PROFESSIONAL ARTICLE

Autopsy of Communication Messages in Intimate Partner Femicide Case: Examining Emotional Language and the Mental Health of the Perpetrator

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Abstract

Background/Aim: Intimate partner femicide (IPF) is a tragic phenomenon rooted in cultural, social and psychological contexts. This study aimed to identify the emotional language patterns and mental health conditions of the perpetrators in the murder case of Ayu Indraswari, who was mutilated by Heru in 2023. Critical discourse analysis with a linguistic approach was used to examine the communication messages between the perpetrator and the victim.

Methods: This study used a qualitative approach with critical discourse analysis and content analysis methods to understand the emotional language patterns and mental states of the perpetrators. The main data was obtained from communication messages between perpetrators and victims collected through police documents and investigations.

Results: The results of the analysis showed that the language used by the perpetrator showed signs of psychological distress characterised by intense emotional manipulation and the use of language that reflected control and domination over the victim.

Conclusions: This study provides valuable insights into the relationship between emotional communication patterns and mental states in the context of IPF, highlighting the importance of early detection of risk factors in communication between couples and the development of strategies to prevent violence in intimate relationships.

Key words: Homicide; Intimate partner femicide; Emotions; Language; Mental health; Machiavellianism; Mutilation.

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Introduction

Cases of murder in intimate relationships are often triggered by emotional complexity, conflict and an unstable mental state.[1] Intimate partner femicide (IPF) is a form of murder committed by a person against his or her intimate partner, often motivated by deep emotional and psychological motives.[2] This phenomenon requires a deeper understanding, especially regarding how communication patterns, emotional language and the mental health of perpetrators play an important role in driving the occurrence of this extreme violence.[3] The murder case of Ayu Indraswari by Heru in 2023 provides a vivid illustration of this tragic violence, wherein the victim was mutilated into 65 parts.[4] Prior to this tragedy, the perpetrator and victim communicated intensely, leaving

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a digital footprint that could potentially reveal the perpetrator's emotional and mental state. By studying these communication patterns, this study seeks to explore the emotional aspects conveyed by the perpetrator, as well as the possibility of indications of psychological disorders that can lead to mutilation.

The IPF phenomenon has a strong foundation in cultural, social and psychological contexts.[5] Some studies have shown that cases of IPF often involve negative emotions such as jealousy, anger, or excessive possessive feelings towards the victim.[6] In addition, the perpetrator's mental health condition often plays an important role,[7] where disorders such as depression, antisocial personality disorder (ASPD), or narcissistic tendencies can trigger the perpetrator to commit extreme violence against his or her intimate partner.[8] This research focuses on the elements of language used by perpetrators to show certain emotional expressions, as well as identifying communication patterns that can provide an indication of the perpetrator's mental state.

To find communication factors, this study used critical discourse analysis methods and content analysis techniques. The critical discourse analysis approach allows us to see language not only as a means of communication but also as a tool for building, maintaining, or strengthening strengths in relationships.[9] The language used by the perpetrator tends to contain elements of manipulation, control, or even gaslighting, which is an attempt to manipulate the victim's perception and create emotional dependence. However, content analysis techniques allow us to identify the frequency and context of the use of certain words or phrases that reflect the emotions or psychological state of the perpetrator. Through this approach, this study aimed to identify the dominant types of emotions in the communication of the perpetrator, such as anger, jealousy, or feelings of insecurity that lead to violent acts.

