

## Visual representation of domestic violence in *Kompas.com* and *Detik.com*

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### Abstract

Domestic violence cases are increasingly being exposed in various news outlets, reporting women are disproportionately affected by both physical and sexual violence. The extensive coverage of these incidents represents a significant advancement in empowering women's positions. Nevertheless, given the enduring influence of patriarchal society within the media business, it is necessary to do a more in-depth analysis of how women are depicted while reporting domestic violence, especially from visual representations. The author investigated the news reporting of domestic violence from *Kompas.com* and *Detik.com* during 2022-2023. The analysis revealed that there is ambiguity in representing women as the victims of domestic violence. The two outlets' progressive approach is evident in the narrative, as they position the women as the subjects. However, from the visual images, both outlets continue to perpetuate the notion of women as victims by portraying them in a prejudiced manner.

## Introduction

The National Commission on Violence against Women (Komisi Nasional Anti Kekerasan terhadap Perempuan/Komnas Perempuan) reported that at least three women in Indonesia had experienced domestic violence. Indeed, at least five women, in this case as wives, become victims of violence within their households every two hours (Pristiandaru, 2023). The prevalence of violent acts indicates that domestic violence constitutes a social issue. Nonetheless, domestic violence is still regarded as a private matter.

Recognizing domestic abuse necessitates a comprehension of its concept. Flury, Nyberg, and Riecher-Rössler (2010) characterize domestic violence as the threat or enactment of physical, psychological, and/or emotional abuse. The assailant is associated with the victim's "domestic environment," including an intimate partner, spouse, ex-intimate partner, family member, friend, or acquaintance. The proximity of the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim of abuse succinctly defines the phrase. The intimate connection between the perpetrator and the victim leads to the perception of domestic abuse as a private issue.

The prevalence of domestic abuse incidents frequently garners media attention, prompting them to strive for comprehensive coverage of this topic. Media significantly influences public comprehension of domestic abuse. The media should serve as primary sources of knowledge regarding domestic abuse narratives. Instead of enhancing public knowledge to aid victims, media coverage of domestic violence frequently perpetuates stereotypes and assumptions about women, who are the predominant victims.

The rise of digital platforms has established online news as the potential source of information that captures public attention. Online news platforms facilitate real-time reporting, frequently disseminating information to a broader audience faster than conventional media. The depiction of domestic abuse on these platforms can profoundly influence public perception of victims, perpetrators, and the broader systemic issue of violence against women. Similar to other cases of violence, episodes of domestic violence frequently become media commodities. There is a significant level of public interest in news related to violence, leading media outlets to routinely broadcast reports on violent incidents. As a result, the media no longer serves an informational role for the public; instead, it prioritizes the revenues gained from reporting stories about violence (McQuail 2000).

Domestic violence cases also generate public discourse. Domestic affairs had previously been considered as private issues. However, when they are publicly disclosed, they attract significant public interest. This attention prompts the media to exploit this situation for financial advantage. The commercialization of reporting on domestic abuse gives rise to issues.

According to Meyers (1997), news narratives frequently emphasize the most violent and dramatic incidents (for example, homicide cases or situations that involve celebrities, depicting stories with shocking details, typically including physical violence). Consequently, it ignores the other occurrences (such as emotional or psychological abuse) as well as the broader context of domestic violence as a systemic issue. Several studies (Bullock & Cubert, 2002; Carlyle et al., 2008; Gillespie et al., 2013; Taylor, 2009; Wozniak & McCloskey, 2010) have also indicated the same idea.

The issue of reporting cases of domestic violence extends beyond concerns of objectivity and impartiality. Just as Berns' book (2004) critically highlights how domestic violence victims are framed in media and questions the objectivity of these portrayals. There are some problems of objectivity, such as: (1) media stories frame domestic violence as an individual problem rather than a societal issue; (2) media narratives often do victim-blaming and ignore systemic factors like poverty, inequality, and gender roles that contribute to domestic violence.

When recounting this narrative, the media frequently exhibits a partiality in its portrayal, particularly towards specific individuals or collectives, notably women. Mahmudah (2012) demonstrated that the text reporting on domestic abuse against women in *Pos Kota*, a famous newspaper practicing yellow journalism in Indonesia, has portrayed women in a prejudiced manner. Women are exclusively portrayed as instigating acts of violence perpetrated by men. Nettleton (2011) also mentioned the same pattern. Focusing on domestic violence news in magazines, she found that the media narratives often blame the victims by reinforcing harmful stereotypes about domestic violence. Fauziah and Tamampil (2015) discovered the text reporting on domestic abuse against women on *Merdeka.com* and *Kompas Online* had identical results. The research findings indicate that journalists predominantly identify themselves as male. Consequently, the news text guides readers to perceive the information from a masculine perspective. It leads to the dissemination of biased news. News that exclusively prioritizes the male perspective

perpetuates the objectification of women and contributes to the normalization of violence against them.

