



Facebook group types and posts: Indonesian women free themselves from domestic violence

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ABSTRACT

This research applied the virtual ethnography approach to examine the emerging virtual communities supporting Indonesian women. It explored three Indonesia-based virtual communities on Facebook where women, especially those who experience domestic violence, look for a haven to find coping strategies and strength. As domestic violence is highly considered a private family matter, many believe it should be kept hidden behind closed doors. Victims are discouraged from reporting or seeking help. This study found that virtual communities in social media platforms like Facebook make it possible for female victims of domestic violence to have a meeting place and share their experiences without exposing their identities. In other words, interactions within a virtual community empower women through the exchange of experience and knowledge. Women develop connections when they post their experiences in a Facebook group that they are a member of and get positive comments, which are perceived as social support from other members. It provides women with alternative strategies to find relief and to liberate themselves from domestic violence.

Keywords: ***Domestic violence, Facebook group, online social support, perebut laki orang (pelakor), virtual communities***

INTRODUCTION

The advent of social media has offered women more avenues to articulate their experiences and knowledge. Brookes (1988) describes women as rarely seeing themselves as a separate being and thus have little confidence to speak their own voice. Voice or the act of speaking out as well as standing up for oneself against patriarchal authority (Kabeer, 1999), is often identified in the feminist movement as the core key of women empowerment and is regarded as proof of agency (Gilligan, 1982). Women's voice is considered an important issue in gender-based violence, including domestic violence, intimate partner abuse, sexual assault, verbal and emotional abuse, harassment, and threats (Morahan-Martin, 2000; Hague, Mullender, & Aris, 2003; Young, 2003; Eyrich-Garg, 2011; Stephan, 2013; MacKay & Dallaire, 2012; Weinert, 2000). Most countries all around the world have formulated legislations to protect individuals from all forms of violence, including protecting women and children from violent or aggressive behaviour in the domestic domain. However, the numbers of domestic violence cases remain high, including in Indonesia.

Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 23 of Year 2004 regarding Elimination of Violence in Household states: "Domestic Violence is any act towards someone, especially women with negative consequences such as misery, physical, sexual and psychological suffering, and/or negligence of household including threat to seize, force, or grab freedom against the law in the scope of household" (Article 1, Verse 1). Nonetheless, according to Women National Commission (WNC), reported cases of violence against women in 2018 reached 406,178, with an increase of 16% compared to 2017 (384,446). Yet, they believe there are still many unreported cases of violence against women in Indonesia; the reported cases being just the tip of the iceberg as many more victims remain silent.

In many cultures, society considers domestic violence as a private family affair and thus should be kept behind closed doors to safeguard the patriarchal constructs, including family, (Cronin, 2013; Chuemchit, Chernkwanma, Somrongthong, & Spitzer, 2018), preventing them from reporting and talking about their plight. Female victims of domestic violence who do reach out for help often encounter a lack of support from institutions, and thus they are not able to escape the violence.

Scholars argue that in today's Internet age, this medium empowers women in ways that could not have been imagined before, particularly participating in a public space and voicing out without constraints (Morahan-Martin, 2000; Hague et al, 2003). Accordingly, opportunities to voice out have made women more visible (Young, 2003) as well as given them a sense of community (Eyrich-Garg, 2011). Studies reveal that there are women who engage and develop connections with others on the Internet (Stephan, 2013; MacKay & Dallaire, 2012) and thus seek social support (Teoh, Chong, Yip, Lee, & Wong, 2015).

Numerous studies conducted by experts have shown that Facebook was used by abused women as a place to ask and obtain social support. According to Gilmour, Machin, Brownlow, & Jeffries (2020), Facebook-based social support can improve the general physical and mental well-being. It was also found to reduce symptoms associated with mental illness, including depression, anxiety, and loneliness.

This study aims to provide insights on how female victims of domestic violence create support systems through their connections as a member of anti-perpetrator groups in Facebook. Applying the virtual ethnography method, this study discusses how women's virtual interactions in the anti-perpetrator Facebook community can release them from the domestic violence that traps them, through the exchange of comments and sharing of posts.

