

## Between Sexism and Expressions of Resistance over the Body: A Study of Poster Texts in Demonstrations in 2022

Radius Setiyawan<sup>1</sup>; Maulida<sup>2</sup>; Sri Lestari<sup>3\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Muhammadiyah Surabaya, Surabaya

<sup>2</sup>BeritaSoloRaya.com

<sup>3</sup>Universitas Muhammadiyah Surabaya, Surabaya

email : [srilestari@um-surabaya.ac.id](mailto:srilestari@um-surabaya.ac.id)

### Abstract

In April and September 2022, students in various regions in Indonesia held demonstrations. These activities demanded and protested against the government's discourse on the policy of 3 presidential terms. Meanwhile, in September, there was an action against the increase in fuel prices. Like the previous demonstrations, the action used posters as a medium of public communication. What was interesting about the posters was the content of the demonstration. The content of the posters tended to be more related to the body and sexual matters. The content used more metaphors of everyday life related to sexual activity. This spread massively in many social media. Through Theo Van Leeuwen's critical discourse analysis method, this research discusses several sexist poster texts and analyzes the social context behind the phenomenon. There are two assumptions that this paper tries to address. First, the poster content that appears is sexist content that demeans women. The second is that it is part of an expression of women's resistance to bodily restraint. Both arguments above will be reviewed in this paper. This research found that there was sexist content in posters that used direct or indirect expressions of sexism. The sexist expressions in the posters also show misogynistic practices because posters that denigrate women come from women. Findings also show that the sexist language used leads to pornography.

**Keywords:** *demonstration, poster, sexism, women, cda*

### Abstrak

Pada April dan September 2022 lalu, mahasiswa di berbagai daerah di Indonesia melakukan demonstrasi. Aktivitas tersebut menuntut dan memprotes pemerintah atas wacana kebijakan 3 06/04/2024 aktivitas seksual. Hal tersebut menyebar secara massif dalam banyak media sosial. Melalui metode analisis teks kritis (critical discourse analysis) dari Theo Van Leeuwen, penelitian ini membahas beberapa teks poster berbahasa seksis serta menganalisis konteks sosial yang melatarbelakangi fenomena tersebut. Ada dua asumsi yang berusaha diulas dalam tulisan ini. Pertama, konten poster yang muncul merupakan konten seksis yang merendahkan perempuan. Sedangkan yang kedua, hal tersebut merupakan bagian dari ekspresi perlawanan perempuan atas pengekangan tubuh. Kedua argumen di atas akan diulas dalam tulisan ini. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa terdapat konten seksisme dalam poster yang menggunakan ekspresi seksisme langsung maupun tak langsung. Ekspresi seksis dalam poster juga menunjukkan praktik misoginis karena poster yang jelas-jelas merendahkan perempuan justru berasal dari perempuan. Temuan juga menunjukkan bahwa bahasa-bahasa seksis yang digunakan mengarah pada pornografi.

**Kata Kunci:** *demonstrasi, poster, seksisme, perempuan, cda*

\***Corresponding Author** : Sri Lestari ([srilestari@um-surabaya.ac.id](mailto:srilestari@um-surabaya.ac.id)). The Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surabaya, Jl. Raya Sutorejo No.59, Dukuh Sutorejo, Kec. Mulyorejo, Surabaya.

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## Introduction

In April 2022, there were student demonstrations in various parts of Indonesia. This demonstration is more or less demanding and protesting the government over the policy discourse of the three term of office of the president. The action is a protest against the increase in BBM prices. Like the demonstrations in general, the activity uses posters as a public communication medium. Posters and demonstrations are two inseparable parts in the historical context. Posters in many demonstrations are used as a tool of propaganda and agitation. In the historical context, Kathleen M. Ryan (2012) explains that propaganda is a deliberate and systematic attempt to shape perception, manipulate cognition and direct behavior to the desired response of the propagandist. One of the instruments used as a propaganda tool is a poster. The posters were a major part of the entire propaganda effort during World War I and II. The design ranges from the appearance of small tables to street-side advertising boards. The posters played an important role in conveying the minds of Americans to help maintain the war effort throughout the battle (Eren Evin, 2018).

