

# **The Case of Sukabumi's Teenage Rape in Online News Text: Sara Mills' Critical Discourse Analysis**

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**Abstract:** The news or issues about women often position them as marginalized and underrepresented in mass media. This study aims at investigating the news about the rape of a finalist in the Sukabumi's Putri Nelayan contest reported by Detikcom, Tuesday, July 16, 2024 edition. The approach used in this study was Sara Mills' critical discourse analysis theory and the paradigm applied was descriptive qualitative. The data were collected by applying content analysis with read-and-record technique. They were analyzed by employing Sara Mills' CDA theory comprising the subject-object position and the writer-reader position. The results showed that Detikcom presented the news about the rape of a finalist of the Sukabumi's Putri Nelayan contest in Palabuhanratu, Sukabumi. The news focused on revealing the chronology of incidents by the victim's father based on his daughter's confession. The portrayal of women in this news was highlighted by the actors who played roles as subject and as object in the report. The subject was the narrator and the object was the one being narrated. These portrayals illustrated how women were represented in news text. It could be concluded that Detikcom demonstrated its bias towards the victim by prioritizing the victim as the primary subject.

**Keyword :** critical discourse analysis, Detikcom, mass media, women

## **INTRODUCTION**

The news or issues about women often position them as marginalized and inferior party. Women are frequently underrepresented in the media and its content gives more favors to men. Women are commonly referred to in different ways in media reports than men. Men are commonly referred to by their jobs or appearance, while women are frequently referred to by their relationships with others. The mass media plays an important role in presenting these issues in the public sphere. As a source of information, it has freedom and full control over every piece of news it presents. The mass media is often at risk of being manipulated by certain groups in power. On the other hand, those without power do not receive their rights. The mass media plays a crucial role especially in shaping the public's perception of a particular issue. The perception heavily depends on how the mass media presents and portrays the news.

Issues, rumors, and news about women always attract public attention. One example of it is the news about the rape of a teenage girl who was a finalist in the Sukabumi's Putri Nelayan contest reported by one of the online media, *Detikcom*, and was published on Tuesday, July 16, 2024. The rape was committed by a member of the Fishermen's Day organizing committee in Palabuhanratu in 2024. This study aims at investigating the news by applying Sara Mills' critical discourse analysis (CDA) theory, i.e. subject-object position and writer-reader position contained within the news. The theory developed by Sara Mills is also known as the feminist perspective. Sara Mills' critical discourse analysis focuses on media coverage of women and examining how women are portrayed by the media. The Sara Mills' model also pays attention to subject-object position and writer-reader position. The subject is the narrator who tells the story while the object is the one being narrated. The reader's position relates to the use of pronouns in the text, such as *I, you, we, they*, etc.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) views language as an aspect to be analyzed within a text. CDA is not merely understood as a study of language in the sense of traditional linguistic understanding. The language analyzed in CDA does not simply examine its linguistic aspects but also connects it with context. This means that language is used for specific purposes and agendas. Fairclough & Wodak explain that language, whether in speech or in writing, is a form of social practice. Discourse practice can show ideological effects. It can create unequal power relations between social classes, men and women, majorities and minorities, through which these differences are displayed in social positions represented (Novianti et al., 2022). CDA focuses on how messages are conveyed within a text. These messages are traced through words, phrases, sentences, and metaphors. Through these elements, discourse analysis can reveal the hidden meanings of a text. Therefore, CDA not only explores the content of the news but also examines how the news content is presented. CDA is an alternative approach that can be used to analyze media texts. While other analyses, such as quantitative analysis, answer the question of "what," CDA answers the question of "how" (Melinda et al., 2020).

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) using Sara Mills' perspective focuses on the women's position in media. Therefore, Sara Mills' framework is called feminist stylistic which refers to feminist perspective. By referring to a feminist perspective, Sara Mills' framework conveyed how women are stigmatized when displayed in media. Media displaying women is often drawing attention to how the text is biased. Women representation is also attaching discrimination since women are portrayed as a marginalized party (Lubis, 2023). Thus, the analysis according to Sara Mills' perspective purposes to attract attention and to change the way gender is portrayed. It tries to explore an actor's position in the text. In this case, the actor's position can be displayed through the subject-object position and active-passive voice. It will be clearly known who becomes the subject and who becomes the object of news. After the position is clearly visible, it will lead to how the structure of the text and how the meaning is interpreted in the text as a whole (Agung & Suroso, 2023).