Since 2017, the membership of the Anti-Perpetrator Facebook group has significantly grown. As of 15 December 2018, the researchers found that are approximately

56 groups that claim they are against perpetrators. Members of these groups are both male and female. The total number of integrated members amounted to 85,837 accounts. In line with the growth of access to the Internet in Indonesia, there is a growing number of various self-claim groups of anti-perpetrators, with members from Indonesia as well as from Indonesians living overseas. As of 15 December 2018, at the national level, there were two groups: the Indonesia Against Perpetrator group, with 47,204 female members, and the Perpetrator's Wrecker Group, with 2,677 female members. At the province level, there are groups such as Bangka Belitung Against Perpetrator Forum, the East Borneo Indonesia Care for Household Forum and the Sharing of Women's Heart (Anti-Usurper of Men) from South East Celebes. Groups such as Palu Against Perpetrator, Community of Anti-Perpetrator of Makassar City and Women against Perpetrator of Manado are found at the county and city levels. The Anti-Usurper of Men formed at the county level is the Cikalong Against Perpetrator group, from Cianjur, West Java.

This group has undergone rapid growth as it offers a safe space for domestic violence victims to share their problems with other members and to seek solutions. They receive not only psychological support but also support from the social movement formed by the members, for example, spreading awareness about domestic violence on social media, creating online petitions and influencing mass media such as infotainment, to highlight domestic violence cases. Finally, this social movement creates a significant impact by engaging both social and legal action against perpetrators of domestic violence. This paper will discuss how online communication amongst anti-perpetrator Facebook community groups can help free women from domestic violence that traps them.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social support for domestic violence victims

Women's effort in handling pressure is also an attempt to overcome painful and threatening conditions, which is known as coping. Coping, according to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), involves "constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and internal demands that are appraised as taxing" (p. 141). By coping, the psychological well-being of a survivor is maintained, despite being in a challenging situation. Further, those who are assertive will take action to emerge from their problems and transition from being victims to survivors, which is a powerful place to be (Poerwandari, 2008).

One strategy of facing domestic violence is by seeking social support from others. Social support, according to Nurhayati (2010), helps female victims of domestic violence choose strategies to face and solve their problems effectively and constructively.

Taylor (2011) defined social support as the perception or experience that one is cared for, respected and part of a mutually supportive social network; this has beneficial effects on mental and physical health. In addition, depending on the social support given, Cutrona and Shur (1992) categorised the social support category system into five general categories: (a) informational, (b) emotional, (c) esteem, (d) social network, and (e) tangible. Informational support refers to knowledge or facts such as advocacy, referral, situation appraisal and education. Emotional support is related to expressions including caring, concern, empathy, prayer, and sympathy. Next, esteem support refers to support that can help promote one's skill/abilities, and intrinsic values such as compliment, validation, and relief from blame. Social network support refers to messages or acts that help to enhance one's sense of belonging in a specific group with similar interest or situation. Finally, tangible support is physically providing goods and/or services to those who are in need.

Interactions in cyberspace also gives stronger social support than face-to-face interaction. According to Shavazi, Morowatisharifabad, Shavazi, Mirzaei, & Ardekani (2015), the Internet affords new additional social support avenues including sharing personal experiences, coping strategies, and spiritual support in virtual support communities.

Virtual community

One of Internet's features which provides online social support is virtual communities. Rheingold (1993) defined "virtual communities" as social aggregations that emerge on the Internet when groups of people engage in long public discussions involving human emotions to form personal relationships in cyberspace. Rheingold added that virtual communities have the same function as real-world communities formed on the basis of shared hobbies or interests, regular interactions, identification or identity, specific focus on something, integration or equality in discussions and open information accessibility.

Al-Saggaf (2004) and Siapera (2012) also highlighted several characteristics of virtual communities. Within virtual communities, members have more freedom to express their identities without fear of being alienated. Moreover, virtual communities also form rules and norms based on their members' behaviour. Online communities tend not to establish leaders. This shows that online communities are more egalitarian and democratic than offline or organic communities. Other comparative advantages of virtual communities include openness to new members and the easiness of content creation.

Virtual communities also provide an opportunity for everyone to configure their social relationship which is called by Anthony Giddens (1990), a sociologist, as "networked individualism". The idea of "networked individualism" involves accommodating ideas that there is a reconfiguration of long-distance relationships from a collective form that dominates in the past (family, village, association, company) and to the direction of formation centralised on the individual.

According to Urry (2012), this "networked individualism" thus involves most people possessing many distant connections or weak ties that connect them to the outside world. Each person possesses a distinct individualised pattern. This individualisation of connectivity means that the acquisition of resources depends substantially on personal skills, individual motivation and maintaining the right connections. With networked individualism, people must actively network to thrive (Wellman et al., 2005).

Compared with developing social relationships in real life, the cost needed to maintain networks in the virtual world is cheaper. According to Wellman et al. (2005), relationship in the Internet tends to be networked and it comes with no cost as individuals can develop as many networks as they want to without any obligations in creating or keeping them.

