

# Gender Inequality Contributes to Women's Vulnerability to HIV During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Aris Tristanto<sup>1</sup>, Sri Setiawati<sup>2</sup>  
{tristanto29@gmail.com<sup>1</sup>, srisetiawati3101@gmail.com<sup>2</sup>}

Doctoral Program in Development Studies Universitas Andalas, Padang, Indonesia<sup>12</sup>

**Abstract.** Gender inequality is believed to have exacerbated the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on women. Gender inequality during the pandemic, which needs special attention is violence against women in the personal sphere. This research is a qualitative research which is library research. The data analysis technique used is content analysis method. There are two sources of data in this study, namely primary sources and secondary sources. The data presented is data in the form of words that require processing to be concise and systematic. While the writing instrument in this study is a check list for the classification of writing materials, writing schemes/maps and the format of writing notes. Violence against women in the personal sphere in the form of physical violence followed by sexual, will have an impact on women's vulnerability to HIV. This is caused by socio-cultural factors so that when experiencing acts of violence women rarely fight because the control or dominance of men is higher than that of women. If they want to leave, they are hindered by economic conditions because most women are economically dependent on men. In addition, they are also hindered by regulations during the Covid-19 pandemic. In situations of stress due to the violence experienced, women generally cannot refuse unsafe sexual relations with their partners for fear of being threatened or subjected to other forms of violence. This makes women have no power to recommend the use of condoms in sexual intercourse even though they know that the shape of their genital organs is like an open vessel so that it is easier for the virus to enter through small cuts or abrasions or the entry of sperm fluid into the vagina.

**Keywords:** Violence, Gender, HIV

## 1 Introduction

Corona virus disease 2019 (Covid-19) is a new type of disease that has never been previously identified in humans. The name Corona itself is taken from the Latin word means crown, because the shape of the corona virus has spikes that protrude like a crown and the solar corona. The corona virus has triggered an outbreak in the city of Wuhan, China, in December 2019, and after that it spread to various countries around the world. World Health The Organization (WHO) declared Covid-19 a global pandemic on March 11, 2020 (Tristanto, 2020).

In Indonesia, the first Covid-19 cases were found in mothers and children in the Depok area, Java West. In responding to the case, President Joko Widodo, through a related press statement, said: The development of the spread of Covid-19 invites the Indonesian people to reduce their activities outside the home and get used to doing work, studying, and worshipping House. The President emphasized that reducing activities outside the home is a step which is

very important to flatten the curve or prevent the spread of Covid-19, because if people stay in public places and public transportation, they will be at risk of being exposed by the virus. (Ihsannudin, 2020).

The president's invitation was implemented by the local government by implementing large-scale social restriction policy. The legal basis for implementing PSBB is: Government Regulation Number 21 of 2020 concerning PSBB in the context of accelerating treatment of coronavirus disease . Based on a government regulation signed by President Joko Widodo on March 31, 2020, it was explained that the PSBB was a restriction on certain activities in an area suspected of being infected with the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). To regulate as well as detail the government regulations Minister of Health (Menkes), issues Minister of Health Regulation (PMK) Number 9 Year 2020 on April 3, 2020.

Although the policies issued by the government have a positive impact on suppress the transmission of the virus, but in its implementation it also causes various impacts characteristic negative to gender inequalities in society. This can be seen from the weak position of women in the family, resulting in increased cases of violence against women in the personal sphere during a pandemic (Agustina, 2021) .

According to a report from UN Women, one in three women worldwide experience physical or sexual violence, mostly by a partner. However, since the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of cases of violence in the personal sphere against women is increasing the number of emergency telephone calls in various countries of the world (UN Women, 2021). That matter in line with the survey conducted by Komnas Perempuan in 2020 through the media in network with 2,285 respondents, dominated by women from the islands Javanese aged 31-50 years, graduated from S1/equivalent, with an income of 2-5 million rupiah, married, have children, work full time in the formal sector and have no family members susceptible.

The survey results show that the number of women who experience additional time domestic work more than 3 hours during Covid-19, four times more than other types other gender. This is due to the additional domestic and accompaniment duties children study at home. In addition, according to the survey, household economic problems with unstable spending in the midst of a pandemic has the potential to trigger violence against women in the personal realm.

