

# INTERPRETING GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S POSITION IN FACING THE RISKS OF THE WORLD OF JOURNALISM (STUDENT PRESS)



Jurnal Analisa Sosiologi

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Received: 2 January 2025  
Revised: 11 January 2025  
Accepted: 31 January 2025

**Edition:**  
January 2025, 14 (1): 39-  
51

## Abstract

The issue of gender equality in the world of journalism is still a debate, especially related to the position and treatment of female journalists. This study aims to analyze the meaning of gender equality and women's position in facing the risks of the journalistic world, with a focus on female journalists at the Press Institute of the Gema Campus of the State University of Surabaya. The method used is a descriptive qualitative research with a feminist axiology approach, which involves in-depth interviews and observations of female journalists on campus. The results show that although female journalists on this campus have a good understanding of gender equality and are committed to promoting gender inclusion, challenges such as gender stereotypes and discrimination remain significant barriers. Most informants feel that gender equality is important to fight for, but they still face social stigma and the risk of gender-based violence. In addition, Judith Butler's theory of Gender Social Construction shows that public opinion towards women journalists is influenced by social constructions that associate certain traits with gender, thus exacerbating the gap in the world of journalism. This research makes a unique contribution by revealing the dynamics of risks faced by women journalists in the campus environment as a micro-reflection of the broader challenges in the world of journalism. These findings offer a new perspective on the interaction between gender, professional risk, and advocacy in the world of journalism, as well as encourage the formulation of policies that are more responsive to gender equality.

**Keywords:** Gender Equality, Women Journalist, Social Construction, Gender-Based Violence

## INTRODUCTION

In the world of journalism, the issue of gender equality continues to be a global concern, especially ensuring that male and female journalists have equal rights and opportunities. Gender itself has the meaning that a social and cultural construction is not always determined by gender. The concept of gender distinguishes attributes and roles into two categories, namely "masculine" and "feminism" (Iriyani Astuti Arief et al. 2024). The entry of women into the world of journalism presents its own challenges that they must overcome and conquer, they must also follow the latest information so that the world of journalists remains active 24 hours per day (Oktarina et al. 2024).

Many view women's journalism as having a negative impact, even considered weak and influential, which makes gender injustice appear. Journalism is everything about reporting and disseminating information to the public by journalists through newspapers, online media, and print (Rahmadani and Flowerina 2024). In 2021, research by the Indonesian Journalists Alliance (AJI) found that 70% of female journalists in Indonesia have experienced harassment or intimidation while reporting. However, gender differences cannot be a problem, as long as they do not cause injustice (*inequalities*), in a large scope for example in Indonesia, gender injustice for women is still encountered, and cannot be completely addressed (Iriyani Astuti Arief et al. 2024).

In addition to gender-based violence and gender injustice, they also face public opinion that often does not understand the profession, giving rise to a negative stigma as a "rebel". Therefore, this is also related to the 90s after the emergence of the feminist movement which was based on the demand for a fair position on the position of women in various aspects of life because they have been treated undeservedly such as, being marginalized, weakened, and even "colonized" culturally (Rahmadani and Flowerina, 2024). The position of women as journalists in the post-reform era is very advantageous, so they can voice their aspirations and can be a self-defense against gender injustice. Even so, there are still many who are indifferent regarding the pros and cons related to the position of women and gender equality in the journalist profession, which is the gap in this research. Through an analysis that focuses on the meaning of gender equality and the position of women in the Campus Press, it becomes one of the author's *research novelties*.

Unlike previous studies that discussed gender discrimination in general, this study focuses on the experiences of women journalists in the campus environment which is minimally discussed. This study was made with the aim of analyzing the meaning of gender equality and the risks faced by women journalists in the Student Press.

Through the idea of Gender Social Construction Theory from Judith Butler (1990), it can help review how gender identity as female journalists, especially in the campus environment, can be well formed and perceived by the public. It is related to his concept of *gender performativity*, which emphasizes that gender is not a fixed identity, but the result of repeated actions and performances according to certain social norms (Zuni, 2024). In journalism, the identity of female journalists is formed through a process where they often have to show behaviors that are considered to meet social expectations, such as courage and resilience in order to be accepted in a work environment that is often dominated by men. This performance is part of a social construct that is constantly being created through interaction and repetition to influence the way the public views women journalists as professional subjects.

Despite being constructed in *performativity*, as a campus journalist there are still risks and challenges, including stereotypes that demean women's abilities as journalists. This turns out to give birth to stigmas that arise from the public to female journalists. Butler reveals that this kind of stigma does not arise naturally, but through social constructions that marginalize certain groups and normalize inequality (Fauziah, Permadi, and Hirzi 2024). Therefore, through Butler's Theory it can help understand how this risk is amplified through gender constructions that normalize injustice.