To be able to maintain and maximise networks, the mode of communication used is mass self-communication. This mode is considered by Castells (2009, p. 70-71) as revolutionary because this mode provides enormous potency and opportunities to produce autonomous and various communication waves which eventually construct meaning in public minds. In other words, this mode of communication gives social actors networking power, especially communication networks so that social actors can play their role as programmers or switchers in the communication networks they develop.

Online social support via virtual community

According to Watkins and Jefferson (2013), online social support groups are virtual communities. While virtual communities share the same functions and purposes as face-to-face groups, membership within an online group provides the anonymity that is impossible in a face-to-face group.

On one hand, users take advantage from anonymity, that allows them to disrespect others in online discussion especially under topics of mental health such as stigma. On the other hand, some users take advantage of social support in virtual communities compared to offline groups as virtual communities provide 24-hour access, affordable costs, and no geographical or political constraints.

In other words, the nature of virtual community which enables freedom of expression without the need to expose their identities, makes this community revered by domestic violence victims as a place to search for social support.

In their work, Finn and Lavitt (1994) found that the potential benefits of CSHMA groups (computer-based self-help/mutual aid) for sex abuse survivors include providing greater access to support, diffusing dependency needs, meeting the needs of those with esoteric concerns, reducing barriers related to social status cues, encouraging participation of reluctant members, promoting relational communication, and enhancing the communication of those with interpersonal difficulties.

Similarly, Chu, Su, Kong, Shi, and Wang (2020) also found that the Chinese online community was a space for domestic violence victims to obtain information, resources and emotional encouragement. The advantages of Facebook groups as a place to search for social support is also agreed by domestic violence victims in Pakistan. Younas, Naseem, and Mustafa (2020) found that Pakistani women use closed Facebook groups as a vital mechanism to access anonymous peer support for taboo subjects such as abortion, sexual harassment, rape, domestic abuse and issues relating to child-rearing and parenting.

METHODOLOGY

The method employed in this research was virtual ethnography. Carrying out an ethnography research on the Internet involves learning how to live in cyberspace and how to measure its activity as and when necessary. Achmad and Ida (2018) asserted that virtual ethnography is more than just partisan observation; since we live and work in the cyberworld, we can use many methods to collect varied rich data, including questionnaires and semi-structured face-to-face interviews.

Hine (2015) suggested a multimodal approach to Internet ethnography using the E3 framework of sensitivity towards an embedded, embodied, and everyday Internet, that is, an encouragement to look both inwards and outwards in search of ethnographic holism. Both embedded and embodied means that the Internet has become rooted in everyday life. The third component, everyday refers to the Internet's increasing ubiquity and how this has largely rendered it mundane and commonplace.

One problem with virtual research is that a lot of sources use nicknames or pseudonyms. In this context, Hine (2000) stated that the main principle of a virtual ethnographer is not to bring in any external criterion to judge whether it is safe to believe what the source has said but rather simply to come into the virtual world to understand the source while judging the originality of the information given. A researcher focuses more on source originality than the intensity and continuity of conversations conducted by the source. On the other hand, a source's validity has already been addressed by that particular community right from the beginning. For all three Facebook groups observed by the researchers, the validity of the data from a source was initially checked by the admin and moderator. For members who want to share their problems, they must first provide a detailed chronology of the incident that affected them. Members are also required to attach evidence, such as wedding photos, photos that prove instances of cheating, certificates of marriage as well as identification details and information about the perpetrators. Incomplete

posts will be deleted by the moderator(s) because they do not want the group to become an avenue for framing. Furthermore, the fan page community guidance constitutes a rule that prevents members from engaging in hoax or lies. Some fan page community guidance even applies a strict legal consequence for such act, that is, members who provide hoax or fabricate information will be legally sued.

There are a few things that must be done in virtual ethnography research. Achmad and Ida (2018) listed the steps of virtual ethnography research, which include proactively identifying the community, conducting negotiation for access, initiating contact with the community and conducting in-depth interviews. These steps taken for the present research are elaborated in detail below.

