Examining Digital Activism Through Sentiments for Feminism Issues on Instagram (Case Study @perempuanberkisah)

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ABSTRACT

The high number of sexual violence cases against women in Indonesia remains alarming, with a recent surge in gender-based cyber violence that exploits victims through sexual content. This phenomenon prompted the author to investigate how the Instagram account @perempuanberkisah manages public narratives and responses from netizens toward stories shared by women victims of sextortion. The main objective of this research is to analyze the sentiment and discourse dynamics generated in the comment sections of this platform. Employing a qualitative approach with a case study design, the study selected three sextortion-related posts from @perempuanberkisah during 2023. Sentiment analysis was also conducted to categorize the direction of netizen comments into positive, negative, and neutral. The findings reveal that neutral sentiments dominate the discussions, surpassing positive and negative sentiments across all three posts. This suggests that while @perempuanberkisah serves as a platform for raising awareness and empowering victims, netizen engagement tends to remain cautious and reflective rather than explicitly supportive or oppositional. Theoretically, this study enriches feminist perspectives on digital activism and online narrative management. Practically, it highlights the importance of safe online spaces for survivors. Future research is encouraged to explore similar issues using additional theoretical frameworks and comparative platforms.

Keywords: digital activism, sentiment analysis, @perempuanberkisah

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, cases of pornography in Indonesia are still widely reported. Included are the uncovered cases, wrapped in content with the issue of gender-based cyber violence. The phenomenon of pornography is said to be one of the forms of popular culture in Indonesia (Adiyanto & Ashari, 2021). The term emerged when content creators dared to manifest sexual representations in the form of images and published them on social media. According to McNair (2013), the cause of this phenomenon is that technological advancements have made it easier for pornography to enter the lives of society. The rapid increase in social media users has also contributed to sexual violence occurring so easily on digital platforms. Perpetrators can easily exploit the anonymity and accessibility of the internet to exploit, harass, and disseminate sexual content without consent (Hayati, 2021). Instagram is a virtual public space to discuss, persuade, and even debate among netizens about issues in Indonesia's society (Adiyanto & Ashari, 2021).

One of the issues of gender-based sexual violence is sextortion. Sextortion is an event characterized by the involvement of extorting the victim with the threat of publishing the victim's sexual content. The threat is used to gain benefits for the perpetrator. Material benefits can include additional sexual images and videos, forced sexual relations, money, or other forms of compensation. The sextortion issue not only involves sexual violence but also serves as a means of corruption for revenge or to threaten individuals. Sexual violence shows no signs of stopping; its victims are not limited to one gender. Moreover, the perpetrators of sextortion do not recognize publication boundaries to disseminate it to anyone who watches it for their gain.

Sextortion has evolved into a form of cybercrime carried out by extorting or exploiting victims through sexual content. The perpetrators of sextortion usually exploit the victims to perform sexual acts and secretly record them or persuade the victims to send pornographic material. There are two types of sextortion when viewed from the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim, namely face-to-face relationships, which are sextortion incidents where the perpetrator and the victim have previously been in a romantic relationship. The second type, online relationships, is a form of sextortion where the perpetrator and the victim have never met in person to engage in sexual acts (Permana, 2022).

Sextortion is a form of extortion involving threats to misuse the victim's sexual content to obtain money or engage in sex with the victim through coercion. The act of extortion with the threat of abusing the victim's sexual content to obtain money or engage in sex with the victim through coercion. Threats to the victim to reconcile or perform actions desired by the perpetrator do not necessarily take the form of extortion for monetary purposes.

Sextortion incidents can affect anyone, especially among teenagers. The

main reason victims can fall prey to sextortion is the excessive use of social media. Internet users conduct online searches freely, creating unsafe online behaviors. In addition, the lack of knowledge about the impact of online sexual violence risks also reinforces the vulnerability of victims to sextortion. Victims cannot control the attacks of sextortion perpetrators through online social networks (Patchin J & Hinduja S, 2020).