Research on dictionaries in demonstration posters in Indonesia is not something new. Jimly in his research analyzed interesting phenomena of language in the use of language variations in demonstrations. There is the use of Betawi and Jakarta dialects as well as female sociolect. In addition, from the point of view of usage, there are three types of registers used: political registers, educational registers and environmental registers. In addition, the study found two mixed codes in the data analysed, namely the Indonesian-Jawa language and the Indonesia-English language (Jimly, 2020). Another study also described an action called Gejayan Calling that created the social media Instagram then flooded with the posting of photos related to the demonstration with the tag #GejayanCalling. A study used a qualitative approach with semiotic methods that analyzed signs in denotation and connotation levels, as well as using visualization society theory, a concept popularized by Guy Debord. As a result, "Gejayan Spectacle" is seen as a phenomenon of Gejayan's active representation. They also build

an image of themselves as objects seen by distinguishing themselves from other users. (distingsi). It is here that the role of "image" is played in such a way, the concept of "shaking" that unites society, explaining that in the society of visualization there is a diversity of different appearances as a product of social construction.

Furthermore, Gejayan Spectacle is not only a deliberately displayed image, but also has subversive values. Photos of participants in the action on Instagram became a form of symbolic resistance in the cyber space against the status quo (Rino, 2020) . Similar research also shows that social media is capable of linking resistance movements to demonstrations. This study explains how the #GejayanMemanggil Movement can exploit digital space to launch a political narrative that is implemented with a massive mass action. Furthermore, with the help of secondary data in the form of Social Network Analysis, it was discovered that this movement was a movement that emerged with the collective consciousness of every previously unconnected user. The findings of the research identify that Gejayan Calling can take advantage of digital space through the personalization of narratives that are shared and uploaded by the Gejyan Calling tag. From there, a pattern of Connective Action was found that could then explain the success of #GejayanMemanggil in organizing a mass demonstration (Rino, 2020). Meanwhile, The women's activism history cannot be separated from attractive poster as a media to gain public attention, such as posters with symbols of felinity (femininity and animality) in the 2017 women's march in America (Wren, 2017). Cat symbol in the poster illustrated how society underestimates all women's efforts and shows the domestication of women. Other research on language style analysis on demonstration posters between men and women actually tends to perpetuate the stereotype that male demonstrators tend to be practical while women tend to be emotionally oriented and feminine (Aviandasari, 2020).The above research explains more about how the content of the demonstration is dictated and how social media can be a tool for uniting resistance . This writing attempts to see a different phenomenon.

The demonstration of 2022 shows something interesting. One of the interesting things about the demonstration entitled Students

in April and the Action to Denial the BBM Rise is that it's related to content. The content in the poster of the demonstration in 2022 is more related to the body and sexual activity. A number of sentences like:

“Jangan minta 3 ronde, 2 ronde saja sudah ngosngosan”(Don't ask for three rounds, two rounds are gone) ,“Stop peras duit rakyat, sesekali peras Adek, Pak” (Stop peeing people's money, occasionally peeing me, sir), “Harga minyak kaya harga mi-chat” (oil price is like mi-chat price).

The appearance of the content in the poster can be seen from two perspectives. Such content could be seen as part of sexism or the phenomenon could be viewed as an expression of resistance to corporal restraint. This article aims to comment on both points of view above. At first glance, it puts existing content as a sexist act. The content of the poster has been widely criticized on social media. Such an accusation has its own basis and logic. Swim & Hyers (2009) mentions that sexist language is a practice of individual, organizational, institutional, and cultural attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour that reflects negative judgments based on gender or advocates status inequality between men and women. Sexism in the content of the demonstration has become a matter of interest. The meaning and motives of the content are interesting to analyze. Meanwhile, in other perspectives, the existing demonstration posters are seen as women's resistance to body straps. Listiorini and Oetomo (2022) understood that the posters were indeed a form of political expression of the young body as well as of the political body of the woman, which was always considered a lian when faced with state control. Stated in the conversation.com, instead of being seen as an inclusive part of society, the state positions women as a separate group, thus deemed necessary to be controlled.

