

The Silencing of Women in Marlina: The Murderer in Four Acts

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Abstract

Today, violence against women is becoming a globally important issue. This is inseparable from the record of cases that continue to increase every year, not least in Indonesia. The recorded numbers are like an iceberg phenomenon that only some victims dare to report. There are still many cases that have not been revealed. Violence against women also varies in types, not only limited to physical violence but also verbal to sexual violence. As one part of the mass media, film is a powerful mass communication media in conveying judgments or general images of many things. . Films are considered to have the ability to shape public opinion including people's perception of male dominance in the social order. One of the films that represents this is Marlina: The Murderer in Four Acts. Marlina: The Murderer in Four Acts has a uniqueness in the delivery of messages that are rarely found in films made by domestic filmmakers. Taking place in Sumba Regency, East Nusa Tenggara, the film depicts how Marlina was sexually, physically and verbally assaulted. The severity of this violence was done while she was grieving the death of her husband. This film reaffirms to all of us that women are the liyans of male oppression. Even as women defended the violence that befell them, women were again discredited for the existing system.

Keywords

Women; patriarchy; film; feminism; authority



I. Introduction

Living in a patriarchal culture like in Indonesia is not an easy matter for women. According to Abdullah (2006), women are considered as the other sex or second-class citizens whose existence is not taken into account. The representation of women's roles and status is then marginalized because of this assumption. Men play a dominant role in our culture, even the smallest unit in society, namely the family, often perpetuates this.

Even this unequal position between men and women is reproduced through news coverage through the mass media, representation of women in advertisements, soap operas, and up to the big screen. Mass media as a tool to convey news, opinions or general descriptions about many things, the media has the ability to act as an institution that can shape public opinion, this is because the media can also turn into groups that put pressure on an idea. or ideas (Sobur, 2001:31).

Through its mediation function, the media actually shows something to the public to show the public how all this violence is informed and constructed so that it is understood fairly (Setiawan, 2011: 14). However, today the mass media are in a dilemma. On the one hand, media idealism demands its role as an educational medium for readers, viewers, and listeners to develop a critical attitude, independence, and increasing depth of thinking.

Economic pragmatism, on the other hand, forces the media to adopt a fashionable logic rooted in messages that are spectacular, sensational, superficial and diverse (Haryatmoko, 2007: 30). Regarding the realm of women's problems, the mass media on the

one hand do have an important role in voicing important issues regarding women, but on the other hand the media also creates violence against women in pornography and the image of women or the objectification of women as commodities (Sharma, 2012).

Economic actors, basically have very important functions. Because it has two functions at once, namely as a supplier of all the needs of the community, both primary, secondary and tertiary. At the same time, they also function as absorbers of community labor, which can economically increase purchasing power. (Ansari, T. 2019)

We often find that there is not a little news about domestic violence, physical violence, and sexual violence to online-based gender violence (KBGO) that does not have gender sensitivity. Women as victims, who should get empathy from the mass media, actually experience what is called victimization of victimization.

This condition is inseparable from the general public's assumption that for example women as victims of sexual violence are attached to the stereotype that they are the ones who want actual immoral acts (Koss & Harvey, 1991). How women dress in public to women's behavior and body shape are often used as scapegoats by the dominant groups that the main trigger for acts of sexual harassment in society is nothing more than the actions of women themselves.

Based on data compiled by the National Committee on Violence against Women (Komnas Perempuan), at least throughout 2019 there were 431,471 cases of violence against women (Komnas Perempuan, 2020). Even in its report, Komnas Perempuan stated that in the last 12 years, violence against women increased by 792%, this means that there has been an 8-fold increase in the number of cases of violence against women over the past 12 years in Indonesia.

Meanwhile, the Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression Network or SAFEnet (2020), in its official release, said that it had received a surprising number of reports related to KBGO. At least, there are around 169 reported cases of non-consensual distribution of intimate content. This number increased by 375% when compared to 2019 which only amounted to 45 cases.

The issue of violence against women is not only in the spotlight domestically but also globally in general. The World Health Organization (WHO), states that almost 1 in 3 women worldwide have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a spouse or sexual violence where the perpetrator is the closest person in their life. Violence perpetrated by husbands is the most common form of violence with 30% of women reporting that they have experienced physical or sexual violence from their partners. Data from the WHO also shows that 38% of the murders experienced by women are carried out by their own husbands (World Health Organization, 2020).

