

EUPHEMISTIC EXPRESSION IN THE REPORTING OF SEXUAL HARASSEMENT ON THE INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT 'INSIDE LOMBOK'

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ABSTRACT

This research analyzes the types and social functions of euphemistic expressions used in the reporting of sexual harassment cases on the 'Inside Lombok' Instagram account. This research uses a qualitative descriptive method with a discourse analysis approach. Data were obtained from captions and Instagram posts related to sexual harassment cases. The research results show that there are eight types of euphemisms used, namely substitution, orthographic variation, circumlocution, generalization, technical terms, abbreviation, metaphor, and understatement. Among all these types, circumlocution is the most dominant, indicating a tendency for the media to use indirect expressions in conveying sensitive information. Additionally, this study found four main social functions of euphemisms, namely identity protection, censorship evasion and conformity with digital platforms, discourse neutralization and prevention of collective stigmatization, and interpretation management and public perception building. This study concludes that euphemisms in digital media reporting not only function as a strategy of linguistic politeness but also as a discursive tool that influences public representation and understanding of the issue of sexual harassment on social media.

Keywords: *Euphemism; Sexual Harassment; Discourse Analysis; Social Media Discourse*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital media has transformed the way we produce, disseminate, and consume information in today's society. Social media, as a key component of this development, is no longer merely a standard communication tool but has become the primary space for sharing news and shaping public opinion. Kaplan and Haenlein (2020) explain that social media enables rapid and widespread information exchange, thereby making public discourse in the digital age more dynamic. Platforms like Instagram allow information to easily reach a wide audience, without time or location constraints. In this context, social media plays a central role in bringing social issues—including sensitive issues such as sexual harassment—into the public discourse. Recently, cases of sexual harassment have been discussed more openly on social media, demonstrating how digital platforms help bring to light issues that were previously hidden. This aligns with the perspective of Fileborn and Loney-Howes (2019), who describe social media as a vital platform for survivors to share their experiences of sexual violence and build public awareness.

The increased media attention on cases of sexual harassment on social media not only signals growing public awareness but also underscores that such incidents are indeed occurring and recurring in various regions, including Lombok Island. Reports from local media and Instagram accounts such as “Inside Lombok” indicate that sexual harassment is no longer a hidden secret, but rather an issue receiving serious attention from the public. Nevertheless, this surge in cases is not always accompanied by clear and neutral reporting. Often, the language used feels indirect, vague, or biased toward one side, which risks obscuring the actual facts. Previous studies indicate that indirect or mitigated language in media discourse can reduce clarity and soften the perceived severity of sexual violence case (Cuklanz & Moorti, 2006). Consequently, this less assertive reporting can influence how the public understands, evaluates, and reacts to cases of sexual harassment—including their views on victims and perpetrators. Therefore, it is highly relevant to examine the use of language in reporting such cases, especially on social media, which has a significant influence on shaping public opinion.

From a linguistic perspective, language is not merely a tool for communication, but also a means of shaping and depicting social reality. The media, as the primary channel for language, plays a significant role in creating meaning from the events presented to the public. This perspective resonates with discourse analysis, which conceptualizes language as a social practice inextricably linked to ideology and power relations (Fairclough 1995). Thus, the media does not merely convey facts but actively constructs meaning through its choice of words. In this context, the concept of discourse serves as a vital tool for understanding how social issues such as sexual harassment are represented, negotiated, and interpreted by the public through language in the media.

Euphemism is a linguistic strategy commonly used in reporting on sensitive issues, involving the replacement of taboo or crude terms with polite and indirect expressions to maintain decorum and avoid negative reactions. However, its impact is not always neutral. Research indicates that euphemistic expressions mitigate and veil the stark realities of sensitive matters, particularly sexual violence, consequently shaping public perceptions of these incidents (Lutzky & Kehoe, 2020). This study views euphemisms not merely as linguistic forms, but as communication strategies that serve a social function in the media. Theoretically, euphemisms convey indirect meanings regarding sensitive issues. In digital media, their function is to maintain decorum while simultaneously controlling the representation of reality.

The previous theoretical framework is supported by recent empirical research on euphemisms in digital media, particularly in the reporting of sensitive issues. Lutzky and Kehoe (2020) examined euphemisms in public discourse and the media, focusing on linguistic forms that mitigate sensitive meanings. The results show that euphemisms, such as indirect expressions and shifts in meaning, make information more socially acceptable and help control the conveyance of meaning to the audience. This demonstrates that euphemisms are not merely linguistic forms but communication strategies within discourse. This classification receives further support from Ahmed and Jomaa (2022), who categorize euphemisms in media discourse into different linguistic forms such as indirect expressions, generalizations, abstractions, and orthographic modifications. Their analysis emphasizes that euphemisms function systematically beyond mere semantic softening, facilitating adaptation to media constraints and audience sensitivities.