Considering the pivotal influence of online media in creating public attitudes, it is essential to examine the portrayal of domestic violence in the media. Understanding the trends and patterns in reporting can facilitate the identification of biases, mitigate victim-blaming narratives, and promote more responsible and ethical journalism. This research focuses on Indonesia's big online news sites: *Kompas.com* and *Detik.com*. Both news outlets are recognized as reputable media sources. The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (RISJ) report enumerates media featured in the Brand Trust Scores category. *Kompas.com* ranks first with a trust level of 69 percent, and *Detik.com* occupies fifth place with a trust rating of 63 percent (Newman et al., 2023). Based on the prior studies, this research examines how domestic violence is portrayed in *Kompas.com* and *Detik.com*. We want to explore whether credible media outlets present domestic violence cases objectively and impartially or just perpetuate the same media rituals identified in previous studies. Focusing this study on both media is essential. If previous research indicates that the media's reporting on domestic violence is often biased, what is the viewpoint of *Kompas.com* and *Detik.com*, which are regarded as reputable media outlets? The findings of this study may have implications for two aspects: (1) If both media outlets exhibit issues in reporting domestic abuse, it serves as a cautionary signal for others; (2) If both media report on domestic violence equitably, they can serve as a model for other outlets. For that purpose, it is also vital to highlight that this research focuses on the artistic and visual representations of domestic violence news.

Journalists frequently employ images while reporting on domestic violence situations. It includes the visual representations of text, which are typically displayed as pictures, photographs, or videos, used to help explain specific events. Textual or verbal information is emphasized through the use of visual representations. Visual representations also serve as supplementary aesthetic components of information, enhancing readers' comprehension and retention of the imparted material. Nonetheless, the selection of visual images is contingent upon specific preferences of the issues, cases, themes, topics, or point of views emphasized. Visual images become symbols that, according to Bharata, Hasan, and Husin (2022), not only focus the audience's attention but also limit the audience's perception and direct it to specific ways of thinking and beliefs.

Through an examination of the visual production and media coverage of domestic violence cases, the study aims to illustrate the construction and reproduction of women, as well as the media's design of women's roles as victims of domestic violence. In other words, the study attempts to reveal patterns and trends of media in the reconstruction and reproduction of women's stereotypes.

## Method

This research has successfully undergone validation by the UMY Communication Department Research Ethics Committee. It involved three distinct steps to comprehensively analyse the visual material used in media representations of women in domestic violence news. The first stage employed classifying illustrations in the news to identify central patterns and structures within the visual material. The codebook for this analysis encompassed various categories, such as the type of visual material (photographs or pictures), the type of portrayal, the organization of space, and the presence of other individuals. From the first step, we found 85 articles from *Kompas.com* and 117 from *Detik.com* from January 2022 to December 2023. The author retrieved those articles from their official web pages.

This analysis indicates that many photographs and illustrations are employed in domestic violence news. After collecting 202 articles about domestic violence, the author identified 140 visual images comprising the analysis corpus. A single article may contain one to three images, and it may even contain more than four. Particular articles employ identical images. The classification provided a systematic comprehension of the visual elements and characteristics prevalent in the media's portrayal of women.

The second stage involved conducting a qualitative visual analysis to identify the predominant image motifs. The author adopted Stuart Hall's (1997) perspective on meaning as a representational system, acknowledging the critical role of visual images in producing meaning. This method examines the specific ways in which repetitive or similar images in the media frame issues. The author illuminated the underlying themes and narratives conveyed through visual representations of women by identifying and interpreting the key motifs in the images through a qualitative examination.

The final stage entailed a visual context analysis to identify the interdependencies between images and the underlying conceptual frameworks (figures of thought). The author interpreted the image motifs in the context of socio-political dynamics and cultural reproduction patterns, drawing on Müller's concept of visual context analysis (2007, 2011). By contextualizing the images, the author obtained a more profound understanding of the broader socio-cultural implications of media portrayals and how they aligned with or challenged prevailing norms and beliefs.

## Results and Discussion

### Domestic Violence News in *Kompas.com* and *Detik.com*

Numerous articles reported cases of Domestic Violence. All domestic violence perpetrators in those articles are men, with various victims, including wives, children, and mothers-in-law. The prevalence of spouses as offenders indicates a persistent subordination between men and women, wherein males are perceived as leaders and physically robust. In contrast, women are regarded as weak and irrational or emotional, reinforcing the common assumption of women's inferiority to men across various domains. Women continue to be the primary subjects or victims of domestic violence.