The most common forms of violence against women in the personal sphere are: physical violence in the form of hitting, grabbing, pinching. This can cause injury, pain, injuries or defects in a person's body that can take life. Sometimes violent physical violence followed by sexual violence such as practicing unsafe sex acts (Utami, 2021). According to the authors, this situation will contribute to women's vulnerability to HIV in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. This is in line with the opinion of Heidari et al (2013), namely: Women who experience sexual violence are vulnerable to contracting HIV.

Research by Jewkes, et al (2006) has also shown that women who are in relatively less powerful position than their partner, indicated by the report their experience of being more in control of their behavior, and in their relationships of communication generally very minimal in having sex more often. Couple violence sexual intercourse was associated with HIV in a two-way analysis (OR 1.56; 95% CI 1.08–2.23).

This phenomenon is often overlooked in gender discussions in the midst of a pandemic. whereas based on the Declaration of Commitment on HIV-AIDS, United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV-AIDS in June 2001, the incidence of HIV and AIDS among women was caused by three things, namely: 1) Poverty, ignorance, and low social status make women being the target of acts of violence, trafficking, and sexual exploitation; 2) Bargaining

position women who are low, so they cannot determine safe sex and refuse safe sex undesirable;  
3) Sexual violence and sexual exploitation, especially in conflict situations (Ainur, 2011).

Based on the background of the problem above, the writer tries to analyze the phenomenon of Gender inequality contributes to women's vulnerability to HIV during Covid-19 pandemic. According to the author, by analyzing this, it can present a broad set of policy solutions especially for long-term structural change that needed to avoid similar crises in the future. In addition, it is hoped that provide benefits and input, as well as be a material for consideration for decision makers decisions in the context of reviewing and establishing various policies related to gender and HIV.

## **2 Methodology**

This research is a qualitative research which is library research by reviewing reliable sources, either in written form or in digital format that is relevant without going directly to the field (Subagyo, 1991; Hadi, 1995). Literature study here is a literature study without empirical testing (Muhadjir, 1998). According to Sugiyono (2012) study the literature is a theoretical study, references and other scientific literature related to culture, values and norms that develop in social situations.

The data analysis technique used is content analysis method ( content analysis ). Analysis this is used to obtain valid inferences and can be re-examined based on context (Krippendorff, 1993; Sabarguna, 2005). In this analysis, the process will be carried out select, compare, combine various relevant meanings related to gender inequality contributes to women's vulnerability to HIV during Covid-19 pandemic.

There are two sources of data in this study, namely primary sources and secondary sources. The methods and steps used to collect data in the research this is the selection of topics related to gender, women's vulnerability to HIV and Covid-19 pandemic, information exploration, determining focus, collecting data sources, presentation of data, and preparation of reports. The data presented is data in the form of words which requires processing to be concise and systematic (Muhadjir, 1998). Whereas writing instruments in this article is a list of check list classification of material, the scheme / map writing and writing notes format.

## **3 Result and Discussion**

### **Gender**

The word gender comes from the French in the Middle Ages, which is the gender taken from latin, namely genus with the meaning of type or type (Echols, 1997). Use of the word gender was originally developed as a social science analysis by Ann Oakley and since then according to him, gender is then considered a good analytical tool to understand the problem discrimination against women in general (Mosse, 2002). Next year 1970s the feminist movement developed and popularized the word in feminist theory (Chafetz, 1974).

The word gender can be said to appear later but in its journey the term gender more developed than the term sex (Rokhima, 2015). This can be seen from the many use of the term gender instead of sex (as a biological category) compared to sex. Although the general public still equates the terms gender and sex, in the concept of gender differs from biological sex in that it consists of the structural norms of social relations and identities that are socially

constructed in the form of rights, obligations, expectations, and power relations involving women and men (Umar, 2010; Gruskin, et al, 2014; Bloom, et al, 2014). This is in line with the opinion of Fakhri (2010) which means: sex is more inclined to the characterization or division of two human sexes based on characteristics inherent, immutable and non-interchangeable biological in this case it is often said as the provisions of God or 'nature'.

