

# Blame the Rapist, Not the Victims: Monitoring Indonesian News Media

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The rape happened to Livia Pavita Soelistio (20)—a student of Bina Nusantara University who had become a serious concern in the Jakarta since September 2011—then aggravated by the Governor of Jakarta’s statement who blamed women for rape cases to be responsible for their own safety by dressing improperly. Strong reactions were spreading through social media of twitter and many people participated that ended up with a demonstration. The rally-theme “Mini Skirt Action” was attended by more than 100 women at Hotel Indonesia Roundabout to represent the restlessness of Jakarta people on Monday, September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011. This reaction was covered by a lot of Medias and many of them that stated rape-case as criminal problems which need to get a serious attention from the people and law enforcement officials. The protesters shouted their concern that every time there is a rape case happens, women are those to blame and rape becomes something to be joked about in the community. While there is no effort made to help the victims to recover from the trauma of rape or if there is any, there is rarely any support or socialization. Upon this the protesters wrote written messages on posters that rape is not the victim’s fault, but the rapist’s fault such as “It’s not Our Skirt’s

fault, but Your Small Brain is”, “Don’t Blame Our Clothes, Punish the Rapist “, “Don’t Tell Us How to Dress, But Tell Them Not to Rape”, “My Body is Not a Porn, Your Brain is”, “Control Your Lust, Not My Clothes “. Indonesian Feminist Journal (*Jurnal Perempuan*) has recorded that since July to September 2011 the news about rape shows that the average victims are women and under-aged. And the age of the perpetrators varies from teenager to elderly as illustrated by the following newspaper.

No	Day/Date/Year	News Source	Location	Perpetrator	Victim
1	Friday, July 15 2011	Pos Kota Online	Cibubur	Sayuti (50)	5 children
2	Tuesday, September 6 2011	Media Indonesia Online	Bogor	Tommy (35)	GA (15)
3	Monday, September 5 2011	Media Indonesia Online	Jakarta Barat	RH dan Afri	Livia (20)
4	Wednesday, July 13 2011	Pos Kota Online	Bandung	PU (21)	RI (14)
5	Thursday, July 14 2011	Kompas Online	Trenggalek	Suratno (42)	Nu (12)
6	Wednesday, July 13 2011	Pos Kota Online	Lampung	Nur dan Nan (25)	HT (21) a mute girl
7	Sunday, September 4 2011	Pos Kota Online	Lampung	Mahmud (34)	Mawar (8)
8	Monday, September 5 2011	Kompas Online	Jakarta	Kiki (29)	Put (19)
9	Monday, August 15 2011	Kompas Online	Bantul	SRJ (47)	Bunga (14)
10	Monday, August 22 2011	Pos Kota Online	Surabaya	SG (54)	Mawar (16)
11	Friday, July 29 2011	Pos Kota Online	Lampung	6 Bocah SD	Nn (9)
12	Thursday, July 28 2011	Pos Kota Online	Bogor	AG (22)	Surniawati (15)
13	Friday, Juli 22 2011	Pos Kota Online	Surabaya	Mat amin (30)	Noniek (19)

Almost all the rapists are men. Some are even the victim’s father. This suggests that rape is not caused by someone’s appearance but the problem lays on the rapists themselves who did sexual crimes against the victims—that’s what should be the big question in every news and case report. As happened to Mawar (not her real name), who was only

8 year old and was found by her mother crying while lying with face down clutching her stomach. Yet a lot of publicities around rape are very inhuman against the victims and make cases like this as subject of jokes or usual sexual events to allure readers just like porn reading. In several publicity, rapist were asked a lot about their motive of raping and almost all them admit that they expressed their regret (usually written as *khilaf*) and other reason was because they didn't feel satisfied with their wives. The coverage also frequently used the words "vent his lust" towards the rape victims and described how the lust happens by adding sentence "stripping the victim's shirt". Upon this, it seems that rape is something done based on the natural needs of men, while the victims' point of view were rarely be covered, showing that victims were not important to be noted. The coverage rarely interviewed or took regard psychologist, sociologist and criminologist, not to mention gender perspective (because rape cases cannot be separated from the matter of gender) as sources and a depth-coverage in breaking down the case.

