

# The Victim Blaming: Reports of Female Murder Victims on Online Media

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**Abstract.** News that discusses the theme of women often position women unequally. Moreover, in the case of murder, the female victim is actually considered the cause of the crime that happened to her. The purpose of this study is to analyze the strategy of blaming the victim against women victims of murder in crime news and to analyze the structure of ideas that are arranged in packaging the meaning of blaming the victim in cases of murder of women. The method used is descriptive qualitative research method. Qualitative methods are method which research findings are not obtained through statistical or quantitative methods, but rather emphasize the quality of social phenomena. In this study, it was found that female victims are described in more detail both in terms of identity and other attributes. The news leads to blaming the victim by taking advantage of the stigma of women in society.

**Keywords:** Blaming the victim, Detik.com, Murder, News, Women.

## 1 Introduction

The value and stigma of women victims of homicide in the media often places them in a position of blame. This matter can be seen from the news of murder cases that occurred, such as in Iran on May 21, 2020. Reported from BBC.com there is a news entitled “Pembunuhan Demi Kehormatan Keluarga: Anak Perempuan diduga dibunuh Ayah karena Kabur dengan Kekasih.” The title has indicated that the woman was murdered because her mistake brought shame to the family's good name. The news contained a case that befell Romina Ashrafi, a 14-year-old girl.

Before she died, she had fled with his 35-year-old lover. Romina chose to run away because of her father's opposition to her marriage plans. As a result, Romina's neck was cut off with a sickle by her father while sleeping in the room. The incident caused criticism from the Iranian community, but there were also those who commented that it happened because of Romina's disobedience.

Not much different from the cases above, in Indonesia there are also many cases of murder of women. One of them was a case that shocked the public in April 2016. Reporting from Liputan6.com, Yuyun, a 14-year-old woman from Bengkulu, was raped by 14 men and seven of them were minors. The incident occurred when Yuyun came home from school through the road around the community's rubber plantation. However, on the way, 14 men came and hit Yuyun on the head with a stick. At that time the perpetrators were under the influence of alcohol, so they took turns raping Yuyun. Two days after the incident, Yuyun was found in a ravine in a state of decay, naked with her hands and feet bound.

As a result, the case caused public protests, but not a few people regretted why Yuyun passed through a deserted and crime-prone area, as if she was not careful to take care of herself. Judging from the news of the case, it has been illustrated that women are often cornered and vulnerable to acts of violence, even to the point of being killed. According to a report from Komisi Nasional Anti Kekerasan terhadap Perempuan Indonesia, cases of murder of women are increasing every year.

In 2018 there were 730 cases, this number was then followed by 2019 where there were 1,184 cases, and until October 2020 there were 1,156 cases. This amount is mostly done by husbands, girlfriends, ex-husbands or ex-girlfriends. It can be seen that the murder of women often occurs in the closest relationships such as marriage, family and lover relationships. In addition, most of these murder cases are also accompanied by acts of sadism such as rape, mutilation and things that damage the organs of the body to the point of destroying the honor and dignity of women.

The murder case that happened to women was also exacerbated by the news in the media that tended to blame women as victims. In the case that happened to Yuyun, for example, conducted a study entitled *Kasus Pemerkosaan dan Pembunuhan Yuyun dalam Kacamata Kultur Patriarki* (Hana, 2016). He conducted a critical discourse analysis on the statement of the Minister of Social Affairs Khofifah Indar Parawansa in the online media *Antaranews.com*. In the news, according to Khofifah, what happened to Yuyun was caused by alcohol and the influence of pornography.

However, the results of the study showed that pornography and alcohol were not the main factors that triggered Yuyun's rape. The news is considered to save the position of patriarchal culture by using alcohol and pornography as supporting reasons. This proves that women are in a weak position because women are considered to have to regulate themselves, so as not to arouse the lust of men who are exposed to pornographic videos and liquor. In fact, if a crime occurs, it is the perpetrator who must be limited in his space of movement, not the female victim. This further emphasizes the concept of blaming the victim that was built by the media.

