
ABDIMAS

Jurnal Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat
<https://journal.unnes.ac.id/journals/abdimas/>

Improving the Image of Women in Social Media Based on Gender Justice for Teenagers

Rini Fidiyani*, Eko Mukminto, Irawaty, Widhiyanto, Rahayu Fery Anitasari, Edward Michael Simangunsong, Hafidz Daffa, Samuel Adi Nugroho

Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia
*Corresponding author: rinif@mail.unnes.ac.id

Abstract

The social media network has become one of the most favored digital technology platforms for information and entertainment among the public today. However, in social media practices, women often appear as objects that are sexualized or commodified commercially. According to a survey by wearesocial.com and Hootsuite, most internet users in Indonesia fall into the categories of teenagers and young adults. Building upon the results of this survey, community service focuses on the age group of 13 to 18 years old who are currently studying at a Senior High School (SMA). This community service initiative occurs at a Public Senior High School in Semarang City, Central Java. The activity involves the socialization and mentoring of 100 students (50 males and 50 females). This activity influences the perspectives and behaviors of teenagers towards the portrayal of women on social media, leading to an average score change from 39 (before socialization) to an increased average of 89 (after socialization and mentoring), which represents a significant increase.

Keywords: gender justice, ideology criticism, image of women, social media patriarchy.

INTRODUCTION

Social media networks have become a highly favored digital technology platform for information and entertainment among the public today. They were referring to survey data from wearesocial.com and Hootsuite, which showed that in January 2021, there were 22 million internet users in Indonesia. Meanwhile, social media users reached around 170 million, which accounts for approximately 61.8 percent of Indonesia's current population. Wearesocial.com and Hootsuite also provided data indicating that the most significant age ranges were between 13-17 and 18-34. (wearesocial-hootsuite, 2021). Therefore, most users fall within the adolescent and young adult age categories. Referring to the most common age data range, these ages refer to the Secondary School age group.

This socialization and mentoring program is located at a public high school in the city of Semarang which has 1257 students, more than half of whom are women. The students' activeness in using digital technology is relatively high. This is proven by almost all students having smartphones and owning and using social media to communicate. However, the active use of digital technology and social media still raises questions about how students understand the perception of the image of women, especially on social media.

Whether we realize it or not, in a social relationship dominated by patriarchal culture, women are present as objects. (Mukminto, 2020) This social construction has an impact on the rate of technological development, which is directly proportional to the exploitation of women's bodies, which is also increasingly massive. Moreover, the exploitation of women's bodies is increasingly widespread through digital technology. Forms of digital technology such as the internet and websites, social media, chat applications, virtual reality technology, or augmented reality are tools that exacerbate the tendency for exploitative, discriminatory, and oppressive behavior towards women. (Henry & Powell, 2018) Furthermore, like digital technology in general, social media has also become a means for spreading stereotypes about women. (Princess, 2021) Images of "ideal" women with specific body sizes and facial shapes are constructed and represented on social media. (Sukanto et al., 2019) Moreover, when society sets specific beauty standards, women feel compelled to meet those standards to be

accepted. Such beauty standards are unrealistic and tend to damage women's self-confidence. (Ando et al., 2021)The women are also judged and evaluated based on their appearance. The consequence is that women tend to feel uncomfortable and even doubt themselves. (Walker et al., 2021)In some instances, it can even cause women to feel anxious about their bodies, and some even experience eating disorders.(Aparicio-Martinez et al., 2019)

What is worse, women are also often seen as sexual objects on social media. (Galdi et al., 2014)(Rodgers & Hust, 2018)Pornographic content showing women in seductive poses or clothing is circulating in cyberspace. This certainly has inevitable moral consequences and perceptions for psychological development, especially for teenagers and young adults as the most active users of digital technology. (Yati & Aini, 2018)

However, like two sides to a story, apart from the negative things mentioned above, digital technology also has positive significance if it can be used well and wisely. Digital technology, such as social media, can be used as a platform and space for women to fight for their rights. Therefore, women can utilize digital technology to promote gender equality and raise awareness about women's issues. This can increase knowledge and awareness, open up people's understanding of these issues, and help spread important messages to fight for women's rights. In this way, women can strengthen the role of women and produce positive changes in a gender-just society. So, regarding its relevance to high school students, the responsibility lies with the school to provide increased strengthening of knowledge and understanding regarding the image of women for its students.

From the problem of efforts to improve the image of women in the era of digital technology, there are priority problems:

What is the level of knowledge and awareness of students at SMA Negeri 1 Semarang, especially young women? What are their perceptions and behavior in using digital technology, especially social media? What is the trend among students of SMA Negeri 1 Semarang regarding the perception of women and their bodies in digital technology?