Although sexual activity is performed together by men and women, which means that men also perform actions considered inappropriate, men do not feel any burden at all. Men exploit this to control their female partners or seek benefits. This is because in society, there is a construction of sexuality that benefits men and, on the other hand, greatly marginalizes and harms women. Men are considered normal for being sexually active outside of marriage, while women who engage in sex outside of marriage are deemed dirty, cheap, and poor women. Society never discusses that men should be 'virgins' before marriage but often debates that women should maintain their virginity. Even state institutions might use this narrow and inaccurate moral standard, making it understandable that some men are pleased to take advantage of this highly favorable position. Meanwhile, many women suffer because they fear losing their reputation (Poerwandari, 2021).

Therefore, the identification of an event as sextortion is determined by the perpetrator's treatment of the victim. When interacting with the victim, the perpetrator uses a false identity or disguise to conceal their identity. Additionally, they often use psychological tactics, such as building emotional bonds or manipulating the victim with false promises, to achieve the perpetrator's goals. These goals are accumulated to achieve personal satisfaction, such as financial gain and/or sexual material (Wolak J et al., 2018).

Unfortunately, Indonesia was in first rank among Asian countries with the highest sextortion cases in 2020, followed by Sri Lanka (17%) and Thailand (15%); Indonesia reached 18% of reported cases based on the results of the Global Corruption Barometer, one of the world's largest survey institutions that tracks public opinion on corruption (Dian, 2023). Sextortion cases are characterized by extortion accompanied by threats to expose or disseminate someone's sexual content for the perpetrator's gain. Several sextortion incidents show an increase in cases each year. One of the existing sextortion cases occurred in Medan (North Sumatra). The incident began when a man (who was already a husband) in Medan engaged in a sex video call with a woman (the victim). The perpetrator recorded the indecent act and then extorted the woman by threatening to spread the sexual video. Consequently, the victim felt overwhelmed and ran out of billions of rupiah to pay off the perpetrator's threats (Erwanti, 2021).

The phenomenon of sextortion has also attracted the attention of online feminist activists. One is through the @perempuanberkisah account, which

conducts empowerment based on a feminist approach. This account shares content about women's experiences. Although the content shared by the "Komunitas Perempuan Berkisah" contains elements of sexual violence, the stories can convey important information and knowledge in the form of storytelling by the victims of violence for the virtual audience to know. The content received by the public is anonymous, so people will not know who the victim is behind that experience because the uploaded content consists of real-life experiences of victims or survivors of gender-based violence, whether directly or online.

Many forms of violence occur both directly and indirectly. Thus, this encourages the account @perempuanberkisah to highlight various narratives from the tragic events that befall women in Indonesia. However, on the other hand, these literacy efforts have the potential to create different interpretations in the eyes of the public, especially among communities that still have a low level of awareness regarding gender equality issues. The public can commit verbal violence against the victim through comments or posts that turn to judge the victim. This causes verbal abuse, where someone's actions belittle or defame, demean, and hurt others using inappropriate language or words.

As a result, women are increasingly intensifying their advocacy actions on social media. Indeed, it cannot be denied that not all members of society agree with the advocacy actions for women's equality. One of the reasons is the lack of educational literature on sexual studies. Individuals are racing to follow social media trends, but they are not yet fully grounded in a proper understanding of the use of communication technology. Consequently, individuals tend to act hastily and form opinions on cases affecting women.

This reality drives authors to highlight the phenomenon from the perspective of existentialist feminism as a novelty. In understanding the phenomenon of women's existence, according to de Beauvoir's thinking, the internalization of women as "the other" and asserting that patriarchal social constructs shape women's identity. De Beauvoir argues that women must seize opportunities to achieve equality in the economic and social spheres and become subjects on par with men (Komang & Suwastini, 2013).

Existentialist theory is a theory that highlights human existence, focusing on how individuals consciously live their lives. Here lies the essence of humans as beings who continually maintain their subjectivity and make others objects. The feminist existentialist theory explores the disparity in recognition of women. Women are often positioned as objects in the presence of men and are considered the "second sex," which hinders them from achieving equal rights with men.

The existence of women tends to be measured by their ability to perform domestic work and adhere to social constructs that regulate the concept of femininity (Ilaa, 2021). Thus, this theory also provides a framework for

understanding how women who have experienced sexual violence strive to regain control over themselves or their freedom of expression through social media platforms.

Based on the explanation, the research question in this article is to seek how the @perempuanberkisah account manages the argument/narrative among netizens in commenting on the stories of women as the victims of sextortion cases. Thus, the urgency of this research will examine the digital activism, primarily through sentiment analysis usage, that drives social change based on gender.

