

From Love to Death: Sociological Analysis of Safe Space Violations and Phenomena Intimate Femicidism in Indonesian Society

Retno Wahyuningtyas, Rizza Armelvia Sari, Nur Maulida

University of Bengkulu, LKiS Yogyakarta

Retno.wahyuningtyas@unib.ac.id , Rarmelviasari@unib.ac.id, Cahayakelahiran.09@gmail.com

Abstract

Intimate femicide, or the murder of a woman by a partner or ex-partner, is the culmination of the tragedy of an acute cycle of gender-based violence. In Indonesia, this phenomenon is categorized as an ordinary crime, ignoring a fundamental sociological dimension: the violation of the safe space of the domestic domain. This study analyzes how social norms and patriarchal systems turn intimate relationships into deadly zones while dissecting how public discourse reproduces violent ideologies. Specifically, this study traces the sociological processes that escalate dominance to fatal violence.

The theory of gender sociology that forms the main framework of analysis is Evan Stark's Coercive Control Theory, combined with the concept of hegemonic masculinity (R.W. Connell), helping to explain the systematic attempts of perpetrators to dominate. Meanwhile, to dissect the reproduction of violence in digital narratives, this study adopts Critical Discourse Analysis (AWK) by Norman Fairclough (1992; 1995) through three dimensions: Text Analysis (examining linguistic elements that rationalize perpetrators); Discourse Practice Analysis (highlighting the amplification of framing mainstream media by netizens); and Social Practice Analysis (linking findings to power structures).

The results of the study show that intimate femicide is a logical consequence of the relationship marked by men's sense of entitlement to women's autonomy. The analysis of social practices confirms these findings by attributing them to the Theory of Male Proprietariness, in which the reduction of motives in social media is a reflection of an ideology that naturalizes male control. Coercive control has transformed domestic spaces into locations of absolute surveillance and power. This study concludes that sociological recognition of femicide as an embodiment of structural failure is urgent to formulate prevention strategies that target the roots of toxic masculinity at the community level.

Keywords: *intimate femicide, coercive control, hegemonic masculinity, patriarchy, AWK Fairclough, male proprietariness, and domestic realm.*

1. Introduction

Thus far, society has understood love as an effort to share affection (related to psychological aspects). Meanwhile, in the sociological landscape, love is understood not merely as a biological emotion, but as a social construct, the form and function of which are determined by the norms of the time. In the past, intimate relationships, especially the institution of marriage, were defined by sacred characteristics, which are constructions maintained through the support of religious authorities, customs, and collective social contracts (referring to *Durkheim's concept of the sacred*). The main function of this bond is institutional, oriented towards continuous relationships and ties with lineage and the guarantee of communal economic stability, so that it has consequences that make it a structurally very difficult agreement to revoke.

In late modernity, relationships have marked a turning point towards individualization. This phenomenon, which sociologist Anthony Giddens calls the emergence of a "pure relationship," indicates a fundamental shift in which the values of love and intimacy are no longer legitimized by external institutions but are

based entirely on mutual satisfaction and ongoing negotiation between the two individuals. The implication is that when the survival of a relationship depends entirely on personal promises and *performances*, the bond transforms into an inherently vulnerable reflexive project. This vulnerability means that the relationship can be terminated at any time, as soon as one of the parties feels unfulfilled. Consequently, failure in relationships in this era is no longer considered institutional dysfunction but rather a burden of personal failure that has a destructive impact on the identity and *self-esteem* of the individual who experiences it. Ironically, a relationship breakdown ends in divorce, violence in relationships, and even brutality, namely, femicide.

Intimate femicide, or the murder of a woman by a partner or ex-partner, is the most brutal manifestation of gender-based violence (Kelly, 2021). Globally, consistent data show that the domestic sphere, which is normatively considered a safe space, is instead the deadliest location for women. UN statistics underscore this reality: more than half of women killed globally are killed by their partners or family members (UNODC, 2022). However, in general, the term femicide is still minimally used; in media publications, it is more likely to use the term murder with a romantic motive than to use the term femicide appropriately. The bias of social views in a patriarchal society often denies whether people who love each other really hurt each other brutally. In fact, many cases of femicide occur at the global level and in our own country.