This classification gains additional theoretical foundation from the framework of Allan and Burridge (1991), who view euphemism as both a linguistic and social phenomenon. They

delineate various forms of euphemism, including metaphor, idiom, circumlocution (indirect phrases), generalization, synecdoche, and orthographic modification, which are used to replace taboo or sensitive expressions. From a functional perspective, Allan and Burridge (1991) explain the crucial social roles of euphemisms: avoiding taboo, maintaining politeness, mitigating harsh or negative impressions, concealing meaning, and protecting both speakers and audiences from social discomfort. These functions are highly relevant in reporting sensitive issues such as sexual harassment, where language choice must balance clarity of information with social acceptability. The study by Dewi, Huda, and Supriyatno (2019) analyzes euphemisms in online newspapers manifested through figurative language, circumlocution, omission, and understatement with the functions of maintaining politeness, avoiding taboo, and strategic communication, emphasizing the dual role of euphemisms as a linguistic phenomenon and a discursive strategy.

Fileborn and Loney-Howes (2021), examined the representation of sexual violence in digital media via social media. Their findings revealed how language shapes the presentation and public understanding of experiences of sexual harassment. Direct or indirect disclosures influence public awareness, empathy, and societal responses toward victims, as well as the public discourse surrounding sexual violence. Cuklanz and Moorti (2006), similarly observed that indirect and attenuated expressions in media discourse obscure sexual violence severity while shaping audience interpretations. These insights affirm euphemisms' critical function in framing and constructing understandings of sensitive issues like sexual harassment within public discourse.

This study systematically identifies the types of euphemisms and analyzes their social functions in reporting cases of sexual harassment on the Instagram account "Inside Lombok," emphasizing that euphemisms are not limited to words but also encompass phrases and sentences in social media discourse constructions. The analysis is grounded in the frameworks of Allan and Burridge (1991) and Ahmed and Jomaa (2022) to understand the role of euphemisms as a linguistic-discursive strategy that shapes meaning and influences audience interpretation. Although previous studies have provided valuable insights, their scope remains limited. Most research has focused on the general media context without specifically highlighting how euphemisms operate on specific social media platforms. Furthermore, there is still a scarcity of studies that systematically analyze the relationship between types of euphemisms and their functions in shaping discourse, particularly in reporting on sexual harassment. Studies targeting Instagram, particularly local news accounts such as "Inside Lombok," are also scarce, even though the multimodal nature of this platform allows for richer meaning-making through the interaction of text, visuals, and audience responses.

To address this gap, this study analyzes the types of euphemistic expressions used in reporting sexual harassment and their role in shaping discourse on the Instagram account "Inside Lombok." This study is expected to enrich sociolinguistics with a new perspective on the use of digital language in sensitive issues. From a discourse analysis perspective, this study explains how euphemisms function as discursive strategies that construct social reality and influence the representation of victims and perpetrators. In the context of social media studies, this research highlights the influence of platform characteristics on the language used to report sensitive issues. Practically, these findings encourage the use of more accurate, critical, and responsible language in reporting sexual harassment on social media.

With all this in mind, the researchers believe that people are now more likely to express concerns about the use of euphemisms whenever they encounter topics that are difficult to

discuss due to their sensitivity. Furthermore, the concept of euphemism is very important for society students to understand in order to support them in maintaining social relationships and communication if they encounter others trying to discuss important global topics in the context of the English language. Given this situation, the researcher wants to focus on "The Analysis of Euphemisms in Online Written Mass Media on Inside Lombok in Reporting Sexual Harassment on Instagram Accounts." The researcher wants to conduct a study based on the following objectives in relation to the study background: To identify the types and social functions of euphemisms that appear in Inside Lombok's reporting of sexual harassment in terms of their forms and roles; and to explore the types of euphemisms appear most frequently in the reporting of sexual harassment.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze the use of euphemistic expressions in reports of sexual harassment on the Instagram account "Inside Lombok." This approach was chosen because the study emphasizes an understanding of linguistic phenomena and the construction of meaning, rather than numerical measurement. Qualitative research aims to understand and interpret social phenomena in their natural context (Creswell, J. W. & Poth, C. N., 2018). Here, the data consisting of Instagram captions and posts require in-depth analysis of linguistic patterns and implied meanings.

A qualitative descriptive design is used to identify types of euphemisms and explain their functions in discourse. (Sandelowski, M., 2000) emphasises that descriptive research aims to present a systematic account of a phenomenon. This study also adopts discourse analysis, which regards language as a social practice that constructs meaning (Ahmed & Jomaa, 2022). This approach enables researchers to understand euphemisms not merely as linguistic forms, but as strategies for shaping meaning and public perception in social media discourse. This research is a qualitative study based on discourse analysis that highlights the use of euphemism in social media discourse. The study examines how language in Instagram posts represents and shapes meanings surrounding sexual harassment. By focusing on euphemistic expressions, the research reveals that language choices are not merely linguistic forms, but discursive strategies that shape meaning, influence interpretation, and construct social reality within the media sphere. The research data comes from the Instagram account "Inside Lombok" which regularly covers social issues, including cases of sexual harassment. The data includes captions and posts related to sexual harassment over a certain period of time. The study applied purposive sampling techniques by selecting data based on criteria relevant to the research objectives. The selected data are posts that contain indications of euphemism in reporting sexual harassment, in accordance with the analysis focus.