1. Proactively identifying the community: To understand the group of anti-usurpers, the researchers became members in several groups with interesting group descriptions and many members. Furthermore, the researchers chose three groups based on members' profiles along with the community which conducted the most active interactions. Thus, the researchers became members in three Facebook communities for 7 months: Indonesia Against Perpetrator Group (*Anti Pelakor Indonesia*), Perpetrator's Wrecker Group (*Group Pembasmi Pelakor*) and Haters of Perpetrator (*Group Pembenci Pelakor*). The observed groups had admins and moderators who act as cautious gatekeepers. This was necessary for the privacy protection of the members. In order to be accepted into the group, the moderator requested certain conditions. For example, for Indonesia Against Perpetrator Group and Perpetrator's Wrecker Group, the moderator required applicants to not be a usurper of men, must have status as a legal wife, and she must obey all the applicable rules. If she is found later to be an usurper of men, she must be prepared to be kicked out of the group, and her scandal will be exposed all over the social media. However, for the third group, the Haters of Perpetrator, the admin does not limit the gender; however, each candidate must obey all the rules.
2. Access negotiation: In order to maintain the research validity, the researchers also had to submit letters to inform moderators their intent to conduct observations and research. The researchers also explained to the moderators the significant implications of this research for the group.
3. Initiating contact: In order to gain an in-depth understanding, the researchers initiated contact with the moderator and members regularly. For the Indonesia Against Perpetrator Group group, the researchers followed the WhatsApp group of Indonesia Against Perpetrator Group Chapter Jakarta, which consisted of members in the Jakarta area. For the Perpetrator's Wrecker Group, the researchers also joined the group's WhatsApp account. For the Haters of Perpetrator, the researchers followed the WhatsApp group that was specifically for women called Strong Women!
4. In-depth interviews: The researchers conducted in-depth interviews with the group moderators and members through a structured method using WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger.

Upon completing the research, the researchers examined the posts in the Facebook groups for the period of time, from 1 March 2018 until 31 May 2019. Next, the researchers grouped the posts into four types of domestic violence: physical, sexual, psychological and negligence of household (household abandonment). In order to analyse the role of virtual communities in overcoming domestic violence, the researchers assessed the member sample ($n = 11$) and then analysed comments from other members.

RESEARCH OUTCOMES AND DISCUSSION

To explore how virtual communities become a medium for liberation from domestic violence, the researchers divided the discussion of the results into two parts. The first part is about the profile of the three groups that became a safe space for domestic violence victims to share and communicate. The second part looks at the call for help by victims and third, the type of efforts or help the virtual community provided to solve their problems.

A. Virtual community that helps victims of domestic violence

To analyse how Facebook groups are able to become a safe space for domestic violence victims, the researchers examined the groups' characteristics.

Indonesia Against Perpetrator Group (Anti Pelakor Indonesia)

The Facebook group, Indonesia Against Perpetrator Group (*Anti Pelakor Indonesia*)—shortened to API in Bahasa—was established on 1 July 2017, by an account holder named **SM** in Hong Kong. Based on its description, this group's purpose is sharing of experiences and stories as well as providing support and wise advice to one another. Such advice is not merely confined to the subject of usurper of men. This is a closed group with the description of the group and the administrator available publicly but only members can read other members' posts and post inside the group.

As of 28 May 2019, this women-only group had approximately 45,681 members. The members were varied comprising those who live in rural areas and urban areas as well as migrant workers. The professions of the members were also varied from housewife to online shop traders, lawyers, and health workers. Due to its thousands of members, this group has its own offline organisation at the province and at the city level, whereby members communicate via WhatsApp groups. Currently, there are 21 offline groups that regularly conduct meetings. The rules of this group are very strict; one of it being that only the moderator and admin have the right to determine which post can be published in the Facebook group account. The content of post must be confined to personal sharing of members who experience domestic violence, which then receives comments or replies containing various forms of social support. In addition, numerous members routinely share posts about legal information particularly those related to domestic issues.

Perpetrator's Wrecker Group Usurper of Men's Eliminator (Group Pembasmi Pelakor)

The Facebook group of Perpetrator's Wrecker Group Usurper of Men's Eliminator (*Group Pembasmi Pelakor*) was established on 21 December 2017. This community was built by two women, **M** and **I**, who live in two different locations. **M** lives in Malang, East Java, and works as an entrepreneur. **I** lives in Bekasi as a housewife and is also an online trader. At first, they joined other anti-perpetrator communities because of their concern for women with domestic problems, especially those cheated by their husbands and face difficulties in obtaining help. However, due to some irreconcilable differences with these groups, both women created a new group that they perceive as more accommodating and emphasising on community practice. The content of discussion is not confined to managing psychological violence from husbands but also focuses on children's welfare. According to the admin, children often become the most vulnerable victims of violent households and divorce. Currently, the group has five administrators and moderators; all of whom are married women who have experienced domestic violence in their households. These admins and moderators are domiciled in different provinces. **MP** is in Makassar, **IR** is in West Java, **WH** is in East Java, **MR** is in East Java, while **JR** did not expose her location.