In Indonesia, this deadly phenomenon has become increasingly prevalent and has attracted public attention in the last three years (2023–2025). Cases of intimate femicide often show a clear pattern of threats to perpetrator control. For example, a murder case in West Java in 2023, in which the perpetrator killed the victim after the victim expressly asked for a divorce and attempted to start financial independence. Similarly, a murder case in Jakarta in 2024 triggered by the victim's refusal to return to his ex-partner, an act that the perpetrator considered a total erosion of his power. In 2025, there will be many femicide cases in which the victim's background is a middle-class woman, such as a lecturer. This means that all women from various backgrounds are potentially vulnerable to becoming victims of femicide. This pattern confirms that the trigger for fatality is not jealousy alone, but a reaction to the opposition to women's autonomy.

The findings on femicide cases in Indonesia for 2023 to 2024 reveal the urgency and significant improvement trend, as compiled from national reference institutions and civil society organizations. The National Commission on Anti-Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan), as the main reference, noted a sharp increase in monitored femicide cases. In 2023, there were 159 cases of femicide or suspected femicide, which increased dramatically to 290 cases in 2024. This increase not only indicates the potential increase in real cases but also an improvement in the data collection mechanism and increased *public awareness* of this issue.

In response to this crisis, Jakarta *Feminist* (JakFem) has been at the forefront of documentation efforts since 2017, seeking to map patterns of deadly violence perpetrated by men. Since the initial data collection, which recorded 361 cases (for 2016–2017), JakFem has consistently presented fluctuating but still high figures: 258 cases in 2022, 180 cases in 2023, and an increasing number to 204 cases in 2024. This annual data clearly demonstrates that femicide is a persistent threat in various provinces.

More than just numbers, the Jakarta Feminism documentation reveals the victims' profile in depth. Of the 209 victims whose information was successfully collected, shocking facts showed that femicides lurk women from all walks of life. Although the majority, namely 48% (101 victims), did not identify their employment status, these cases affected workers/employees (16%), housewives (11%), and even students/students (8%). This data dismisses the notion that femicides only target certain groups. This

tragedy even penetrates to girls, such as the sad case in Bandung, West Java, where a mother was found hanging herself with her two toddlers to death of poisoning, and in Batang, Central Java, where two brothers and sisters were found dead. These findings are not just statistics, but a stark reminder of the need for a more serious legal and social response to femicide in Indonesia

Data from Komnas Perempuan and monitoring conducted by Jakarta *Feminist* (JF) consistently underscore the dominance of intimate femicide, namely, murder committed by the victim's spouse or ex-partner. This strengthens the argument that the domestic sphere, which is supposed to be a safe space, has actually transformed into the deadliest location for women in Indonesia, in line with the Theory of Coercive Control. Furthermore, the JF report in 2023 found that 94% of perpetrators were men, confirming the gender-based nature of the crime. Although the most reported motives, such as emotions, jealousy, and communication problems, account for 26% of the data (2023 JF Data), these should be seen as a starting point for criticism, as such categorizations tend to reduce structural motives rooted in power and possession. These data provide a crucial empirical basis for analyzing how threats to women's autonomy often trigger fatalities, not just momentary outbursts of emotions.

Ironically, this phenomenon is often downplayed and narrowly categorized as a *common crime*, driven by personal emotions such as "blind jealousy." This neglect of gender and sociological dimensions precludes the understanding that femicide is a structural violation rooted in the patriarchal system that governs power relations in the private sphere. An approach that reduces motives to the emotional aspect only fails to capture the broader context, namely, the nature of male ownership implicit in social structures. Moreover, the high number of cases is inversely proportional to the effectiveness of the law; law enforcement against the perpetrators has not had a strong deterrent effect, as if allowing the cycle of violence to continue.

