

Violence Against Women: A Gender-Based Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Violence against women is a widespread issue occurs in personal, cultural and structural level, both national and international. Defending women's rights that have been corrupted since forever requires a strong commitment and hard work within all aspects of life from various elements of society. Among ways to eliminate violence against women is by analyzing policies, social programs, values and norms based on gender. Using this analysis, it is expected to figure out gender bias within policies, programs, norms and values implemented within society. The fact shows that many forms of violence against women occur due to women's limited access in political, social, cultural, economic and religious life. This paper tries to elaborate a gender-based analysis as an alternative tool to defend women's rights. Also, it is an effort to raise people's awareness about gender issue and to struggle for a gender-based justice welfare society.

Keywords: Women; Gender; Analysis

ABSTRAK

Kekerasan terhadap perempuan merupakan isu yang meluas terjadi di tingkat pribadi, budaya dan struktural, baik nasional maupun internasional. Membela hak-hak perempuan yang telah rusak sejak lama membutuhkan komitmen yang kuat dan kerja keras dalam semua aspek kehidupan dari berbagai elemen masyarakat. Di antara cara untuk menghapus kekerasan terhadap perempuan adalah dengan menganalisis kebijakan, program sosial, nilai-nilai dan norma-norma berdasarkan gender. Dengan menggunakan analisis ini, diharapkan dapat mengetahui bias gender dalam kebijakan, program, norma dan nilai yang diterapkan dalam masyarakat. Fakta menunjukkan bahwa banyak bentuk kekerasan terhadap perempuan terjadi karena terbatasnya akses perempuan dalam kehidupan politik, sosial, budaya, ekonomi dan agama. Tulisan ini mencoba mengelaborasi analisis berbasis gender sebagai alat alternatif untuk membela hak-hak perempuan. Juga, ini adalah upaya untuk meningkatkan kesadaran masyarakat tentang isu gender dan untuk memperjuangkan masyarakat kesejahteraan keadilan berbasis gender.

Kata kunci: Perempuan; Jenis kelamin; Analisis

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INTRODUCTION

In general, violence means an action of harassment to physical, psychological or one's mental integrity (Fakih, 2003). Violence could happen to anyone women or men, children, young people, adult or even elderly with any reason. It is true to say that within a patriarchal system, both women and men are victims of this injustice cultural system. However, it is also true that women suffer more oppression compared to men. The stigma that men are responsible for public space and women are in charge of domestic space and these two spaces



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are separated strictly has been embodied within society. As a result, it has become a belief that their successful or failure in each space depends only to those who are in charge. It contradicts to the fact that both public and domestic spaces are integral that support and influence each other.

Violence against women is a public matter that requires assistance and advocacy in either micro, mezzo or macro levels. Phenomenon of women being victims of violence either in domestic space, society and government policies has been occurred since centuries ago and it is still there. It is unfair for women to become victims of violence just because of their sex. There are various cases illustrate this discrimination practices, such as rapping, in which a victim woman of this violence is still be blamed for reasons like being aggressive or wearing short skirt, etc. Those reasons given are unacceptable since there are also many cases of children and elderly being rapped. The most sarcastic among all is the stereotype labelled to these victims that they are not capable of maintaining their virginity and therefore they deserved to be alienated.

The fact shows that women have greater risk and possibility of being victims either in personal, cultural or structural levels within patriarchal system compared to men. Based on the data of violence against women, the amount of this case raises each year and more women become victims. Giving respond to this reality, Indonesian government introduced *Undang-Undang Penghapusan Kekerasan Dalam Rumah Tangga/ UU PKDRT* (decree on elimination of domestic violence against women) no. 23, 2004. Thus, this paper explores many cases of violence against women using a gender-based analysis. In addition, introducing a critical approach to social work related to injustice practices against women is also considered important to discuss.

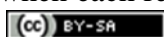
Gender-based Analysis

In her analysis, the writer uses human rights and gender-based approaches to reveal violence against women. Gender defined as differences in women's and men's behaviors that are socially constructed-by women and men themselves (Fakih, 2003), while sex is biological differences between women and men as a God's gift, for example their differences in body shape and reproductive tools. From that definition, it can be sum up that gender is women's and men's characters that are socially constructed and that can be changed between women and men from one generation to another.

A gender-based analysis is a crucial approach to figure out discrimination practices related to commitment of struggling for social justice, especially concerning on women and men. Therefore, not having this gender-based analysis as one of alternative approaches to defend human rights means having half-hearted commitment to fight for justice. For example, there are many instituitons claim themselves as defending human's rights, but violence against women as part of their struggle is often left behind. There is still an opinion that domestic violence against women is private bussiness, not a public issue that does not relate to human's rights.