While gender is a trait inherent in men or women who are socially and culturally constructed and interchangeable. So that all the things that can be exchanged between male and female traits, which can be change from time to time, from place to place, or from class to class another class, called gender. Therefore, gender should be understood and practiced in society as a visible difference between men and women who are seen in terms of values and behavior in the form of rights, obligations, expectations, and power relations.

### **Gender Inequality**

Gender differences in principle are something that is natural and is sunnatullah as a cultural phenomenon. However, the problem and always being sued by gender activists are structures of "inequalities" created by gender roles and these differences (Arbain, et al, 2015). It appears because of an error understanding of the confusion between the biological concept (gender) and its social meaning (gender) (Barlah, 2007).

Gender inequality is manifested in various forms, namely: 1) Marginalization or the process of marginalization/impoverishment, which results in economic poverty; 2) Subordination or subordination, is basically the belief that one gender considered more important or more important than the other sex; 3) Stereotypes, about individuals or groups that are not in accordance with the existing empirical reality; 4) Violence against a certain gender, generally women, because of gender differences. This violence ranging from physical violence such as rape and beatings, to subtle violence such as harassment; 5) Double burden, is a burden that must be borne by one type too much of a certain gender. This arises because of the assumption that the women have a nurturing and diligent nature and are not suitable to be the head of the households, resulting in all domestic work being the responsibility of the women (Fakhri, 2010; Arbain, et al, 2015).

All manifestations of gender inequality are interrelated and influence each other. The manifestation of injustice is socialized to men and women steadily, which gradually both men and women become accustomed and trusted that gender roles are as if they were nature. In the end, a structure is created and a system of gender inequality that is acceptable to society (Fakhri, 2010).

### **Overview of Gender Inequality During the Covid-19 Pandemic**

Gender inequality is believed to have exacerbated the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on woman. Quoting the statement of the Minister of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection in the Kartini Day Discussion Webinar 23 April 2020, namely violence against women which is part of gender inequality become hidden issues that are often went unnoticed and found in various main narratives related to the cover of the Covid-19 pandemic-19 (Darmawati, 2020). The existence of gender inequality during the Covid-19 pandemic experienced by women due to the increased burden on women during the pandemic, emotional instability of women, and violence against women in the personal sphere (Hutabarat, et al , 2020; Bakhtiar, 2020 ).

Of the three factors that cause gender inequality during the pandemic, the factors that need to be special attention is violence against women in the personal sphere. The existence of violence against women in the personal sphere during the Covid-19 pandemic is a one of the

impacts of the government's policy to suppress the spread of Covid-19 by apply the rules of working from home ( work from home ) (Susiana, 2020).

With the implementation of these regulations, a number of women were forced to stay at home and unable to get out so that it becomes the biggest threat to body and mental security women (Agustina, 2021). This phenomenon can occur because women are forced to isolated or “isolated” at home with perpetrators of violence ( Radhitya, et al, 2020) . This situation provides a golden opportunity for a perpetrator of violence because spend more time privately with the victim and away from people's scrutiny others (Tristante, 2020). Violence against women in the personal sphere occurs in various types. Shapes These are violence against wives (KTI), violence in dating (KdP), violence against girls (KTAP), violence perpetrated by ex-husbands (KMS) and ex-girlfriend violence (KMP), violence against domestic workers, and other personals.

Based on the annual records of the National Commission on Violence against Women (Komnas Perempuan) on violence against women in 2020 released On March 5, 2021 it was discovered that the amount of violence against women in the the highest personal in 2020 is KTI with the number of reports reaching 3,221 cases or 50% of all cases, followed by KDP totaling 1,309 cases or 20%. Then followed by KTAP with 954 cases or 15%, and KMP with 401 cases or 6%. The rest are KMS with 127 cases or 2%, and 457 cases or 7% are forms of violence others in the personal sphere (Komnas Perempuan, 2021).

According to Law No. 23 of 2004 concerning the Elimination of Internal Violence Household explains that the forms of violence against women in the personal sphere are divided into four forms, namely physical, psychological, sexual, and economic violence. Of the four forms of violence based on this, it is known that violence against women in the personal sphere is the most in 2020 is physical violence with a total of 2,025 cases or 31% followed by sexual violence 1,938 cases or 30%. Furthermore, psychological violence reached 1792 cases or 28% and the last was economic violence which reached 680 cases or 10% (Komnas Perempuan, 2020).