As of 5 December 2018, this group's membership stood at 2,677. Six months later, precisely on 11 June 2019, the group had doubled its membership to 4,034. Members came from various locations in Indonesia, including metropolises and remote villages. The members were varied with different religions, various levels of education, and also various professions, such as housewives, lawyers, civil servants, teachers, entrepreneurs and health practitioners like doctors and nurses.

Haters of Perpetrator (Group Pembenci Pelakor)

The Facebook group, Haters of Perpetrator (*Group Pembenci Pelakor*) was established on 21 April 2017, by an account holder called **AS** in New Penganden, West Java. As of 28 May 2019, this group had 7,216 members. Unlike other Anti-Usurper of Men groups, this group accepts men as members as well, as male victims of domestic violence (that is as children) or men who are concerned about domestic violence.

Compared to the other groups in which the moderator had a dominant role in evaluating and approving posts, in the Haters of Perpetrator, the discussion is very open. However, this poses another issue among members as this led to quarrels with one another, especially between female and male members who have different points of view when responding to posts on domestic problems. This is mainly because comments from male members were almost always asking the person sharing the story to do self-introspection. However, one of the advantages of joining this group is that victims receive possible solutions for their household problems not only from women's perspective, but also from men.

Members of all three groups also join other groups of anti-usurpers of men. By becoming members in various groups, domestic violence victims are usually able to deduct which community matches their needs and can build "networked individualism". For example, some domestic violence victims join a group merely because it is a safe place to share their sad feelings to get emotional support. On the other hand, there are those who join a group because they need informational support on how to handle their divorce case and get custodian rights of their children. Or, they join the group with a purpose of sharing their own experience or knowledge with fellow victims of domestic violence.

B. Online social support for domestic violence victims

To receive support from other members, victims were required to post details of their problems with a clear chronology of events accompanied by evidence either in the form of photos, videos or screenshots. Victims must also prove that they are truly victims by attaching a certificate of marriage. If the content of the post is complete, victims will receive various forms of social support from other members. The following sections give an account of various types of abuses and the type of support given to the victims.

Physical violence

In their posts of physical violence, victims describe what their husbands had done. In order to prove that physical violence occurred, members show photos of physical abuse and provide a chronology of the incident.

For example, **IM**, a housewife, shared about the domestic violence committed by her husband by posting a photo of herself that showed her head bleeding on 3 July 2018. She also said that she was fearful of submitting a complaint to the authorities because if her husband found out about it, she would be killed by him. **IM** was in Malaysia, having followed her husband to work there. **IM** did not have the courage to speak out because she was an illegal worker in Penang, Malaysia. If she made a report, the local police would capture her. The saddest part was she was afraid of getting medical attention because she

feared being questioned by doctors and nurses about her status. The one and only source of help that she could depend on was the Facebook group. The following excerpt was taken from her post:

“Mom, do you know why my head is now black and blue? It is a new wound, newly injured with a huge brick! No wife who wants to spend their life longer with an evil man. If there is a little problem, he easily hits me like crazy! My body feels like it is experiencing a fever, Mom. I got a headache; I could not get up. I felt like I want to pass out if I wake up. Now, I lay down while trying to hold the pain. What do you think, Mom? Is this the kind of man to be kept as a husband? But my heart, says its better to leave than to be tortured by him repeatedly. This is not the first time that I was tortured by him. I am sick, Mom! My body is sick! My heart is sick! My mind is sick! I’m so sick of him!”

IM’s post received 516 comments. Most of the comments (234) recommended for her to make a police report. From the comments, the researchers also found 15 other members who underwent a similar experience as IM, in which they had been beaten by their husbands.



Figure 1. A photography posted by IM, a member of the Facebook group Indonesia Against Perpetrator Group , showing the injury caused by her husband who hit her head with a large brick

In addition to **IM**, another popular post in the API group was also made by **IS**. She had posted six times before in the API group. **IS**, a housewife from North Sumatra, who experienced physical violence from her husband when she was six months pregnant. On 27 September 2018, she posted about her husband's violence act, together with evidence in the form of photos proving her husband's affairs:

“Last night, my husband came home from the Usurper of Men's place. When he arrived, we fought fiercely until I got slapped twice. It was so painful until I could not open my mouth. We were almost divorced, but the suit was withdrawn by him. He feared that I would marry another man if we really separated. On the other hand, he didn't want to let go the Usurper of Men. That woman posted their 'togetherness' in a hotel. Any wife will suffer when she sees this cheating. In the meantime, I was pregnant but continued to experience domestic violence from my husband. And they were cheerful seeing my misery. What should I do, mothers? Give me your advice”.