## Methods

This research used critical discourse analysis developed by Theo Van Leeuwen. The data source was obtained from the expressions of words in the Gejayan Menggil demonstration poster in 2022. The following is data on sexist expressions contained in the Gejayan Summoning demonstration, which will be

analyzed using Theo Van Leeuwen's critical discourse analysis:

Contents
1. Daripada BBM naik, lebih baik Ayang yang naik (Instead of rising fuel, it's better for me to make love)
2. Harga minyak kaya harga mi-chat (Oil prices are like mi-chat prices)
3. Stop peras duit rakyat, sesekali peras Adek, Pak! (Stop squeezing the people's money, squeeze me once in a while, sir.)
4. Lebih baik bercinta 3 ronde daripada harus 3 periode (It's better to make love 3 rounds than have 3 periods)
5. Jangan minta 3 ronde, 2 ronde saja sudah ngosngosan (Don't ask for 3 rounds, 2 rounds are already exhausting)
6. Aku mau 3 ronde, bukan 3 periode (I want 3 rounds, not 3 periods)
7. Harga BBM kayak harga video Dea Onlyfans, sama-sama mahal (Fuel prices like Dea Onlyfans video prices, equally expensive)
8. Migor 50.000 mahal !!! kaya open BO (Migor 50,000 expensive !!! like open BO)
9. Lebih baik 3 istri dari pada 3 periode (Better 3 wives than 3 periods)
10. Cari minyak yaaa? Minyaknya hilang sama kaya doi, menghilang pas lagi sayang-sayangnya (Looking for oil? The oil is missing the same as doi, disappearing when it's lovey-dovey.)
11. Cukup PRAWAN yang langka MINYAK GORENG JANGAN PAK!!! (It's enough that Virgins are scarce rather than Cooking Oil sir!!!)
12. Naikin aku saja, Jangan BBM (Just ride me, no fuel)
13. Kami Lemas di Naikin Terus (We're limp making love all the time)

As the form of discursive social practice, the content of demonstration poster in this study is interesting to analyze. By using the critical discourse analysis model of Theo van Leeuwen, this analysis will detect groups or individuals who are marginalized. The expression produced

in the demonstration posters will be analyzed by applying linguistic insights to non-linguistic communication. Everything can be studied as a text—a phenomenon linked together by a code. This obviously doesn't mean that everything is text. But it implies that everything moves, monuments, movies, clothes and so on including a demonstration poster as text (Dunn and Neuman, 2016). There are two categories of representation: inclusion and exclusion (Leeuwen, 2008). In the realm of inclusion, social actors are presented in discourse, whereas in exclusion, social players are eliminated for a specific purpose. Forms of inclusion and exclusion were analyzed through the words, phrases, or clauses used in the Gejayan Mengang 2022 demonstration poster.

## **Results and Disussion**

### **Demonstrations and the Metaphor of Social Activity**

Demonstration in a democracy is a common activity. In a democracy, demonstrations are a culture of community participation to take part in determining state policies. The emergence of participatory culture can be traced back to the 19th century where people traditionally created aspirational content for state policies (Biggs & Andrews, 2015: 410). Over time, the evolution of social media drastically changed the way people consumed information, eventually creating a participatory culture that opened up opportunities for anyone to create content. So important is the role of social media in opening up opportunities for anyone to create certain issues or content that was previously limited, ultimately leading some experts to argue about culture or participatory culture. Henry Jenkins (2006) defines participatory culture as a way in which people with various backgrounds can act as consumers as well as producers or contributors of meaning so that they are able to shape certain content. In the context of Indonesian democracy, which is entering the democratization phase of the internet, demonstrations as part of participation in state policies have utilized digital platforms as one of the tools of struggle, especially social media. It has been proven that many demonstrations have utilized social media to mobilize the masses and spread the message of

demands. The speed of online culture proves that mass mobilization and message delivery are more effective.

