicting UNESCO’s “put the victim first” guideline.

None of the 12 articles provided hotline information, legal referral contacts, or basic guidance on how victims could seek protection. Therefore, articles missing educational components Depiction of violence without exploring causes refer to articles that focus primarily on the incident itself, ignoring social, legal, and cultural dimensions. This omission contributes to the normalization of violence as mere news content rather than a violation of rights. The prominence of viral framing, dramatic headlines, and emotional triggers suggests that online visibility is prioritized over responsible news reporting. Overemphasis on sensational aspects was detected.

8. Synthesis of Analytical Findings

The combined application of Mills’ approach and gender-sensitive journalism reveals five major themes:

1. Women are structurally positioned as narrative objects; their perspectives were mediated through authoritative voices.
2. Institutions dominate narrative construction; institutional actors shape interpretations more than victims do.
3. Sensationalism overshadows substance; violence has become a spectacle rather than a social issue.
4. Structural causes of violence are omitted; the news normalizes violence by separating it from systemic gender inequality.
5. Ethical journalistic standards are inconsistently applied; especially in terms of contextualization, victim support, and avoidance of sensationalism.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how SuaraMerdeka.com constructs representations of women in its coverage of violence-related cases by applying Sara Mills’ framework and evaluating the extent to which gender-sensitive journalism principles are incorporated. Through the examination of 12 selected articles, the findings reveal a recurring pattern of representational imbalance that reflects deeper ideological structures in Indonesian news discourse.

Women are predominantly positioned as narrative objects rather than as subjects. Their voices, perspectives, and experiences are rarely highlighted. Instead, narrative

authority is largely granted to institutional actors such as the police, university officials, religious leaders, community representatives, and netizens. This imbalance of narrative power means that women's lived experiences are filtered through authoritative or socially sanctioned perspectives, thereby marginalizing their agency.

The analysis also highlights SuaraMerdeka.com's tendency to use sensationalist language and clickbait headlines. While such strategies may be effective in attracting readership, they risk commodifying women's suffering and reducing serious incidents to entertainment or viral content. This narrative style encourages emotional, reactionary engagement rather than critical reflection on the systemic nature of violence.

Equally concerning is the absence of structural context in reporting. In most articles, violence is treated as an isolated event rather than as part of broader gender-based inequalities. By failing to incorporate explanations related to power relations, patriarchal norms, institutional hierarchy, or digital vulnerabilities, news coverage obscures the root causes of violence. This depoliticized portrayal normalizes violence and reinforces the belief that such incidents are random, individual occurrences rather than symptoms of structural injustice.

Additionally, background elements of subtle victim-blaming appear in several articles through narrative framing, ordering of events, or including unnecessary details about victims' behaviors. Even when unintended, these discursive choices shape reader perceptions in ways that may undermine victims' credibility or suggest shared responsibility for what occurred.

From the standpoint of gender-sensitive journalism, SuaraMerdeka.com demonstrates partial compliance. The platform avoids explicit sexist language, but indirect stereotyping remains. Crucially, the articles failed to provide educational or supportive information, such as emergency contacts, legal resources, or referral services for victims. This omission represents a missed opportunity for public education and demonstrates a gap between reporting practices and the ethical standards defined by UNESCO and gender advocacy organizations.

Overall, the findings indicate that SuaraMerdeka.com does not fully implement gender-sensitive journalism. The representation of women remains heavily shaped by patriarchal discursive structures that privilege institutional voices while silencing the voices of women who experience violence. This reinforces unequal power relations not only in society but also in news discourse itself.

This underscores the importance of transforming journalistic practices to center women's voices, contextualize violence as a structural issue, adopt nonsensational language, and provide practical information that empowers readers and supports victims. Without such reforms, media outlets risk perpetuating the inequalities that contribute to violence in the first place.

Conflict of Interest

We certify that there is no conflict of interest with any financial, personal, or other relationships with other people or organizations related to the material discussed in the manuscript.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to the Department of Communication Science, Faculty of Information and Communication Technology (FTIK), Universitas Semarang for the academic support provided throughout this study. Special appreciation is extended to Dwiyan, who contributed significantly to the data collection process, from the preliminary research stage to the compilation of materials that met the criteria for the analysis.