The description of the data above is only a sample of the many cases of violence against women occurring in our society. Violence against women is like an iceberg phenomenon where only a few of the victims dare to report their cases, while the number who do not report is much higher. Unpleasant behavior such as rape or other sexual harassment is often not seen as a serious problem. This is why women as victims often experience silence when they want to voice their bad experiences.

Women who dare to be vocal in fighting for their fate are even seen as ridiculous and just a passing wind in the eyes of the dominant group, namely the men. It was women who were included in this subordinate group who later became a silent group. The emergence of the silent group is none other than the unequal distribution of power. West & Turner (2010) stated that there are at least four methods used to achieve this distribution of power, including through ridicule, rituals, control and harassment.



Murderer Marlina Movie Poster in Four Acts
Source: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt5923026/>

Nowadays, there are many films that have discussed how gender inequality occurs in Indonesian society, one of which is the film “Marlina: Murderer in Four Acts” (English translation: Marlina the Murderer in Four Acts). The film made by Mouly Surya, which officially aired in 2017, has won a number of awards both at home and abroad

The film “Marlina: Murderer in Four Acts” shows the silence of women as a non-dominant group depicted through the scenes in the film. Marlina, as the main character, is a widow who lives alone in the hills

This film illustrates how culture in Indonesia which is closely related to patriarchal culture and women are considered as a group that is not listened to. The issue of women as other people in Indonesia is still being discussed today with various views, both pros and cons. This article will discuss and help to provide an understanding of how women as a non-dominant group are depicted through the case study of the film “Marlina: Murderer in Four Acts”.

II. Review of Literature

The dominance of a certain group can silence non-dominant groups in a society, according to Shirley and Edwin Ardener, social anthropologists who first introduced muted group theory or hereinafter abbreviated as MGT (Meares, 2017). The two anthropologists argue that in a society there is a hierarchical system that considers one group to be more special than another. The dominant group at the top of the hierarchy will be very influential in determining the communication system that takes place in that society, by imposing their views on non-dominant groups, so that non-dominant groups will feel marginalized because their views are limited by the dominant group (Orbe, 1998).).

This theory is used to discuss and examine the experience of women as a non-dominant group whose voices and thoughts are silenced by men as the dominant group. This silence can be seen from the inequality in the communication system or language

system between men and women. According to Kramarae (in Orbe, 1998), the existing system enables members of the dominant group to set evaluative criteria regarding the communication system, both for themselves and for others. So that the system directly or indirectly blocks the actualization power of other groups.

In other words, Kramarae states that the language used in a social system often silences women in certain ways. This opinion is supported by the idea of Shirley Ardener (in Littlejohn, 2017) which states that the language system has an inherent bias in which men can create certain meanings for a group and suppress and silence women's voices. This happens because of the inability of women to express themselves fluently in the language of men.

West and Turner (2010) put forward three MGT assumptions. First, women perceive the world differently from men because of different experiences and activities based on the different division of labor between men and women. Second, the existence of political domination makes men's perceptions more dominant and hinders women's freedom of expression. Third, in order to participate in society, women must change their own system based on conditions acceptable to the male system.

The silencing process carried out by men against women occurs in several ways, namely ridicule, ritual, control, and harassment (West and Turner, 2010). Teasing occurs when men tend to underestimate some of the habits of women such as chatting, gossiping, nagging, and whining. Men also think that what women talk about is meaningless, but on the other hand, it demands women to be supportive listeners.

Silence through rituals is seen in several marriage customs which show the position of women being under the position of men. After marriage, women also tend to change their names to men's names or surnames.

Silence through control occurs when men tend to control women in decision making, so women consider it normal and will ask permission first before making a decision. In addition, in interacting men tend to interrupt women's conversations and direct the conversation to things they like.

Finally, silencing is done through physical abuse, gestures, ridicule, and jokes from men against women's body shapes. This includes labeling by men who think that most women are troublemakers who overexpose their bodies, but become sensitive and hysterical when abuse occurs.

However, silencing does not occur continuously because women can put up a fight against men. West and Turner (2010) developed three resistance strategies that can be used to deal with dominant groups. First, by mentioning silencing strategies. This is done to find out certain issues that are the cause of women's silence. That way, the issue will become a subject of discussion and in the future can become a means of information for many women to be more courageous in voicing their opinions. Second, by re-elevating and attaching importance to women's discourse. This strategy aims to make women no longer belittled and show that women are more developed and can do things that men can do. Third, by creating a feminist dictionary containing a new language for women to experience a unique gender. The new language that comes from the experience of women is created so that women can share their experiences with a language system that is more suitable and more understandable to men.