2. Research Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach with a *critical discourse analysis (CDA)* design and is supported by the principle of netnography. This approach was chosen to analyze how public discourse on social media reproduces or deconstructs the reductionism of femicidal motives (e.g., 'blind jealousy' versus 'structural violence'). CDA allows for the disclosure of how patriarchal power relations are manifested in the language, narratives, and *framing* used by the public in the digital space when discussing these cases of fatality. The primary data of this study is textual and interaction data published on social media (digital locus). Data were collected from 2023 to 2025, focusing on the three most viral cases of intimate femicide in Indonesia during that period (*purposive sampling*).

All *posts*, comments, and threads that explicitly mention the selected case use keywords such as femicide, spousal murder, blind jealousy, domestic violence, or the name of the victim/perpetrator of a specific case. Furthermore, the data will be analyzed using the critical discourse analysis (CDA) proposed by Fairclough (1992), which systematically links texts (language) with social practices (patriarchal structures). This study adopts the critical discourse analysis (AWK) framework by Norman Fairclough (1992; 1995) to dissect the framing of femicides through three interconnected dimensions. It begins by conducting a discourse practice analysis highlighting how *media framing* is amplified by netizens, creating an echo space that normalizes patriarchy. Furthermore, conducting an analysis of social practices and linking the findings to the theory of *male proprietariness* confirms that the reduction of femicidal motives on social media is a reflection of an ideology that naturalizes male control over women.

3. Research Results

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) was applied to a social media data corpus of intimate femicide cases in Indonesia in the period 2023–2025. The findings are classified into three sub-chapters, each of which reflects the manifestations of patriarchal social practices in digital discourse.

A. Hegemony of Reductionist Discourse: *Framed as 'Personal Tragedy'*

The dominant discourse on social media tends to reduce intimate femicide from a structural issue to an individual personal *tragedy*. This reduction is maintained through the use of a lexicon that obscures the gendered dimension of violence. Discourses that emphasize momentary emotions have relevant sociological and gender implications. Implicitly, the discourse positions male emotional agency—particularly that triggered by a sentiment of ownership or a threat to control—as an inherently uncontrollable and, therefore, a valid force as a cause of action.

In fact, according to sociological studies and contemporary gender theory, extreme violent acts such as femicides are not reduced to sudden *emotional outbursts* but are the result of rational decisions rooted in structural misogyny and rejection of women's autonomy. According to Ratna Batara Munti (*gender law expert*), femicide is rooted in unequal power relations and patriarchal assumptions regarding men's property rights over women's lives and bodies. The reduction of motives to 'blind jealousy' only shifts the focus away from the root of structural causality. Similarly, Sulistyowati Irianto (*professor of legal anthropology*) highlighted the failure of legal discourse and the media in framing femicide as a gender-based crime, instead of reducing it to an ordinary criminal case or a *crime of passion* (crime due to passion).

This pattern of obscuring motives is manifested in the coverage of domestic femicide cases in Indonesia, involving intimate *partner femicide*. In cases of husband-to-wife murder (often triggered by divorce lawsuits or infidelity issues), the media consistently prioritizes the perpetrator's quotes about "*hurt*" or "*not accepting divorce*."

The focus of the narrative in the context of this fatal domestic violence (KDRT) shifts from the analysis of *the coercive control* pattern carried out by the perpetrator to the defense of the perceived destruction of masculine self-esteem. Consequently, public discourse implicitly reinforces men's emotions as a justification that carries a higher weight than the victim's right to life. This phenomenon concludes that the use of emotional metaphors in the public sphere is an ideological framework that systematically discredits the accountability of perpetrators and dangerously normalizes extreme violence against women.

B. Reducing the Historicity of Femicide in the Digital Space

The analysis of discourse on social media reveals a systematic de-contextualization of fatal incidents. Public narratives tend to fail to link *femicide* as the culmination of a continuum of gender-based violence. The majority of netizens' discussions jump straight to the "spectacular" moment of the murder, focusing on the details of the momentary motive while obscuring the structural traces that preceded it.

