

News on Sexual Violence against Women on Magdalene.co and Female Readers

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ABSTRACT

Mass media play a role in building audience perspectives on published content or text, including news about sexual violence. This study aims to investigate and analyze how women readers give meaning to the news of sexual violence against women on Magdalene.co. This study uses reception analysis method with encoding-decoding theory from Stuart Hall to explain the audience reception from women's perspective about the message of sexual violence news on Magdalene.co. The messages interpreted by the audience regarding cases of sexual violence on Magdalene.co vary, depending on the audience's background. The findings illustrate that informant 1 and 4 interpreted news of sexual violence in online media led to negative public opinion. Informant 3 and 6 felt that cases of sexual violence in Indonesia would be handled by the authorities when they were widely discussed by the public. Informant 5 also interpreted that mass media has great power in influencing people's attitudes and thought patterns. The factors that contribute to the meaning of reporting on sexual violence against women on Magdalene.co include experience, work, age and interests.

Keywords: *Meaning, News, Sexual Violence, Women.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The mass media places cases of sexual violence against women as interesting objects for reporting. In fact, in several mass media, both electronic, print and online, incidents of sexual harassment are another side of the media's appeal. Reporting about sexual violence also gives the impression of being exploited, the incident becomes a section or interesting news from the media (Bungin, 2005).

Understanding the reporting of sexual violence can give rise to various meanings regarding cases of sexual violence against women. Based on their background, knowledge and experience, each will give rise to different ideas. These responses or thoughts can be in the form of pros or agrees or even cons from men and even fellow women.

There is an opinion among the public that the causes of this case of sexual violence are two possibilities, the first is that cases of sexual violence against women are purely the actions of other people and secondly, women are the victims because of their own actions. Therefore, women are asked to take care of themselves, such as wearing clothes that do not invite men's desires (Prihandini, 2021).

Based on the National Commission for Women (Komnas) 2020 Annual Records (CATAHU) data, 299,911 cases of violence against women were recorded and reported throughout 2020. As many as 79% (6,480 cases) were violence that occurred in the private or personal sphere, around 30% were cases of sexual violence of 1,983 cases (Komnas Perempuan, 2021).

Reported cases of violence against women consist of various types of physical and non-physical violence, one of which is sexual violence against women. According to Winarsunu in (Utami, 2016, p. 8), sexual harassment is all kinds of behavior that has a sexual connotation that is carried out unilaterally and is not desired by the victim.

According to the findings of West Coast LEAF Vancouver, which was reported on the IJRS page on March 18 2021, its findings stated that many victims of sexual violence do not want to report it because they are worried about protecting the victim's identity, which could possibly have an impact on their mental health and financial condition (Indonesia Judicial Research Society (IJRS), 2021).

Mass media also plays a role in building the audience's perspective on published content or texts, including reporting on sexual violence. This is because the media shape public opinion which then leads to significant changes (Ardianto & Erdinaya, 2004, p. 57).

According to the results of research regarding the framing analysis of the online media Magdalene.co on sexual violence against women conducted by Yusnia (2020) stated that Magdalene.co is an alternative media that focuses on diversity, especially women's issues. Birowo also argues in (Yusnia, 2020, p. 26) that alternative media is the media of choice for the public in obtaining accurate, correct and impartial information. Magdalene.co tries to provide facts on the ground and not cover them up. In this way, the news in the online media Magdalene.co attracts the attention of readers, especially female readers, so that it can be used as a learning tool to avoid acts of sexual violence.

Online Media and News

Online media is one that is classified as new media. New media is a combination of information technology and social communication which is based on three parts: technological tools and objects, activities, practices, uses and the social order and organization that is formed around it (Quail, 2011, pp. 42-43).

Online media has several advantages over print media journalism. First, the news published is faster. Second, access to news is easy and practical, can be done anywhere and can be done with just a smart phone. Third, there is a comments column in online media so that online media readers can easily provide comments or responses to the news. It is this factor that cannot be obtained from print media which makes online media very necessary for those who want to know world developments at any time (Zaenuddin, 2017, pp. 6-7).

In this research, the media is Magdalene.co, which is an online media based on a website since September 2013. This mass media is an online media that focuses on women's issues, because its target audience is Indonesian women. Apart from that, this media exists because it wants to provide opportunities for women to express their opinions and thoughts.

The existence of the internet influences reporting in online media. Foust (in (Muliawanti, 2018)) mentions the positive side of reporting in online media, namely, firstly, audiences are given the freedom to choose the news they want to access. Second, the news presented can stand alone (nonlinearity). Third, reporting in online media is timeless and it can still be stored so that it can be accessed again by the public. Fourth, online media can present news in greater quantity and more variety (unlimited space).