METHODS

This article used the method of socialization based on ideological criticism in dissecting a discourse on women's images on social media. (Van Dijk, 1993)(Guardino, 2020). Criticism of knowledge and understanding is carried out to help change perceptions, solve problems, and achieve the goals outlined utilizing a personal approach to students by periodically making visits or through continuous telecommunications media at least once a () month. From these visits or through periodic telecommunications media, we hope to be able to make initial observations so that we can understand and find the root of the problem of the urgency of increasing knowledge about the situation and conditions of students regarding digital literacy and perceptions of women's behavior on social media. This is used as an initial observation and to obtain data on infrastructure that is not available at the school, which is considered to be able to support community service activities, for example, how students' digital literacy at a public high school in the city of Semarang is.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In service through this program, the Community Service Team from Semarang State University has carried out several activities namely: On July 6, 2023, the UNNES Faculty of Law community service team chaired by Rini Fidiyani made a direct visit to the high school in order to make observations to understand and understand and find the root of the problem of the situation and conditions of students regarding digital literacy and perceptions of women's behavior on social media. This visit was received by the school, represented by the State High School's principal and deputy principal. This is used as an initial observation, which is also expected to be able to obtain data on infrastructure and things in the school that are considered to support community service activities, for example, the digital literacy of the high school students. Then, from the data obtained from the high school, the community service team sent a questionnaire containing sociological conditions and digital literacy and gender among SMA Negeri 1 Semarang students to the school, which the school then followed up by distributing the questionnaire to 100 students of SMA Negeri 1 Semarang.

The questionnaire is a pre-test that provides an overview of the sociological conditions of SMA Negeri 1 Semarang students regarding the use of digital technology and the image of women in digital technology and social media. In initial observations and through questionnaires, data was obtained regarding how students perceive the image of women on social media. From this data, an average student score of 39 points was obtained. This indicates that the average student understands the image

and role of women in undesirable and inadequate categories. However, this range of values is in a category that sees women in the image and role in the general construction presented by families and society, which are considered traditional and conservative. Women are indeed different from men in terms of their image and role.

Then, on July 24, 2023 the service team held interactive socialization and dialogue with high school students. The material presented by Rini Fidiyani in this socialization was the Image and Role of Women in social media based on Gender Justice. This socialization was held as a form of providing knowledge and increasing gender awareness of high school students in the use of digital technology, especially social media.

Socialization was carried out in the high school hall with 100 students (50 and 50 female students) participating. These participants had previously completed a pre-test to determine the extent of their knowledge and awareness regarding the image of women and gender equality.

The material presented by the service team was about gender awareness and equality for students participating in socialization and interactive dialogue. This socialization is related to understanding the importance of a positive image of women on social media. And it can encourage social media users to avoid stereotypes against women, thereby inspiring positive action in supporting gender equality online. The first material is about the definition of the Image of Women on social media and how a positive image of women helps overcome slanted and discriminatory stereotypes towards the image of women and inspires and can support campaigns and promote gender equality through social media.

Rini Fidiyani and the community service team provide a radical redefinition of the image of women with a feminist approach and a conception of gender justice. A feminist approach (Kumar Mahajan, 2022) is presented as a construction of a philosophical and political view that women have equal rights to men in a social construction. Thus, the view that women are inferior or lower than men is a specific ideological construction in society. Feminism also sees that the dominant ideology that gives the meaning of inferiority to women is a patriarchal construction that has been infested and rooted for a long time in human history.

This historical patriarchy has also been amplified ideologically and theologically, and in the contemporary era, its exploitative amplification was initiated by changes in contemporary industrial capitalism. (Jensen, 2021) The exploitative amplification carried out by contemporary capitalism has provided a discourse on the commodification of women. For example, pornography and prostitution are fundamental forms of how the commodification of women is amplified in the contemporary era of industrial capitalism.

It was also conveyed by Rini Fidiyani and the UNNES Faculty of Law Community Service Team that digital technology, such as social media, also contributes to the commodification of the image and role of women in society. Rini Fidiyani gives an example that the manifestation of the ideology of beauty construction, which is ideologically interpellated by patriarchal ideology which is intertwined with contemporary capitalism, provides an awareness that there are specific beauty standards adopted from patriarchal society and in such a way that they become standards in the consciousness of social media users.

Social media such as TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and so on have also provided a reproduction of the meaning of beauty and commodification of the patriarchal image of women. Rini Fidiyani and the service team conveyed this in a popular approach adapted to teenagers' level of knowledge and understanding.