Sociologically, this phenomenon reflects the privatization of public affairs, in which the victim's history of domestic violence, threats, or *coercive control* before death is reduced to mere "domestic affairs" separate from the legal realm. Consequently, murder is understood as an isolated (episodic) event rather than an accumulation of patriarchal dominance left untouched by social intervention. The elimination of this context not only obscures gender motives but also perpetuates social impunity for perpetrators by normalizing the escalation of violence that occurs in the domestic sphere.

C. The Concept of Male *Proprietariness* Manifestation for Women

The most crucial discourse identified is the tendency to represent the victim's attempt to gain autonomy as a provocative act that triggers the perpetrator's fatal reaction. These findings directly show the operationalization of the Male *Proprietor* Theory in the Indonesian social context. Generally, when victims are known to have asked for a divorce, sought financial independence, or refused to return, the narrative in the comments and threads often portrayed the victim as an "ungrateful" or "traitor." The phrase "seek her own pleasure" implies that women's autonomy (the right to divorce or work) is a violation of the patriarchal social contract. This is a direct manifestation of a social practice in which intimate relationships are constructed as male property rights, which explicitly reflects the ideology of male proprietarians. In this view, the independent actions of the victim are perceived as a threat to the erosion of control, which should be punished.

D. Normalization of Patriarchal Control and *Agency* of Actors

Social media discourse tends to normalize male control in relationships. The perpetrator's actions were justified as an attempt to "uphold" domestic order, even through violence. Even if the perpetrator commits murder, *their* agency is often recognized as a reaction or defense of their 'hurt' dignity. The victim's *agency* to choose and leave the relationship is completely ignored. In some cases, there have been comments that the perpetrator's failure to maintain a peaceful relationship is because he is "too loving" or "just a fragile ordinary man," which again obscures the motive for control and possession. This discourse reinforces patriarchal ideologies that justify the expression of male violence as an acceptable consequence of "threatened" intimate relationships.

4. Analysis and Discussion

This paragraph integrates the key findings of a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of social media with the framework of femicide theory, namely, **the theories of male entitlement and coercive control**, while providing criticism of institutional responses in Indonesia.

A. Reductionism: Discourse and Ideological Buffers of Patriarchy

CDA's findings in Indonesia's digital realm consistently identify the dominant discourse of social media as an ideological buffer that underpins patriarchal structures. Reductionist discourse has proven effective in eliminating the politicization of femicide. The use of emotional metaphors, such as "*blind jealousy*," has succeeded in nullifying attempts to frame femicide as an issue of gender inequality and structural violence (Kelly, 2021). Coercive Control Theory (Stark, 2007) asserts that violence in intimate relationships is rarely incidental or impulsive but rather an essential component of a systematic strategy of domination. The adoption of emotional lexicons by the public reinforces this pattern by decontextualizing, that is, eliminating the long history of control and intimidation that precedes fatality. Theoretically, this phenomenon can be understood through the concept of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005), where the public discourse fabricates violence as a '*justified reaction*' to the violation of the hierarchical order, which is the essential foundation of dominant masculinity.

B. Women's Autonomy and the Threat to Property Rights

The publication of a perpetrator's statement on social media provides tangible evidence of a digital discourse reaction that constructs the victim's autonomy (e.g., divorce request, financial independence) as a "*betrayal of property rights*," aligning with the framework of intimate terrorist violence (Johnson, 2008). Furthermore, Johnson highlighted that this type of violence is driven by the perpetrator's need to control their partner entirely. In the Indonesian cultural landscape, which still idealizes complementary gender roles

(men as *breadwinners* and heads of families), women's autonomy is perceived as a double threat: it erodes the perpetrator's masculine identity and undermines the socially legitimized status of power. Victim *blaming* in the digital realm serves as an effective social defense mechanism, shifting the focus away from the recognition that social structures *de facto* allow men to claim property rights (Stark, 2007). Therefore, how do women have autonomy over themselves? Is it at the time that they have already experienced death?