The spread of Internet-based forms of communication is essentially hailed as an important transformation in the practice of collective action such as demonstrations. This is because the public has lost its centrality, and been replaced by various forms of online campaigns, thus giving more autonomy to individual choices (Diani, M., & Della P., 2015).

The sexist student demonstration that took place in 2022 became an influential demonstration in the community because it could not be separated from the role of internet-based communication. In addition to the use of sexist language, social media became an influential tool, which helped spread messages and documentation at the demonstration. Even though it was done in real life on the streets, the blatant use of sexist language became another effective form of campaigning that took place online.

### **Sexism, Women, and Poster Content**

The phenomenon of demonstrations in early 2022 is an interesting concern to study. The demonstration messages were presented through content that was considered to be sexist. The rejection of the extension of the presidential term to 3 terms was delivered with unusual content. One of the things that this study focuses on is the emergence of sexist content and in detail this paper will prove that the content does contain sexist language that demeans women. Using critical discourse analysis, sexist content in the demonstrations tends to exclude women. Some of the content tends to put the dominant group more in control in interpreting an event and its meaning, while other groups that are lower in position tend to continue to be the object of meaning, and are portrayed in a minor way. In the context of critical discourse analysis, the text present in the demonstration content is not just seen as a text. The text is a social practice. Text is the behavior of the community on existing gender relations. Some of the texts in the posters emphasize the exclusion of women through sexist expressions.

Sexist content explains how society still lives in a patriarchal culture that is unfair to certain genders. Mills mentions two types of

sexist language: overt sexism and covert sexism. Mills (2010) mentions the characteristics of overt sexist language, namely (1) generic pronouns, whose meaning is universally understood for men and the meaning for women is separate, (2) generic nouns whose general meaning is for men when in fact it is for both men and women, such as student and young, (3) affixes that end words (suffixes) as gender markers, (4) greeting words for women are different for those who are already/not yet married, such as nona and mbak for those who are not married and nyonya and bu for those who are married, but it does not apply to men, (5) insulting words such as prostitutes and pimps, (6) pairs of words that have a gender relationship, such as husband-wife and man-woman, (7) proverbs, proverbs or pameos. Some examples of direct sexism are illustrated in the content below:

No	Content	Explanation
1	Fuel prices like Dea Onlyfans video prices, equally expensive	The poster was held by three men. Dea onlyfans is one of the public figures who has been litigated for selling pornographic videos of herself.
2	Better 3 wives than 3 periods	The poster is held by a woman in a headscarf
3	Instead of rising fuel, it's better for me to make love	A poster held by a man

Meanwhile, indirect sexist language can take the form of humor or presuppositions that tend to be more implicit. In the context of indirect sexism, Shifman & Lemish assert that there are four components that can be seen whether a humor can be categorized into sexist humor or not, especially with regard to women. First, humor that mocks women, emphasizing women's inferiority to men. Second, humor that targets women either directly or indirectly, but in many aspects tends to be imply (e.g. using various derogatory stereotypes for women). Third, humor that propagates traditional stereotypes that portray women as stupid, dependent, illogical, and as mere sexual objects. Finally, fourth, sexist humor not only emphasizes that women and men have different characteristics, but further perpetuates the hierarchical position that women are inferior to men (Shifman & Lemish, 2010).