From this socialization and interactive dialogue, the high school students were given another questionnaire with the same questions. From the questionnaire (post-test) results, the 100 students received an average score of 89, which is an increase from the previous average point of 39.

However, it should be remembered that basically, these quantitative results cannot be a standard measure that can explain how students' perceptions or behavior change, but at least the structure of students' understanding and awareness is challenged with knowledge and discourse that provides a counter to the traditionally interpellated understanding that is instilled by society and the environment. Thus, ongoing mentoring can be an effort to improve the image of women on social media.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to express their gratitude to LPPM UNNES for their financial support, which made this research possible. We also appreciate the contributions of all individuals involved in this project.

CONCLUSION

Digital technology, in this case, social media, has particular significance for social relations. In a patriarchal society, the construction of the image of women is defined in such a way and amplified ideologically both by theology, culture, and the economic system of contemporary capitalism so that it is commodified spiritually, sexually, and commercially. This community service towards middle school teenagers tries to criticize the understanding and practice of social media, which is ideologically interpellated by patriarchal ideology. From the results of socialization and interactive dialogue with 100 middle school students, the score for changes in knowledge and understanding of women's images on social media was obtained from an average of 39 to 89. This figure is considered significant. Thus, the understanding of the ideologically interpellated structure of consciousness cannot be completely changed through socialization. However, the FH UNNES community service team sees that delivering socialization can provide a new perspective that provides a challenge and a counter to other thoughts on the dominant ideology in society, especially for teenagers active on social media.

REFERENCES

- Ando, K., Giorgianni, F.E., Danthinne, E.S., & Rodgers, R.F. (2021). Beauty ideals, social media, and body positivity: A qualitative investigation of influences on body image among young women in Japan. *Body Image*, pp. 38, 358–369. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2021.05.001>
- Aparicio-Martinez, P., Perea-Moreno, A.J., Martinez-Jimenez, M.P., Redel-Macías, M.D., Pagliari, C., & Vaquero-Abellan, M. (2019). Social media, thin-ideal, body dissatisfaction, and disordered eating attitudes: An exploratory analysis. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 16(21). <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16214177>
- Galdi, S., Maass, A., & Cadinu, M. (2014). Objectifying media: Their effect on gender role norms and sexual harassment of women. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 38(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0361684313515185>
- Guardino, M. (2020). “Rediscovering” Ideology Critique (Again): Toward a Critical Realist Analysis of Political Media Effects. *International Journal of Communication*, 14.
- Henry, N., & Powell, A. (2018). Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence: A Literature Review of Empirical Research. *Trauma, Violence, and Abuse*, 19(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838016650189>
- Jensen, R. (2021). Getting Radical: Feminism, Patriarchy, and the Sexual-Exploitation Industries. *Dignity: A Journal of Analysis of Exploitation and Violence*, 8(2). <https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/dignity/vol6/iss2/6/>
- Kumar Mohajan, H. (2022). An Overview on the Feminism and Its Categories. *Research and Advances in Education*, 1(3). <https://doi.org/10.56397/rae.2022.09.02>
- Mukminto, E. (2020). Law, Patriarchal Ideology, and Systematic Violence Against Women—A Žižekian Study. *Legal Conscience*, 3(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.51825/nhk.v3i1.8566>
- Putri, SAR (2021). Stereotypical Portraits of Women on Social Media. *Representation*, 7(02). <https://doi.org/10.30996/representamen.v7io2.5736>
- Rodgers, K. B., & Hust, S. J. T. (2018). Sexual objectification in music videos and acceptance of potentially offensive sexual behaviors. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, 7(4). <https://doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000142>
- Sukanto, M., Hamidah, H., & Fajrianthi, F. (2019). “Can I Look Like Her?”: Body Image of Adolescent Girls who Use Social Media. *Makara Human Behavior Studies in Asia*, 23(1), 60. <https://doi.org/10.7454/hubs.asia.1120519>
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1993). Principles of critical discourse analysis. *Discourse & Society*, 4(2), 249–283. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926593004002006>
- Walker, C.E., Krumhuber, E.G., Dayan, S., & Furnham, A. (2021). Effects of social media use on desire for cosmetic surgery among young women. *Current Psychology*, 40(7), 3355–3364. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-019-00282-1>
- wearessocial-hootsuite. (2021). Digital 2021: the latest insights into the 'state of digital' - We Are Social UK. <https://wearesocial.com/uk/blog/2021/01/digital-2021-the-latest-insights-into-the-state-of-digital/>
- Yati, M., & Aini, K. (2018). Case Study: The Impact Of Pornography Shows On Psychosocial Changes In Adolescents. *Journal of Health Science and Technology*, 9(2). <https://doi.org/10.33666/jitk.v9i2.189>