Blaming the victim is a term popularized by psychologist and sociologist from the United States, William Ryan. He is an observer of social issues and problems such as poverty caused by racism. In the book he wrote entitled *Blaming the Victim*, he explained that blaming the victim is a concept of unequal thinking by putting the truth on things that are unfair through mistakes or defects that are seen in the victim (Ryan, 1971).

Ryan saw this concept by bringing to life the conditions of the poor in America at that time. From his analysis, everything related to the poor in crime, disease, unemployment and deviant matters, is caused by those who do not have enthusiasm for work and lack of knowledge about health. All of this is built on the thought patterns of blaming the victim. Ryan said the concept of blaming the victim is a strategy to save the needs of the dominant party and ideology.

Regarding blaming the victim, Laura Niemi and Lianne Young conducted research in the field of Psychology in 2014 entitled "Blaming the Victim in the Case of Rape." In their research, they used the Path of Blame model to explain the path of the victim being blamed in the rape incident. The results show that the agents of causality and the ideology of the obligation to take care of themselves for women become the assessment and encouragement of blaming the victim on the victim (Niemi & Young, 2014).

Based on that concept, when it comes to women as victims of murder, there are many media that build the meaning of women by placing them in a disadvantaged position. Especially for online media, in just one murder case, for example, there is more than one news uploaded by an online news portal.

This can be seen on Tribunnews.com, such as news with titles “Pria bunuh kekasihnya usai bercinta 3 kali di hotel kota Bontang, pelaku marah disebut mirip drakula,” “Gara-gara dihina gigi mirip drakula, pria di Bontang habisi kekasih,” dan “Dihina gigi mirip drakula hingga dimintai mahar Rp 25 Juta, pria di Bontang tega bunuh kekasih.” From the news title, it can be seen that the media framed the meaning of female murder victims in the concept of blaming the victim repeatedly, even from just one case.

For the media, such titles aim to pursue clickbait, namely news titles that seem excited, cause interest, confusion or curiosity, thus making readers want to click on the news link (Anand, 2017). This is done by the media in order to get more profit from the number of clicks made by readers. Not only that, clickbait for the media is also intended to adapt in the midst of the large information needs of the vast number of internet users.

As is known, the number of internet users today is unmitigated. Meanwhile, as reported by Kominfo.go.id in 2018, it is estimated that in Indonesia there are 43,000 online news portals and no more than 100 media that are only verified by the press council. With this number, online news portals are competing to provide complete information and attract a lot of attention from internet users, such as Detik.com.

Detik.com is an online news portal in Indonesia which ranks third as the most visited news site according to Similarweb.com. From Similarweb.com’s analysis, it can be seen that the number of visitors to Detik.com during the last six months, namely July 2020 to December 2020, was around 179.80 million visitors. This is the reason why this research focuses on Detik.com. And then, this is why Detik.com has become a popular online news portal in Indonesia, because it has many news readers from various circles.

Talking about news readers, when it is associated with news that contains blaming the victim against female victims, it may be able to form readers' views just from the title or a few paragraphs of the news. In the view of news readers, they cannot be separated from the influence of the meanings constructed by the media. The media as a distributor of information to the public does not only cover and send it in the form of news.

However, there is a process of meaning formation through journalists covering an event. Then, this is also continued by the editors who participate in shaping the meaning of the news, so that when analyzed it can be found the meanings built and framed by the media. Therefore, to dismantle the meaning can be through framing analysis.

Framing analysis is an analysis that is used to see how the media builds a reality from the actual reality. In framing analysis, it has two main objectives, namely, to see how an event is represented, so that there will be reality that is displayed and not displayed. Then, framing analysis aims to see the facts written, so that the framing analysis will focus on the use of words and sentences to highlight the aspects built in a news (Eriyanto, 2002).

Thus, the existence of framing analysis can help us in revealing the true meaning built by the media in news, one of which is in crime news. Based on the explanation above, the writer will conduct related research how the strategy of blaming victims against women who are murder victims in criminal news and the structure of thought that is arranged in the meaning of blaming victims in cases of murder of women.

