

The Case of Criminalized Victim Baiq Nuril: A Narrative Case Study of Female Representation in Indonesian Media

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From November 2018 to August 2019, Indonesian newspapers reported heavily on the case of Baiq Nuril Maknun, a woman who was a victim of sexual harassment yet was prosecuted for defamation. Her deliberate portrayal as a victim in the media gave rise to movements for women's rights and led to the questioning of certain laws. Most importantly, it provoked a major discussion among feminist media researchers about female representation. Still in a stage of transition, Indonesian journalism and media display a variety of styles. In this paper, I examine articles from *Koran Tempo*, *Kompas*, and *Republika* by applying narrative analysis. Examples of Tuchman's symbolic annihilation, victimization, and objectification based on gender are found across all three articles but to varying degrees. *Koran Tempo*, the most liberal newspaper, employs empowering adjectives to describe Nuril and uses her case to discuss the larger issue of the legal treatment of women. Representing conservative media, *Republika* avoids discussing social and legal issues, and additionally places Nuril in a traditional feminine role. *Kompas*, a moderate media outlet, raises the issue of law and women while still applying a traditional approach when portraying female independence. The diversity of the findings implies that interested parties have a strong influence on news content, which is reflected in the variety of representations of women.

Keywords

feminist media studies, newspaper, Baiq Nuril, narrative analysis, Indonesia

Baiq Nuril and Indonesian Media

Towards the end of 2018, Baiq Nuril Maknun¹ became the most talked about

topic in all of Indonesia. The national media was fixated on the case of Baiq Nuril

1 Henceforth will be referred to as Nuril

Maknun, a 37-year-old woman and former high school teacher from Mataram in West Nusa Tenggara Province. Beginning in August 2012, Nuril had been receiving regular phone calls from Mr. Muslim, the principal of her school, during which he disclosed his sexual exploits with his mistress. These phone calls evolved into verbal sexual abuse directed at Nuril, and this abuse eventually went beyond just phone calls.

Nuril decided to record one of these conversations, which lasted for over 20 minutes, and later passed it along to one of her colleagues. This colleague proceeded to report the phone call to the local authorities. Subsequently, the recording was somehow leaked and spread quickly throughout the public. Consequently, Muslim got demoted and Nuril was fired from her job.

In March 2015, Muslim sued Nuril for defamation in the district court of Mataram. She was prosecuted of violating the 2008 Electronic Information and Transaction (ITE) law and faced a six year prison sentence and a fine of 1 million Indonesian rupiah (equivalent to \$70,895). After a long legal battle, Nuril was detained from March 2017 to July 2017 before being found not guilty and released.

The prosecution did not relent in their efforts to convict Nuril, and in September 2018 they brought the case to the Supreme Court of Indonesia. The judge overruled the district court's verdict and sentenced Nuril to six months in prison, in addition to a fine of 500 million Indonesian rupiah

(equivalent to \$33,749). Nuril exercised her right to appeal her case to the Supreme Court of Indonesia, but her appeal was denied in July 2019. As a last resort, she sought amnesty from the President of Republic of Indonesia, Joko Widodo, which was granted in August 2019.

This case, which is often referred to as the "Baiq Nuril Case," was heavily publicized by national media, to the extent that it sparked the emergence of movements supporting women across the country. Indeed, this support resulted from Nuril being depicted of a victim of the ITE law, rather than a perpetrator.

The Baiq Nuril case is a useful opportunity for scrutinizing how Indonesian media, notably newspapers, function to position women as subjects in criminal cases, and how this influences public perception. Betty Friedan (1979) was one of the first feminist theorists to theorize the link between media (advertising, television, and magazines) and gender roles and its influence on expectations after observing the shared problems of countless American women. Since then, a wealth of feminist media research has been carried out in Western countries, which necessitates a discussion on how this research applies to the circumstances of Indonesia. Ross Tapsell (2017) reveals that research on journalism predominantly focuses on two countries: the United States and the United Kingdom. This exclusive focus on Western countries has resulted in a lack of research on Southeast Asia. Feminist analyses of Indonesian media have so far

focused predominantly on the representations of women in popular culture—specifically films (Haryati & Suwana, 2014; Eliyanah, 2018) and magazine illustrations (Brenner, 1999).

The structure of Indonesian media and journalism is in a constant state of change, as the country is currently transitioning to a democratic system following the overthrow of General Soeharto in 1998, after over 30 years in power (Sen, 2011). Therefore, research which explores this issue while simultaneously attempting to explain the power relations between media, the people, and government is needed.

As Griffin explains (2007), McCombs and Shaw suggest that mass media has the ability to introduce topics of discussion and debate to the public. Not only is media able to implant particular opinions in media consumers, it is also able to induce changed in behavior, as demonstrated in Baiq Nuril's case, where the legitimacy of the ITE law was brought into question. That is, McCombs and Shaw have hypothesized that media deliberately attempts to shape public opinion concerning women's rightful place in society.