Below are contents that are considered jokes that indirectly depict sexism

No	Content	Explanation
1	Stop squeezing the people's money, squeeze me once in a while, sir	The poster is held by a woman wearing a hijab.
2	Migor 50,000 is expensive !!! like the open BO price	The poster is held by a man. Open BO stands for open booking out. Or in the world of prostitution bringing women out. The term Open BO has a negative connotation because its meaning is attached to online prostitution. So, if there is the term Open BO on a social media network, it probably means that the person is involved in online prostitution.
3	Oil prices are like mi-chat prices	The poster was held by 3 women in headscarves. Mi-chat is an app that is synonymous with prostitution. The application is actually not made specifically for prostitution, but it is blamed by some people as an online prostitution business.
4	Don't ask for 3 rounds, 2 rounds are already exhausting	The poster was held by a woman in a headscarf.

The content above clearly targets women indirectly but clearly demeans women. The diction "squeeze your sister", ask for 3 rounds, Open BO are examples of how women are positioned. Jokes that aim to entertain and get attention from the audience instead tend to demean. These jokes clearly reinforce the culture of verbal violence against women. In this context, women are positioned as objects of

sensual jokes that discriminate and hurt. In a study, Julie A. Woodzicka and Thomas E. Ford in 2010 explained that sexist jokes perpetuate discrimination against women and encourage sexist behavior among men. In fact, when women are the target of jokes, they actually get harmful emotional effects, such as disgust, anger, and feeling humiliated (Woodzicka and Ford, 2010).

But there is an interesting phenomenon about the sexist content in this study. Some of the sexist posters that clearly demean women are actually held by women themselves. This confirms that the issue of gender bias that often harms women is sometimes the actor itself. This practice can be referred to as misogynistic practice. Manne (2017) Misogyny refers to an environment or social system in which women face coercive, unfriendly, and hateful treatment, simply because they are women in a world of masculine men. Misogyny is also referred to as a historical patriarchal system (Ibid).

Misogynism is a cultural attitude of hatred towards women because they are women. This hateful behavior can also be perpetrated by women against other women or even themselves. This is illustrated by the sexist content in this study. Much of the content is held and may be produced by women. Flood (2011) stated that misogynistic attitude held by women is called internalized misogyny. Women who have internalized misogyny group other women into superior and inferior groups so that they often act condescendingly towards fellow women who do not fit their "standards". Internalized misogyny reinforces women's position in the social environment as beings who are always oppressed. Women exclude other women, ranging from behavior, physical appearance and even other women's personal lives. Women act as actors who perpetuate the patriarchy that oversees women's lives. Acts of discrimination such as ridicule, bullying, labeling, reducing the value of women, and even actively exploiting women's rights have been carried out by women on other women. This can happen because they have sexist views towards women. This sexist view makes them or even us have stereotypes. Schneider explains that stereotypes are a form of negative judgment and tend to be reductive towards a certain group of individuals (Schneider, 2004). What is interesting in the context of this research is how stereotypes of

women are perpetuated by women. The perpetuation process is massively disseminated through the help of digital platforms. The presence of digital platforms that facilitate the formation of online public spaces is a phenomenon that encourages how sexist practices are formed and spread massively. The urge to create jokes and diction in demonstrations is certainly due to the desire to be popular in online spaces. Online spaces provide various things related to image and popularity. In addition to the personal image of wanting to be perceived as caring when participating in demonstrations, the desire to be popular and talked about in the digital space is something that is often done in the era of modern society. In addition to discussing sexism in demonstrations, reviewing its relationship with online spaces is relevant.

### **Sexist Demonstrations in a Pornofication Space**

Collective movements or demonstrations wrapped in sexist language cannot be separated from the cultural involvement that accompanies them. From the research results, it can be observed that there are several words used in the posters, which contain prostitution terms such as Open BO, as well as internet-based media platforms such as Mi Chat, OnlyFans which then connote digital platforms related to sexual and pornographic service activities. Based on data quoted from Kompas.com media, platforms that are often associated with pornographic content such as OnlyFans are able to reap revenues worth 4.8 billion US dollars or the equivalent of 71.5 trillion rupiah, within an operational period of 12 months to September 2021. This indicates that the pornographic content business is common and always thrives in society.