Word choices used in rape news are very degrading, careless, and hurtful to the victims. Often we come across figures of speech that don't actually describe the true nature of the event such as "being shagged", female victims are subjected as "girl" or "widow", or by describing the "rape" in details such as "being rape alternately ", or the victim was "gang raped" or "assaulted" and "being knocked up". Designation



used for the victim for example is “adolescent” to emphasize the quality of someone who has undergone puberty but has not fully matured in sexuality. The diction choices give message that is contrary to the reality of rape that is painful and gives a long traumatic impact to the victims. Even the news about rape that happened to children often used the words such as “kid” or “wet behind the ear” or to victims with disability as “idiot and dumb girl”. The victims’ reactions were even told in such detail such as “moaning in pain” etc. And to the perpetrator, sentences were even added to make it seems as if the rape was not done willingly such as “who knows what devil which possessed”, so

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that it was obvious that the rape was not the perpetrator’s responsibility and was considered as action that is unintentional or just lose control of sexual desire. The excuses of the perpetrator were always represented by the coverage about rape as if the rape was indeed caused by sexual needs or satisfaction such as “had not had sex with her wife for almost a year because her wife was working as TKW (female migrant workers)”, or “being a

widower for too long”.

From the coverage, we were able to learn how the law asked the victims to prove what happen to them, not on the accused to disapprove reported complain. As happened in East Java (Kompas.com, July 20 2011) of a child who was raped by her step father and was declared by the law enforcement that the case needed verification through post mortem result. Most rape reports were not done by someone unknown but by their closest relatives who love them such as their father or friends. Some rape cases even were solved by marrying the perpetrator and the victim like what happened on the last October, where there was a rape happened in a Karaoke in Senayan City Jakarta, the perpetrator even took his victim’s naked picture and spreaded it through the internet. The victim was tricked by drinking liquor that was done by her own close friend and she never thought that this would happen to her. Detiknews on Thursday, September 15 2011 reported based on the

information from the Chief of Operation Beureau of Polda Metro Jaya (Jakarta City Police) Commissioner Saujarno during January-September 2011 there are 40 cases of rape happened in the capital. From 40 cases, most perpetrators committed rape in a residential neighborhood, reaching 26 cases. Others were on public roads including the public transportation (3), office (1), crowd (1), house-residential (8), and real estate (1). Meanwhile, the most vulnerable areas are Tangerang Regency reaching 9 cases. Others are Bekasi Regency (7), Tangerang City (5), West Jakarta (4), and Central Jakarta (4). According to Polda Metro Jaya, last year (2010) there were 40 cases of rape and stated that hopefully the number will not increase in 2011.

While in other regions on November 2011, mass media proclaimed a shocking news, two municipal police had raped a rape victim age 15 in Jambi, Bungo Regency. The child had just been raped by other man and when she was found by the police, they did not help her and raped her instead. They also threatened to kill her if she tells what happens to her to anyone. Even if the case is reported to the law enforcement, it is hard to get information from the victim because she was traumatized and scared. It is very hard for the victim to recount the event that occurred to her, especially in the age of kid. Even the actors are said "if proven guilty" then the sentence simply "issued with respect". In Gresik, East Java, as reported by *Tribunnews.com* (Tuesday, November 1 2011) there are 21 rape cases happened in January-October 2011. This means that on average every month occurred 2 cases of rape affecting children and women. In other part of the World, on June 2011 we were shocked by the news about 100 women who became the victim of mass raping in the Democratic Republic of Congo. This attack occurred on June the 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> in several villages. This report was supported by Megan Hunter, a chief medical mission in South Kivu who dealt with the rape victims there. According to her, they (the victims) were suffering trauma. This mass rape was done by 200 rebels who had been integrated into the Congolese army. Here we see how rape often happened when the politics is unstable, there's a power struggle and war. We almost could not imagine how a colonel in Congolese army was jailed for 20 years for ordering his men to rape more than 60 women in Fizi city. This news suggests that rape is a not a matter of sexual needs or satisfaction, but

rather power or occupation in war. In Indonesia, we are reminded of how National Commission of Women was established to investigate the mass rapes of ethnic Chinese Women on May 1998 during the riots as the burning and looting occurred prior to reformation. In the Japanese occupation, we still remember what happened to the young women in this country who were called as *Jugun Ianfu* who were being lied to and promised to get education were actually forced to serve Japanese soldiers to meet their sexual needs for years.

**Sources:** *Kompas.com, Pos Kota Online, Pos Kota Cetak, Tribunenews.com, Media Indonesia Online, OkeZone, Detiknews.*