Media has become polarized and fragmented as a result of dynamic interaction with other institutions, particularly politics (Reese & Shoemaker, 2016). Therefore, in this paper, I would like to determine how the personal agency of Baiq Nuril was depicted in the reporting of three different newspapers: *Kompas*, *Republika*, and *Koran Tempo*. Indeed, considering the continually changing system of Indonesian

media and journalism, I am motivated to examine the different approaches taken by each national newspaper in order to better define the current structure of news reporting in Indonesia and the position of women within Indonesian society.

The Portrayal of Women in the Media

As women do not all share the same essential identity, there is no single and unified feminist perspective. However, all women are bound together by a singular concern: the status of women in society, most notably the nature of gender and the interpretation of being a woman as a basic distinguishing label that often tends to legitimizing women subordination (Bachman et al., 2018). Because women hold different levels of knowledge and have undergone different experiences, feminist theory must account for the complex and diverse intersectional nature of women's identities. As Judith Butler states:

Gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities. As a result, it becomes impossible to separate out “Gender” from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained. (1990, p. 3)

Nevertheless, women from various parts of the world are still marginalized and misrepresented in media discourses and practices. Feminist media studies scholars examine how women have been

represented in the media, often criticizing representations of women for legitimizing women's subordination and oppression. Tuchman (2000) refers to this phenomenon as "symbolic annihilation," claiming that it functions to maintain women's subordinate position in society and shapes young girls' needs, wants, and expectations. Media representations of women exploit taken-for-granted binaries, such as mind/body, subject/object, and reason/emotion, in order to justify portrayals of women as inferior to men. In professional newsroom, the objectification of women has been conceived as a strategic ritual or routine procedure, as a protection for the organization to deflect any potential criticism (Tuchman, 1972).

Davies (2000) shows how binaries rely on an implicit assumption that the two concepts of the dualism are interdependent yet unequal, meaning that one cannot exist without the other despite the fact that they are always battling each other. The male/female binary is related to the conscious and unconscious mind; the former is superior but always at risk of being undermined by the latter. Davies makes note of Hélène Cixous's claim that women, despite being educated, are constructed as "other" to rational thought. In contrast to men, women are commonly associated with emotions, feelings, and other "irrational" elements. Hence, women are seen as to the opposite of "good" thought, masculinity, and rational decision making. This echoes Ngai's (2007) finding that "ugly feelings," such as envy and paranoia, are forms of

passivity, where one feels disempowered or is perceived as a small subject. This type of emotion is a result of a larger political problem which leads to the obstruction of personal agency.

The poststructuralist theory of agency can be contrasted to the humanist perspective of Davies, which characterizes agency as synonymous with personhood. That is, Davies does not interpret agency to be an effect of discourse in which the subject finds himself or herself. The dominant discourse defines moral rightness; those who are able to influence discourse have the authority to tell others what to do. Davies summarizes the poststructuralist view of agency as follows:

Agency is never freedom from discursive constitution of self but the capacity to recognize that constitution and to resist, subvert and change the discourses themselves through which one is being constituted. (2000, p. 65)

Women and Law

Echoing the prevailing argument of feminists, Frug (1992) asserts that differences between women and men are socially constructed and not biologically determined. As cultural mechanisms, legal rules assign meanings to the female body that are rationalized through an appeal to the "natural" differences between the sexes. Furthermore, Catherine MacKinnon argues that law and legal methods are gendered tools of social organization due to the dominant male point of view, making the

exclusion of women's experiences imperceptible. Law devalues women, and therefore they are in danger of losing the ability to define themselves (MacKinnon, cited in Jackson, 1992, p. 195).

The exclusion of women's experiences in law has been discussed by Sandiata (2018) in her study of Indonesia's judiciary system. By assessing the national legal elements (articles, structure, and culture), Sandiata suggests that the legal system does not fully recognize women as a result of the deep-rooted patriarchy within society. When charged with a crime, women are regarded as meek, yet are responsible for things that they do not wish to befall upon them. This tends to come into practice in rape cases in which the female victims share partial blame for not being strong enough or subconsciously incite the perpetrators. Frug states that legal discourse employs linguistic strategies in order to define women as either "weak, nurturing, or sexy."

Critiquing how Indonesian women are treated by the law in light of the increasing publication of such case mentioned above, Melati (2007) observes that laws supposedly conceived to protect women are often contradicted by other legal statutes, or are simply ignored. Taking the Baiq Nuril case as an example, she criticizes the ruling of the Supreme Court as having directly contradicted Supreme Court of Indonesia Regulation Number 3 from 2017, which deals with women facing legal charges. Moreover, Melati has expressed that existing regulations meant to protect

women from cyber sexual crimes are inefficient and in dire need of revision, as the number of offenses are increasing.