This post from **IS** received 501 comments. Of the hundreds of comments, the researchers noted that there were six other members who experienced similar violent acts from their husbands.

In addition to **IM** and **IS**, the researchers found 96 posts in the API group containing the keywords 'beaten', 'kicked', 'grabbed' and 'tortured' in a search for the period 1 March 2018 till 31 May 2019. The posts included members sharing incidences of being beaten, kicked, grabbed, or tortured by their husbands.

For the group Perpetrator's Wrecker Group, physical violence was also reported in a post by **RR** from West Java, on 27 March 2018:

“Last night, I caught my husband red-handed in the Usurper of Men's house, but I was tortured in front of people. No one helped me. He instantly got out of his mistress's house and grabbed my hair untill I went into shock”.

RR explained that at the time, she screamed and asked for help. Neighbours saw her, but no one helped her. Even when she was chased by her husband and she was calling out for help from her neighbours, they did not open their doors. This incident left a traumatic impact on her child, who saw what his father did to his mother. After witnessing that incident, the next day, the child was completely silent in school. **RR**'s post received 108 responses. Of those responses, one member admitted her experience was the same as that of **RR**. She was attacked by her husband and her husband's mistress, and not one of her neighbours who saw the incident was willing to help; they just watched from behind their windows. In addition to **RR**'s post, the researchers found three other posts about physical violence in the Eliminator Group of the Usurper of Men.

In the Haters of Perpetrator, the researchers found no posts about physical violence with real evidence for the period 1 March 2018, until 31 May 2019. Posts without a clear chronology of events, photos and other evidence will not receive any responses from other members.

After posting about their domestic violences, victims will receive comments from other members. These comments will help them develop a strategy to solve their problems. For the three posts described earlier, the researchers conducted an analysis of 1,115 comments, as seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Types of comments/replies for posts by physical violence victims in Facebook groups

	Physical Violence Victims		
	IM	RR	IS
Submit a report to authorities	58%	53%	43%
Emotional support	18%	33%	25%
Suggestion of divorce	17%	7%	19%
Sharing experience	3%	1%	1%
Others	4%	6%	12%

- 1) Most of the comments were recommendations to file a report with authorities, such as the police or the Defender Council for Women and Children. Victims were also given information about regulations that can put husbands and their mistresses in jail. Other members also gave information about how to file domestic violence reports, keeping evidence of the violent act, advice about getting help from hospital and to whom the victims should submit the report along with the address and phone number. Besides, informational support given by other members, victims received tangible support, for example, some members who lived near the victims were even ready to accompany them to file a report.
- 2) The second type of comment was emotional support from other members who replied with emojis, support and prayers for the victims to be brave in their fight against domestic violence.
- 3) The third type of comment was informational support that gave suggestions for the victims to leave their husbands and procedures on filing for divorce.
- 4) In addition to comments, others who also experienced physical violence also shared their own stories/experiences to guide and provide information on what needs to be done in situations of physical violence. Experiences shared by other members were sometimes more painful than the original post. For example, the researchers found the worst incident in the post of another member called TI, who claimed to have experienced five years of torture in her marriage. Horrifyingly, just five days after giving birth, she was beaten by her husband and went into a coma for a week and hospitalised for two weeks due to severe bleeding. Apart from facing violence from her husband, TI also received brutal treatment from her parents-in-law and brothers-and sisters-in-law. TI never reported the violence to the police because she had no money. However, she was grateful that her husband cheated with another woman. It was during this period, she was able to quickly run away and file a divorce case.

Sexual violence

Posts on sexual violence were the least found in these three groups. There was not even one post that exposed sexual harassment or forced sex by friends, boyfriends, or fathers because it is so hard for victims to prove that they had experienced sexual violence. However, there were a number of comments that mildly indicated the act of sexual violence. Moreover, victims had no guidance or advice on this matter, and the perpetrators were often their own relatives, and so they could force the victim to keep quiet. Of the three groups, the researchers only found two comments on the Facebook group Indonesia Against Perpetrator Group (API) from a news post on sexual harassment that spread widely on social media on 27 September 2018.

The first comment was from **RA**, a housewife who shared how her stepfather raped her in the past when she was a teenager:

“I have been raped by my stepfather in the past. I wanted to talk to Mom, but I felt pity if their marriage breaks down because of me. So, I just told my husband. Now, I feel so traumatic and even I don’t want to talk about my father”.