The silent group theory is used to explain the dynamics of communication between two groups whose power is not equal (Arslan, 2015). This theory has been used in various studies to examine women's silence. Silence usually occurs in minority groups of women, such as research conducted by Zirulnik and Orbe (2018) regarding black female pilots who have to adapt to the system of norms and language systems of white men, as well as

research conducted by Syafiera and Azeharie (2020) regarding veiled female students as a minority group who are less able to express themselves.

In addition, many studies have conducted research on the silence of women caused by the portrayal of women in the media (Sulandjari, 2012; Mustin, 2013; Mukarom, 2019). Along with its development, MGT is not only applied to conventional media but can also be implemented in new media such as the research conducted by Stephani and Sarwono (2020) regarding the issue of sexual violence that befell artist Via Vallen. The female art worker uploaded evidence of a lewd message on her Instagram story, but was silenced by shifting the issue by the dominant group. The issue of violence was also raised in Fintari's research (2018) regarding women as victims of domestic violence who feel silenced because violence by the dominant group is considered normal and natural. So therefore,

MGT is a critical theory in the context of intercultural communication. However, this theory can also be used to examine phenomena in the context of political communication, such as research conducted by Girsang (2018) regarding women's communities in the Kalijodo area who are still unable to voice their opinions regarding the control program (relocation) carried out during the Ahok leadership era. In addition, this theory can also be used to examine various other fields such as the field of public welfare regarding women's participation in tackling poverty in Minangkabau (Sarmiati, 2018) and in the religious field regarding Islamic women who are trying to get an equal position with men in becoming preachers. (Rohmah, 2018).

Various existing research shows that MGT is used to describe the situation of women who are silenced in various aspects of their lives. It is not easy for women to voice their opinions, they are not easy to express themselves, and they are not easy to fight against male domination because of the limited language system and the labeling of men towards women which tends to assume that women normally occupy an unequal position with men.

In this research, women are described not only as a silenced minority, but also as mothers who will try to fight against male domination in order to protect their children. As a mother figure, women's voices are no longer silenced because women also have a language system that can be easily accepted and understood by both children and men in the family, and the role of a mother also enables women to overcome their silence. In addition, this research also examines a phenomenon that is quite different from other research because it seeks to raise the phenomenon of female silence which focuses on the way women are depicted and silenced in the film "Marlina: Murderer in Four Acts", which shows that there are still many women out there who experience injustice due to male domination.

III. Result and Discussion

Talking about the film "Marlina: Murderer in Four Acts", this is closely related to feminist studies. Furthermore, this study discusses in practice how the media construct various stereotypes about women. Feminist studies also study how a text contains the idea of resistance to the dominant ideology, namely the patriarchal ideology.

The definition of gender is often interpreted the same as gender, even though both have different terminology. Lippa (2005), states that gender is related to the characteristics of masculinity and femininity. This includes interests and occupations, appearance, behavior and nonverbal behavior.

Gender refers to the biological conditions that exist in humans that distinguish them as female or male (Gonzales & Ehrenfeld, 2018). In general, biological characteristics can

be seen physically or not, such as the breasts, vagina and uterus that women have. Meanwhile, men have testes and penises.

As mentioned earlier, women in a patriarchal society often get unfair treatment from the surrounding environment. In fact, language in certain cultures does not treat women and men equally. In Kroløkke & Sorrensen (2005), women are often neglected and invisible. Women's experiences are often seen as just a black spot. This then creates silence for women because of the unequal power compared to the dominant group of men. Women only have two choices, namely trying to translate their point of view into a masculine model or trying to give up alternative communication models.

According to Sara Mills (2005), one of the important elements that need to be considered in analyzing gender representation in the media is language style. The choice of language style used to describe the position of women and men is related to the meaning of gender. The film "Marlina: Murderer in Four Acts" clearly depicts how women as a subordinated group have limited access. Marlina, in this case, does not have sufficient access to express what she wants, because the words or language and norms used are basically formed by the dominant group, namely the men themselves.

A snippet of dialogue uttered by Markus, the leader of the gang who raped and robbed Marlina's property, proves it. Snippets like:

"Any coffee, betel? I'm a guest."

"So that if there is a man who wants, you don't be picky." "Tonight you got your bonus, seven boys."