**METHODS**

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method with a feminist axiology approach, which prioritizes the understanding and analysis of gender-based phenomena based on personal experiences as female journalists on campus based on Judith Butler's views regarding the concept of *gender performativity*. Qualitative research is scientific research that prioritizes the process of in-depth communication interaction between researchers and the phenomenon being studied (Abdussamad et al, 2021)

The collection of this data results uses primary data by determining the subject first using *the purposive sampling technique*. The following is the recruitment of selected informants:

INFORMANT'S INITIALS	POSITION	INFORMANT CRITERIA
DP	Secretary 1	1. Woman
ID	External Public Relations	2. Active member of the Gema Unesa Student Press Institute

FN	Media Editor	3. Have experience in
	Coordinator	covering the action
ZA	Treasurer 1	

The research data was collected through in-depth interviews and direct observation of selected female student informants who are still members of the Gema Unesa Campus Press Institute. In order for the results to be accurate, the data that has been collected is validated using source triangulation and *member checking*. Then the data analysis process is carried out by narrative and interactive methods, where narrative analysis focuses on the story and informant's views. Meanwhile, data reduction is used to sort out relevant information. The stages of analysis include grouping data, presenting in the form of stories, and drawing conclusions based on findings in the field.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

#### Interpreting gender equality and the position of women in women journalists at the Press Institute of the Gema Unesa Campus

Through gender equality, the position of women as journalists has now been recognized by the public and can affect the potential between men and women. The answers from the informants showed that they had understood the meaning of gender equality, according to them it is a very crucial social issue in various aspects, especially for women.

On the question of opportunities in decision-making, the majority of informants also answered that they are still involved in the practice. "*Yes, I am still often involved in decision-making and going to the field for coverage*" (ID, 2024), said one of the author's informants. But even so, their involvement provides a public view of their performance. The perspective of the environment around them has differences of opinion both negative and positive. In fact, some people who still have irrational views must say negatively, like what happened to one of the writer's informants, namely DP who said "*Having a negative impact, he said that being a journalist has no benefits, it even makes lives threatened*" (DP, 2024). Such a view breaks the stigma of gender justice in various jobs.

In general, in addition to experiencing gender injustice, women who play a role in the public space are also vulnerable to various other risks. Especially their position as female journalists, these risks include sexual violence, hostage-taking by the authorities,

and exile from the community. This situation shows that being a female social activist requires courage and commitment to fight for human values. Therefore, every individual must have full awareness to protect himself, especially if he carries out his profession as a journalist. Regarding what FN said "*Awareness of risks must be prepared, with the importance of supporting policies that protect women's rights in the media and journalist community*" (FN, 2024). But in addition to having full awareness, other policies must also support to face risks as a campus press such as, in collaboration with other LPM, Legal Entities, Equal Communities, etc. ZA informant also said the same thing "*I am aware that this is likely to happen, therefore I try to take care of myself and ask for help from LBH or related communities to minimize the risk if something unexpected happens*" (ZA, 2024).

Now in the axiological approach, feminism is a representation of women's position in maintaining equality, so that it can be an initial movement for women journalists through the campus level. Overall, the female journalists of this campus show a high awareness of gender equality issues and are committed to encouraging gender inclusion in their environment. However, challenges such as stereotypes, the risk of discrimination and the risk of gender-based violence are still more of a concern that need to be addressed through education and policies that support gender equality.

## **Discussion**

### **Gender Awareness Among Women Journalists**

Gender equality is something that can be obtained with the same results, the meaning here is that women and men must have the same capacity and needs. So ideally, they get equal rights to health, education, income, and political participation.

Gender awareness among female journalists at LPK Gema State University of Surabaya shows a growing recognition of the role of women in the world of journalism. Of the total 50 members, 80% of them are filled by women. Based on the interviews, the informants said that they were given responsibility in news coverage as well as the freedom to express opinions, gather information, and write news to the best of their ability. In this case, it is not only a matter of numbers, but also how women break gender stereotypes through concrete actions. Referring to Judith Butler's theory of social construction, gender identity is formed through social performance, meaning that female journalists at LPK Gema have proven their ability to face journalistic challenges and provide diverse perspectives.

If women journalists are aware and understand about gender equality, it means that the dominance of women in the organization will have a positive impact and break through changes that can be equal in the equal distribution of rights and opportunities for men and women. However, it is important to ensure gender equality is seen not only from the participation rate, but also from the opportunities provided to all members to thrive. With increasing gender awareness, women are expected to continue to contribute to creating an inclusive and equal campus journalism environment.