The other comment came from **NN**, a housewife who admitted she once was sexually harassed by her stepfather in her teenage years. She said:

“It was when I was in third grade of Junior High School. My breasts were squeezed by my stepfather. But when I was questioned, I told them that I was hallucinating, or my boobs were squeezed by Jin. I already told my mother, my brothers, and sisters, but in the end my mom returned to that asshole! So, I stayed away from my Mom and I had a bad relationship with her. But Allah is kind and gives me True Justice. Now, that scumbag lives in endless suffering. I wanted to file a report at that time, I did not have any strong evidence and my family did not believe me and I was powerless. I felt so sad and traumatic. Until today, I do not want to have a father. My real father left use to get married with another woman. My stepfather sexually harassed me and I still feel traumatic even though I am 25 now”.

Social support for sexual violence victims were not found in these three groups because victims only shared their confessions as victim in comments and not through individual posts. This suggests that perhaps, the victim only wants to share the experience and does not expect any support.

Psychological violence

In posts on psychological violence, victims exposed that they were betrayed by their husbands when they have affairs with other women or when they marry again without asking for their permission. For example, in a post on 24 March 2019, in the Perpetrator’s Wrecker Group by a member named **QS**, a mother of two little children, she wrote:

“Hug me ‘mother’, I feel so weak when I heard the news from my friend that my husband had already married an ‘usurper of men”.

QS’s post was attached with a WhatsApp screenshot from her friend, who told her that her husband had illegally married another woman. **QS**’s post received 17 comments, with emotional support such as sympathy, empathy and prayers expressing what was felt by her was also felt by others.

Posts about psychological violence were numerous compared to other types of violence. For the period 1 March 2018 till 31 May 2019, the researchers found 14 posts about psychological violence in the Eliminator Group of the Usurper of Men. Whereas in the Anti-Usurper of Men group, the researchers found 600 posts about psychological violence, with keywords such as: “cheating”, “married again” and “illegal married”.

The size of social support received by these domestic violence victims is dependent on their motivation and ability to communicate their problems. For victims who merely

wanted to tell their story and make peace with the situation, they just received emotional support such as sympathy, empathy, and prayers from other members.

However, for those who wanted to address the issue, they can use the existing network to fight back against the perpetrators. To receive more support, victims need to inculcate mass self-communication skill. The thousand-strong Facebook group gives an opportunity to domestic violence victims to tell their story and use it to sway public opinion into giving social support. In fact, this happened to a member called **TC**, from Indonesia Against Perpetrator Group who shared her story of decade-long of cheating and torture from her husband.

Unable to bear her suffering any longer, **TC** from South Sumatera, wrote numerous posts in the group about the way her husband treated her in the form of threats. She then asked for help to spread the story widely throughout social media on 3 June 2018:

“Assalamu Alaikum.. Mom, smash, crush and terrorise the phone number of the Usurper of Men Mom... First, my husband told me that they fought, second, short texts from the Usurper of Men that attacked me and mocked me”.

The post from **TC** received 219 comments that moved quickly to terrorise the usurper of men by sharing her posts on various social media accounts.

As **TC**'s case became widely known on social media, **TC** was reported by her husband's mistress. Ironically, her husband even supported the cheater and threatened **TC** that five family members of his mistress would sue **TC** using the Electronic Information and Transactions (ITE) law for defamation.

On 5 June 2018, **TC** posted about her anxiety:

“Assalamu alaikum... good morning, Moms. After their story went viral... eh... the mistress family felt irritated and they wanted to report me to the police. What should I do, Moms?”

TC's post received more than 1,100 comments that defended her and made a coordinated effort to make her case go viral.

Finally, on 6 June 2018, **TC**'s case was spread by members on Instagram through the account *@antipelakorindonesia*. Since it went viral on 6 June 2018, **TC** was invited to become a guest star on the show *Pagi Pagi Pasti Happy* (broadcasted by national television *Trans TV*). The impact of the show helped her successfully divorce her husband. Thus, **TC** was finally free from her former husband's psychological violence, while her former husband and his mistress suffered from social disgrace.

What **TC** did to release herself from domestic violence, required a high level of communication skills and motivation. From the chronology of events described, **TC** succeeded in influencing other members to support her. This success story can be attributed to **TC**'s diligence in maintaining her network by posting frequently on her Facebook group, so that other members understand and empathise with **TC**'s suffering. Eventually, **TC**'s story received tremendous support both in the virtual and actual world. **TC**'s story is in line with Wellman et al. (2005), who remarked that individualism connectivity can generate resources; however, it depends on the individual's personality and motivation in defending the appropriate connections. With networked individualism, people must be active in maintaining their network in order to make it grow continuously.