*Kompas.com* not only reports events but also engages various experts in specific fields, including legal professionals, representatives from organizations focused on the protection of children and women, and government officials, to establish a framework that recognizes domestic violence as a perilous issue requiring legal resolution and victim protection, particularly for vulnerable groups such as children and women. For example, in the article titled "*KDRT Tak Seharusnya Ditutupi, Kementerian PPPA: Jangan Takut Melapor* [Domestic Violence Must Not Be Concealed, Ministry of PPPA: Do Not hesitate to Report It]"; "*Kemenag: KDRT Tidak Bisa Dibenarkan, Apalagi Disembunyikan dengan Dalih Keluhuran Istri* [Ministry of Religion: Domestic Violence Cannot Be Justified, Especially when cloaked in the guise of the wife's virtue]"; "*Kementerian PPPA: Banyak Kasus KDRT Terjadi karena Faktor Ekonomi* [Ministry of PPPA: Numerous Domestic Violence Incidents Arise from Economic Factors]"; "*Mahfud MD Beri Atensi pada Istri Korban KDRT di Depok Jadi Tersangka: Kapolda Metro Turun Tangan, Kasus "Di-hold"* [Mahfud MD Addresses the Spouse of a Domestic Violence Victim in Depok, Now a Suspect: Metro Police Chief Intervenes, Case "On Hold"]". In addition, *Kompas.com* also engaged in raising awareness about domestic abuse through articles titled "*Perbuatan yang Termasuk KDRT Menurut Undang-Undang* [Legal Definitions of Domestic Violence Acts]", or "*Undang-Undang KDRT: Larangan dan Sanksi* [Domestic Violence Law: Prohibitions and Sanctions]".



Using a straight news format that is continuously updated, which is characteristic of internet journalism, both *Kompas.com* and *Detik.com* refrain from modifying domestic violence news, treating it not as a product for sale to their readership. The news disseminated by both media outlets does not endeavor to frame domestic violence coverage as a means to captivate readers' interest. The news headlines are not sensationalized. Crafting significant titles accurately represents the news material. Domestic violence cases are delicate matters; therefore, both *Kompas.com* and *Detik.com* strive to maintain impartiality in their reportage. This situation is apparent from the sources, wherein the victim, suspect, police, government, and institutions associated with the settlement of domestic violence are comprehensively shown. *Kompas.com* and *Detik.com* emphasize the notion of balance by soliciting diverse sources. The primary reference source is the police. Moreover, the victim serves as the primary reference. It may originate directly from the victim, via the victim's attorney, or through the family. A limited number of articles utilize perpetrators as sources. Our finding of the impartiality of *Kompas.com* and *Detik.com* in reporting domestic violence news has confirmed the previous research. Geruh, Dwi N., and Basuki (2010) mentioned in their research that the percentage of news sources in *Kompas* daily newspaper came from a combination of various existing sources, such as actors, governments, families of the victims, and others who appear. This decision proved that *Kompas* Daily newspaper keeps the principle of balanced news. Fajri (2023) argued that domestic violence news on *Detik.com* had high objectivity.

### Domestic Violence Cases as Criminal Acts

There are multiple perspectives to examine domestic violence. People can understand it as a social problem, an economic issue, a cultural or political concern, or a criminal offense. *Kompas.com* and *Detik.com* recognize domestic violence as a significant issue; hence, both media outlets report on various cases of domestic violence. Both *Kompas.com* and *Detik.com* framed domestic violence as criminal acts in their publications. There are some clues indicating the framing.

*First*, nearly all news outlets present the police as the source of information. The roles of the police as the resource person are even mentioned in the title of the articles, for example on the news titled "*Polisi Selidiki Dugaan KDRT Seorang Perempuan oleh Pilot di Serpong* [Police Investigate Alleged Domestic Violence Against Woman by Pilot in Serpong]"; "*Kronologi Ibu Muda di Bekasi Lapor Polisi Sebelum Dibunuh Suami, Sudah Lampirkan Hasil Visum* [The Chronology of Young Mother in Bekasi Reporting to Authorities Before Being Murdered by Spouse, Including Autopsy Findings]"; or "*Polisi Tetapkan Raden Indrajana Tersangka KDRT Anak!* [Police Identify Raden Indrajana as a Suspect in Domestic Violence Incidents]"; "*Penampakan Ferry Irawan Tersangka KDRT Diserahkan Polisi ke Jaksa* [The Appearance of Ferry Irawan, Domestic Violence Suspect, has been transferred by Police to Prosecutor]."