C. Normalization of Violence and Empowerment of Perpetrator Agencies

The practice of discourse not only reproduces but also paradoxically gives agency to the perpetrator, even in the context of a fatal crime. The justification of the perpetrator as "*overly loving*" or "*reacting because his dignity is hurt*" is an example of a discursive practice that, as Foucault (1980) explains, is a power relation that shapes and limits the subject. This discourse does not simply replicate the narrative; it validates violence as an instrument to enforce the patriarchal legal order in the private sphere. Within the framework of macrosociology (Ritzer, 2015), the reproduction of repetitive narratives in the digital space can reach the stage of institutionalization. In the context of femicide, institutionalization is the social justification of male violent expressions when their property rights are questioned and resisted.

D. Judicial Inconsistencies and Gender Categorization Failures

Currently, although the Sexual Violence Crime Law (TPKS Law) has been promulgated, its implementation in handling femicide cases, especially those motivated by sexual violence, is considered suboptimal. Observations show a significant *gap between legislative mandates and judicial practices*. Documentation data notes that in 2023, there was not a single case of femicide charged using the TPKS Law. In fact, cases identified as having a motive for sexual violence (such as the case of Ronald Tanur) also do not use these legal instruments, which leads to the potential for early release of the perpetrator. Data from Komnas Perempuan (2024) show that intimate femicide is often categorized as ordinary murder (Article 338 of the Criminal Code) or premeditated murder (Article 340 of the Criminal Code). To address this bias, the Indonesian legal system urgently needs to consider the reconceptualization of intimate femicide as a distinct form of crime, at least in the interpretation of *mens rea* (malicious intent), which explicitly recognizes gender motives and the history of coercive control as defining elements (Kelly, 2021).

This situation reflects the low institutional commitment of *law enforcement agencies* in upholding restorative and retributive justice for victims and families left behind. Furthermore, the state has not provided real support in the form of assistance funds and recovery programs for the families of femicide victims, even though this is an essential component in fulfilling holistic *justice* for victims. Another fundamental challenge is the terminological gap and lack of gender sensitivity among law enforcement. The term femicide (the killing of women due to their gender identity) is considered foreign and has not been widely internalized in the Indonesian justice system. This lack of understanding has the potential to lead to misclassification of cases and *non-targeted intervention*, thus failing to recognize femicide as a serious form of structural gender-based violence. Failure to identify gender motives from the investigation stage to prosecution can reduce these crimes to ordinary murders, resulting in verdicts that do not reflect the weight of patriarchal ideology-based crimes.

The Indonesian government has not optimally implemented the recommendations of the Committee on *the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*, especially regarding the establishment of a *femicide watch*, which is a special monitoring mechanism for femicide cases. The absence of this specific monitoring mechanism indicates state *failure* in building a comprehensive and gender-sensitive surveillance framework. The failure to implement these international recommendations is perceived as a reflection of the country's weak protection of women's right to life and security, as well as

an indicator of the need for policy revision to integrate international standards in the handling of gender-based violence.

5. Conclusion

Overall, the findings of the CDA and this judicial analysis underscore the discursive and institutional failure in Indonesia to transform the understanding of femicide from the psychological-individual realm to the sociological-structural realm. An analysis of social media discourse shows that the pathology of violence does not lie in the individual perpetrator but in a collective ideology that systematically reduces structural violence to mere 'love crimes'. While the arrest of perpetrators is successful, the judicial system has not fully transformed successful arrests into gender-appropriate sanctions. Therefore, policy implications should be directed at the deconstruction of social norms that underpin a culture of male ownership in all sectors, including judicial reform through gender sensitivity training for law enforcement, as well as more gender-aware public education.

Intimate femicide in Indonesia is the culmination of a tragedy of gender-based violence, which is not merely an emotional outburst but a logical consequence of structural failures rooted in internal social, economic, and political factors. This phenomenon is reinforced by the interaction between deep-rooted patriarchal norms and the structural vulnerabilities faced by women in the domestic sphere.

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