### **Public Opinion on Women Journalists**

Initially, the cultural process that takes place from generation to generation in society is formed by social norms and manners, then gives rise to the gender gap itself (Jivanta and Emily, 2023). This is what causes a perspective in the selection of male and female roles, where these roles can provide positive and negative stigmas against gender justice.

However, this fact according to gender studies (Hanifah Maulidia, 2021) can be inversely proportional and interchangeable, because feminine and masculine traits are not innate human nature but the basis of the construction of social and cultural values in their environment. However, women also have the right to carry out activities in public spaces. If this public space itself is used as a space for discussions related to politics and the state through activities to exchange ideas, solutions, and opinions that are started and formed. In gender sociology, the public sphere is also understood as an area outside of domestic activities traditionally associated with women, namely the kitchen, the well, and the mattress. Public opinion towards women journalists reflects a social construct that associates women's roles with gender. In society, the roles of men and women are often based on traditional norms, such as femininity is associated with domestic work, while masculine is associated with courage and public space.

According to Judith Butler (1990), gender is the result of repetitive performative actions, forming socially constructed identities, not something fixed or natural. In the case of female journalists, public opinion often presents two sides, namely negative and positive perspectives. Some informants said there was a negative stigma, such as the notion that being a female journalist was not beneficial and high-risk. This stereotype reflects resistance to traditional gender role changes that associate courage and independence only with men. On the other hand, positive views also emerge, such as the recognition that women journalists are able to convey objective information and

contribute to society.

Through the answers from the informants, it also highlights the role of female journalists in channeling the aspirations of other women whose voices are often ignored. This shows that there is acceptance of the flexibility of gender roles that can go beyond traditional boundaries. Public opinion towards women journalists, both positive and negative, illustrates the dynamics of changing gender social constructions. With their active role in the public sphere, women journalists challenge traditional stereotypes and open up opportunities for redefinition of gender roles in the world of journalism.

If you look in the mirror and see the condition *gender equality* in other countries, such as South Korea. This issue is not paid attention to by the public, gender equality in the media still faces significant challenges. Some South Korean media portray feminism radically, tending to lead to misandry, which contributes to a negative perception of the feminist movement (Hong, 2024). In addition, a survey by the Journalists Association of Korea in 2019 showed that there were more male journalists than female journalists, reflecting the gender imbalance in the media industry. This gap points to the need for further efforts to achieve more balanced gender representation in the world of journalism. This condition is almost the same as Indonesia, so that public opinion of both of them towards the media, especially female journalists, is influenced by the social structure of each country.

### **The Risk of Gender Violence in Journalism**

Gender injustice often stems from social constructions that limit women's role in the domestic space, making them vulnerable to subordination and negative stereotypes. In the world of journalism, women are often faced with the risk of gender violence, both physical and verbal. This results in the perception that they have a weak nature and are less able to face dangerous challenges. From the above conditions, it shows an illustration related to the possible occurrence of gender injustice. The forms of gender injustice that may occur to female journalists on campus are as follows:

1. **Gender stereotypes** are labels or negative or positive views from society towards women that tend to generalize traits or behaviors based on gender (Iriyani Astuti, et. al: 2022).
2. **Gender Subordination** is a view that demeans women's position, based on the assumption that women are irrational and emotional. This view causes women to be considered less worthy of leading teams, giving opinions in solving problems,

or holding high positions (Iriyani Astuti, et. al: 2022).

Based on the various forms of gender injustice that exist, it can be concluded that journalists at the Gema Unesa Campus Press Institute (LPK) interpret gender equality and gender injustice as real challenges that still exist in the world of journalism. However, when in a campus environment, these challenges tend to be more controlled. Negative gender stereotypes and gender subordination are *labels* that women are less able to face pressure or only fit into certain roles, becoming a form of injustice that often affects their experiences. The positive thing is that these female journalists have a good enough awareness of these risks and challenges. Not only do they understand their position in a social structure that is not yet fully equal, but they also show an effort to fight the boundaries created by gender stereotypes. In addition, this gender injustice also often occurs in cases of sexual harassment. News coverage activities are one of the challenges as female journalists to be harassed either verbally or physically.