*Second*, people also can discern from the rubrication. Events and news are categorized into specific rubrics. Rubrication should not be perceived only as a technical issue or a standard procedure of news-making. Nevertheless, it becomes integral to the categorization of facts. Events are categorized within specific classifications, excluding others (Eriyanto 2002, pp. 161). Domestic violence can be categorized as a social issue when the media highlights its societal repercussions, such as the perpetuation of violence through imitation by children or its detrimental effects on familial happiness, which can lead to additional social problems. It may also be viewed through an economic lens when the narrative emphasizes income disparity or restricted economic opportunities as contributing factors. Furthermore, it can be analysed as a cultural or political concern when the discourse centres on the patriarchal structures that empower men to dominate their wives and children or the government's neglect of the issue.

Eriyanto (2002, pp.162) reiterated that the definition of social reality in the news strategy and news-making process may be understood through categorizing events and information inside specific sections or rubrics. *Kompas.com* and *Detik.com* categorize domestic violence news across multiple sections/columns (rubrics). The distribution is illustrated in the subsequent table:

Table 1. Distribution of Violence News Articles (Source: Author's Classification)

<i>Detik.com</i>		<i>Kompas.com</i>	
Section/Rubric	Articles	Section/Rubric	Articles
DetikNews:		News:	
a. Berita	81	a. Megapolitan	34
b. Hukum & Kriminal	23	b. Nasional	8
c. Politik & Peristiwa	1	c. Regional	10
DetikFinance	1	Money	
		a. What's New	1
DetikHot	6	Lifestyle	1
DetikHealth	4	Tren	1
DetikFood	1		
<b>Total Articles</b>	<b>117</b>		<b>85</b>

Both media outlets featured domestic violence news prominently in their major sections. *Detik.com* includes a category dedicated to criminal issues titled "*Hukum & Kriminal*," a sub-part of the *Detiknews* section. However, there are only 23 articles included in this section. *Detik.com* mostly puts violent domestic articles inside the "*Berita*" sub-section. Currently, *Kompas.com* lacks a dedicated section for crime-related content. Like *Detik.com*, specific domestic violence issues are featured in the *News* Section. *Kompas.com* features a column, or rubrics, titled "*News*," with a sub-column named "*Megapolitan*," which contains the latest news, presenting business, government, political, legal, and criminal updates, and daily current events in the capital. Other sub-sections are "*Nasional*" for events occurring in Jakarta and its vicinity and "*Regional*" for events outside Jakarta. According to the rubrication and the chosen sources of information, *Detik.com* and *Kompas.com* portray domestic violence news within a criminal framework.

Lastly, domestic violence can be regarded as a criminal act when it results in suffering or fatalities for the victim. By framing the domestic violence cases as crimes, both news outlets construct the positioning of actors involved in the events, representing some as active agents and others as passive recipients of actions or events. Before examining the images, the author must highlight the significant point regarding how the journalists from the two news outlets recounted the story from diverse perspectives. Understanding the media's portrayal of victims and perpetrators is essential. The author's examination of the narrative indicates that the journalists from *Kompas.com* and *Detik.com* reported the events from the victims' perspective. There are two journalist positions in this context:

- a) The journalist mediated the occurrence by positioning the victims as the storytellers/subjects. The reader discovers the incident from the second subject (journalist), who relays the victim's confession. The second subject elucidates how the victim perceives herself while characterizing the other individuals involved, including the perpetrator, from her perspective. As the victim, the woman becomes the subject of the narrative since the sequence of events is recounted not by the perpetrator of the violence but by a secondary narrator who obtains the information from the victim. The victim indirectly narrated the sequence of events related to the occurrence. The woman can portray her-

self as a victim through the information she provides to the second subject.

- b) There is a layer of mediation in the process, indicating that specific individuals influence the narration of events, for instance:
- The journalists get the stories from the victim's representatives (the lawyer, family members, and anyone with intimate ties to the victim, such as acquaintances or neighbors).
  - The journalists contacted the police responsible for the cases. The police do not advocate for the victims. Nevertheless, the police's stories are founded on the testimony provided by the victim. Most articles from both online news use employ this layer of mediation.

By positioning the woman (the victim) as the subject, she can articulate her experience and action from her perspective, provided to the police or their representatives (secondary subjects), which is subsequently conveyed to the journalists (tertiary subjects). Simultaneously, the portrayal of the other (in this case, the perpetrators) is conveyed based on her perception and viewpoint. The cited passage indicates that the victim of violence characterizes the attacker as cruel, using the phrase "he hit or kicked." Consequently, the news focuses on the victim (the woman).