Meanwhile, several studies have explored cases of sextortion, such as Digital Sextortion: Internet Predators and Pediatric Interventions (Honga et al., 2019) and Cyber Sextortion: An Exploratory Analysis of Different Perpetrators Engaging in a Similar Crime (O'Malley & Holt, 2022). Other relevant findings include Criminal Liability of Sextortion Perpetrators in Gender-Based Online Violence (Permana, 2022); Women's Empowerment and the Realization of Digitally Literate Women through the Perempuan Berkisah Platform (Anggreni et al., 2022); Content Analysis of the @perempuanberkisah Instagram Account as a Platform for Women Victims of Gender-Based Online Violence to Speak Out (Parasdya et al., 2023); and Unveiling Sextortion: Sentiment Analysis on @perempuanberkisah (Girsang et al., 2024).

This study is motivated by the rising cases of gender-based sexual violence, particularly the increasingly prevalent phenomenon of sextortion in Indonesia. While various studies on sextortion exist, most prior research has focused on legal, psychological, and social impacts on victims. Some works have highlighted how digital media is used to empower female survivors (e.g., Anggreni et al., 2022; Parasdya et al., 2023), yet few have examined in depth how digital narratives are curated by women's activism accounts such as @perempuanberkisah, especially within the context of public sentiment analysis.

Furthermore, previous studies tend to rely on descriptive or normative legal approaches without directly engaging with the dynamics of discourse and public responses on social media. Accordingly, this study addresses that gap by integrating a qualitative approach rooted in a critical paradigm with sentiment analysis to map how netizens' perceptions are shaped in response to victim narratives featured on Instagram.

The contribution of this study lies not only in its practical findings concerning the distribution of public sentiment but also in expanding theoretical understanding through the lens of existentialist feminism. This perspective allows researchers to examine how women reclaim their existence as autonomous subjects in digital spaces rather than remaining mere objects of violence or societal judgment.

Thus, this research offers a novel contribution to the literature on digital communication, feminist studies, and online activism in the Indonesian context

while paving the way for future research utilizing other theoretical frameworks, such as critical discourse analysis.

This study's novelty lies in its investigation of gender-based sexual violence, particularly sextortion, through the lens of digital communication and public sentiment analysis. Whereas prior research has predominantly focused on legal perspectives, victim psychology, or protective measures, this study uniquely emphasizes how the public constructs and receives victim narratives on social media, specifically through the @perempuanberkisah account.

Another distinctive aspect is the combination of qualitative case study methodology with sentiment analysis. This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the account's narrative meanings while quantitatively mapping public perceptions, thus providing a comprehensive picture of societal reception toward sextortion issues. The application of existentialist feminist theory further enriches the theoretical dimension, as it remains underutilized within digital activism studies in Indonesia.

Academically, this study significantly contributes to advancing literature in communication studies, particularly in digital communication, feminism, and social media research. It is also relevant for understanding the role of digital activism accounts in creating safe spaces for survivors and shaping more empathetic and reflective public opinion.

Practically, this study serves as a foundation for policymakers, social media activists, and victim advocacy organizations to formulate more effective and responsive communication strategies that address victims' needs. Thus, this research not only enriches academic discourse but also has tangible impacts on the empowerment and protection of women in digital spaces.

RESEARCH METHOD

The critical paradigm is used as a foundation for observing the research object. The existence of the critical paradigm constantly questions the reality being experienced. There are four key concepts in the critical paradigm: (1) Critique of domination, (2) Ideology, (3) Hegemony, and (4) Social Transformation. Besides that, dominance is also considered disturbing and must be resisted. The tangible form of domination can be seen in the use of language, codes, and symbols that glorify certain groups, leading to the emergence of marginalized groups (Kasemin, 2016).

Further, the critical paradigm examines the ideological meanings through the deconstruction of people's perspectives, basing the research on the interpretation of individuals who are the subjects of this study, namely the meaning of social critique in the sexual phenomenon in Indonesia. Through this interpretation, the researcher delves into the depth of subjective meaning and

addresses the meaning within the research method. In line with the critical paradigm, a qualitative approach is taken to understand the phenomenon in greater depth. In this case, it can be said that if the research problem is unclear, still vague, or perhaps even dark, gender phenomena can use qualitative methods (Rusandi & Rusli, 2021).