Women in Indonesia

Blackburn (2004) believes that the incoherency and inconsistencies of gender ideology in Indonesia are a result of the different gender traditions of various ethnic groups. Moreover, this situation is further aggravated by other forms of diversity, such as classes and religious diversity. Nevertheless, the Indonesian state has adopted the gender ideology of a group of men of who are predominantly moderate Muslim men with Western educations.

Porter (2003) has compared Indonesian women to women in other predominantly Muslim countries, such as Iran, Pakistan, Malaysia, and Saudi Arabia, claiming that Indonesian women are relatively more liberal and independent, both individually and collectively. The independence of individual comes in many forms, for example, wearing a veil (*jilbab* or *hijab*) is optional, girls go to school, the minimum marriageable age for girls is 16, women can initiate divorce, and contraception is allowed. Whereas as a group, there has been publicly acknowledged appearances of female organizations. However, women are still considered subordinate to men.

Curnow (2015) suggests that only following the end of Soeharto's presidency have social, institutional, and legal reforms brought Indonesia more in line with the international standard of human rights. Despite the establishment of the National

Commission on Human Rights in 1993 and the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1984, human rights were not effectively enforced during Soeharto's era due to New Order cronyism. The two acts were considered to be a mere façade erected by Soeharto in order to appease the international community. Indeed, the mandates of judicial rulings are not always enforced beyond the doors of the courts. Access to courts in Indonesia is remarkably low, especially for women, who are reluctant to go to court in the first place as they are unlikely to be supported. Blackburn confirms this by using certain ethnic groups' restrictions on women's that result in the state's reluctance to fight the discrimination as follows:

The Indonesian state has been too weak or reluctant to try to displace subordinate groups as they exert control over women. When it does claim the citizenly obedience of women, it is not always to their advantage. (2004, p.88)

The position of women in society is determined not only by religion but also by *Pancasila* (Indonesian state philosophy), formal government rules and regulations, and the cultural norms of ethnic groups. The dynamic of all these elements causing complexity of Indonesian women's roles, but when contradiction occurs the elements tend to sort out themselves, yet the general outcome usually still puts women

to stereotypical traditional roles.

Media in Indonesia

Media ownership in Indonesia is intimately intertwined with questions of political power and influence. Ida (2011) claims that when analyzing Indonesian media, business and politics cannot be separated, particularly following Soeharto's fall from power. Ida points out that the majority of media corporations are still largely owned by Soeharto's family and cronies, including Bambang Hary Iswanto Tanoesoedibyo—better known as Hary Tanoe—a Chinese-Indonesian capitalist who holds a 100 percent stake in the shares of PT Media Nusantara Citra (MNC), one of the nation's largest media corporations.

According to Shoemaker and Reese's (1996) theory of the hierarchy of influences, media content is shaped by aspects which extend from the lowest, micro level (i.e. individual characteristics of newsmakers) to higher, macro level (i.e. larger social system). The lower-level elements are affected by activities occurring at the higher level. Tapsell (2017) conducted a series of interviews with powerful figures in Indonesian media, from owners to field reporters, and concluded that the national media landscape is still highly oligopolistic. The interests of owners overwhelm the autonomy individual newsmakers. That is, newsmakers do not have the freedom to select and frame news content, as the majority of media conglomerates are also major political actors. Thus, according to Ida:

Media ownership remains in the hands of political and economic players, and their ideology of media marketization acts as a barrier to the development of alternative broadcasting services and democratization of the media [...] a similar pattern of concentration is replicated at the local level. (2011, p. 16)

The challenges facing the development of Indonesian media are not limited to interference by business interests. Steele (2011) asserts that the problem is embedded within the culture of the national media itself, which lacks context and overly privileges official sources, revealing a tendency toward superficial reporting which does not consider underlying causes. This type of journalism has been practiced since Soeharto's era and is still prevalent in Indonesia today.

Indonesian media tends to report on single events without providing a wider perspective. Questions of accountability are often left unasked, and more in-depth reporting on how to fix underlying issues is instead substituted by a focus on the suffering of victims and economic impacts. Based on her experience in translating Indonesian news, Steele (2011, p. 91) commented on the banality of news reporting in Indonesia when compared to stories written by foreign reporters, writing: "The de-politicization of journalism under Soeharto led to a kind of 'A said X and B said

Y' journalism that passively relied on official sources and statements."

Despite the rise of investigative reporting in Indonesia, there are still restrictions on what topics can be investigated. In addition to pressure exerted by the wealthy, journalists who are considered to be "attacking" certain individuals or groups maybe threatened with criminal defamation lawsuits. Moreover, the press is encouraged to stay away from stories that would cause ethnic, religious, racial, or inter-group conflict.

As I have mentioned, feminist values are no longer restricted by physical geography or borders. As a result, the representation of women in previously understudied areas has become a topic of discussion, and scholars are exploring issues unique to the social and cultural environment of each region, such as the symbolic annihilation of women in Middle Eastern media (Lance & Paschyn, 2018) and the inclusion of women in South African media (Buiten, 2012). This case study is no different.