## **2 Methods and Materials**

This research uses descriptive qualitative research methods. Qualitative methods are method which research are not obtained through statistical or quantitative methods, but rather

emphasize the quality of social phenomena (Ghony & Fauzan, 2012). Qualitative research describes the actual reality through words based on relevant techniques and analysis of natural situations.

In qualitative research, researchers are the main instrument (Hardani, 2020). In this study, the researcher will provide an overview of how the media builds and frames women as victims in the murder case at detik.com. The news of the murder case will be analyzed by researchers and the results will be presented in the form of words in a succinct manner. The analytical method in question is framing analysis, this analysis helps dismantle any meanings that are built in media messages.

The framing analysis used is the Gamson and Modigliani model. In the analysis of this model, Gamson and Modigliani explain that in news we can see the frames built by the media through discourse devices such as the words used, strung sentences, etc., all of which support each other the clusters of meaning that are constructed (Eriyanto, 2002).

Through framing analysis techniques, researchers will collect news on women's murder cases in the July - November 2020 edition of Detik.com, because In this study, researchers will take data from news of female murder cases in Detik.com July to November 2020. This period was chosen because it was reported from liputan6.com that the Indonesian National Police (Polri) recorded an increase in crime rates since the beginning of July 2020. The figure reached 10.37% from the last week of June 2020. Previously, there were 5035 cases recorded. Then, at the beginning of July 2020 there were 522 additional criminal cases, bringing it to 5557 cases.

Furthermore, the National Police also recorded a high number of criminal case categories consisting of narcotics, theft, embezzlement, theft, and violence. The following are news that will be analyzed by researchers:

**Table 1.** Object of Research

No	Title of News
1	"Pembunuhan Wanita di Sumut Oleh Selingkuhan Dipicu Cemburu Korban Selingkuh." 9 July 2020
2	"Gadis 16 Tahun Tenggelam Kaki-Tangan Diikat Hamil 6 Bulan, Dibunuh Pacar." 29 August 2020
3	"Pemuda di Bima NTB Bunuh Kekasihnya Karena Sakit Hati Lamaran Ditolak." 5 August 2020
4	"Detik-detik Wanita Dibunuh Pacar Pencemburu di Apartemen Margonda Residence." 6 August 2020
5	"Sakit Hati, Suami Singkawang Kalbar Tusuk Istri Hingga Tewas." 1 September 2020
6	"Wanita di Sumut Sempat Cekcok dengan Suami Siri Sebelum Tewas Digorok." 26 September 2020
7	"Check In Bareng Pria, Gadis ABG Tewas di Hotel Masih Berseragam Pramuka." 17 November 2020
8	"Suami Bunuh Istri di Sukabumi Dipicu Utang dan Urusan Cerai." 17 November 2020
9	"Bunuh PSK Karena Diejek 'Durasi Main' Adung Dihukum 14 Tahun Penjara." 16 September 2020

Next, researchers will read the news repeatedly in order to get the meaning built through the words and sentences in the news. This is done to find the right research results. Then, after understanding the content of the news, the researcher will conduct a framing analysis of the Gamson and Modigliani model to find the packaging of meaning in the news.

Furthermore, the results of the analysis carried out will be explained by explaining in depth and detail what strategies are widely used by Detik.com and the packaging of meaning that is built to direct the reader to blame the victim. In addition, the researcher will also summarize it in the form of an analysis table. The results of the analysis that have been carried out can be understood more quickly and easily.

### 3 Research Results

#### 3.1 Strategy of Blaming the Victim

Researchers have analyzed several news published by Detik.com related to the murder of women. In the news, the researcher saw a tendency for Detik.com to bring news of female murder victims towards blaming the victim. Blaming the victim is a concept of unequal thinking by putting the truth on things that are unfair through mistakes or defects that are seen in the victim (Ryan, 1971).