On the other hand, online media misuses events can be occurred to take advantage, such as in cases of sexual violence by using pornography, namely exploiting news in such a way that what is displayed is the reader's sexual stimulation or images (Rossy & Wahid, 2015). The media is also too quick to draw conclusions by making sentences that attract the attention of readers (Komnas Perempuan, 2015).

Active Audience

Readers who receive media messages are classified as media audiences. The audience's behavior towards mass media depends on how they behave. Mc Quail (2011, p. 164) defines active audiences as those who are involved in forming knowledge based on incoming information and experience.

Media effects are no longer fully accepted by active audiences, such as how the wider community views and interprets media messages, but audiences receive media messages based on what views suit their own needs (Baran & Dennis, 2010, p. 237).

The process of meaning by active audiences occurs if the special meaning given by the media is able to be conveyed to active audiences in line with their daily media consumption habits, social influence and background. Receiving media content can share experiences between audiences based on the content of media use through interpretation, correction, perception and a person's statement regarding their media consumption.

In this research, female readers become active audiences who produce the meaning of messages from mass media. In this case, female readers interpret for themselves, what messages they receive after reading news about violence against women on Magdalene.co, female readers will express how they interpret the news.

Stuart Hall's Encoding-Decoding Theory

This research uses Stuart Hall's encoding-decoding theory as the basis for research which uses reception analysis methods or audience reception. In this theory, Stuart Hall (in (Ida, 2014, pp. 161-162), explains encoding-decoding as meaning formation and the process of receiving mass media content consumed by active audiences.

The focus of encoding-decoding theory is on the relationship between media messages and the way the messages are interpreted by the audience. The encoding process can be interpreted as the process of sending messages or ideas by producers to the audience.

Encoding is a communication process that can occur once or many times. When communicating directly through face-to-face conversation, the encoding process that occurs in the form of thoughts or ideas is channeled through words. The ability to do this encoding varies for each person. There are people who are very skilled at choosing words to produce good sentences (Morissan, 2013, pp. 18-19). Meanwhile, decoding is the process of translating messages carried out by the recipient or audience into a form that has meaning (Morissan, 2013, p. 21). Communicators have their own choice of codes and symbols which will influence the recipient in interpreting the message.

Therefore, according to Stuart Hall (in (Morissan, 2013, pp. 550-552), there are three models that explain the possible process of audience decoding of media messages, namely: Dominant Hegemonic, Negotiation and Opposition positions.

Dominant Hegemonic Position

The position where the audience fully receives the message conveyed by the media. The audience likes and agrees with the messages conveyed by the media. This situation is called the dominant cultural code of society. In other words, communicators and communicants or active audiences and the media both agree and have the same understanding of the content of media messages.

Negotiation Position (Negotiated Position)

The situation where the audience actively accepts part of the content of a media message but the rest rejects its application to certain cases is adjusted to the situation and local cultural rules.

Opposition Position (Oppositional Position)

Audiences only receive codes and/or messages that they only like. Furthermore, audiences reject and replace and change media codes or messages that do not match their thinking.

Through this research, researchers want to find out more deeply and analyze how female readers give meaning to the news about sexual violence against women on Magdalene.co. The characteristics of online media that are different and specific from other online media will result in female readers' different meanings about sexual violence against women and how female readers place themselves or their positions on the news, which is also the focus of this research.

2. METHODS

Suriasumantri in (Kriyantono, 2006, p. 49) explains that research methods are procedures for knowing something using systematic steps. If we conclude, research methods are procedures for proving something that has a purpose and is useful scientifically.

This research uses the reception analysis method, namely to see the diversity of meanings of each informant or respondent. Analysis of audience reception is knowing the process of meaning by the public or audience when consuming impressions or media content. Reception analysis aims to see and understand the responses, reception, attitudes and meanings produced or formed by the audience or readers (Ida, 2014).

The important focus of reception analysis is the meaning process resulting from the interaction between the audience (viewers/readers) and media texts, not the meaning contained in media impressions. In other words, meaning is created by reading or watching and processing media texts (Hadi, 2008, p. 2). The researcher wants to know how the audience or readers of the Magdalene.co media receive content messages reporting sexual violence against women in the media and reconstruct the news messages.

Not only that, according to Jasen in (Andiesta & Bajari, 2017, pp. 4-5), there are three elements in the reception analysis methodology: collection, analysis, and interpretation of data, which are then used as research steps carried out by researcher.