Data Collection and Analysis

For this study, I analyzed newspaper articles covering the Baiq Nuril case from three major newspapers in Indonesia: *Kompas*, *Republika*, and *Koran Tempo*. In this order, the three newspapers are the three most read Indonesian-language national newspapers in the country². In addition to their popularity, I believe that

2 4International Media & Newspapers, *Top Newspapers in Indonesia*, [website], <https://www.4imn>.

these three newspapers accurately represent mainstream reporting by Indonesian newspapers, as the newspapers display a diversity of characteristics and ideological perspectives.

Established in 1965, *Kompas* is still owned by its founder Jakob Oetama and remains the most read newspaper in Indonesia. Indeed, their 2014 media kit boasted an estimated daily circulation of 507,000 units in 2013 (Suryana, 2018). Suryana characterized *Kompas* as a liberal media outlet, as they explicitly criticize the persecution of minority religious groups. However, this label may only be partially appropriate, as the newspaper also avoids coverage of LGBT issues that is still condemned by majority of Indonesians. Hence, putting *Kompas* somewhere in between. As Keller (2009) posits, even since Soeharto's era, *Kompas* has always been an "obedient" newspaper which does not upset dominant social values. Benedict Anderson, who has researched Indonesian politics extensively, described *Kompas* as the "New Order's newspaper par excellence" (Tapsell, 2017). Thus, *Kompas* is an accurate representation of center-left Indonesian media in general.

Republika is owned by the Mahaka Media Group and began publication in 1993 by Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim Indonesia – Association of Indonesian Muslim Scholars (ICMI). *Republika* is the first Islamic newspaper and the first news outlet to begin publishing online in Indone-

sia. As a reflection of the aspirations of the Islamic community in Indonesia, the birth of *Republika* marks the rise of the Islamic community in the country – a religious group which Soeharto tried to approach to maintain the status quo during the last days of his reign (Nugroho, Putri, & Laksmi, 2012). Due to their interests, it is not surprising that Suryana (2018) described *Republika* as a conservative newspaper. However, he has also demonstrated that the newspaper does not exclusively reflect conservative values, as they promote religious tolerance while also inserting Islamic teachings into their stories. Nevertheless, the unique practices of *Republika* make it a worthy data source for studying conservative media outlets in Indonesia.

As a part of Tempo Group, *Koran Tempo* is an extension of the magazine of the same name, which came into existence long before the newspaper. Indeed, while the magazine has been in existence since 1971, the newspaper version is fairly new. The late arrival of the newspaper is a result of the magazine having been banned twice for its explicit criticisms of Soeharto, once in 1982 and again 1994 during the New Order era. Following Soeharto's fall from power, the newspaper version, *Koran Tempo*, was established in 2001. Similar to the magazine, *Koran Tempo* is often praised—even by foreign journalists—for its investigative reporting and its progressive and democratic perspective, despite experiencing constant financial difficulty

(Keller, 2014; Tapsell, 2017). For this reason, Suryana (2018) categorizes *Koran Tempo* as a liberal media outlet. I agree with this characterization and therefore selected this publication to represent liberally aligned media in Indonesian.

As there is no integrated newspaper search engine such as LexisNexis for Indonesian newspapers, the articles analyzed for this study were gathered by searching for the keyword “Baiq Nuril” in the online archives of the three previously discussed newspapers. My searches targeted a time frame beginning in the month when the case first became public, November 2018, to when Nuril received presidential amnesty in August 2019.

All articles that did not discuss the Baiq Nuril case as the main subject of the story or stories which merely mentioned the case as an example while discussing a different issue (such as the sexual harassment bill) were excluded from my analysis. This same rule was applied to opinion columns, photographs, and photograph captions. In the end, my study focused on 29 articles from *Koran Tempo*, 18 articles from *Kompas*, and 19 articles from *Republika*.

This research was conducted using a qualitative approach and employed the narrative analysis method. Qualitative document analysis is an appropriate approach for investigating the media’s deliberate attempts to shape public opinion, as this method emphasizes the discovery and description of underlying meanings in texts (Altheide, 2000). Arguably, mass media, including print, mediates or gives

meaning to texts because news recontextualizes and transforms social practices, e.g., politics, law, and are in turn recontextualized in the texts and interactions in our everyday life (Fairclough, 2003).

Narrative analysis is an appropriate method for evaluating the meanings embedded within mass media texts, as these texts provide traces of the socially constructed reality in which they were created. Therefore, in order to understand the social context, it is necessary to study the words, concepts, ideas, themes, and issues that are contained within the texts (Brennen, 2013).

In studies which apply the narrative analysis method to works of journalism, Kitch (2007) points out how this method attempts to identify common structural elements that are consistently utilized by reporters and editors. According to this method, observation points include not just the story’s individual content and structure, but also, more importantly, recurring characters and subplots. The more significant findings come in the form of a general depiction of the culture in which the story takes place by attempting to understand the connotative and denotative meanings of the language and imagery.