The following are strategies for blaming the victim that researchers analyze:

a. Stigma of Women

In the news that the researchers analyzed, several sentences were more focused on female victims. These news clearly build meaning about women according to the growing stigma in society. These stigmas are contained in all analyzed news. This can be seen for example in the sentence on the news of the murder of a sex worker, "Korban perbuatan terdakwa adalah seorang perempuan yang tidak berdaya." It seems that Detik.com contains the stigma that women are in a subordinate position to men. Women are depicted as weak, incompetent and deserve to be paid cheaply, so that women are unable to fight or match the power of men.

This Detik.com news clearly constructs women as the number two people after men. This can also be seen in the news of the woman who was killed by her lover because the perpetrator's application was rejected. It appears that Detik.com contains the sentence "Dia menolak lamaran pelaku karena mau lanjut S2." As if to build the meaning that women do not need to have higher education, and this can be an excuse to blame the victim. The victim was killed due to his own fault for refusing the perpetrator's application on the grounds of education. In fact, women in society's view are identical with 'wells, kitchens, mattresses' so they don't need to have higher education.

Not only that, but women in society are also considered ideal if they are gentle, obedient, know boundaries and so on. This is what Detik.com is trying to build, so that if there are things that are not in accordance with the general public perception, then the woman can be labeled 'Naughty woman.' This can be seen from the news that a 16-year-old girl who was six months pregnant was murdered by her boyfriend. Detik.com contains the "Pihak keluarga mengatakan sudah tak dapat menghubungi korban sejak Kamis malam, korban meninggalkan rumah dengan membawa ponselnya."

It's as if Detik.com builds on the meaning that the woman doesn't know ethics and boundaries. In fact, the woman 'went around unclear' and her whereabouts were not known to her parents, so it was natural to get pregnant out of wedlock with her boyfriend and then be killed. Such negative stigmas about women were found in the news that the researchers analyzed.

The researchers saw that there were violations of journalistic ethics in the Detik.com news analyzed. In most of the news, the names and other identities of the victims are clearly stated, only a few stories are listed with the initials. But interestingly, the identity of the perpetrator is

mostly disguised in the news. Of course, Detik.com can be considered less neutral in reporting the case of the murder of women.

b. Opinion of the Authorized Party

Another fact that the researchers found in the analysis of the news was that all the news contained information from the police. As it is understood that the police are the party who has the authority in the murder case. Their statements and opinions tend to be trusted by the public, so that no matter what the police say, many people will not dispute it. Moreover, the police who provided information in the news were all male police officers. At least there is a set of personal assumptions as men that save the position of the perpetrators who incidentally are also men.

c. Confessions from the Perpetrators

After analyzing the news, researchers found that there was information from the perpetrators of the female murder. This confession further puts the position of female victims into a corner. This position is clearly seen from the title and content of the news, which repeatedly makes news with the concept of the perpetrator killing because of 'heartache.' The perpetrator seems to be looking for reasons to justify that what he did was triggered by the woman herself. The actions taken by the perpetrators seem to be only as a counter reaction and in the end the perpetrators are seen as the real 'victims'. However, of the nine news stories that the researchers analyzed, there were only two that included information from the perpetrators.

d. Opinion of Others

The news that the researcher analyzed found that there was only one news that included information from eyewitnesses. In fact, there is no information from the victim's family or relatives. It can be seen that detik.com news is not balanced. Because if it is examined, if only from the side of the police, the perpetrators or added by eyewitnesses who provide information, there will be inequality.

### **3.2 The Meaning of News of the Murder of Women**

The media are required to be independent and objective in reporting an event. However, in reality, often news published from the same event has a variety of features. Each media reports events in a different way and point of view. There are those who openly open and there are also those who close tightly a fact that is considered important or not. In general, this will seem reasonable because journalists have the assumptions they carry. This assumption will influence him in choosing the title, structure, and words used to show partiality or otherwise towards an event, although sometimes unconsciously. This concept has also been explained in framing theory, where this theory explains how an individual's schema views a reality (Littlejohn, 2009).

According to Teun A. Van Dijk, framing theory can be used as a method in viewing the 'information strategy' of messages in the media (Hamad, 2004). The analytical method in question is framing analysis, this analysis helps dismantle any meanings that are built in media messages. The framing analysis used is the Gamson and Modigliani model. In the analysis of this model, Gamson and Modigliani explain that in news we can see the packaging of meaning built by the media through discourse devices such as the words used, strung sentences, etc (Eriyanto, 2002).