First, data was collected from in-depth interviews between researchers and selected 6 informants to explore how informants stimulate the content of media messages. Second, analyze the results of in-depth interviews which are transcribed, then grouped according to the symbols that appear to the reader which are then translated by the research subject, then the process of meaning that arises from the audience or research subject (decoding) is compared with the results of analyzing media impressions (encoding) to be categorized into types of reader positions. Third, researchers carry out interpretations by considering the background and knowledge of informants such as social and cultural factors.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research was conducted from September 10, 2022 to January 12, 2023. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, observation and literature study. The data was then reduced by the researcher. This research uses Stuart Hall's reception analysis model. There are three groups of audience positions in interpreting media messages. Each audience interprets the same media message and the results of the interpretation are different for each audience. Stuart Hall's audience position categories are: Hegemonic Dominance, Negotiation, and Opposition.

Media Facilitation for Women Audiences

Reporting on sexual violence is the main topic in this research. Therefore, it is important for researchers to know and describe the informant's point of view or perspective regarding their experience of reading news of sexual violence in online media. The first finding in this research explains that the three informants, namely informant 1, 2 and 3, evaluated news of sexual violence against women on Magdalene.co as news that cornered the position of women as the victims. This finding proves the results of previous research which states that the media makes reporting on sexual violence against women as a commodity, where the media gain profits from it (Prihandini, 2021).

Informant 2 interpreted the media's bias in reporting sexual violence in online media as having different news characteristics. According to her, many online media that report on sexual violence against women comply with the journalistic code of ethics, do not use vulgar sentences and focus only on the case. Informant 2 also interpreted that although much of the news about sexual violence against women only focuses on the victims, nowadays people are more careful in responding to news on online media by not directly agreeing with the content of the media.

In contrast to Informant 2, Informant 1 interpreted that society is still not neutral in reporting on sexual violence against women, because reporting in online media that leads to victim blame causes victims to not have the courage to defend themselves. Informant 1 interpreted that there are still many online media that report sexual violence against women that do not cover both sides and are not neutral. Prioritizing reporting about victims, especially using click bait titles and seem to put the victim on the wrong side.

Meanwhile, Informant 3 interpreted that reporting on sexual violence against women was a topic that was widely discussed on social media and mass media in Indonesia. Reporting on sexual violence often easily gets the attention of the public. But this is not in line with the handling of the case. Informant 3 interpreted that when cases of sexual violence are intensely discussed by the public and receive legal action, the mass media is often seen as inconsistent in reporting sexual violence until it is resolved. Resolving cases of sexual violence through the law, which is considered slow and a long process, will make the public forget the progress of the case due to the disappearance of mass media reports.

Moreover, informant 6 gave the meaning that news in the mass media could influence audiences, including news about sexual violence. Informant 6 also interpreted that reporting on sexual violence in online media created a negative impression of the case. The media is considered to be exaggerating the situation when reporting on sexual violence against women. Informant 6 interpreted that even though the reporting was in accordance with the facts in the field, it needed to be filtered again. This is because online media seen by the general public can provide new methods for potential perpetrators of sexual violence. Some of these findings states that reporting on violence in online media creates more negative information. This understanding supports the statement from Bungin (2005) which states that the mass media presents news about sexual harassment not only in a positive way but also in a negative way, which even modifies positive messages to become negative.

Meanwhile, Informant 5 interpreted the current reporting of sexual violence against women in online media as not only providing information. Reporting on cases of sexual violence covers many aspects, such as preventive measures to prevent sexual violence from occurring, the flow of complaints about action reports, and the legal process for cases of sexual violence. Informant 5 also interpreted that the mass media has great power in influencing people's attitudes and thought patterns, so that the mass media is also responsible for educating the public so that they understand more fairly the position of victims and perpetrators in sexual violence against women. This supports the statement that mass media can influence people's viewpoints and opinions (Bungin, 2001).

Informants' Meaning of Sexual Violence Reporting in Reception Analysis

This research found that the informants showed various and different interpretations and acceptance of what Magdalene.co reported on its website. This is proven from the results of interviews conducted with 6 informants. The researcher's findings use Stuart Hall's theory of meaning, namely the encoding-decoding model which explains that the process of conveying messages from the media to audiences can have different effects due to the background knowledge, audience relations, and infrastructure factors of each audience. This is a functional influence affected psychologically and persuades the audience's perception which causes the subjectivity of the audience as recipients of the message.

The media creates text or encodes the meaning of a text with the specific purpose of the message conveyed. In the process of consuming messages, audiences decode the text in a certain way. The process carried out by the audience will produce different interpretations or meanings for each audience who consumes the message. Hall divides three audience models in decoding messages consumed by audiences, namely dominant hegemonic position, negotiated position, and oppositional position (Hall in Morissan, 2013, pp. 550-552).