Despite its utility, narrative analysis is often overlooked in feminist studies. Ruth Page (2007) posits that narrative analysis does not take place in a context-free vacuum, instead narrative strategies must be considered within the context of the cultural construction of gender. Susan Lanser (1986), a pioneer of feminist narratology,

believes that narratology needs to be conducted in a context that is simultaneously linguistic, literary, historical, biographical, social, and political. She also reevaluates the narrative method, which she says in the past has been “gender-specific, focusing on texts primarily by and about men.”

As narrative research on gender inherently must discuss inequality, Susan Ehrlich (2015) shows that narratives (and narrators) can get mangled at the boundaries of powerful institutions. In other words, the ability to recount narratives in ways preferred by institutions is intimately connected to power structures. Investigating the implicit power distribution within a text may allow the author to answer questions about agency.

In this study, articles of a single newspaper were analyzed in relation to each other in order to identify major themes. This method is known as the holistic-content approach, as described by Lieblich et al. (1998). According to Iyengar (2014), who has provided step-to-step procedures for this approach, re-reading is crucial for gradually identifying major themes. Iyengar instructs that any intuitive thoughts should be noted before moving on to the step of charting the overall impressions left by narratives. Themes emerge by grouping words or “labeling” words that are closely associated in meaning or form by using color codes.

Next in the process, findings are connected to external aspects of the text according to their interdependent nature. Moreover, in addition to elements present

in the text, the meaningful absence of certain elements, as well, should be analyzed. This study focuses on two aspects of these newspaper articles. First, I explore the depiction and agency of Baiq Nuril Maknun in these articles. Second, I investigate how the depictions differ across the three newspapers. In the following section, I describe the themes which emerged after conducting a narrative analysis according to the steps proposed by Iyengar (2014).

Victims of Law

Newspaper articles on Baiq Nuril have been inconsistent in their reporting of her profession. *Koran Tempo* described her as “a former public high school honorary teacher” while *Republika* interchangeably used this same phrase, while also describing her as a “former honorary administrator of a public high school.” As if aware of the inconsistencies in information, *Kompas* wittily called her “a former honorary staff member of a public high school.” In spite of the inconsistency, it was continually stressed that she was a “former honorary staff member” or a former part-time worker in a high school. In every article, Baiq Nuril is identified using a variation of this phrase.

Another common element of newspaper articles is referring to Nuril as “a victim of a sexual harassment,” which indicates that newspapers unanimously acknowledged that she was the victim of a crime. Moreover, *Republika* explicitly associated her past employment status with her experience of harassment:

During the period, Nuril had been an honorary teacher and her job depended on the principal. Nuril had no way out because her position was threatened. (*Republika*, 2018, Nov 17)

In addition to acknowledging the harassment, the three media outlets also harshly criticized the ITE law, which was used to convict Nuril. *Koran Tempo* identified Nuril as a “criminalized victim of sexual harassment” (*Koran Tempo*, 2019, July 3) while *Kompas* similarly called her a “victim of the ITE law” (*Kompas*, 2018, November 17). The two media outlets related Nuril’s case to other similar cases, characterizing all of them as “innocent people who are victims of the ITE Law” (*Koran Tempo*, 2019, July 25) and “people who are weak and could not achieve justice from law enforcement” (*Kompas*, 2019, July 26).

Koran Tempo and *Kompas* criticized the ITE law by characterizing Nuril and others as “victims” of the law and described them with adjectives which connote powerlessness, such as “innocent” and “weak.” *Koran Tempo* blatantly criticized the law, decrying the law as a “repressive tool” (*Koran Tempo*, 2019, July 9) while also castigating the Supreme Court of Indonesia’s ruling as “ignoring the process to eradicate sexual crimes” (*Koran Tempo*, 2019, July 25).

Republika never explicitly declared Nuril to be a victim of injustice, and instead questioned the legitimacy of the ITE law using subtle phrasing:

Nuril expressed the injustice that she is facing, of being entrapped by the ITE law, when in reality she is a victim of verbal sexual abuse.” (*Republika*, 2018, Nov 17)

Familial Ties

Another label attached to Nuril by the three media outlets was “a mother of three.” Even in early reports, *Republika* was using this label along with a detailed description of Nuril’s family and how her family members were coping with the news:

Nuril mentioned how she has already planned separate birthday celebrations for her two sons for upcoming November 24th and December 2nd. The married couple, Nuril and Lalu Muhammad Isaeni, are parents of three children who are ages 17, 13, and 7. Two of their children are already aware of what has happened to their mother, whereas the youngest has not. Nuril’s biggest concern is the psychological health of her children.” (*Republika*, 2019, November 15)

Kompas places emphasis on Nuril’s family by extensively using her male relatives as sources:

Nuril’s extended family members are relieved and grateful for the amnesty grant [...] “I can sleep now,” said Lalu Mustajab, Nuril’s father. [...] Nuril’s uncle, Lalu Junaidi, is hoping that Nuril’s case will be an important les-

son and a basis for evaluating the ITE Law. (*Kompas*, 2019, July 30)

While *Republika* and *Kompas* always discussed Nuril in relation to her male family members, *Koran Tempo* approached her case differently. *Koran Tempo* never mentioned Nuril's male relatives, and instead expanded on Nuril's empowered identity as a mother:

What Nuril had done was simply an act to protect her honor and dignity as a woman and mother. (*Koran Tempo*, 2019, July 16)

Nuril's Feelings and Expressions

Articles by both *Republika* and *Kompas* heavily emphasized Nuril's emotions and actions. In the first article by *Kompas* dealing with the case, Nuril is twice described as being in a state of "despair" and "desperate" within the same article (*Kompas*, 2018, November 17). In their first article, *Republika* exaggerates this even further by employing the following dramatic storytelling trope to begin the article:

Baiq Nuril (40) could not hold back her tears in the middle of telling the story of what had happened to her. (*Republika*, 2018, November 15)

The dramatic depictions of Nuril's emotions is not limited to just negative emotions. Indeed, this approach is also used when reporting on Nuril's joy when the predicament came to an end:

After the amnesty grant has been concluded by a hit of the gavel, Nuril—who went through the whole process in the House of Representatives—immediately covered her face with her two hands [...] A smile could be seen on her face. (*Republika*, 2019, July 26)

Kompas wrote about this scene in a more graphic nature, describing her attire in addition to her facial expressions:

Baiq Nuril Maknun, the victim of sexual harassment who had been sentenced to prison, now looks cheerful. The smile did not leave her lips. Nuril, who is wearing a white blouse and red headscarf, is now relieved. (*Kompas*, 2019, August 3)

Nuril's (In)dependency

In addition to being presented as a victim of sexual harassment, *Koran Tempo* also represented Nuril as a proactive agent seeking justice for being mistreated. In an article published on July 16, 2019, *Koran Tempo* characterized Nuril as acting alone in search of justice for herself:

Nuril is fighting for an amnesty grant after the Supreme Court's ruling [...] Nuril visited the Minister of Justice and Human Rights to discuss the process for receiving an amnesty grant [...] After receiving the result of her appeal, Nuril has been visiting several institutions. (*Koran Tempo*, 2019, July 16)

It is interesting to note that the three newspapers ascribe Nuril's differing degrees of personal agency by highlighting one particular element: the House of Representatives's support for Nuril. No matter how independent she might have been, it would have been impossible for Nuril to receive amnesty without the endorsement of the legislature.

Koran Tempo wrote: "The House of Representatives (DPR) supports the plan for Baiq Nuril's amnesty" (*Koran Tempo*, 2019, July 9). *Republika* also stated, "Baiq Nuril, through her legal representative, seeks the DPR's support concerning the amnesty grant from President Joko Widodo" (*Republika*, 2019, July 10). An article from *Kompas* uses a similar structure to *Republika*'s article, writing: "Accompanied by her legal representative and a DPR member from the PDI-P Party, Rieke Diah Pitaloka, Nuril managed to meet Yasonna the day before" (*Kompas*, 2019, July 9).

Comparing the sentence from the *Koran Tempo* article with those of *Republika* and *Kompas* reveals that the latter two newspapers' portrayals of Nuril are inseparable from other figures, namely her legal advisors. Furthermore, in later articles, *Republika* forgoes discussion of Nuril and instead focuses on her companions, as if these figures were more central to Nuril gaining amnesty than Nuril herself:

Rieke and the legal representative, as well as Nuril, arrived in the Attorney General's office at around 10 AM. Rieke came with Baiq Nuril, while

her legal counsel, Joko Sumadi, had come earlier in a separate vehicle. (*Republika*, 2019, July 13)

Kompas portrays Nuril as a figure who needs to be protected, such as in their article from July 26, 2019, which refers to "amnesty as protection" (*Kompas*, 2019, July 26). An emphasis of the notion of protection is not limited to Nuril, but is extended to Indonesian women in general, which is reflected in the use of the phrase "Women Protection" by *Kompas* as a main headline (*Kompas*, 2018, November 17). These two statements reinforce the hegemonic belief that women are beings who must be kept safe by men.

Discussion

By constantly emphasizing Nuril's status as a part-time worker, the three newspapers attempted to highlight Nuril's financially precarious situation and characterize her as heavily reliant on her job, despite treatment she received from her supervisor. *Republika* discussed her risk of being fired, highlighting the difficult position she found herself in and legitimizing the media's portrayal of her as a "victim."