In the subject-object position stage, Sara Mills' perspective aims at exposing the tendency shown in a discourse by positioning the position of social factors, position of ideas, and events in the text. This will reveal a particular actor as the subject of particular event. As a result, an actor with a higher position has the authority to determine the reality of the structure of the text that will be presented in society. The actor can also interfere with how he/she is portrayed and how other parties are portrayed. Furthermore, Sara Mills' perspective also involves both readers and writers' position in the text. The point of this idea is that the readers will identify which position they will place themselves according to the narration of the text (Asheva & Tasyarasita, 2022). The reader's position concept occurs in two ways, through the hierarchical truth raised within a discourse and the cultural code. The truth within the text makes the readers attach himself to the character and the situation that the characters face. The cultural code directs the readers' moral value when interpreting a text. Sara Mills' Critical Discourse Analysis theory acknowledges the way gender relations are represented. Writer's authority to reflect his/her ideology through the text is absolute. Therefore, Sara Mills' perspective serves the analysis of how texts are attached by the ideology of the writers. She also introduced how the position of the reader is reflected in the text. In accordance with this position, the narrator could attempt to draw sympathy from the readers once negotiations between the writer and the readers are resulted in the text. Hence, the news results in a negotiation that involves the journalist as a writer and readers. The readers are not only the ones who just accept the text, but also participate in transactions in the text (Yogaswara & Hamdani, 2023).

## **METHODS**

This study is a linguistic study. Linguistic study focuses on language structure, the relationship between language and culture, language and its use, language and its function, and so on. Therefore, a research paradigm is needed to uncover the realities contained. For this reason, researchers need to describe the research methods so that the research is objective, systematic, logical, and valid. This study focuses on the analysis on sentences within the news about the rape of a teenage girl who was a finalist in the Sukabumi's Putri Nelayan contest reported by *Detikcom*.

The approach used in this study is Sara Mills' critical discourse analysis (CDA) theory and the paradigm applied is descriptive qualitative with a sole embedded case study employing content analysis method. Descriptive qualitative research aims to understand phenomena such as behaviours, perceptions, motivations, actions, and others experienced by research subjects in a holistic manner, described in words or sentences within a specific natural context and utilizing various scientific methods (Citriadin, 2020).

From the ontological assumption, it is known that reality in qualitative research is subjective and multiple and refers to the researcher. From the epistemological assumption, qualitative research demonstrates the interaction between the researcher and the subject being studied. From the methodological assumption, qualitative research follows an inductive process where factors simultaneously shape each other, the design is evolving, categories are

identified during the research process, it is context-bound, and theories and patterns are developed for understanding and ensuring accuracy and reliability through verification.

The source of data in this study is *Detikcom* website, Tuesday, July 16, 2024 edition. The data are sentences within the news about the rape of a teenage girl who was a finalist in the Sukabumi's Putri Nelayan contest. They were collected by applying content analysis with read-and-record technique. The reading technique involves repeatedly reading to understand the entire content of the news. The recording technique involves noting down the data or information obtained from the news according to the Sara Mills' critical discourse analysis (CDA) theory. The data were analyzed by employing Sara Mills' CDA theory comprising the subject-object position and the writer-reader position.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Results**

The online media *Detikcom*, Tuesday, July 16, 2024 edition, presented the news about the rape of a 17-year-old teenage girl who was a finalist in the Sukabumi's Putri Nelayan contest in Palabuhanratu, Sukabumi with the headline *Pilu Remaja Finalis Putri Nelayan Sukabumi yang Diduga Diperkosa*. The news focused on revealing the chronology of incidents by the victim's father based on his daughter's confession. The headline placed the woman (the girl who was raped) as a weak person which indicated by the word *pilu* (melancholy). The portrayal of women in this news was highlighted by the actors who played roles as subject and as object in the report. The subject is the narrator and the object is the one being narrated. The roles and positions of these actors are the focus of Sara Mills' critical discourse analysis theory. These portrayals illustrate how women are represented in news texts.