First, the dominant hegemonic position is a position of meaning from the audience which interprets the message in accordance with or in line with the message producer, and shows the characteristics of acceptance or approval of the message (Hall in Morissan, 2013, pp. 550-552). In line with the theory of dominant hegemonic audience position, in this case, the message discussed is women's reporting on sexual violence on Magdalene.co, informants 1, 3, 5, were influenced by different thoughts after reading the article about sexual violence in full, adapted to their respective perspectives. However, the three informants had one influence in common, namely that they acknowledged that sexual violence could raise awareness about the importance of the issue of sexual violence in society and online media. As with informant 1, the difference in meaning was based on the informant's interest in gender equality issues.

Furthermore, for informant 3, the differences in meaning were influenced by the informant's personal experience who was active as a volunteer in campus organizations as well as outside campus, so that the informant's personal experience related to humanity fostered the informant's sense of empathy. For informant 5, the difference in meaning was influenced by his job as a civil servant, which has complicated procedures if a problem occurs, making it easy for him to ignore it when faced with a case of sexual violence. Apart from that, the informant's work environment has a culture that normalizes verbal harassment against women and controls the occurrence of sexual violence against women which invites men to take action.

The three informants were influenced by the idea that the cause of sexual violence came from the men themselves. There are two meanings captured: (1) the act of sexual violence against women is purely a disgraceful act by the perpetrator against the victim and (2) the meaning that it is the man who makes the woman a mere object.

In the negotiation category, this is a position where the audience receives the meaning of the message conveyed by the media by adding or providing their own meaning based on each audience's experience. (Hall in Morissan, 2013, pp. 550-552). In short, the audience not only swallows the messages conveyed by the media whole, but also weighs the positive and negative sides of the messages conveyed by confirming some meanings of the message and rejecting other meanings. Information obtained from six sources shows that two of them, namely Informants 2 and 6, are audiences with a negotiating position.

For Informant 2, the difference in meaning was based on the informant's experience as a student who was active in the field of journalism and volunteering, namely as a member of the Untirta Journalism UKM and Untirta Volunteer Corps (KSR), making him more critical and careful about the information conveyed by the media regarding what conveyed by the media must be factual and relevant to the news topic. And for Informant 6, she based the difference in meaning due to the informant's experience as a mother of a daughter who saw a lot of news about sexual violence against children, making her very careful and critical about sexual violence against underage women.

Lastly, the opposition position where the audience rejects media messages. The audience only accepts codes and/or messages they only like and changes media codes or messages that do not match their thinking (Hall in Morissan, 2013). The opposition position allows audience to understand the messages conveyed by the media, but they reject the messages conveyed with different interpretations or meanings.

The research findings disclosed only Informant 4 who is in the opposition category. The difference in meaning in the opposition category, namely informant 4, is caused by the interest factor

of the informant who only likes short media content such as Instagram posts. Informant 4 preferred reading news on Instagram posts rather than on websites which have lengthy writing. The lengthy news affects his focus and is tedious, so the message conveyed by the media is not captured perfectly.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the informants' understanding, in general, everyone agrees on the meaning that sexual violence is a physical action directed at private parts that is carried out by force. Informant 1, 3 and 5 are categorized as the dominant hegemonic position within Hall's Reception Framework. Informant 2 and 6 are classified as the negotiated position whereas Informant 4 functions as the opposition category.

The results of research regarding the meaning of informants about sexual violence in online media for female audiences, explain Informants 1 and 4 interpreted news of sexual violence in online media leads to negative public opinion. To prioritize reporting about victims, especially using click bait titles, appears to put the victim on the wrong side. Informant 1 also added that society is still not open to cases of sexual violence against women, especially the stigma towards victims of sexual violence.

Meanwhile, Informant 3 elucidated that reporting on sexual violence against women was a topic that was widely discussed on social media and mass media in Indonesia. Reporting on sexual violence often easily gets the attention of the public. But this is not in line with the handling of the case. Informant 6 also argued that even though the report was in accordance with the facts in the field, it needed to be filtered again. This is because online media seen by the general public can provide new methods for potential perpetrators of sexual violence. In addition, Informant 5 contended that the mass media has great power in influencing people's attitudes and thought patterns, so that the mass media is also responsible for educating the public so that they more fairly understand the position of victims and perpetrators in sexual violence against women. Factors that cause meaning to occur include: (1) informant's experience (2) occupation (3) Age (4) Interests.

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