Her victim status was also emphasized when newspapers called attention to the sexual harassment case. As Tuchman's theory of symbolic annihilation suggests (2000), victimization is a very common pattern found across all media texts reporting on woman. Placing women in a subordinate position makes them appear incompetent. Tuchman finds even a work-

ing woman, like Nuril in this, are still bound to be condemned by media, being an inferior subject within her workplace. A breadwinner status does not equal to to be liberated from inferiority when placed in a professional setting.

Similar to Sandiata's (2018) statement on the representation of Indonesian woman as meek when confronting criminal cases as well as the adjectives of powerlessness used by *Koran Tempo* and *Kompas* demonstrate how the case evolved in an unexpected fashion. These labels, which were used both in reference to Nuril and other women as well as to condemn the ITE law, imply a power relation in practice within the regulation; the law holds power to force women into objectification. As the women are portrayed as subjects lacking authority, the law is described as being in possession of and in control over them, eventually causing them to suffer.

Instead of directly criticizing the ITE law, *Republika* uses oppositions to express its disagreement with the law. However, *Republika* is not apprehensive when describing details about Nuril's family. Placing women within a domestic setting is one form of Tuchman's symbolic annihilation, in which women are relegated to the most stereotypical sex roles, such as a housewife or mother (Tuchman, 2000). In addition, women are only able to exist when are defined in terms of their relationships with men, an approach employed by *Kompas* when they use Nuril's family members as sources.

In comparison to the other two newspa-

pers, *Koran Tempo* employed empowering descriptions of Nuril that reflect what Porter (2003) has coined "maternal feminism." Porter observes that the dynamic identities of Indonesian women are bound to traditional, male-dominated values. At the same time, they enjoy more relative freedom than women in other predominantly Muslim countries. The interrelation of what seemingly contradictory identities of the aforementioned feminine freedom in a male-dominated society eventually gave birth to "maternal feminism" that Porter defines as women's focus on their reproductive capacities as a liberation.

Koran Tempo also differs from both *Republika* and *Kompas*, as only the latter two emphasize Nuril's expressions and emotions. Associating women with emotions is a common trope of media representations of women and is related to the concept of binaries introduced earlier. Women are characterized as emotional whereas men are represented as rational (Davies, 2000). Ngai (2005) has expressed a connection between negative feelings and disempowerment. In the context of the practice of victimization, "ugly" feelings obstruct a sense of agency by objectifying the subject as small and passive. Indeed, detailed descriptions of Nuril's emotions seek to objectify her, treating her as a specimen under a microscope.

By describing minute details of Nuril's appearance, such as her clothing and facial expressions, we can observe the "male gaze" at work in these articles. Although the "male gaze" is typically an aspect of

visual mediums such as television and film, the aforementioned newspaper articles describe Nuril in a cinematographic manner. Mulvey (1975) determines this concept as a strong visual emphasize on a woman, putting female in the passive side of the action of looking. In other words, woman is a “spectacle”, and man is “the bearer of the look”. This is especially true considering Sandiata’s (2018) statement that the Indonesian legal system is strongly influenced by dominant patriarch values.

Nuril’s passivity is further enforced by *Republika* and *Kompas* through the depiction of her in relation to her legal advisors. Indeed, these descriptions reinforce the stereotype that Indonesian women are reluctant to take legal action unless they are being supported by one or more supporters that can guarantee their innocence, as argued by Curnow (2015).

Descriptions of Nuril across all three newspapers generally conform to one of the three qualities that are used in legal discourse strategies: “weak, nurturing, or sexy” (Frug, 1992). As I have shown, the media plays a significant role in the symbolic annihilation of women by promoting the subordinate position of women in the eyes of the law. As suggested by Tuchman (2000), this pattern is concerning, as it may shape young girls’ wants, needs, behavior, and attitudes.

The objectification of women is not foreign to Indonesian journalism. According to Suryana’s (2018) ethnographic study of

ten mainstream Indonesian media outlets,³ the biggest problem of Indonesian journalism is its ignorance and insensitivity towards minorities, women included. Indonesian journalism relies heavily on sensationalism to attract commercial interest. Excessive focus on capturing market share is a characteristic common to countries which have undergone abrupt political reform, transitioning from authoritarianism to liberal democracy (Hanitzsch, et al. 2011). All of the three newspapers studied here objectified women in different ways.

There was one common element which all three newspaper shared. Nuril was defined as a victim that is passive. However, this is where *Koran Tempo* differs from the other two newspapers. Well-known for its investigative reporting, *Koran Tempo* does not shy from writing styles that deviate from standards. As mentioned by Blackburn (2004), the state ideology of Indonesia is dominated by males who are Muslim and Western educated, the dominant viewpoint is also reflected in the news reports that are prudent enough to write things that may spark counterarguments from the domineering group. Hence, we see that *Koran Tempo* affirms Nuril’s agency while also addressing questions over the effectiveness of the ITE law.