The authors select the units of analysis, consisting of three contents: (1) February 4, 2023; (2) December 8, 2023; and (3) December 28, 2023. All contents consist of the interactions of netizens' comments in posts related to the sextortion cases at the @perempuanberkisah account. Each comment is analyzed to uncover the overall sentiment (Purnamasari D et al., 2023) and views of netizens, providing an in-depth picture of the public's reaction to the issue.

Practically, sentiment analysis examines a broad field of natural language processing, computational linguistics, and text mining to analyze whether individuals' opinions, sentiments, evaluations, assessments, emotions, and attitudes are related to a topic, service, product, or similar activities. The primary function of sentiment analysis is to categorize the polarity of text within a sentence, document, feature, or specific aspect. Then, determine whether the opinion expressions are positive, negative, or neutral (Yana et al., 2018).

Hence, sentiment analysis aims to categorize the polarity of text within documents to determine whether the expressed opinions are positive, negative, or neutral. The sentiment analysis method of the researcher's data was reviewed using "Atlas.ti", a software with a coding process. Software has become one of the tools that can be used in social sciences. Encourages researchers to conduct observations in the real social internet world on selected subjects (Kurnia & Savirani, 2023).

Technically, this research implements web scraping. The web scraping method uses Hypertext Transfer Protocol requests. Data collection itself is divided into several parts, namely the method of data collection, the timing of data collection, the population, and the sample. This facilitates researchers in tracing content indicated as sextortion on the @perempuanberkisah. Based on the data collection period in this study, the data collection time falls under the cross-section or incidental approach, meaning the data will be collected during an exclusive time frame.

Next, the researcher processes primary data, where the researcher becomes the principal instrument or primary source in this research study. The researcher is the planner, executor of data collection, analyst, data interpreter, and reporter of research results. Lofland states that qualitative data sources are words and actions (Moleong, 2021).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Description of Instagram Content and Comment

The first sextortion case began with a woman's experience while making a romantic relationship with an older man through an online platform. This woman was flattered to share the sexy photos she had given to the man. However, a few months later, there is no progress in their relationship until the woman knows that those sexy photos are already sold out through online platforms. The perpetrator's actions included disseminating the material and selling the photos to irresponsible parties who exploited the situation for fraud. As a result of the sexual and economic extortion she experienced, the victim suffered profound trauma and felt afraid to interact with many people. This experience highlights the significant psychological impact of sexual violence and extortion, as well as the urgent need for adequate support and protection for individuals who undergo similar situations.

In brief, the following figure is taken from the narrative of the woman's story and comments from the netizens.
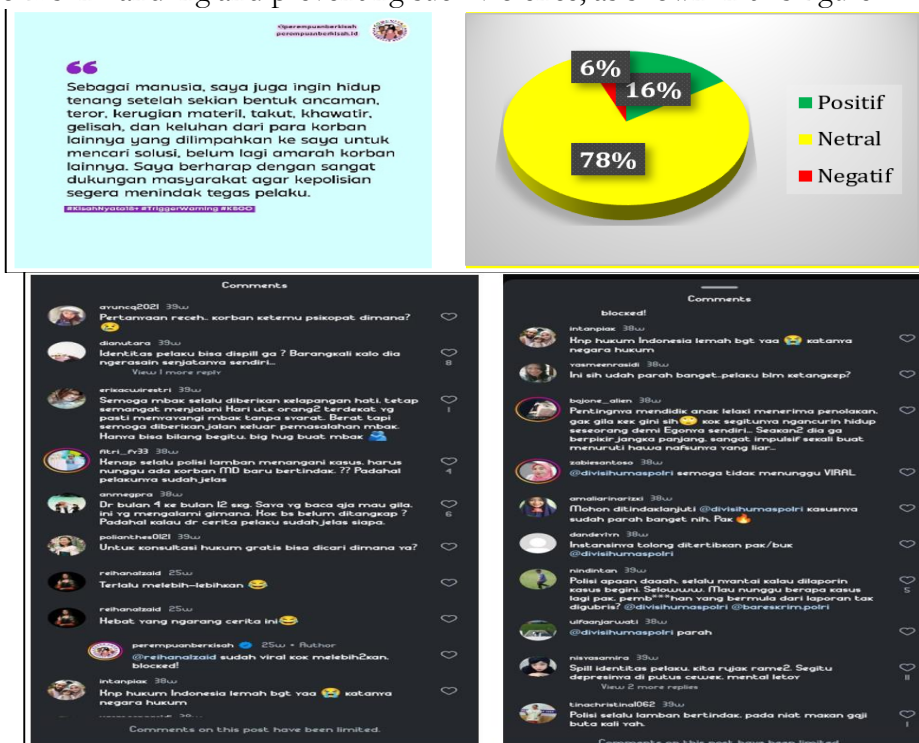