Data collection was conducted using the documentation method. The researcher systematically identified, selected, and recorded Instagram posts related to sexual harassment from the "Inside Lombok" account. The process began with searching for relevant posts, followed by selecting data potentially containing euphemisms, documenting them via screenshots, transcribing them into text, and then classifying them according to the research focus categories. This method ensures authentic data directly from social media discourse. Data analysis uses a qualitative discourse approach to identify types of euphemisms and their functions in discourse. The process includes data reduction by selecting relevant data, classification based on the linguistic forms of euphemisms, interpretation of their function in constructing discourse meaning, and drawing conclusions on the role of euphemisms as a

discursive strategy representing sexual harassment on social media. This approach reveals that euphemisms not only soften language but also shape meaning and public perception.

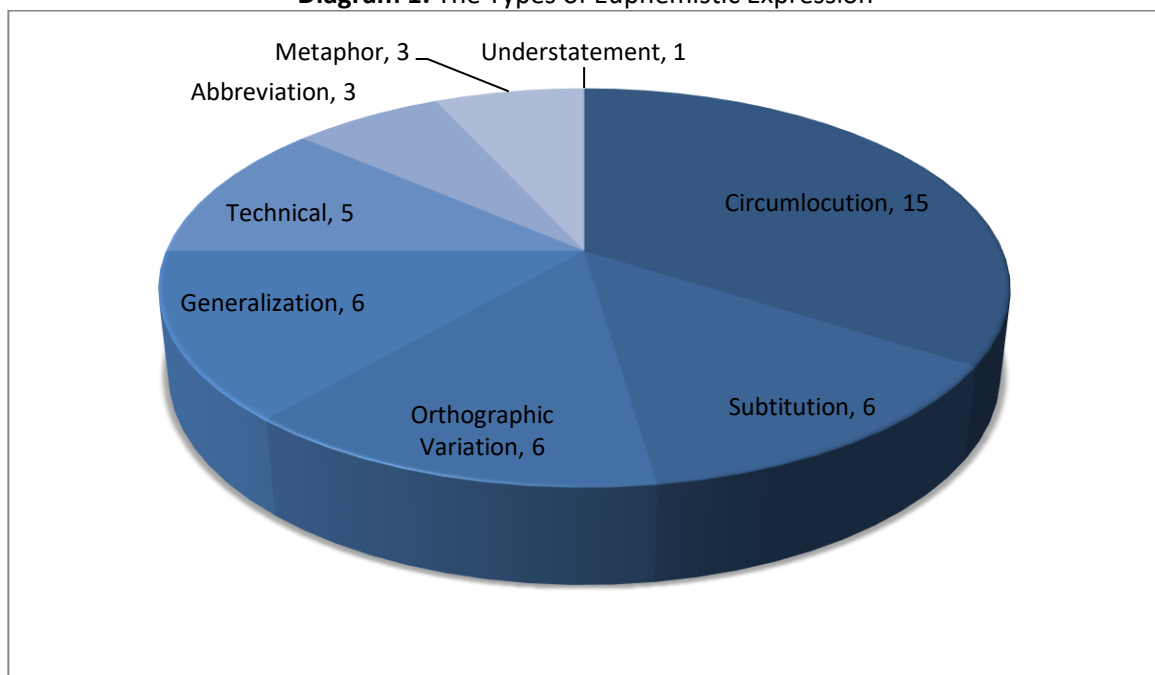
RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study examines euphemistic expressions through the lens of (Allan, K. & Burridge, K., 1991), which categorizes euphemisms into distinct linguistic forms—including substitution, abbreviation, circumlocution, understatement, technical terminology, generalization, and metaphor—as techniques to refine, obscure, or supplant expressions that are socially taboo and sensitive. Ahmed & Jomaa (2022) support this paradigm by saying that euphemism shows up in digital media through changes to spelling and the usage of technical terms that fit the platform's rules and the audience's level of sensitivity. As stated in the introduction of this study, language in the media is not only a means of communication but also a social practice fundamentally connected to ideology and power dynamics (Fairclough, 1995). Consequently, the euphemisms employed by Inside Lombok should be regarded not merely as linguistic variations but also as discursive strategies that actively shape the social reality pertaining to sexual harassment in the digital public sphere.

The Types of Euphemistic Expressions

This study identifies 8 categories of euphemisms used in reporting sexual harassment cases on the Instagram account "Inside Lombok," analyzing a total of 45 cases. There are 8 types: circumlocution, substitution, orthographic variation, generalization, technical, abbreviation, metaphor, and understatement. There are 15 cases of circumlocution, which is the most common type. Substitution, orthographic variation, and generalization each have 6 cases; technical has 5 cases; abbreviation and metaphor each have 3 cases; and understatement is the rarest type, with only 1 case. The prevalence of periphrasis aligns with the research conducted by (Dewi, Huda, and Suprayitno (2019), which revealed that Indonesian online media predominantly use indirect expressions as the main approach in handling sensitive issues. The diagram below shows the euphemism data found in this study.