### **Discussion**

The subject-object position is used to see the position of the actor who provides an interpretation of the incident to another person who becomes the interpreted object. This position shapes a text or an image within society. The girl who was the victim of the rape has opportunity to recount the incident from her perspective. In the news report, she – represented by her father – held the subject position, as her father described the chronology of the incident based on her confession. The perpetrator of the rape was positioned as the object or the person described by the subject. Here is the data of quotation recounting the incident from the subject – with the initials A – from the news text:

*"Kata anak saya kamar hotel itu sudah dibooking oleh panitia hari nelayan karena memang saat make up, saat ada rangkaian kegiatan juga disitu. Nah saat itu ketika anak saya sampai ke kamar itu, kedua temannya keluar alasan mau beli makanan. Nah saat itu si pelaku datang ke kamar, masuk, dan dia matikan lampu memaksa dan melakukan pemerkosaan. Setelah kejadian itu si pelaku mengontak kawannya lalu datang ke situ. Seprei itu sama si pelaku di buntel-buntel (lipat) lalu dibawa ke luar. Setelah enggak lama si pelaku bawa seprei baru digantilah seprei pakai yang baru," kata A. (Detikcom, July 16, 2024)*

Women were illustrated as weak people in the disclosure of the incident by the victim's father. This can be inferred from her father's statement, saying that his daughter was so scared of the perpetrator's threats and that there were chat messages that placed her in vulnerable position. Here is the data of quotation from the news text:

*"Anak saya tidak langsung lapor karena dia takut, dari chatingan yang saya lihat jadi seolah-olah pacaran, jadi semacam dibujuk putri saya ini. Karena kondisi anak saya trauma dia baru memberanikan diri melapor ke ibunya. Karena anak saya ini memang tinggal dengan ibunya, pada Kamis, 4 Juli 2024 saya dapat kabar besoknya hari Jumat itu saya langsung melapor ke polisi," kata A. "Anak saya ini mengalami berbagai ancaman dan tekanan, bayangkan saja saat kejadian itu lampu dimatikan, anak saya dipaksa. Bahkan anak saya cerita takut dibunuh, hasil olah TKP polisi juga menyebut TKP nya di salah satu kamar hotel yang posisinya di lorong," sambungnya. "Sejak pelaporan kurang lebih dua minggu belum ada gelar perkara, penetapan tersangka dan penahanan. Namun begitu kita masih percaya polisi bekerja profesional dan presisi mencari keadilan. Saya kedatangan tamu dari Dinsos Kabupaten Sukabumi, nanti akan melakukan pemulihan psikologi putri saya," tutur A. (Detikcom, July 16, 2024)*

Furthermore, the subject (narrator) in the news is also represented by the police. In this case, the girl who was the victim of the rape is positioned as the object (the one being narrated). Here is the data of quotation from the news text:

*"Hari ini agenda trauma healing terhadap korban, namun berlangsung tertutup," ujar Kapolres Sukabumi AKBP Tony Prasetyo. "Kami terima laporan pada tanggal 5 Juli sedang melaksanakan penyelidikan, pemeriksaan saksi-saksi dan pengumpulan alat bukti. Untuk terduga (pelaku) kita tetap mengedepankan asas praduga tidak bersalah," ungkap Tony. (Detikcom, July 16, 2024)*

The object position placed the actor as the one who received the action by the subject, i.e. the rape perpetrator. In the news text, it can be observed that the rape perpetrator – with the initials S – was described by the subject and had been reported to the police by the subject. The data showing the object position can be seen in this sentence:

*"Nah saat itu si pelaku datang ke kamar, masuk, dan dia matikan lampu memaksa dan melakukan pemerkosaan. Setelah kejadian itu si pelaku mengontak kawannya lalu datang ke situ. Seprei itu sama si pelaku di buntel-buntel (lipat) lalu dibawa ke luar. Setelah enggak lama si pelaku bawa seprei baru digantilah seprei pakai yang baru," kata A. "Saya melapor pada Jumat, 5 Juli 2024, sebelumnya saya dihubungi oleh mantan istri saya, ibu korban sehari sebelumnya atau pada Kamis, 4 Juli 2024 mengabari jika putri saya sudah menjadi korban pemerkosaan," ucapnya. (Detikcom, July 16, 2024)*