This is in line with Bhasin's (1996) opinion, namely the situation faced by the community now is a system of male domination and superiority, a system of control over women, where women are dominated. Inherent in this system is an ideology that states that men are taller than women, that women must be controlled by men and that women are part of men's property. This ideology is considered as one of the bases of women's oppression because it creates a feminine character and masculine which preserves patriarchy, creates and strengthens the barrier between private and public and restrict women's movement and development and produce women's domination men (Nunuk et al, 2004: 80)

### **Gender Inequality Contributes to Women's Vulnerability to HIV**

Violence against women in the personal sphere will lead to gender inequality in society and contribute to women's vulnerability to HIV (Bloom et al., 2014). Matter this is in line with research by UNAIDS, UNFPA, and UNIFEM (2013) where there is clear link between violence and HIV, women being beaten, and controlled partners are much more likely to be infected with HIV than women who are not present domestic violence. More than 48% of women who were hit by their husbands or girlfriends are more likely to become infected with HIV than those who are not. In addition, those who emotionally and financially dominated by partner 52% more likely to be infected than those who are not dominated.

Another reason for this is that the strong patriarchal culture in Indonesia causes a woman cannot negotiate and practice safer sex in relate to their partner. This can be seen from the low bargaining power for negotiate intimate relationships, tend to be unable to say 'no' to everyone

sexual partner's wishes, as well as ignorance and reluctance to ask for information partners about the health status of their sexual partners (Dalimoenthe, 2011; Wulandari, et al, 2013; Hartmann, 2016).

This is in line with feminist sociological studies explaining that women are housewives vulnerable to being infected with the HIV and AIDS virus because of the low bargaining power and negotiation in terms of have sex (Dalimoenthe, 2011). This fact is in accordance with the findings of Neverdorff et al (2018) in their report stating the risk factors for HIV transmission from sexual intercourse heterosexuals in Indonesia dominate a quarter of the number of HIV transmissions in Indonesia. Matter this was confirmed by the discovery of cases of HIV and AIDS in housewives with

This number is quite high, reaching 20% of the total number of HIV transmissions in Indonesia over the past year five reporting periods. This can happen because men with different gender norms was significantly equal to the possession of multiple sex partners at the same time similarly, intimate partner violence and alcohol abuse (Heidari, et al, 2013; Gottert et al., 2017). Inequality gets sharper when women are economically dependent to the couple. Lane conditions like this open up the possibility of violence from the party with higher bargaining power or considers himself to be able to control the other (Nyamhanga et al, 2014).

When it comes to gender inequality in the Covid-19 pandemic situation, such as: violence against women in the personal sphere in the form of physical violence followed by sexual intercourse, it will have an impact on women's vulnerability to HIV. This is because by socio-cultural factors so that when women experience violence, women rarely put up a fight because the control or dominance of men is higher than women. If they want to go then they are hindered by economic conditions because most women are economically dependent on men. Besides that, they are also hindered by PSBB rules during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In a stressful situation due to the violence experienced, women generally cannot refuse to have unsafe sex with their partner for fear of being threatened or experience other forms of violence. This makes women do not have power to advise the use of condoms in sexual intercourse even though they know that the shape of their genital organs is like an open vessel so that it makes it easier for the virus enter through small cuts or abrasions or the entry of sperm fluid into the vagina.

## **4 Conclusion**

There is still a patriarchal culture in society, thus making the position of women vulnerable accept violence from those closest to them. Men think that they have an important role in family or superior to women. Violence experienced by women it is a form of real injustice at this time. Inequality causes there is an unequal relationship between men and women, so that it can increase the number of women infected with HIV and AIDS. The cause of that is the norms gender favoring men to control women and violence against women hinder women's ability to make reproductive decisions based on their own fertility preferences so that women have no bargaining these conditions. This can be seen from women who can't refuse or can't ask her husband uses a condom when forcing unsafe sex. Women also can't refuse sexual relations even though she knows her husband had relationships with a number of other women outside of his marriage.

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