Diagram 1. The Types of Euphemistic Expression



Substitution

In this study data, six cases of substitution euphemisms were found and the three of them show interesting variations in the way Inside Lombok replaces sensitive references with socially acceptable terms. The first case is the use of the word “korban” as a substitute for the real name of the victim of sexual harassment as written in the sentence “Setibanya di rumah, korban sempat beristirahat seorang diri di ruang tamu dalam kondisi pintu kamar tertutup.”. Second, the expression of “kekerasan seksual” is used in substitution of more vulgar and explicit expressions. The act of crime is thus presented in a more acceptable formal register in the public spaces. The third case is the employment of phrase “Ibu korban” as an indirect reference that shields the identity of parties associated with the victim. The fourth case is the use of the perpetrator’s word as a neutral designation. Substitution is defined by (Allan, K. & Burrige, K., 1991) as a euphemistic strategy in which more socially acceptable terms replace taboo or sensitive references. Clearly, in all four cases, the choice of words was made with consideration of the balance between the need for public information and the responsibility to protect the parties involved.

In a cross-cultural study of language use around sexual violence, Vessey, (2024) found that reporting sexual violence in different media contexts commonly uses generic terms (e.g., “korban”, “pelaku”, “kekerasan seksual”) as they are a type of informative and protective reporting. (Fileborn & Loney-Howes (2019) argue that identifying survivors of sexual violence on digital platforms can lead to re-victimization and therefore the use of anonymous labels to replace identities is an important protective measure, especially considering the nature of social media in the potential mass dissemination of content. Gorwa, Binns, and Katzenbach (2020) also state that the use of anonymous labels such as victim and perpetrator is an algorithmically and ethically safe journalistic choice within the digital platform ecosystem. As Fairclough (1995) has shown, the use of words in the media always has a dimension of power. Alternative words in the four cases are discursive actions that deliberately choose to protect vulnerable individuals rather than the interests of information sensationalism. Thus, the replacement of euphemisms in Inside Lombok's reporting shows that word choice in social media reporting always has interrelated social, ethical, and technical dimensions.

Orthographic variation

In the research data there were six cases of orthographic variation euphemisms and all six demonstrate different techniques of spelling modification but with the same purpose. The first example is “S*ksu4”l, which replaces the word “seksual” with a combination of letter substitution, the asterisk symbol, and the number 4. The second case is “c*bul” which deletes the critical vowels from the word cabul so that the word is not literally detectable by the moderation system. The third case is “set*buhi”, a total distortion of a vulgar word referring to sexual intercourse through a combination of letter removal and substitution. The fourth case is “pel3ceh4n” where two letters are replaced with numbers at the same time, the fifth case is “pel*ceh*n” and pem*rko*aan which apply the same technique to two taboo words at once in one phrase.

The sixth case is “tindak pidana kekerasan s*ksual” that only impose orthographic modifications to the keywords considered most at risk of censorship. Orthographic variation is a peculiar and unique form of euphemism for the digital media environment, as Ahmed and Jomaa (2022) explain, that arises out of the need for content creators to work within the technical limitations of the platform, such that the altered word can be fully decoded by readers but technically eludes the automatic content filter. (Gorwa, Binns, and Katzenbach

(2020) noted that algorithmic content moderation systems detect patterns of words, so a few spelling modifications are enough to fool the detection system and the text is published. The range of techniques shown in these six cases, from vowel deletion, letter substitution with symbols, letter substitution with numbers, to total distortion, shows that Inside Lombok has a wide repertoire of orthographic modifications and that they are used flexibly depending on the sensitivity level of the respective words.

The ability of social media to disseminate information is solely dependent on the contents of the social media itself following the rules of the platform (Kaplan and Haenlein 2020). Therefore, to learn these orthographic variation techniques is a survival competence that determines the continuation of Inside Lombok's journalistic function. Lutzky and Kehoe (2020) note that these linguistic changes are indicative of the power relations between content creators and the platform governance systems controlled by giant technology corporations. Six cases in our data are very specific empirical evidence of this dynamic. The orthographic changes in Inside Lombok's reporting are therefore not simply an act of linguistic innovation, but a calculated strategic response to the social and technical constraints of the digital media environment.

Circumlocution

The dominant type of euphemism found in this research data is circumlocution, as it is found 15 cases. The variations that exist in the data indicate the wealth of techniques in the use of indirect terms in reporting 'Inside Lombok'. The first is the phrase "dalam pengaruh minuman keras", which replaces the word 'drunk' with a more formal, multi-word expression, and which does not carry with it a direct moral judgement. The second situation is "dugaan perbuatan asusila", the word "dugaan" being a softener for the claim before the legal decision is taken. Third, "melancarkan nafsu bejat". It is an indirect expression with a negative meaning since it does not specify the sexual act performed. The fourth case is "diam-diam masuk" as an alternative to harsher language such as "menyusup dengan paksa" and the fifth case is "dibawa ke lokasi" place that hides aspects of coercion or force with neutral language that does not reflect the conditions.