It is worth noting that victims of psychological domestic violence are mostly

women. However, in the Haters of Perpetrator that accepts men, the researchers found shared stories from male victims of domestic violence whose fathers were the perpetrators. For example, a member with the initials **IP** who posted a photo of his father's mistress on 16 February 2019, with the caption:

“Hey Palembang People, be careful with this woman! She swore to me by saying God's name but she still chatting with my dad. Hypocrite lady! I'll send it to mom”.

This post from **IP** received 9 comments from other members who gave their emotional support such as empathy by telling him to be patient and pray for the happiness of his family.

Abandoned household

Posts on abandoned household were submitted by members who contended that they did not receive financial support from their husbands. For example, a member named **SM** wrote on 6 July 2018 that she was abandoned by her husband without any financial support: *“I want to share, Mom ... How do you survive if your husband left you and married another woman ... and he never sent his child any money for almost three years ...”*

In the group Eliminator of Usurper of Men, on 19 April 2019, **RA** posted that her husband no longer supported her financially. She said:

“How can I move on from being betrayed? He betrayed me when I was 6-months pregnant. He even sadistically said that the child in my belly was not his child. He cheated with women he met on Facebook by transferring them money. As for me and my child, he didn't give even a penny. Since the early weeks of my pregnancy, all the costs were paid by my parents and he divorced me. Now, my baby is 15 months, I want to move on but it is still hard. My ex already has a girlfriend from Facebook, his cheating woman. What do you think guys? He divorced me and didn't want the child from my belly even though this child is his”.

This post from **RA** received 39 comments that sympathised with her and asked her to focus on the future and on getting a job to support her child.

Violence in terms of denied financial support was also shared in the Hatred Group of Anti-Usurper of Men. For example, **NO**, posted her husband's photo with another woman with high-class style, with an accompanying text that said she and her three children had not received any financial support from him:

“This jerk husband with disgusting behavior does not seem to shoulder any responsibility at all. The fact is the bastard has three kids who are suffering and in desperate need of love from their cheating father. Until now, I still have not divorced him. My three children and I received no financial support, not even a penny. Hopefully, in this Holy Month of Ramadan, they will get punishment from Allah. Amen”.

This post from **NO** was responded by 54 other members who offered emotional support such as sympathy and prayers.

CONCLUSION

Virtual communities provide a safe space for female victims of domestic violence to share their problems and stories through posts on Facebook groups. Comments and emojis posted by other members are a form of online social support for the victims. However, to fully optimise and garner maximum online social support, victims ought to have sufficient motivation and mass self-communication skills so that they can construct meaning for their story and influence the minds of other members.

Psychological violence is the most frequently reported offence by community members, followed by violence in the form of denied financial support (abandoned household) and finally, physical and sexual violence. For the posts on psychological violence, victims receive comments in the form of emotional support and social network support to solve their problems. For example, suggestion to “viral” the story about the husband and his mistress to evoke social punishment.

For the posts on household neglect, victims receive comments in the form of emotional support such as prayers and encouragement to be independent and not depend on the husband’s finances. On the other hand, for the posts on physical violence, most comments are informational support that encourage victims to file reports to the authorities to arrest the perpetrators. Victims of physical violence also receive comments such as empathy and support for divorce. Other responses include the sharing of similar or more brutal experiences of other members. However, posts of sexual violence are not found in all three Facebook groups that were studied. Confessions about sexual violence were only found in comments, implying victims find it difficult to seek help from the virtual community. Victims of sexual violence do not post about sexual violence because they are afraid of sharing their problems and usually only have the courage to speak out when they get married or they feel they are strong enough to talk about it.

For all three Facebook groups studied, there were no members from government agencies or NGOs that work on domestic violence issues. Frankly speaking, by joining these groups, official representatives can give proper social support to victims. This is especially so since not all social support given by the group members are positive; in fact, some give bad advice that make things worse for the domestic violence victims.

For further research, the researchers recommend expanding the research on virtual community social support for sexual violence victims in Indonesia. This is because sexual violence victims have difficulty expressing their problems and thus do not receive any social support. Besides that, the researchers also recommend social support research on men who are domestic violence victims utilising interviews. This is mainly because the researchers encountered difficulties interviewing male members through WhatsApp and Facebook messenger as they did not respond. This can be attributed firstly, to male members using pseudo accounts and secondly, because they are hesitant to tell their stories especially when the perpetrators who subjected them to domestic violence were women.

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