The perpetrator is presented as an object, with their identity defined and characterized by others. When the police spokesman recounted the narrative to the journalist, they commenced with, "*Menindaklanjuti laporan korban ... (following up on victim reports...)*". The news excerpt provided a comprehensive account of the violent occurrence from the victim's perspective. The news conveyed to the public represents the victim's exclusive perspective, supplemented by the police as the narrator. The news discourse delineates the sequence of events involving the victim and the actions of the perpetrator (the object). The news content, derived from the victim's side, portrays the perpetrator as the object or the one being told. The perpetrator is entirely incapable of providing a defense statement.

Visual images further substantiate the news framing domestic violence as a crime. The author discovered hard-news photographs<sup>1</sup> of specific events, such as the trial process of domestic violence cases, press conferences conducted by the police, and crime scene investigations. The perpetrators are depicted in those photographs with and without masks.



(a)



(b)

Figure 1. The perpetrators are in orange clothes during the press conference with the police during the press conference (a) and in the police office (b).

<sup>1</sup> The term "hard-news photographs" describes images that are intended to explain and complement actual news stories.

The photographs above illustrate the perpetrator's visual identity. They are positioned in the middle, portraying them as the center of attention. The criminals are identified by their orange prison attire. Their performance stresses their portrayal as criminals. The photographs have strengthened the framework of the domestic violence case as a criminal offense.

Nevertheless, the frame of domestic violence news as a criminal offense fails to demonstrate the victim's resilience in confronting the perpetrator's actions. The victims, mostly female victims, are portrayed as vulnerable, subjugated, and helpless, primarily through the other image categories that will be elucidated in the subsequent section.

### The Portrayal of Victimhood

There are some categories of visual images of domestic violence news. The author previously mentioned the first category, 'the hard-news photographs,' representing the news stories. However, the visual images do not always represent current events. They can also give readers a general understanding of the news contents and function as a complement to the news. The author used the term '*illustrations*' to refer to this type of visual image. There are two forms of illustration: *photographs* and *pictures* (drawing or painting).

As mentioned previously, the hard news photographs exploited the perpetrators as criminals. However, the illustrations, photographs, and pictures give a different perspective. The illustrations depict women, the victims, as weak and helpless figures. The author classified the portrayal of women into three themes as follows:

#### 1.1 Vulnerable Victims of Crime

Women who are victims of domestic violence are considered to be victims of a crime against human dignity in the sexual field or any other criminal offense that involves pressure, threat, or violence. The portrayal of women as vulnerable victims of domestic violence is found in several articles in *Kompas.com* and *Detik.com*. The following photographs are the examples:

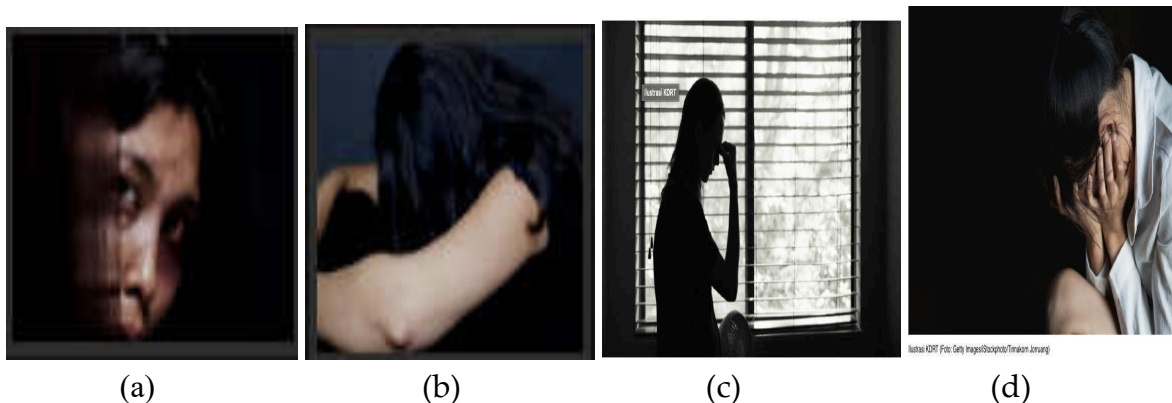


Figure 2. Sample illustrations of vulnerable victims of crime in

*Kompas.com* (a & b) and *Detik.com* (c & d)

The photographs portraying women as victims of domestic violence share a commonality. The victims are depicted in a variety of poses in photographs that depict the aggression, with the perpetrator looming in a threatening manner. These poses include a scared face behind the curtain (Figure 2a) or a cowering position on the floor or in an unknown location with her legs drawn up against her bosom, her arms wrapped around



themselves, and her foreheads resting on her knees (Figure 2b). Both images are found as illustration in *Kompas.com* of the news entitled “KDRT Tak Seharusnya Ditutupi: Jamham Takut Melapor” [Domestic Violence Must Not Be Concealed, Ministry of PPPA: Do Not hesitate to Report It]”; and “Kemenag: KDRT Tak Bisa Dibenarkan, Apalagi Disembunyikan Dengan Dalih Keluhuran Istri” [Ministry of Religion: Domestic Violence Cannot Be Justified, Especially when cloaked in the guise of the wife’s virtue]”.