Besides the five cases, the data revealed the use of circumlocution in phrases "*melibatkan seorang anak*" that do not include explicit details about the victim's participation, "*memaksa membuka pakaian*" that does not contain explicit sexual descriptions but does convey the fact of the action, "*korban masih belia*" using general terms instead of precise ages, and "*laporan masyarakat*" that hide the reporter's identity behind anonymous collective phrases. Allan and Burridge (1991) state that the mechanism of circumlocution is that the description of a situation is extended by means of longer expressions to diminish the negative connotations of the original reference. The dominance of circumlocution with 15 cases in this data is consistent with Dewi, Huda, Suprayitno (2019) who found that circumlocution is the most dominant type of euphemism in Indonesian online media. Fairclough (1995) argues that the widespread use of circumlocution represents a consistent ideological choice in favour of communication safety and journalistic neutrality. Lutzky and Kehoe (2020) state that "circumlocution in digital discourse is a strategy to make potentially shocking information more socially palatable". Cuklanz and Moorti (2009), while commending the skillful use of circumlocution to achieve neutrality, warn that the use of indirect language when describing sexual violence may also obscure the seriousness of the alleged activities. The 15 examples of circumlocution found in this data thus suggest a

complex negotiation of information transparency, journalistic safety and social media accountability.

Generalization

There are six generalization euphemism in the form of vague and abstract concepts to substitute the more particular terms contained in Inside Lombok. The first case is the word "oknum" in the phrase "oknum guru ngaji" and "oknum ustadz" which is used to distinguish deviant behavior at the individual level so as not to generalize the entire profession concerned. The second scenario involves the use of the word "kejadian" as a substitute for a more specific term in the description of the occurrence of sexual harassment, so the severity of the incident is not immediately obvious to the audience. The third case is the word "tindakan" as a generic expression, which by using too wide terms, obscures the reality of the event. The fourth example is the phrase "lebih dari satu korban", which again does not give an exact number and leaves the information vague. The fifth case is the phrase "kejadian tersebut", which uses a demonstrative pronoun rather than an explicit description of the event in question.

Allan and Burrige (1991) define generalization as a euphemistic process where more specific allusions are used to replace expressions that are more general and abstract, thus reducing the social and emotional impact of the remarks. The term 'oknum' in Indonesian has a special semantic function as an individual anomaly marker in a profession. The use of 'oknum' in the phrase 'oknum guru ngaji' linguistically constructs the understanding that the reported action is an individual deviationism that does not represent the whole professional group.

Fairclough (1995) argues that words used in media discourse always have an ideological dimension that positions social groups in the public space. These six cases of generalization prove that Inside Lombok does not sacrifice the reputation of certain groups or institutions in reporting that sensational. As pointed out by Ahmed and Jomaa (2022), generalization depersonalizes sensitive situations and renders reports more impartial and balanced in the eyes of a wide audience.

Richardson (2007) also points out that the decision to use the word generalisation in the news is rhetorical decision with immediate consequences for the way in which the public perceive social groups. This has very serious consequences for the religious community of Lombok. Therefore, the six generalizations in this data shows that Inside Lombok always uses this method in balancing the responsibilities to promote societal harmony and the requirement to publish facts.

Technical

The research data contained five examples of technical euphemisms. All five of these examples demonstrate how Inside Lombok employs terminology from various professional fields to produce a more clinical and formal register to describe sexual offenses. The first is the term "grooming", borrowed from the fields of psychology and criminology to describe the systematic process of manipulation by the perpetrator towards the child and his or her family.

The second case is the word "terduga pelaku" which is a legal terminology to avoid direct allegations before a court verdict. The third case is the word "terdakwa", a formal legal term which unequivocally and unmistakably defines the status of a person in the judicial process. The fourth case is the word "anak di bawah umur". Minor is a formal legal term used to refer to a victim who has not reached the legal age of adulthood without specifying an

exact age which could identify the victim. The fifth is the phrase “dugaan kekerasan seksual” which combines the legal word alleged with the official term sexual violence, to make a legally responsible report.

The use of technical euphemisms is a means of substituting emotionally loaded words for the vocabulary of scientific or professional domains, which results in a sense of objectivity and detachment from the situation in question Allan and Burrige (1991). Interestingly, three of the five instances of technical euphemisms in this data, such as “terduga pelaku”, “dugaan”, and “dugaan kekerasan seksual” come from the legal field. It means that Inside Lombok always uses the legal register as a strategy to give the legal protection to themselves by keeping the accuracy of the reporting. As Ahmed and Jomaa (2022), observe, technical euphemisms in digital media are very useful in the production of reports that are both instructive and algorithmically safe as professional phrases seldom set off content control systems.

Fileborn and Loney-Howes (2019) argue that the use of clinical language allows for more candid and productive public conversations about the operations of crime that have long been misunderstood by society. As vessey (2024) explains, the use of technical words points to the process of professionalising discourse, which enables evidence-based conversations, but also risks creating an emotional distance that is too large between the audience and the reality of the gravity of the crime.

Thus, the five examples of technical euphemism in this data collectively demonstrate Inside Lombok’s effort to establish journalistic credibility via a professional register and at the same time, shield itself from legal issues in reporting.