Source: @perempuanberkisah, 2023

Figure 1. Object 1 and netizen's comments

The selected comments on the first content published by @perempuanberkisah on February 4, 2023, related to the story, include 15

comments. However, from that number, only 36 sentences meet the criteria for netizen sentiment analysis. Analysis of netizen sentiment on content one shows that neutral sentiment dominates the comments. In detail, five comments are classified as positive, accounting for 14% of the total valid comments for analysis. Meanwhile, neutral sentiment comments reached 28 sentences, constituting 78% of the total comments analyzed. As for the comments with negative sentiment, three sentences contributed 8% of the total comments analyzed.

Continuing to the second content, the female victim experiences profound helplessness regarding control over personal photos and videos, which is further exacerbated by the perpetrator's image editing to create degrading and offensive representations. From the psychological impact of the threats, of course, the victim also faces material losses. Although the victim has reported this case to the police, no clarity or decisive action has been taken against the perpetrator. The absence of transparent and responsive law enforcement from the authorities underscores the challenges in the judicial system regarding gender-based violence cases, particularly sextortion. It highlights the urgent need for more effective reforms in handling and preventing such violence, as shown in this figure.
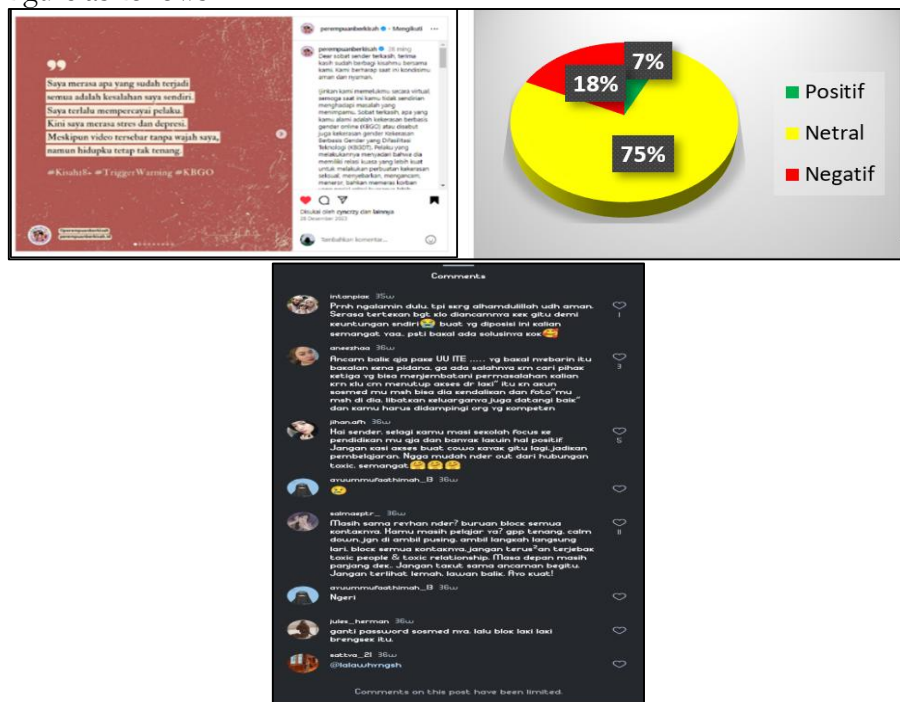

Source: @perempuanberkisah, 2023

Figure 2. Object 2 and netizen's comments

Sentiment analysis of those comments shows that neutral sentiment dominates significantly. Of the total comments, 50 (78%) were categorized as neutral, indicating that most netizen responses did not show a clear emotional tendency but tended to be informative or descriptive. Meanwhile, positive comments were recorded at 10 comments (16%), reflecting support or appreciation for the content. Negative comments, on the other hand, only reached four comments (6%), indicating that criticism or disagreement with the content is relatively minor. Overall, this data illustrates that although there are several positive and negative responses, netizens' neutral sentiment is the most dominant response towards the published content.