This can be seen in the news of the murder case published on Detik.com. News related to murder cases is often published in Detik.com media. Especially if the case has something to do with women, Detik.com focuses more on reporting on female victims than perpetrators. For example, it can be observed from the news entitled "Check In Bareng Pria, Gadis ABG Tewas di Hotel Masih Berseragam Pramuka."

In this title, Detik.com clearly makes female victims as news objects. In addition, Detik.com also clarifies the victim's attributes with 'ABG' and 'Berseragam Pramuka.' Even though without adding these words, it does not reduce the understanding of people who read them. In addition, the description of the perpetrator is not explained much in this news, such as how his mental health is, the behavior of the perpetrator in his environment, and others. It can be seen that Detik.com packs meaning through the words chosen to highlight and highlight the woman as if the death of the victim was due to her own fault. At the same time, Detik.com should be balanced in reporting the case.

Meanwhile, if you look at the Detik.com news titles, most of them carry the concept of cause and effect. This concept can be seen from the title which uses the words 'karena' and 'dipicu.' These two words are always followed by a sentence that blames the victim, for example, "Pembunuhan Wanita di Sumut oleh Selingkuhan Dipicu Cemburu Korban Selingkuh." Then, at the end of the news, the sentence is often embedded that the perpetrator killed the victim by 'khilaf.'

This statement seems to be a defense of the perpetrator by admitting his guilt. The word 'khilaf' also refers to the intention of an unintentional or uncontrollable mistake, so from this statement the perpetrator claims that his act of killing the victim is an uncontrollable counterattack. In fact, in a murder case, the important object to be investigated is the perpetrator. Finally, a misunderstanding is formed in understanding the existence of victims and perpetrators in a crime event.

Perpetrators are often described as someone who commits a crime on an uncontrollable self-motivation, such as lust. Meanwhile, victims are often described as passive and unable to fight the crimes that have happened to them (The Canadian Resource Center for Victims of Crime, 2009). For clearer analysis results, the researchers put them in the following table:

**Table 2. Analysis Result**

No	Analysis Result
1	Many clearly state the identity of the victim and the perpetrator with initials or pseudonyms
2	Almost no further discussion of the other parties involved in the killings
3	There are quite a number of words that seem impolite
4	Only focus on discussing the victim as the trigger for the murder
5	Sufficiently clear and detailed mention of the victim's attributes
6	Sufficiently show pictures of perpetrators in police security situations (face not shown) and use illustrations
7	Almost all the news that explains the perpetrators kill because of heartache
8	Quite a lot of juxtaposing words that are refined for the perpetrator, while the victim is the opposite.
9	News tends to be interpreted as entertainment for readers and the news is not discussed further
10	News is more impressed to serve the desires of readers, especially male readers by considering the content of the news from a male perspective
11	All news uses the same formula, namely cause and effect
12	Often highlighting female victims as having bad morals
13	There is an explanation for the reader against the actions of the perpetrators of the wrongdoings of women who support

The framing analysis that the researchers conducted on the news of the murder of women on Detik.com also found facts other than those described above. The researcher sees that the

news presented by Detik.com tends to be interpreted as entertainment for the readers and the news is not discussed in detail. This means that the news no longer puts forward the substance or importance of the murder case itself. The news about the murder of women seems to serve the readers' desires, especially the male readers, by considering the content of the news from a male perspective.

As for all the news, it can be seen that the same formula is used by Detik.com. News is built with the concept as if 'There is no smoke if there is no fire,' this concept gives birth to the meaning that women are the source of the problem that initiated the crime of murder that occurred to her. The news that is published often highlights those female victims have bad morals such as mocking, insulting, cheating and others. It can be seen clearly that Detik.com finds fault with female victims.