Abbreviation

This research data has yielded three abbreviated euphemisms. The three cases all used the tactic of reducing names to initials to hide the identity. The first case is “ZH” in the term “terduga pelaku ZH (30)”, who hides the full identity of the alleged sexual harassment perpetrator in Pringgasela District. The second case is “LO” in the phrase “berinisial LO”, using the same strategy to protect the identity of the suspect in another case. The third case is “AJN” in the phrase “tersangka AJN” (three initials, hence the suspect's whole name has three syllables) but does not allow direct identification by the public.

Abbreviations are a euphemistic device that minimize the sensitive implications to their least verbal expression, thus creating a social and psychological distance between the label and the whole person buried behind it” Allan and Burrige (1991). The common abbreviation strategies in all three cases, despite some differences in reported cases, signal the use of initials as an editorial convention at Inside Lombok, indicating the internalization of the presumption of innocence principle as one of their operational standards for reporting. . In the digital media discourse, abbreviations are considered a balancing mechanism between the access to knowledge of the public and the right to privacy and legal protection of the person (Ahmed and Jomaa 2022). Gorwa, Binns, and Katzenbach (2020) also note that in digital platforms where content can go viral, the effects of publishing a suspect’s name too soon can be permanent, making the use of abbreviations in social media reporting more salient than in traditional media. The use of abbreviations is an act of language power in the opinion of Fairclough (1995), which deliberately highlights the protection of individual rights over the requirement of sensationalism in information. Therefore, the three instances of brevity in this data suggest that Inside Lombok has built consistent ethical standards in masking the identity of suspects as a form of responsible journalistic accountability.

Metaphor

This research data has three cases of metaphorical euphemism. In all three cases, the application of figurative language obscures sexual offenses by translating them into other conceptual domains. The first is the term "*pembersihan rahim*" that exploits the domain of religious rituals and bodily holiness to disguise the sexual harassment by the alleged ustadz under the pretext of a spiritual obligation. The second case is the term "*dilakukan oleh jin*" which uses symbolic and ironic language taken from the realm of supernatural beliefs to disguise or shift the blame for the deeds conducted. Inside Lombok uses it ironically to indicate the folly of the perpetrator's argument. The third scenario is the phrase, "*melancarkan nafsu bejat*" which is a military metaphor, "*melancarkan*" combined with an innate drive metaphor, "*nafsu*" to describe the sexual crime act without mentioning the type of activity.

Metaphor as a euphemistic strategy works by mapping the meaning of a tabooized action into a different and more socially acceptable conceptual domain (Allan and Burridge, 1991). In these three cases we present variations of the borrowed domains: religious domain, supernatural domain and military-biological domain. Metaphors in media discourse are ideological strategies that shape the audience's understanding of social reality (Fairclough, 1995). In all three cases, Inside Lombok quotes critically the actors' metaphors, in order to unmask manipulation instead of supporting it. Fileborn and Loney-Howes (2019) suggest that the language used to frame sexual violence and sanctioned by the culture can influence how the violence is understood by victims or the public. The use of quotation marks in the presentation of these three metaphors by Inside Lombok indicates a high level of editorial awareness of the risks involved. In reporting sexual violence, Vessey (2024) found that the metaphors used reflect the cultural norms of the society where the events took place. The three metaphors in this data, taken together, reflect the cultural context of Lombok's religious society, which is rich in supernatural beliefs. The three instances of metaphor in this data thus cumulatively demonstrate that metaphors in social media discourse can operate as layered discursive devices that reveal and critique the linguistic manipulation techniques of the offenders.

Understatement

The understatement euphemism was found only once in the research data, but its solitary existence makes it the most essential finding to be rigorously analyzed in depth. The only case of understatement found is the phrase "*tidak sampai terjadi persetubuhan, tetapi perbuatannya termasuk kategori cabul*". This phrase states the facts of the crime in terms "*tidak sampai terjadi*" it did not reach the point of intercourse rather than what did happen. As such, the severity of the act is indirectly assessed in terms of its relative distance from the act which is more severe. Understatement is a euphemistic strategy that purposefully minimizes the seriousness of a situation (Allan and Burridge, 1991). The sentence construction "did not involve intercourse" is a good example of a denial strategy that distracts the audience from the act that happened and toward a more extreme act that was prevented. As mentioned at the outset of this study Cuklanz and Moorti (2009) address how language that minimizes sexual violence in media discourse may distort the public's perception of it by implicitly constructing a hierarchy of severity where non-penetrative acts are less severe. Vessey (2024) reports a cross-cultural study where linguistic minimization of reporting sexual violence is a recurring trend across different media contexts and its societal influence is helping to normalize harassment gradually that should be thoroughly rejected.

Fairclough (1995) warns that the ideological purpose of understatement is to calibrate the level of indignation the audience is expected to feel and too low a calibration risks to form public opinion that downplays the urgency of dealing with the case. According to Dewi, Huda, and Supriyatno (2019), understatement is often employed to maintain civility in communication. But reporting on sex crimes requires balancing that role with the need to not dilute the moral gravity of the alleged transgressions. So, even though it was found in only one case, the understatement in the data of this research is a very important finding, because it shows one of the biggest risks of using euphemisms in reporting sexual harassment, which is the possibility of hiding the seriousness of the crime, which can greatly influence the legal and the social perceptions in the society.