However, the informants' perspectives show that while covering the demonstrations, they have never experienced sexual harassment directly. However, there are fundamental concerns regarding the situation on the ground, especially in interaction with men. Their experience when doing coverage is the opposite, they get a positive response such as respect from people around them, showing that there is public awareness of the risk of sexual harassment that can lead to social impacts, such as virality. This is related to Butler's *theory of performativity*, where there is a social construct in the public treatment of female journalists. It is also influenced by the performance of individuals when constructing their roles in the media field. However, concerns remain, reflecting the need for additional safeguards to ensure the safety of women journalists while working in public spaces.

The realization of resistance to gender injustice among LPK Gema Unesa female journalists is also a positive indicator that the campus environment is able to provide an inclusive space that encourages them to fight against the boundaries constructed by gender-based violence. This shows that collective awareness and community support in the academic environment can be a protector in fighting discrimination. However, this resistance needs to be understood not as a sign that the problem is over, but rather as an opportunity to strengthen a broader inclusive strategy.

From the above presentation, it is stated that women who are active in public spaces face challenges such as gender injustice, sexual violence, and community isolation. This role requires courage and high commitment to fight for human values. Therefore,



institutional protection and support are essential for student press safety.

Just as there are efforts to implement gender responsiveness that supports the position of women both as student press and other fields by linking previous research in South Korea, especially at Chonnam National University (CNU) in Gwangju has shown its commitment to gender equality through various initiatives. One of them is the organization of an academic conference themed "Region, Feminism and University Education" by the Gender Research Institute in February 2023, which aims to strengthen cooperation between gender research institutions at local universities (Yonhap, 2023). In addition, CNU also held the "Safe Campus, Confident and Free Jeonnam Nationals" campaign which included the operation of access counseling centers for women and awareness-raising activities on gender-based violence. These measures reflect the university's efforts to create a more inclusive and gender-sensitive campus environment.

Linking with the title of the research "Interpreting Gender Equality and the Position of Women in Facing the Risks of the World of Journalism (Student Press)", the situation at CNU and South Korea in general offers an important perspective. On the one hand, institutional efforts such as those undertaken by CNU show a positive step in promoting gender equality in the academic environment. However, the challenges faced by women journalists, including negative stereotypes and gender imbalances in the media, emphasize the need for protection, supportive communities, and ongoing education to reduce gender stereotypes and create a more equitable and equitable journalistic environment.

But specifically, Chonnam National University (CNU) in Gwangju did not present research related to how the student press there faces risks as journalists. But in general, the condition of the media or journalists in South Korea still applies a patriarchal culture by highlighting cultural violence against women, which is reinforced by social and cultural norms that limit women's role and participation in various sectors, including the media. This condition can increase the risk of gender-based violence against women journalists, both in physical, verbal, and psychological forms, so that this condition can threaten the position of women as journalists. Studies that analyze the representation of radical feminism in Korean dramas show that gender inequality is still a significant problem in South Korea. The dominant patriarchal culture often puts women in a vulnerable position to various forms of violence, including in professional environments such as journalism (Novianty, 2024).

## CONCLUSION

One of the challenges of being a female journalist is to face the existing risks, especially the risk of gender-based violence. This research shows that gender equality in the world of journalism is a social issue that is getting more and more attention. Women journalists in the Student Press have a high awareness of the importance of gender equality and strive to break stereotypes and gender injustices. Although there is already an understanding and recognition of the position of women as journalists on an equal footing with men, challenges such as gender stereotypes, subordination, and gender-based violence remain issues that need more attention.

In addition, the study also highlights how gender social constructions, shaped through social performance, affect public perceptions of women journalists. However, women journalists who are active and play a role in the public sphere are able to challenge these norms by demonstrating their professionalism. Therefore, in order to enrich the understanding of the challenges and potential of women journalists in promoting gender equality. It can also create opportunities to redefine gender roles in journalism, which must continue to be encouraged. For further research reference, it is recommended to conduct a comparative study between female journalists on campus and professional media, in order to achieve journalists who are inclusive and care about gender equality. By adding experience related to gender responsiveness in another country, namely South Korea, which has similar conditions.

Therefore, it can be a reference for the author to understand how culture, policies, and social environments affect gender equality efforts in journalism. South Korea, as a country with a strong patriarchal history but undergoing significant changes in gender awareness, provides relevant case studies on challenges and strategies for addressing gender violence in professional settings, including journalism.

However, this study also has shortcomings because the case study is still general and a little less condensed, so it can be developed and reviewed through supporting data from other countries for comparison. In addition, there are limitations in explaining how educational institutions, including universities, play a role in preventing or addressing gender violence in journalism and lack of exploration of how policies and practices at the university level support the safety and comfort of female student journalists. In the absence of a focus on campus policy or the working environment of the student press, this study does not offer a concrete solution to address the existing risks.

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