Behavior differences between women and men are socially constructed through a very long process that has been internalized within society, legitimized by cultures, religions, norms, values and even government policies. This condition leads to a society's belief that the differences of women's and men's behaviors are given from God that cannot be changed. It is regarded as a destiny from God that women are responsible for houseworks, while men are in charge of the head of the family.

This distribution of responsibilities between domestic and public spaces is acceptable as long as it does not disadvantage either side. It means that the core of this matter is valuing women who are responsible for domestic matters the same as men that are in charge of public spaces. In this case, the problem occurs when each responsibility is valued differently. Public



matters are regarded as more important than domestic matters. As a result, women have a lower bargaining position compared to men within society. This unbalance relationship (dominant-subordinate) leads to men being more powerful and have the right to control over women.

Forms of Violence against Women

Based on the analysis, violence against women occur within society are classified into personal, cultural and structural levels. In personal level, women experience cases of either verbal or action of harrassment. These victims women of violence are still blamed of "inviting" men to commit crime against them by stating that it is women's fault to seducing men and wearing certain clothes. It is important to note that instead of punishing the criminal of violence, people blame women as the victims. In this case, social punishment is hard to bear and it causes women loosing their integrity. As a result, these women often blame themselves, think that they deserved that harrassment and take it for granted.

Violence against women in cultural level occurs in forms of stereotyping and labeling toward women that of course disavantage them. One example, it has become a belief within society that if a woman protests their husband about a decission made, she will be regarded as a disobedient wife and her husband has the right to beat her. Men legitimize their violence action using religious references such as verses in the Qur'an to force women accepting their control over women. It is also a public opinion that good muslim women (*sholihah*) are those who obey their hubands, silent, and patient. Women will be regarded as not *sholihah* if they do not have one of these characters.

In the sructural level, women also experience various forms of violence and injustice practices. State violence can be seen in government's policies related to salary, green revolution, birth-controll and decree on pornography. Different valuing of houseworks as lower compared to public matters leads to different policies on salary beteen women and men. For example, a man driver's receive more salary compared to a woman who works as a house-wife assistent.

According to Fasih (2003), gender bias is also found in the policy of Green Revolution, within which only hard technology instrument is developed while erasing traditional tools that usually used by women at the same time. In addition, men are prioritized to get opportunities to be trained about farming. It is unfair based on gender analysis since both women and men are main actors of farming. Another case is birth control, within which women are forced to take the responsibility of this matter. In this case, most contraception tools invented are for women consumption, while only few for men. The stereotype established within society then is that it is women's fault if they are unable to control child birth and it has nothing to do with men.

Violence against Women in The Name of Religion

The main purpose of all religions in this world is to establish human welfare, including Islam that was introduced to be *rahmatan lil'alam* (Wahid, 2007). However, it is found many cases of violence legitimized by verses in the Qur'an and reasons of defending God. For example bombing, terrorism, violence against women (poligamy and wife beating) conducted in the name of religion.

The violence against women in the name of religion occur due to textual and partial interpretations of Qur'anic verses. It is a common issue in Muslims around the world that they have freedom to interpret Qur'an. However, critical interpretation should be introduced to always remain people about the main purpose of human welfare (*rahmatan lil'alam*) that brings about the consequence to always refer to that purpose in giving interpretation of Qur'anic verses.



As for the case of violence against women, there are various verses misused to legitimize and legalize violence actions. For example, the textual interpretation state that men have higher status than women and therefore men have the right to control over women; verses about polygamy which states that men are allowed to have more than one wife; and verse on wife beating is permitted for disobedience wife. There are many other interpretations and *hadith* (prophet's sayings) that are introduced to discriminate women. In this case, the function of religion to give protection and peace to its followers turns out to be disaster for women only because of gender bias interpretations.

Those textual and partial interpretations endanger human being and their religious life. People started to leave religion because it does not give protection and happiness as expected. It is crucial to note that there are more universal verses rather than those verses that were introduced to answer specific cases. One example of universal verse states that all human being regardless gender, races, sex are equal before God, it is their obedience levels towards God that matters.

Many misogynic hadith referred to legitimate discrimination and violence against women. It is not surprising since the majority of those who quoted and interpreted hadith were male and only few of women. This condition leads to women's limited access in interpreting Qur'anic verses and hadith to defend women's rights. As a result, women are more as object rather than subject of Qu'an and hadith interpretation.

Internalized Violence against Women

Violence against women is internalized within cultural and structural levels. It has been embodied within society's way of thinking that women deserved to be discriminated. Seemingly, people do not aware that they contribute to practice violence against women, whereas women themselves also think that they deserved that forms of violence against them. Those women accept it as their destiny of being born as women. Thus, injustice practices toward women is embodied within society in their cultural, religious and even legitimized by state policies. People believe in this condition as a given destiny from God.