On the other hand, Marlina as a woman is shown to be helpless. The death of her husband, which happened not too long ago, left a lot of debt that had to be borne by Marlina herself. Then unilaterally, Markus and his gang came and took all of Marlina's livestock, starting from pigs, chickens and goats. It didn't stop there, Markus unilaterally stated that seven men would marry Marlina.



Photo of the Initial Scene Markus visits Marlina

Source: <https://www.moviemaker.com/foreign-contenders-mouly-surya-marlina-the-murderer-in-four-acts/>

The sexual violence that befell Marlina, is even considered by Markus as a gift for Marlina, this can be seen from a fragment of the dialogue that was uttered by Markus:

"Tonight, you are the luckiest girl."

Even when Marlina declared herself the unluckiest woman tonight, Markus even replied:

"Hah... You guys love to be victims."

Edwin Ardener, in Griffin (2012), states that the language used by women is rapport talk, that is, it requires acceptance from others and is often difficult to understand. This is different from the language commonly used by men, namely report talk, which is more for providing explanations and is considered easier to understand. Therefore, it is not surprising that women in the social construction of society are considered to be difficult to talk to. A futile work to listen to the voices of a powerless group like women.

Marlina is not on an equal footing when it comes to expressing what she wants, Markus is the one who takes control and in the end the main decision maker is in her hands. As an analogy, Marlina is like talking to a deaf person, no matter how loud she speaks or how many words are said to fight the arbitrary behavior of men, everything will be nothing. Until finally, Marlina chose to remain silent.

What happened to Marlina can be explained by the Muted Group Theory (MGT). Silenced groups occur when people fall into groups who are powerless or powerless, their ideas are often ignored so they have to change language when communicating publicly (Griffin, 2012).

Marlina at the beginning of the scene is actually depicted as a subordinate group tasked with serving the wishes of men. How a woman is ordained to only deal in the domestic sphere, namely mattresses, kitchens and wells, as experienced by Marlina in this film. Under the control of a Markus, Marlina is ordered to prepare dinner for Markus and his friends. Not only that, satisfied with the affairs of the stomach, Markus asked Marlina to serve the lecherous lust of Mark and his gang. One-sidedly, the men felt entitled to sleep with Marlina without her consent. That this sexual violence, Markus considers a blessing from God for Marlina, is like a fragment of the dialogue that Mark said, "How many men have you slept with, only him (Marlina's husband)?".

According to West & Turner (2010), women and men have different ways of perceiving the world. There is something called gender polarization, where society views women and men as polar opposites. This hegemony is inseparable from the different experiences experienced by the two groups. In addition, this perspective is also born from the difference in the division of work between women and men.

The dominant group behavior displayed by Markus and his friends can be a reflection that men really get the power to maintain their political dominance (West & Turner, 2010). The expression model of the subordinate group as shown by Marlina is less acceptable and less respected by the dominant group. Allison & Hibbler (2004), said that different experiences between women and men determine aspects, meanings and social behavior of individuals to be recognized.

Even when Marlina tried to speak up to report her case to the police, discriminatory behavior hit her again. Arriving at the police station, Marlina had to wait for the police who were busy playing ping-pong. Until finally the report was handled by police officers, the response that emerged from the police was arguably less than pleasant. When Marlina told how the chronology of the rapes that happened to her and the characteristics of the perpetrators, the police responded with the sentence: "If he is old and thin, why did you let him rape you?"

Marlina also had to swallow the pill of disappointment again when she found out that her report could not be processed immediately. The police must conduct a crime scene (TKP) and post-mortem report related to the rape case. Meanwhile, the new visa comes with an estimate of one month to arrive. When Marlina protested why the process was taking so long, Marlina was even asked to buy her visa at her own expense so that the process could go faster.

In order for subordinate groups like Marlina to be “accepted”, they must use a communication style according to the expression accepted by the male dominant group. In other words women are forced to be able to communicate “bilingually” in both the usual model and in the male model (Wall & Gannon-Leary, 1999). When Marlina can't express her aspirations and surrenders when rape and looting of her pets befall her, Marlina tries to defend herself. This scene is shown from the action of Marlina slashing Markus' neck until it was cut off while he was crushing Marlina. Without mercy, Marlina managed to kill Mark with just one blow of a machete.

Marlina's actions were not usually done by women. Although initially, Marlina's opinion was silenced and forced to agree with the opinion of the dominant group. In the end, Marlina was able to do what she wanted. Mears (2017), says that power and silence are not permanent in nature, their existence can be changed. Individuals basically have the ability to be creative and challenge the norms of communication prevailing in society. Although in practice, not all individuals actually have the skills, desire or confidence to be firm in this expectation (Ardeners in Mears, 2017). In this film, Marlina shows several attempts to express herself through the way she speaks, the words she uses and also the attitude she takes to defend herself.