Republika, on the other hand, faithfully adheres to the expectations of the dominant group and adheres to the Islamic values which inform the philosophy of the newspaper. *Republika* was first established

3 Three of which are this paper’s data sources: *Koran Tempo*, *Republika*, and *Kompas*.

as part of a giant media group called Visi News Asia, which was previously owned by Aburizal Bakrie, the chairman of a preeminent political party, Golkar (Tapsell, 2017). As such, *Republika* operates in accordance with hegemonic beliefs, and therefore was hesitant to extrapolate larger conclusions from the case. This is another characteristic of journalism in a developing country where journalists find themselves cooperating with the official policies of the government (Hanitzsch et al., 2011).

Kompas is interesting in this regard, as it both criticizes the ITE law while still portrays women according to traditional approaches. According to Suryana (2014), *Kompas* is a liberal newspaper because it uses individual cases to address larger problems. In contrast, Benedict Anderson in Tapsell (2017) classified *Kompas* as a “cowardly” media outlet after observing their obedience to the ruling government. One of the characteristics of *Kompas* is its heavy reliance on official quotations, as mentioned by Steele (2011). This fact is reflected in the words of the founder and owner, Jakob Oetama’s:

Others call us names such as “Crab Journalists.” I told my fellow journalists, “We write whatever we write to reach the top and towards any challenge; but whenever we detect any risk of damage, we need to step back.” People have been comparing us to crabs, by moving back and forth. But for me, going back is necessary in or-

der to advance. This is our choice. I don’t mind being criticized since that is the fact. (Keller, 2004, p. 46)

Conclusion

I have now clearly shown that *Koran Tempo* provided the most unique reporting on Nuril by endowing her with empowering aspects while also representing her as feeble and using her case to discuss underlying social issues, such as Indonesian women in legal predicaments. In stark contrast, *Republika*’s coverage does not aim to shine a light on social issues, and instead it treats Baiq Nuril’s case as just another legal dispute. Even when criticizing the ITE law as the source of Nuril’s misfortune, *Republika* chooses to employ subtler language. *Kompas* employs an approach which combines elements from *Koran Tempo* and *Republika*. Indeed, *Kompas* raises the issue of women and law in Indonesia, yet still succumbs to the traditional method of depicting women as dependent on men.

Women’s issues must always be investigated from a variety of angles, as gender identity is the product of many overlapping elements in society. The combination of the aforementioned of conflict of interests and hegemonic patriarchal values of the country still pushes the application of classic women objectification in issues of sexual harassment and gender-based abuse in Indonesia. As “concerning” as it could have been perceived by the general feminist standard, it is an appraisable attempt to bring forward the social issue. Despite the inevitable tendency to reduce female

subjects to passive figures, the case of Baiq Nuril, along with the escalated supports, attests to an increasing awareness of social injustice throughout the nation, particularly gendered violence.

As I have stated, journalists in Indonesian media tend to show little initiative due to being overpowered by institutional and political interests. My analysis of three different newspapers' coverage of the Baiq

Nuril case show that real differences in reporting to exist. For this reason, the question of how much autonomy individual journalists have in the newsrooms of Indonesia should be studied further, particularly in regards to the portrayal of gender roles. Another unique characteristic of Indonesian reporting is the use of direct sources (Steele, 2011), which could serve as a novel point of focus for another study.

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要旨

バイック・ヌリル、犯罪化された犠牲者 ——インドネシアメディアにおける女性表象のナラティブ研究

アプリリア・ゲナワン

2018年11月から2019年8月にかけて、インドネシアの新聞はセクシュアル・ハラスメントの被害者でありながら名誉毀損の罪で告訴されたバイック・ヌリル・マックヌンの事件を数多く報道した。メディアにおける被害者としての彼女の描写は、それが意図的であったが故、法律の有効性について多くの疑問をもたらしたのである。何より、フェミニスト・メディアを専門とする研究者の間で議論を大いに巻き起こした。インドネシアのメディアはまだ過渡期にあり、そのためにスタイルが一様ではない。本稿では、新聞3紙、*Koran Tempo*、*Kompas*そして*Republika*の記事を取り上げそのナラティブを分析する。ゲイ・タックマンによる「象徴的抹消」、被害者化、そして性別に基づく他者化は、3紙すべてで見られた。自由主義な新聞として、*Koran Tempo*はヌリルの人物像を説明するためにエンパワーメントをあらゆる形容詞を用い、彼女のケースから女性の法的扱いに関するより幅広い議論を展開している。保守的なメディアを代表する*Republika*は、社会的および法的問題を議論するのを避け、さらに、ヌリルを伝統的女性の役割に押しとどめる。穏健なメディアの代表として、*Kompas*は女性を描写する際に従来のアプローチを適用しながら女性の独立および法律の話提起する。以上3紙の分析結果から、利害関係者がニュースコンテンツに強い影響力を持っていることが示唆され、それが女性の様々な表象に反映されていることを明らかにする。

キーワード

フェミニスト・メディア研究、新聞、バイック・ヌリル、ナラティブ分析、インドネシア