The sentiment proportion in the second content shows that the tendency of netizens' sentiment generally leans towards a neutral position. This indicates that the sentiment of the content does not show a clear bias towards either positive or negative sentiment. Although the sentiment distribution appears balanced, there is a significant difference where the percentage of negative sentiment comments is higher than those with positive sentiment, with a difference of up to 10%.

As the last content, sextortion violence is seen in the following variation in the figure as follows.

Source: @perempuanberkisah, 2023

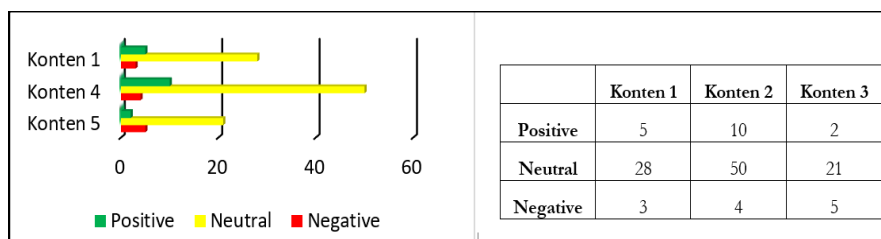Figure 3. Object 3 and netizen's comments

From the image, neutral sentiment is more dominant than positive and negative sentiment, as can be seen from the yellow bars, which are more prominent. Additionally, in Content 3, the amount of negative sentiment is significantly higher than that of other content, as indicated by the longer red bar compared to the green bars in the other contents. This reflects a difference in user reactions to different content, with neutral sentiment remaining dominant but accompanied by variations in negative and positive sentiment proportions.

Meanwhile, the negative sentiment in Content 3 may indicate frustration or dissatisfaction from netizens, focusing on the actions of the female victim who complied with the perpetrator's request. This negative sentiment reflects the efforts of netizens to voice their disagreement with content they consider unrepresentative or even harmful to their position in society. This content can be a significant concern for the *Komunitas Perempuan Berkisah* to protect the psychological safety of the victims from netizen comments.

For the last, the low number of positive sentiments indicates that the victims may feel that the available content does not sufficiently support or adequately acknowledge their experiences and views. The distribution of positive sentiment, identified by the green bars, appears to be the least among the three sentiment categories in almost all the analyzed accounts. This may indicate that the existing content has not fully succeeded in building a strong emotional connection or providing the support that victims feel is important, affecting their perception of the conveyed message.

The Distribution of Sentiment of Contents
Overall, the distributions of sentiments can be seen in the following figure.

	Konten 1	Konten 2	Konten 3
Positive	5	10	2
Neutral	28	50	21
Negative	3	4	5

Source: Primary data, 2024

Figure 4. Distributions of sentiments

The absence of strong social support for sextortion victims can also cause a lack of positive sentiment. If the community does not provide sufficient support, netizens feel no need to offer additional support, as they do not see any significant movement or solidarity against sextortion. This can result in more neutral sentiment because netizens feel their efforts will not have a real impact. Additionally, the ideology of *Perempuan Berkisah*, which tends to be more neutral,

might also inject neutral thinking into netizens.

The presence of technology has brought significant changes in society's views toward sexual assault victims, particularly in cases of sextortion. With the presence of online platforms and social media, the public now has easier access to provide objective feedback and build awareness on this issue. Technology enables the creation of safe and neutral spaces where victims can share their stories without fear of being judged. *Komunitas Perempuan Berkisah* also provides emotional support in the captions, ensuring that the public does not harm the victims further and that the victims feel heard and valued. This shows that even though a woman has become a victim, she remains valuable and deserves full support from society.

In addition, technology also provides new hope for sextortion victims through services designed to help them cope with trauma. For example, virtual counselors are ready to listen and provide advice to create an empathetic and supportive relationship. Technology turns out not only to help victims avoid feeling lonely but also to empower them to combat the shame and stigma that often accompany their experiences. Thus, technology bridges victims with a broader community, reminding them that they remain valuable and fully supported.