At least in carrying out the silencing process, the dominant group uses four ways, namely by mocking, control, ritual and harassment (West & Turner, 2010). Tragically, these four things are so beautifully displayed in the film “Marlina: Murderer in Four Acts”.

Marlina is often labeled as a “cheap” woman who willingly wants to serve the animal lusts of men. It didn't stop there, as a rape victim, Marlina was even intimidated by the authorities who ignored Marlina's experience as a rape victim. The blunt sensibility of law enforcement towards victims has even made victims like Marlina the object of ridicule for their bad experiences.

The control of men in this film is also very thick shown, this control can be seen from the communication process carried out both in making decisions and changing the topic of conversation into what they want (West & Turner, 2010). Spender in Stephani & Sarwono, said that in order to maintain control, the dominant group focused more on how to deliver the message, not just the content of the message. In this way, the position of women is completely wrong and inevitably follows the will of men as the control holders.

If you want to trace it, Marlina also doesn't want her husband to die and eventually leave a pile of debts so much. This in the end had to be paid at a much higher price, apart from having her property confiscated, her chastity as a woman was also tarnished by the barbaric behavior of Markus and his friends. Marlina can't do much, Markus here holds very strong control. As a woman, Marlina has no right to herself, her thoughts or even her own body. You et al. (2019), says that patriarchy is a system where women are made invisible and less influential. Men with power through rituals determine the role that should be performed by women where women are always under the position of men. Previously, already mentioned how domestic work is so closely related to women. Marlina in this case, is forced to cook dinner for Markus and his friends. Helpless, Marlina was forced to obey Mark's will. It does not stop there, the rituals of men's society emphasize

women as satisfying men's lust. So therefore no wonder Markus finally forced Marlina to fulfill his lustful desires.

Marlina's sexual harassment was the last resort carried out by the male dominant group against her. This incident is what makes Marlina finally kill Mark in self-defense. This immoral act makes women truly humiliated and perpetuates the existence of the silent group. Sexual harassment itself can occur because of a positional relationship that places men higher than women and in this case the perpetrators of sexual harassment are in control of their superior position (Dwiyanti, 2014).

If you look at the strategy to overcome or fight silence in West and Turner (2010), the film "Marlina: Pem Killer in Four Acts" is one of the forms of work used by its creators, namely the production team to raise discourses about women. This film is a place for the public to be able to learn important things about how women are silenced and make people aware of the cultures in Indonesia which tend to turn a blind eye to issues of violence that the public has not been aware of and considered a normal thing in society social practice. Film can be a form of feminism dictionary or a language system for non-dominant groups to express themselves and share certain experiences. "Marlin:

IV. Conclusion

It is said in the Muted Group Theory, language is the result of the construction of the male dominant group. Kramarae (in Griffin, 2018) says that women's language is often considered to be of no value and neglected in society. The film "Marlina: Murderer in Four Acts" beautifully portrays Marlina as a woman who is a silenced group whose voices are "not heard".

Marlina as part of a subordinated group has limited access and is not free to express what she wants, when and where they want it. The act of looting his property to immoral acts, namely rape, just happened. The dominant group represented by Mark considers that there is no need for approval for what he is doing is a proof of the dominance of men over others such as women.

However, in Muted Group Theory not all men are silent and all men have a voice. Marlina, who tried to complain about her fate to the authorities, did not get the response as expected. It's like communicating with a deaf person.

No matter how hard the intonation, no matter how many words come out of Marlina's mouth, in the end, it will all be in vain. Furthermore, the film "Marlina: Murderer in Four Acts" reaffirms that the male dominant group is the sole ruler in a patriarchal culture. Equality of relations between women and men is a mere impossibility. The silencing process continues for a long time through commonly encountered ways, either through ridicule, ritual, control and harassment.

Basically, this theory invites people to be more sensitive in dealing with situations or conditions when non-dominant groups are silenced or their voices are not considered by the dominant group who has more power. The issue of women's silence in this case in Indonesia is indeed rife. Several discourses have also been carried out by feminist activists in defending this issue. The film "Marlina: Murderer in Four Acts" becomes a work and a new way to reach people who may not be sensitive to these kinds of issues. This film is a form of a feminist language mechanism system or dictionary which in the end is able to become a means to fight silence against the dominant group.

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