In the end, for news readers there will be an explanation of the perpetrator's actions and blaming the victim. If you pull back, the phenomenon of blaming the victim arises because it has something to do with patriarchal culture. Society, especially in Indonesia, is in a dominant environment of patriarchal culture. The patriarchal culture or 'true father' places women in a situation that must submit and obey the power of men. This kind of situation makes if there are women whose behavior does not match this culture, they are considered to have challenged the patriarchal culture and that is something wrong.

This patriarchal culture has also contributed greatly to shaping society's stigma about women. Women in the socio-cultural system are perceived as weak, have limitations and are dominant in using feelings rather than logic. This forms the meaning that women do not deserve to be in a 'hard,' logical and competitive public space. If there are women who are in the public space, it will be interpreted as having defied nature. This patriarchal culture and ideology have also gained legitimacy from various aspects ranging from family, religion, belief and state.

This has closed women's participation in the public sphere and the emergence of stigma and discrimination, so it is not surprising that women have been facing endless and maintained problems of gender equality. The maintenance of this culture is evident from the news that the researcher analyzes.

### **3.3 Strategy of Blaming the Victim**

Based on analysis, the researcher can see that the findings of the blaming the victim strategy in Detik.com news are dominated by the stigma related to women that develops in society and the opinions of those in authority. Although there are only two strategies that dominate, the concept of blaming the victim can be seen clearly in the news. In the news, the stigma that was inserted played a major role in leading news readers to blame female victims and was strengthened by the information provided by the police. These two things are enough to lead to the assumption that the victim is the trigger for the crime that happened to him.

The results of such an analysis are the same as the researchers found in the relevant research that the researcher took from Dede Mahmuda's article. He published an article entitled "Representasi Perempuan pada Teks Kekerasan dalam Rumah Tangga (Analisis Wacana Feminis Sara Mills pada Teks Rubrik 'Nah Ini Dia' di Harian Pos Kota)." This study has similarities with the results of researchers' analysis related to women's reporting, which both see that the media is not neutral and unequal. From the results of his research, it can be seen that the position of the subject is generally dominated by men so that it directs the reader to interpret the text from a male point of view.

In the text analyzed, it appears that women are only described as triggers of violence, so that they end up becoming victims of violence. However, the scope of this study was narrower



than the cases the researcher adopted. The cases of violence that the researchers have taken have led to murder and not only in the realm of domestic violence. The case that researchers have raised concerns the death of a person.

Cases of death like this need to be watched out, especially the murder of women, because it has become commonplace. Moreover, the media forms the meaning as if the murder was natural with reasons that lead to blaming the female victim. These conditions are unfair to the murdered woman and her family. Although, the woman also has mistaken such as mocking, insulting, cheating and other mistakes. But that does not mean that this is a justification for the perpetrator to kill the victim. For whatever the reason, the act of taking a person's life is a form of treatment that brings down a human being.

### 3.4 The Meaning of News of the Murder of Women

The researcher sees that women are highlighted with excitement with supporting facts in them. The facts presented are not necessarily lies. However, it should be understood that journalists who cover the news are not value-free figures but live in a society that adheres to patriarchal values. This makes the news published contains these patriarchal values. Thus, this study explains that journalists need to have a women's perspective in order to be able to see and explain the facts by considering women's perspectives. Later the news published will be more enlightening and educational, not only profitable behind exciting news but heart-wrenching for women.

## 4 Conclusion

The case of the murder of women on Detik.com is not reported neutrally. This can be seen from the coverage of female victims, which is bigger than the perpetrators. Female victims are described in more detail both in terms of identity and other attributes. The results of the analysis conducted by researchers see that Detik.com news leads to blaming the victim by taking advantage of the stigma of women in society. In addition, the words used to describe the perpetrators and victims are unequal and the news sources chosen are also unbalanced.

News of the murder of women on Detik.com packs meaning by being dominated by the concept of cause and effect, where the victim is the object. Detik.com did not discuss further the other parties involved and the conditions and backgrounds of the perpetrators. Detik.com focuses more on the actions of the perpetrators as a counter-reaction that cannot be controlled due to the victim's mistakes and packs the meaning that the perpetrator is the real 'victim'.

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