The Social Functions of Euphemistic Expressions

The study found four main social functions that were consistently shown in the reporting of sexual harassment on the Instagram account Inside Lombok. The four functions were based on the analysis of the eight types of euphemisms found, namely identity protection, censorship evasion and conformity with digital platforms, discourse neutralization and prevention of collective stigmatization, and interpretation management and public perception building. In the perspective of critical discourse analysis, Fairclough (1995) emphasizes that this research is predicated on the assumption that language in the media is never neutral. All word choices have social, ideological and discursive characteristics that change the way people comprehend the stated reality.

Identity Protection

This research data demonstrates that there are two kinds of euphemisms that work at the same time to shield identities, namely the use of the word "*korban*" instead of the victim's true name and the use of the letters "*ZH*" instead of the suspect's complete name. They do various things but for the same social purpose protecting the persons involved from the social consequences which can arise when identities are exposed on social media. Allan and Burridge (1991) state that one of the important social functions of euphemisms is to protect sensitive people from exposure to the public and this they do by substituting some names with nameless, generic expressions. The protective function for victims is of paramount importance as Fileborn and Loney-Howes (2019) showed that the exposure of the identities of victims of sexual violence on digital platforms can lead to revictimization (additional suffering from non-empathetic social responses such as victim blaming and stigmatization) which exacerbates the trauma already experienced.

The protection of suspects by abbreviations shows the idea of presumption of innocent. Digital platforms often propagate viral content even before the judicial process has proven it and, as Gorwa, Binns, and Katzenbach (2020) explain, the disclosure of a suspect's identity too early can have lifelong implications. Vessey (2024) states that the anonymity of the victim in cross-cultural reporting of sexual abuse is an accepted ethical standard, and is consistent with the concept "do no additional harm" (Vessey 2024) that reporting should not exacerbate the conditions of the victim. (Fairclough 1995) states that every linguistic decision in the media is a form of power. The linguistic exercise of power here is the choice of substitutes and abbreviations that stresses the preservation of individual rights over sensationalist goals. The media's substantive ethical and social initiative to stress individual safety and dignity is not just a polite linguistic choice, it is the social function of identity protection through substitutes and abbreviations.

Censorship Evasion and Conformity with Digital Platforms

The social function of evading algorithmic censorship and adhering to the content rules of digital platforms is the most characteristic feature of the social media environment, and is best illustrated by the presence of orthographic variations in the data – a kind of euphemism that would absolutely not be present in conventional media reporting, as it arises solely from the need to adapt to the digital ecosystem. As Ahmed and Jomaa (2022) explain, orthographic variation is a very measurable adaptive response by content creators to algorithmic pressure and the fact that it consistently featured in six cases in the data shows that Inside Lombok has developed a high awareness of how the platform's moderation system works as part of their editorial strategy. Gorwa, Binns and Katzenbach (2020) found that algorithmic content moderation systems recognize specific word patterns. This would mean that all news content with explicit terms would be automatically banned if there were no orthographic variation tactics.

Circumlocution works in a similar way, but through a different mechanism – longer, roundabout phrases are technically safer from algorithm detection than individual, dense words with strong negative connotations. As Kaplan and Haenlein (2020) state in the introduction of this research, the ability of social media to spread information fast and widely is very dependent on the content's compliance with the rules of the platform. So, the success of Inside Lombok to continue to be able to operate and reach the broad audience is highly determined by how successful they are in following the regulations of the platform without compromising the substance of the information. This linguistic accommodation reflects the power relations between the content producers and the platform governance system (Lutzky and Kehoe 2020). Euphemisms are linguistic tools of negotiation that enable local voices to be heard in the digital domain. According to Dewi, Huda, and Suprayitno (2019), one of the key variables affecting the selection of euphemisms in Indonesian online media is the pressure to conform to the norms of the platform. Hence, the function of evading censorship indicates that euphemistic language use is not a matter of politeness in the digital social media context, but a survival competence which determines whether a local media outlet can continuously perform its social function to the public.

Discourse Neutralization and Prevention of Collective Stigmatization

The generalization with the help of the term “oknum” and the technical euphemism with the help of the term “child grooming” are shown to have the social function of discourse neutralization and prevention of collective stigmatization. Both work by raising the description of events from an emotional and moralistic level to a more abstract and professional level, therefore preventing reports from inciting unfair negative generalizations against specific social groups. This study's critical discourse analysis is based on Fairclough (1995) who explains that the media through the choice of words actively constructs the position and image of social groups in public discourse. Generalization and technicality serve to neutralize the risk of collective discredit for groups whose identities are associated with the perpetrators because of individual deviant actions. Both technical euphemisms and generalizations operate by removing descriptions from strong emotional overtones Allan and Burrige (1991). Social media reporting needs this emotional detachment so that its reports can be read broadly, without causing polarised mass reactions.