This data then becomes the next focal point of this research, that the culture of pornography has basically developed in society. It also plays a role, being used as a reference by the demonstrators, who are represented by women, who also glorify sexist language and terms that lead to pornography.

Basically, seeing the phenomenon of demonstrations with the use of sexist language cannot be separated from the culture and media that have been circulating in the community. One of these cultures is the term pornofication.

However, according to scholars in the field of gender and pornography studies, the culture of pornofication has experienced a shift in social situations over time.

In the beginning, pornography was generally perceived as objectifying women. Women were usually treated as objects of male sexual desire and were not usually present in pornographic activities as active sexual subjects. Furthermore, Krijnen and Bauwel (2015) pornographic culture is founded on male hatred of women, expressed in the slogan "pornography is the theory and practice of rape" coined by Robin Morgan in 1977. Pornography from this perspective is expressly required to be considered an act of violence against women.

In 1988, Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon formulated pornography not as violence, and since it is a criminal act, it is equivalent to an act against women's equal civil rights. In an appendix to a draft model regulation on the subject, they argued "pornography is central to the creation and maintenance of civil and gender inequality. Pornography is a systematic practice of exploiting and subordinating based on sex that differentially and detrimentally affects women (Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015). Underlying this argument is an important assumption about media texts and their effects, namely that enjoying pornographic material is thought to have a direct effect on human, or in this case, male, behavior.

On the other hand, recent research has shown that pornographic images are understood in multiple ways and often elicit contradictory reactions (Attwood, 2005; Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2015), complicating the relationship between text and audience. In the book "Gender and Media: Representing, Producing, Consuming", Krijnen (2015) argues that the pornographic aesthetic that pervades our society is receiving increasing attention and has fallen under the term 'pornofication'. "Pornofication" refers to the idea of mainstream cultural products being imbued with pornographic aesthetics. For example, many items of clothing carry the "Playboy bunny", t-shirts bearing the slogan 'ex-porn star' or nudity used in music videos and advertisements. The spread of this pornographic aesthetic is likely to be one of the references for the demonstrators in expressing their aspirations by using sexist language. Therefore, the sexist

language used by the female demonstrators in this study is on the one hand considered a form of objectification of the female body, but on the other hand it can be considered a form of glorification, or even resistance to the objectification of the female body itself so far.

Furthermore, in "The Aftermath of Feminism", Angela McRobbie questions pornography and sexualization. The commercialization of sex and sexuality is hailed as 'girl power' (McRobbie, 2009). Women, especially young girls, are positioned as having freedom of choice and should celebrate sex and sexuality. However, according to McRobbie (2009), the appropriation of women's power and feminist vocabulary by currents of exchange (including by the media) is a highly normative affair. Young women are forced to participate in sexualization and pornography in order to acquire femininity itself.

## Conclusion

The body becomes a single entity in every human existence, which means that the figure of the body is not only interpreted as a physical form in every human being. This means that the body is not only recognized through the shape of the body that we can recognize through skin color, body shape, and so on. The body becomes a subject that represents ratio, experience, knowledge, and consciousness. The body is no longer only present in the form of a subject, but also an object for the regime of knowledge or power. Object itself means that the female body becomes a very exploitative realm. From the perspective of Foucault's discourse of power, for example, women's bodies become objects of the ruling regime to control the rate of population growth. The control is not done by state repression but through control or control and normalization.

This research shows that the use of sexist language in the content of the 2022 demonstration poster cannot be separated from the objectification of women's bodies that has been repeated, exploited and translated by power holders. However, it is believed that the sexist language used in the posters does not come from an empty space in society. The role of the media, along with pornographic cultural products including digital platforms used as a tool for

sexual commercialization, also plays a role in how the diction used in sexist posters tends to be a form of glorification of the objectification of the female body itself.

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