Additional poses are available on *Detik.com*, such as a sideways posture with a hand placed on the face, symbolizing anxiety (Figure 2c) in the news titled “Polisi Mediasi Kasus KDRT Pasangan Nikah Siri di Jakbar” [Police Mediate Domestic Violence Case Between Secret Married Couple in Jakarta]; and hands hiding the entire face (Figure 2d) in the news titled “Istri di Depok 6 Kali Alami KDRT, Ancaman Hukuman Suami Bisa Diperberat” [Wife in Depok Experiences Domestic Violence 6 Times, Husband’s Sentence Threat Could Be Increased].

Additionally, all images feature a woman at the centre, the sole individual in each setting. The deep shadows of the dark colours and tones in all photographs conceal most of the detail. Its subdued and frequently melancholic tones have intensified the sorrow and feelings of dread and discomfort. Overall, the images alongside domestic violence news depict female victims in helpless, submissive postures, lacking the agency to resist.

### 1.2 Subjected to Violent Aggression

Domestic violence news illustrations describe violence as coerced physical acts, such as rape. Other types of violence, such as verbal and emotional abuse, are not included in the images. It confines violence to solely physical aggression. Conversely, the images do not represent verbal, psychological, economic, or symbolic violence. The examples of visual images of physical violence are as follows:

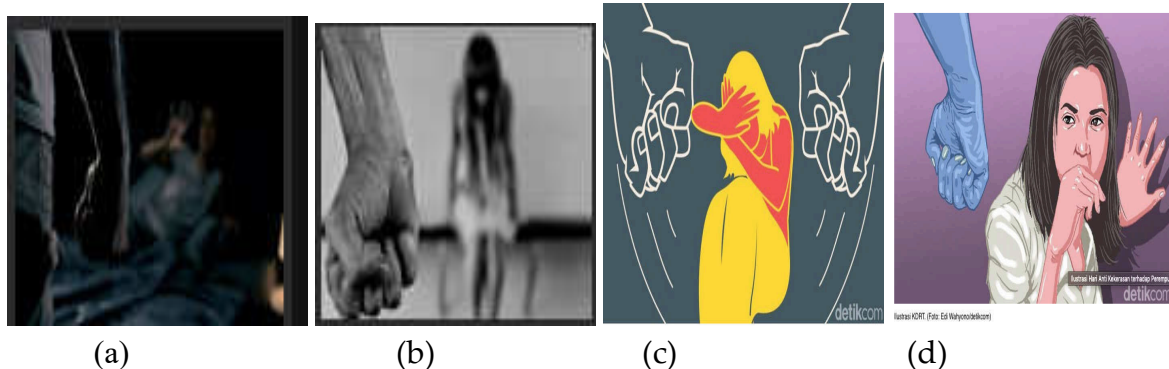


Figure 3. Sample illustrations of women being subjected to violent aggression in *Kompas.com* (a & b) and *Detik.com* (a & b)

All illustrations, both photographs (Figure 3a and 3b) and pictures (Figure 3c and 3d) depict physical violence with clenched fists in front of the camera, representing the hands of the male aggressors. The male attackers are shown as physically larger and positioned higher in the frame. Meanwhile, in front of the clenched fists, the female victims are shown with their entire bodies visible, either looking down or with their hands over their faces. They are depicted as smaller, lower in the frame, with averted gazes, curled-up body language, and expressions of fear or helplessness. The contrasted portrayal of male attackers and the female victims represent the male perpetrators as superior subjects and active agents, the ones initiating the violence, making decisions, and exerting control, wielding more authority than the victims, as the passive recipients who acted upon,

vulnerable, and lacking agency in the situation.

The illustrations in *Kompas.com* and *Detik.com* perform the visual cues that reinforce the dynamic power. It maintains the media narrative positioning the male figure as the subject - the one acting, and the female figure as the object - the one being acted upon (Chesney-Lind & Chagnon, 2017; Mardikantoro *et al.*, 2022; Abramski *et al.*, 2024; Akinseye, 2024).