According to Ahmed and Jomaa (2022), the interplay between generalization and technicality in digital media discourse produces reports that appear objective and balanced, thus enhancing media credibility and reducing the likelihood of social conflict. As Richardson

(2007) notes, the generalization term in the news is a rhetorical strategy that directly influences the public's perception and treatment of social groups. The impact is very real for the religious Lombok community because of the high social status of the community that studies the kora. As {Formatting Citation} remind us, although this neutralization has the social benefit of avoiding stigmatization, it also carries the risk of depoliticizing the issue of sexual harassment by constructing it as an isolated individual problem, rather than a structural reality. The neutralizing function reflects the sensitivity of the media to local social and cultural intricacies, and the ability to navigate these intricacies successfully with the appropriate euphemisms is a very essential type of journalistic competence.

Interpretation Management and Public Perception Building

The most complex and socially important function is the social function of controlling the audience's interpretation and forming public opinion. In this function, euphemisms do not merely soften language but actively shape the way in which the audience interprets, evaluates and reacts to the events reported. This mechanism is called by Fairclough (1995) the ideological function of language in media discourse, where each lexical choice has connotations that affect the general public's perception of social reality. The metaphor of "pembersihan rahim" and the understatement of "tidak sampai terjadi persetubuhan" are both interpretive, but in opposite directions. The metaphor leads the audience to recognize and condemn the manipulation of religious language as an instrument of evil, while the understatement diminishes the sense of the gravity of the action, risking a decrease in the intensity of the audience's moral response. Fileborn and Loney-Howes (2019) argue that the linguistic framing of sexual violence in reporting has a real impact on audiences' perceptions of the perpetrator's accountability and the victim's state.

Cuklanz and Moorti (2009) have specifically warned that the linguistic minimization in reporting sexual violence causes the gradual normalization of harassment, and this should be fully condemned and the long-term impact is a decrease in the social tolerance threshold for cases that are not serious enough. As Vessey (2024) puts it, managing interpretation via metaphor and understatement always has a dimension of power—who gets to decide what counts as serious, and how much empathy is reasonable to give the sufferer. Allan and Burrige (1991) describe understatement as a device for lowering the audience's expectations. In the area of sexual harassment, there is concern that too low a calibration creates a false public perception of the limits of conduct that must be treated strongly by the law. Thus, the task of controlling interpretation presents language not only as a means of communication, but also as an instrument of the creation of social reality that must be wielded with full awareness of its social implications for the victims and the evolving legal culture of the society.

Overall, the four social functions identified in this study show that the use of euphemisms in reporting sexual harassment on the Instagram account Inside Lombok is not a random linguistic choice but a structured and consistent system of discursive strategies in response to the real social, technical, and ethical demands of the digital social media reporting environment. Theoretical framework for this research According to Allan and Burrige (1991), euphemisms are always social instruments that reflect the values, norms and power relations of the society in which the language is used. According to Ahmed and Jomaa (2022), digital media euphemisms are not only linguistic accommodations to the norms of the platform but also embody the power dynamics that underlie every word choice in narrating critical social events. Fairclough (1995) argues that media discourse is not neutral. The option

of using or not using euphemisms is ideological in the sense of the construction of social reality and the guidance of the audience to construct the issue under discussion. The findings also fill the gap in the study as pointed out in the introduction, that is the lack of studies that map the relationship between types of euphemism and their social functions rigorously in reporting sexual harassment in local social media platforms. Dewi, Huda, Suprayitno (2019) highlight that euphemisms in Indonesian online media are phenomena with real and observable social effects, not just ornamental variations of language. As Kaplan and Haenlein (2020) pointed out in the introduction, social media has become the dominant stage for the formation of public opinion in the digital age and the findings of this research indicate that euphemism is a tool for the systematic and measurable shaping of opinions and social reality in this stage. Thus, this study contributes to the fields of sociolinguistics and discourse analysis and to the practice of a more responsible digital journalism that fights for social justice for victims of sexual harassment.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the Instagram account 'Inside Lombok' uses eight types of euphemistic expressions in reporting sexual harassment cases, analyzing a total of 45 cases. There are 8 types: circumlocution, substitution, orthographic variation, generalization, technical, abbreviation, metaphor, and understatement. The most dominant type of circumlocution has 15 data, followed by substitution, orthographic variation, and generalisation with 6 data, technical terms with 5 data, abbreviation and metaphor with 3 data, 1 data of understatement. The dominance of circumlocution usage indicates that Inside Lombok uses more indirect and roundabout expressions to convey sensitive information in a more polite way, to reduce vulgar impressions, and to maintain neutrality in reporting sexual harassment cases on social media.

Furthermore, this study also found that the use of euphemisms in Inside Lombok's reporting has four main social functions: identity protection, censorship evasion and conformity with digital platforms, discourse neutralization and prevention of collective stigmatization, and interpretation management and public perception building. Anonymous terms, abbreviations, technical terms, and indirect expressions are used to protect the victims and perpetrators, to avoid social media algorithm restrictions, to maintain the credibility and neutrality of the news, and to control how the audience understands sexual harassment cases. Thus, euphemism in the reporting of Inside Lombok is a form of linguistic politeness and a discursive technique that is concerned with ethical duty, digital media control, and the creation of public opinion.

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