In the writer-reader position, the news placed the writer as the subject (narrator). The incident was revealed from three perspectives: that of the rape victim – represented by her father, that of the police, and that of the perpetrator – represented by his legal counsel. Here is the data of quotation from the victim's perspective:

*Nasib pilu menimpa salah seorang finalis ajang Putri Nelayan Palabuhanratu, Kabupaten Sukabumi. Gadis berusia 17 tahun itu diduga menjadi korban pemerkosaan pria inisial S, oknum Panitia Hari Nelayan Palabuhanratu 2024. Kejadian itu diungkap oleh ayah korban, A. Ia menceritakan kronologi kejadian tersebut berdasarkan pengakuan dari putrinya. Peristiwa itu terjadi pada 3 Mei 2024. Kala itu korban tengah menonton pertandingan voli di acara kegiatan Hari Nelayan. Korban saat itu dihubungi temannya yang juga berstatus sebagai salah satu finalis Putri Nelayan, dengan satu orang pria lainnya. Kala itu, di Dermaga (PPNP) Palabuhanratu tengah berlangsung pertandingan voli rangkaian kegiatan Hari Nelayan. Saat itu, temannya meminta korban untuk datang ke salah satu hotel tidak jauh dari tempat menonton voli. Hotel tersebut memang sengaja disewa panitia Hari Nelayan selama satu bulan untuk kegiatan putri nelayan. A merinci peristiwa dugaan pemerkosaan itu terjadi pada Jumat, 3 Mei 2024. Pelaporan sendiri baru dilakukan pada Jumat 5 Juli 2024. Korban yang masih berusia 17 tahun dikabarkan mengalami trauma. A menyebut putrinya itu sempat diancam oleh S sehingga tidak langsung melaporkan peristiwa yang menimpanya kepada siapapun. Hal itulah yang kemudian menjadi alasan kenapa pihak keluarga baru melaporkan hal itu. Berdasarkan peristiwa yang diceritakan putrinya, A memutuskan untuk melaporkan S ke polisi atas dugaan pemerkosaan. A melaporkan S ke Unit Perlindungan Perempuan dan Anak (PPA) Satreskrim Polres Sukabumi pada 5 Juli 2024. (Detikcom, July 16, 2024)*

The incident was revealed from the police's perspective as well. Here is the data of the quotation:

*Dikonfirmasi terpisah, Kapolres Sukabumi AKBP Tony Prasetyo membenarkan pelaporan tersebut. Tony membenarkan pihaknya menerima laporan pada 5 Juli 2024, pihaknya langsung melakukan proses penyelidikan. Menurutnya hari ini agenda korban untuk menjalani trauma healing. (Detikcom, July 16, 2024)*

The incident was also revealed from the perpetrator's perspective that was represented by his legal counsel. Here is the data of the quotation:

*Upaya konfirmasi juga dilakukan terhadap pelaku. Tusyana, kuasa hukum S, mengatakan pihaknya belum bisa memberikan keterangan apapun. "Untuk saat ini kami selaku kuasa hukum S, belum bisa berstatemen mengingat kita masih menghargai pihak kepolisian yang dalam hal ini masih melakukan penyelidikan dan penyidikan," kata Tusyana.*

The depiction presented by Detikcom news writer was based on statements from both sides, i.e. the victim and the perpetrator. Both were featured in the text and were given the opportunity to tell their own perspective. These narratives portrayed women as the weak people. Meanwhile, readers were encouraged to position themselves from both perspectives, namely the victim's perspective and the perpetrator's perspective. Detikcom placed its readers in a balanced position, inviting them to view themselves as both subjects (narrators) and objects (those being narrated) in the news coverage.

## CONCLUSION

Each mass media has its own way of packaging and presenting news. Mass media have full control over the dissemination of information to the public. They hold the power to choose from which perspective or in what manner an event is portrayed. Additionally, mass media have the authority to strengthen or weaken the portrayal of a news object.

It can be concluded that, in the coverage of the aforementioned case, *Detikcom* demonstrates its bias towards the victim by prioritizing the victim as the primary subject. The findings of this study are expected to raise readers' awareness that mass media possess the power to amplify or diminish the focus on news subjects. Readers are encouraged to be more critical of the news presented by mass media.

It is suggested that future research analyze news with broader topics and themes. Analyzing news with broader topics or themes will provide a more in-depth study, particularly on how women are portrayed in the news.

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