Although sentiment analysis can provide initial insights into public perception of an issue, such as the sextortion discussed on the @perempuanberkisah account, the results are not yet fully capable of depicting the complexity of the relationship between netizen sentiment and other relevant variables. Sentiment analysis categorizes comments as positive, negative, and neutral, providing a superficial understanding of netizen attitudes. To understand the deeper relationships, it is necessary to consider the social and cultural context underlying the sentiment. For example, the dominance of neutral sentiment may not only indicate indifference but also reflect social norms that hinder open discussions about gender-based violence (Rodríguez-Ibánez et al., 2023).

Furthermore, digital activism through accounts like @perempuanberkisah can be interpreted as a manifestation of modern existentialism, where women collectively reject the passive roles often assigned to them as a result of violence such as sextortion. Through the process of sharing experiences and building solidarity on social media, women claim the right to define themselves and reject the status of being weak objects.

The Relevance of Existentialism Feminism to Sentiment Analysis

Then, this article reveals several important aspects that can be described about critical paradigm through existentialist feminism: Positive Sentiment: Words such as "hope," "strong," "valuable," "happiness," and "cheer" can be associated with narratives about women's empowerment, which are in line with the goals of existentialist feminism to achieve freedom and autonomy. The drive for "hope"

and "strength" reflects the spirit of struggle to overcome oppression and achieve independence.

Negative Sentiment: Words such as "afraid," "fear," "toxic," "problem," and "perpetrator" can refer to women's experiences in facing violence, discrimination, or oppressive social structures. This is by the analysis of existentialist feminism, which sees how women are often made "the Other," where they are marginalized or restrained by the views of netizens or the dominance of men as perpetrators of violence.

Neutral Sentiment: Words such as "people," "social," "media," and "life" describe the social context in which women's existential struggles occur. Existentialist feminism will examine how these social structures shape women's life experiences in limited ways.

In the research results, netizens tend not to question acts of sexual violence that violate, on the contrary. Netizens provide support in the form of sympathy and empathy for victims. This is what the *Komunitas Perempuan Berkisah* has successfully fought for: that modern women are now not weak and empowered objects of sexual violence. However, the existence of self-existence to be open in digital space encourages women to get out of their comfort zone. The courage and openness of women are tangible manifestations of the mission of *Perempuan Berkisah*.

Therefore, the author also emphasizes that this view aligns with Simone de Beauvoir's perspective that women must assert their existence not as objects easily controlled and exploited by men as perpetrators of violence but as subjects with full autonomy and freedom. Through digital platforms, women establish themselves as active participants in their own stories and as social change agents who can oppose patriarchal systems and call for gender equality and justice.

CONCLUSION

This research shows how sentiment analysis of netizen comments on the Instagram @perempuanberkisah account provides an overview of public views on the issue of sextortion in Indonesia. The sentiments generated from netizen comments are mostly neutral compared to negative and positive sentiments. The dominance of neutral sentiment is closely linked to the role of digital activism carried out by *Komunitas Perempuan Berkisah* in managing Instagram captions that tend to present informative content without provoking or baiting excessive emotions, resulting in netizens tending to respond neutrally. The female victims who express themselves through that account demonstrate their existence as objects that want to be empowered and protected by women's organizations or communities. Thus, from a theoretical perspective, this study also contributes to developing feminist literature.

In this case, the @perempuanberkisah account offers a crucial platform for women to provide anonymity to keep women feeling free to speak about their traumatic experiences. This allows women to share their stories without feeling intimidated by society. The use of personal narratives in the content shared by @perempuanberkisah plays an important role in strengthening the authenticity and emotional impact of the messages. By using personal narratives, women have rights, which in turn enhances public understanding and empathy towards gender-based violence issues. Furthermore, by exploring personal narratives, @perempuanberkisah creates a public sphere and inclusive space to build solidarity among women, strengthen the movement for gender equality, and eradicate gender-based violence.

Then, the finding of this article is still limited to the use of sentiment tools only. Hopefully, for further implication, the authors suggest another method that can be applied: critical discourse analysis (Sarah Mills). This method is also helpful in analyzing subject-object position when interpreting texts.

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