### 1.3. Silenced Women

Several illustrations depict female victims who are silenced. Women with faces partially obscured by palms. It symbolizes not only physical violence but also shame and anger. The emphasis on the mouth may indicate a silencing or suppressing of her voice. These illustrations are found in articles titled “*Kementrian PPPA: Banyak Kasus KDRT Terjadi karena Faktor Ekonomi*” [Ministry of Women’s Empowerment and Child Protection: Many Domestic Violence Cases Occur Due to Economic Factors], “*Laporkan Rizky Billar atas Dugaan KDRT, Lesti Kejora Mengaku Dianiaya*” [Report Rizky Billar on Alleged Domestic Violence, Lesti Kejora Claims to Have Been Abused], and “*“Update” Istri Korban KDRT Dipenjara: Kasus Dihentikan Sementara dan Korban Dibebaskan*” [“Update” Wife of Domestic Violence Victim Imprisoned: Case Temporarily Stopped and Victim Released].

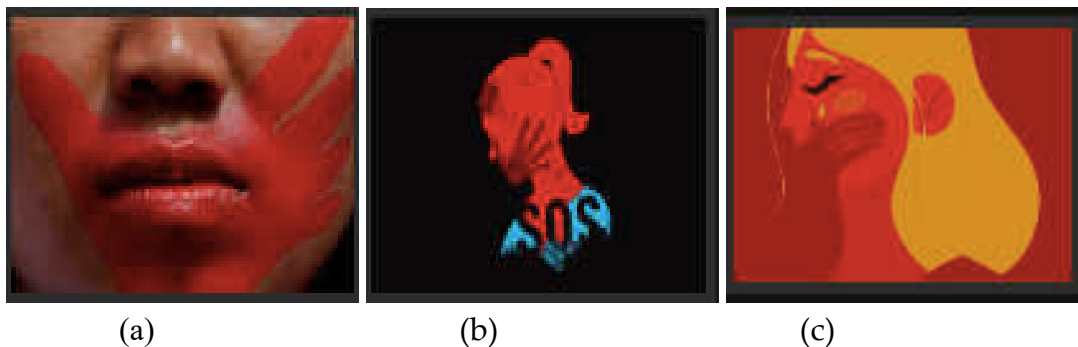


Figure 4. Sample illustrations of silenced women in *Kompas.com*

Schwark (2017) mentioned, “*Sexual violence itself, as well as its female victims, are represented in highly stereotyped ways.*” Schwark’s research on Visual Representations of Sexual Violence is pertinent to the findings of this study, which examines photographic and drawing illustrations of domestic abuse instances. Journalists often present visual news broadcasts that reinforce portrayals of victims as weak, submissive, and lacking agency to resist. It is undoubtedly inconsistent with reality, where a victim’s physiological response to sexual violence may manifest as fighting, fleeing, or freezing.

### ***Kompas.com* and *Detik.com* Rituals in Portraying Domestic Violence**

perpetrators are male, whereas the majority of victims are female. Few instances identify the relatives (mother-in-law or children) as victims. Consequently, the author emphasizes the dynamics between the male perpetrator (husband) and the female victim (wife).

According to the prior explanation, two categories of visual representations of domestic violence news coverage are conducted by *Kompas.com* and *Detik.com*. The first category comprises *hard news photographs*, which are visual images that elucidate the actual news narratives. Images captured during police press conferences, trial hearings, and crime scenes exemplify hard news photographs.

Hard news photographs present incidents of domestic violence as criminal offenses. The implication is that perpetrators are depicted more frequently than victims. Male perpetrators are regarded as criminals. The orange-colored attire, positioned centrally within the police escort and occupying the defendant's chair during the trial, reinforces the individual's perception as a criminal.

Female victims are rarely depicted in hard news photographs. Victims tend to be represented by their brother, father, or legal counsel. However, the representations of female victims in images vary. The two images below depict female victims as defenseless and powerless. Lack of eye contact or positioning her back towards the camera, which symbolizes the observers, suggests discomfort or a lack of confidence, indicating vulnerability and an aversion to being the center of attention.



Figure 5. Samples of hard news photographs of vulnerable female victims in *Kompas.com* and *Detik.com*

In other hard news photographs, the author found different presentations of female victims, as seen in three examples as follows:



Figure 6. Samples of hard news photographs of female victims who resist in *Kompas.com* and *Detik.com*

The first two images (Figures 6a and 6b) depict female victims who have reported their husbands to the police. In contrast, the last image (Figure 6c) features a female victim telling her experience of abuse by her husband. All images showed female victims resisting.

Thus, as depicted in the narrative, *Kompas.com* and *Detik.com* can utilize hard news photographs to present female victims as subjects. When narratives depict female victims as the story's subject, the news actors and sources, the hard news photographs can effectively establish women's agency and empowerment.