As mentioned before that the internalization process of violence against women occur in personal, cultural and structural levels through a long process brought a consequence of complexity in eliminating such internalized violence. It is a multi-faceted problems that requires a strong commitment and hardwork in all aspects of life and levels of society. Raising people's awareness about gender issue is crucial as an entry point to eliminate violence against women. However, it is important to note that changing society's paradigm is uneasy since it has become a belief within them.

People's unawareness of internalized violence against women reflected in their norms and values such as stereotyping and labelings toward women and discrimination against them. On the other hand, such stereotyping and labelings are not addressed to men. The fact shows that this discrimination is legitimized by the decree of pornography which addressed to protect women from harms. However, once again instead of giving protection to women, it turns out to limit women's access to public space and even blame them for the violence occurs against them. As a result of the implementation of the decree there were some cases of women who wear certain clothes in the streets are captured and put into prison because they were suspected as prostitutes. There is an unwritten rule that women are responsible for all crimes that occur within their society. It seems like women's behavior considered as the measurement of crime level within a society. This condition leads to policies, norms and values that discriminate women such as the decree on pornography which is focused on women's wears. It contradicts to the main purpose of eliminating pronography and crimes, the decree turns out to become disaster toward women and strengthening violence against them.



Critical Approach against Violence

The rapid increase of violence against women cases within each year is one of 27 social problems addressed by the Ministry of Social Affairs. Those problems include poverty, people with different abilities, drugs abuse, etc. are interconnected problems that cannot be separated one another. Therefore, the effort to empower those poor people should be conducted comprehensively instead of partial effort.

According to Bob Mullaly (2002), there are three general approaches within social work to deal with social problems namely:

- Assisting disadvantaged groups to adapt to the system that oppresses them
- Trying to modify the system so that society will be easier to better fit into the system
- Giving contribution to carry out a comprehensive social transformation

The first and second approaches are the common methods used by social workers to assist society in dealing with their problems. However, these two approaches are victims-blaming approaches rather than helping them dealing with social problems. People are forced to adapt themselves to the oppressive system by carrying out certain programs. These people are the victims of oppressive system but they are also the ones to blame. Whereas the third approach is different since it helps to defend people's rights by transforming the oppressive system to become a better one.

Mullaly's perspective can also be implemented in analysing violence against women. Defending women's rights requires personal, cultural and national social transformation. The facts show that there are institutions that aimed to protect women's right, but still using victims-blaming perspective. These women are brought to shelters as a first step to protect them from their husband's act of violation. However, after a period of time these women will go back to their husbands because of economic reason and children. It is unfair that only women are empowered to cope with the violence, but men (in this case their husbands who commit crime) is neglected.

Such effort is not enough to struggle for women's rights since it has not include transforming oppressive cultural and national systems. Therefore, awareness raising and social advocacy are urgently needed in either personal (women and men), society (cultural), religious leaders or government.

In term of law, protection for victims women of violence should be guaranteed. There should be a joint cooperation between government, hospitals, police officers, and court. One example of a non-profit institution is Rifka Annisa Women's Crisis Center Yogyakarta. They established networks with various elements of government and non-government to defend women's rights. For example, they succeeded in persuading police officers to provide protection to victim of violence, hospitals to provide a specific room for conducting medical check-up toward those victims, also law institutions to provide lawyers to give assistance in suing their abusers to court. In addition to that, Rifka Annisa is also carrying out advocacy and raising people's awareness about gender issue through media such as radio, local and national newspapers, also giving assistance and empowerment to clients of Panti Sosial Karya Wanita Yogyakarta.

In term of religious aspect, Qur'anic reinterpretation using women's perspective and hadith verification are crucial to enforce justice among all. Until recently, there are several women interpreters of Qur'an namely Amina Wadud, Siti Musdah Mulia, and those who verified hadith (*takhrijul hadith*) in order to scream for justice such as Shinta Nuriyah etc. The effort and struggle to defend women's rights should be appreciated and supported from society. Enforcing justice, equality and welfare for society are challenging since it needs strong commitment, and hardwork, also risky. Therefore, establishing gender based justice



within a welfare society should be conducted in personal, cultural, national and international levels.

CONCLUSION

A welfare society is a state within which all of its members are able to meet their needs, actualize themselves, live their social function and get protection in term of law. Gender equality and justice are among important aspects in establishing a welfare society. The effort to defend women's rights includes eliminating injustice practices and violence against women in terms of economic, politics, law, culture and religions. The gender based analysis is expected to give shape of establishing a gender based justice welfare society through social system transformation in line with the values of critical social work.

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