REFERENCES

- Dwi Asriani, D. (2024). Young women on the internet: Experiences confronting and resisting online gender-based violence. 13(1), 153–171.
- Pusat Kajian Gender dan Anak. (2021). Media in Indonesia: An analysis of gender bias in news reporting. University of Indonesia Press, Jakarta.
- Rahayu, H. (2023). Gender dan kolonial pada pemberitaan online Indonesia: Analisis Wacana Kritis Sara Mills. 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.22437/titian.v7i1.25473>
- Ross, K. (2019). Gender, politics, news: A game of three sides. John Wiley & Sons.
- Salam, U. (2021). Media and identity: Gender and ethnicity analysis. DEF Press.
- Sarasati, R. (2020). Critical discourse analysis in education: The role of CDA in critical literacy, critical thinking, and critical language awareness. 19(1), 20-29.
- Setyowati, R. M. (2022). Magdalene.co and gender-sensitive journalism in news reporting of campus sexual violence. 1(4). <https://doi.org/10.56799/jceki.v1i4.3696>
- Sihombing, E. (2019). Applying Sara Mills' theory to gender and media studies. 12(2), 45-58.
- Suara Merdeka.Com. (2024a, Agustus). Bawaslu Semarang: Ketua PPK terbukti lakukan pelanggaran etika, diduga lakukan tindak asusila terhadap anggota. <https://www.suamerdeka.com/semarang-raya/0413279754/bawaslu-semarang-ketua-ppk-terbukti-lakukan-pelanggaran-etika-diduga-lakukan-tindak-asusila-terhadap-anggota>.
- Suara Merdeka.Com. (2024b, Agustus). Di KDRT suaminya, para selebritis ramai-ramai berikan dukungan ke Cut Intan Nabila: Semoga laki itu dapat ganjaran dunia akhirat. <https://www.suamerdeka.com/hiburan/0413332359/di-kdrt-suaminya-para-selebritis-ramai-ramai-berikan-dukungan-ke-cut-intan-nabila-semoga-laki-itu-dapat-ganjaran-dunia-akhirat>.
- Suara Merdeka.Com. (2024c, Agustus). Mahasiswa Unnes diduga melakukan tindak asusila, ini tanggapan Universitas Negeri Semarang. <https://www.suamerdeka.com/semarang-raya/0413387079/mahasiswa-unnes-diduga-melakukan-tindak-asusila-ini-tanggapan-universitas-negeri-semarang>.

- Suara Merdeka.Com. (2024d, Agustus). Oknum ojol sebar foto pelajar perempuan lewat WA, beri caption tidak pantas sampai dilabrak langsung teman korban, pelaku hanya senyum dan ketawa. <https://www.suaramerdeka.com/nasional/0413365076/oknum-ojol-sebar-foto-pelajar-perempuan-lewat-wa-beri-caption-tidak-pantas-sampai-dilabrak-langsung-teman-korban-pelaku-hanya-senyum-dan-ketawa>.
- Suara Merdeka.Com. (2024e, Agustus). Pelaku pembunuh mantan pacar di Kendal diperiksa kejiwaannya di RSJ Amino Gondohutomo, LBH Nubis Jaya Justitie Semarang dampingi keluarga korban. <https://www.suaramerdeka.com/semarang-raya/0413304284/pelaku-pembunuh-mantan-pacar-di-kendal-diperiksa-kejiwaannya-di-rsj-amino-gondohutomo-lbh-nubis-jaya-justitie-semarang-dampingi-keluarga-korban>.
- Suara Merdeka.Com. (2024f, Agustus). Santri perempuan di Jatim ketahuan pacaran, dihukum berendam dan disiram air got, kini jadi polemik di kalangan netizen. <https://www.suaramerdeka.com/nasional/0413368381/santri-perempuan-di-jatim-ketahuan-pacaran-dihukum-berendam-dan-disiram-air-got-kini-jadi-polemik-di-kalangan-netizen>.
- Suara Merdeka.Com. (2024 g, Agustus). Sehari sebelum peringatan Hari Kemerdekaan di Riau, gadis ini ditampar ibu-ibu karena dituduh curi bayam. <https://www.suaramerdeka.com/nasional/0413363038/sehari-sebelum-peringatan-hari-kemerdekaan-di-riau-gadis-ini-ditampar-ibu-ibu-karena-dituduh-curi-bayam>.
- Suara Merdeka.Com. (2024h, Agustus). Tanggapan PBNU, Muhammadiyah hingga MUI soal isu pelarangan penggunaan jilbab bagi Paskibraka. <https://www.suaramerdeka.com/nasional/0413348722/tanggapan-pbnu-muhammadiyah-hingga-mui-soal-isu-pelarangan-penggunaan-jilbab-bagi-paskibraka>.
- Suara Merdeka.Com. (2024i, Agustus). Terungkap! Ini motif utama pelaku penyebar video mirip putri David Bayu. <https://www.suaramerdeka.com/hiburan/0413340525/terungkap-ini-motif-utama-pelaku-penyebar-video-mirip-putri-david-bayu>.
- Suara Merdeka.Com. (2024j, Agustus). Update pegawai Pertashop di Cianjur jadi korban tindak asusila, mengaku tidak berani berontak, kini pelaku ditangkap. <https://www.suaramerdeka.com/nasional/0413422445/update-pegawai-pertashop-di-cianjur-jadi-korban-tindak-asusila-mengaku-tidak-berani-berontak-kini-pelaku-ditangkap>.
- Suara Merdeka.Com. (2025, August). Buntut video viral Audrey Davis, polisi tangkap mantan kekasih, wajahnya jadi sorotan. <https://www.suaramerdeka.com/hiburan/0413324315/buntut-video-viral-audrey-davis-polisi-tangkap-mantan-kekasih-wajahnya-jadi-sorotan>.
- UNESCO. (2020). Gender equality and media: A commitment to women's rights. UNESCO.