Unfortunately, *Kompas.com* and *Detik.com* do not consistently employ hard news photographs to depict domestic violence visually. The second category frequently utilized is *illustrations*, including *photographs* and *pictures* (paintings or drawings). As mentioned, the illustration represents the female victim as a vulnerable and helpless figure. The pertinent inquiry that arises is why *Kompas.com* and *Detik.com* utilize illustrations as visual representations of domestic violence.

The author's analysis commences with examining the operational logic of online media with the speed of publication. Ward (2002) asserted that a crucial attribute of online journalism is immediacy or the rapid dissemination of information. This aspect has been extensively examined as detrimental to the quality of news. The questioning of online journalism's accuracy arises from issues affecting news precision. Research by Karlsson (2011) indicates that the rapid pace of online news complicates efforts to persuade the audience of its accuracy. Porlezza (2019) investigated the problem of journalistic reportage accuracy because the news cycle's immediacy requested a faster publication pace. News outlets often adopted the strategy to publish first and to verify second. It leads to several errors in news publications. Other studies also mention similar problems (Brautović et al., 2020; Diekerhof, 2023; Fisher-Høyrem, 2023). This study reveals that immediacy also leads to issues regarding journalists' negligence in selecting photographic or illustrative images.

The high-speed factor presents technical hurdles for journalists in reporting on domestic abuse issues. Yustitia (2023) studied human rights issues in Indonesian media, indicating a growing representation of journalists within Indonesia's media landscape. The limited number of journalists leads to the assignment of reporting tasks being determined not by the expertise relevant to the issue. The lack of journalists results in news reporting that is not consistently derived from press conference coverage or on-site attendance, relying instead solely on police releases, resulting in a scarcity of stock hard-news photographs.

Most illustrations serving as the visuals accompanying reportage on domestic violence appear to originate from online stock image collections. These stock photos may include generic photographs, graphic art, cartoon images, and other non-photographic illustrations. The portrayal of victimhood as powerless and subordinate by media outlets like *Kompas.com* and *Detik.com* can be viewed as a type of "media ritual," a practice that shapes and sustains a particular social reality. This ceremonial representation is an objective journalistic endeavor and a cultural practice intricately linked to power relations and ideology. The media significantly influences public perceptions by consistently portraying victims as weak and submissive. This media ritual not only reflects but also perpetuates the stereotype of women as victims of domestic abuse.

Some studies mentioned that the female representation often performs ambiguity (Hadylaya, 2023). The analytical results of this study also indicate the same issue. The coverage of domestic abuse on *Kompas.com* and *Detik.com* demonstrates ambiguity.

The media's gender ideology that sustains heteronormativity has been extensively examined. Santoniccolo et al. (2023) have delineated research on gender and media representation, indicating that stereotypes, objectification, and sexualised portrayals remain prevalent in the media. Media exposure perpetuates views in gender stereotypes and endorses gender role standards, which can indirectly foster sexism, harassment, and male aggression against women.

Increased awareness of gender equality promotes more diverse gender representation in media, challenging stereotypes and promoting fairer portrayal of men and women. However, it does not mean the media has achieved true gender equality. The media still maintains women's underrepresentation. The ambiguity of women's representation



in violent domestic news on *Kompas.com* and *Detik.com* confirms the pattern. The media exhibits a willingness to reposition women as the focal point of narratives, but, in particular contexts, it remains challenging to move beyond the male dominance perspective.

## Conclusion

This study elucidates a notable ambivalence in online journalism by analysing the practice of *Kompas.com* and *Detik.com* on their commitment to balanced and complete reporting of domestic abuse cases. The visual representations transcend mere aesthetics, employing ambiguity to depict women as victims of domestic abuse and men as perpetrators. On the one hand, hard news photographs have effectively portrayed male perpetrators as criminals and could allow presenting female victims in an empowered manner. It indirectly advantages female victims, emphasizing women's representation as the focal point of the narrative. On the other hand, the journalist's illustrations from online stock image collections have contributed to the portrayal of victimhood. They establish a depiction of women as subordinate and weak, perpetuating stereotypes that further marginalize already vulnerable individuals. The progressive efforts of *Kompas.com* and *Detik.com* to portray women as subjects deserve recognition. Conversely, it is imperative to reinforce the principles of gender equality among journalists. Appreciation for the diverse representation of women must be accompanied by the enhancement of empathy toward women's experiences as marginalised groups. Journalistic training that addresses this necessity must be conducted.

Consequently, the findings highlighted the necessity for critical examination and ethical reflection within the journalism community. They underscore the importance of news organizations to rigorously assess and continuously re-evaluate their methods of representation, particularly when dealing with complex and sensitive issues such as domestic violence. In an era where visual images possess significant power for information and influence, responsible media must ensure that these instruments are utilized judiciously to enlighten rather than mislead.

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