It not only identifies the types of emotions of the perpetrator but also explores how psychological factors, such as mental disorders, can affect the way the perpetrator communicates with the victim. David Pineda's study showed that IPF perpetrators often have an unstable mental state, which can be seen from their behaviour including communication patterns.[10] These mental states may include ASPDs, narcissistic tendencies, or emotional disorders that affect the way they react to certain situations in a relationship.[11] By analysing the language used by the perpetrator, it can be seen whether there are signs of emotional instability or mental disorders in communication patterns, which may be a risk factor in the act of femicide. In a broader context, this research has important relevance to social and mental health issues. Intimate partner femicide cases not only reflect the problems of individual perpetrators and victims, but also show the need for greater attention to mental health in the context of domestic violence.[12] The urgency of this study lies in the increasing number of mutilation cases in Yogyakarta, which by the end of August 2024, the number of mutilation cases will reach 6 %, which means that it is likely to increase (Table 1).[13]

Although murder cases have decreased from 12 % to 6 %, this remains a concern. This means that similar cases can still occur with various causal factors. The above data became the basis for a more in-depth investigation of the perpetrator's mental health condition, which is important not only for legal proceedings but also for the prevention of similar criminal acts in the future.[14]

Table 1: Data on mutilation cases in the special region of Yogyakarta

Element	Year		Source
	2023	2024	
Mutilation	12 %	6% (temporarily until August 2024), meaning that there is still potential to increase	Yogyakarta Special Region Police [13]

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Methods

The method used was a qualitative approach with critical discourse analysis and content analysis. The main data were collected from communication messages between the perpetrator and the victim obtained through police documents and the results of the investigation. In addition, secondary data in the form of psychological reports of the perpetrators and interviews with investigators were also used to strengthen the analysis. In data encoding, these communication messages were encoded based on themes or emotions that arise, such as anger, jealousy, control and manipulation, which can indicate an indication of the perpetrator's psychological or emotional instability. Critical discourse analysis was used to identify elements of manipulation and control in the language of the perpetrator, while content analysis was used to look at the frequency and intensity of negative emotions that arise in communication. Each message was classified by theme, then matched with psychological reports to understand how language patterns might indicate a tendency to psychological disorders. The validity of the data was maintained by triangulation, which was comparing various data sources such as psychological reports and investigator interviews.

Results

About emotional separation: Heru showed an emotionally detached attitude because the communication he conducts only focused on transactional aspects (for example; meeting times and ways to appreciate feelings). There were no words to indicate feelings or concerns. This shows that he did not see Ayu as an individual but as part of his plan.

Dominance and control: By offering incentives in the form of money and directing as he wished, Heru showed control of the conversation. This shows that Heru was trying to manipulate the situation to achieve his goals by offering money and making sure Ayu agreed to the terms he set.

Selfishness and utilitarianism (only concerned with personal gains): Heru only focused on his personal interests and individual needs without considering Ayu's feelings. The language he uses was "cold" and tended to be selfish, suggesting that he only cared about his own needs.

Premeditation (measured planning): From the pattern of structured communication and the offerings he provided, Heru showed signs of measured planning. Although this was more of a psychological aspect than an emotion, there were indications that he had thought carefully about what he wanted to achieve, indicating the existence of means area or malicious intent (Table 2).

Discussion

Emotional language is one of the most prominent language characteristics used by perpetrators. Communication focuses only on transactional aspects, such as money and meeting times, without showing concern for the victim. This emotional language shows how the perpetrator uses language to create emotional distance from the victim, indicating a lack of emotional attachment to the victim. This attitude is deliberately done with the aim of avoiding deeper emotional involvement and limiting interpersonal relationships so that interaction becomes a transactional affair.[15] With dominance and control, the perpetrator not only sets terms and conditions in the conversation but also uses financial offers as a control tool to manipulate Ayu. Eg phrases such as "Come here, I add 50 thousand for gasoline", the perpetrator tries to dictate what the victim should do to meet his demands, this indicates the

Table 2: Results of open coding conversations between defendants and victims

Code	Message
Transactional offers	"Here, yes, I added 50 thousand for gasoline, in the room for 3 hours a maximum of 2 x play..."
Confirmation	"Can be a pity"
Confirm appointment	"Can it be tomorrow afternoon?"

dominant role taken in the conversation. The use of this language is a form of control that creates a relationship of domination[16] in which the victim is placed in a weaker position and feels compelled to accept the conditions set by the perpetrator. This dominant attitude also shows how the perpetrator uses language to assert power, establish controls that allow him to manipulate the situation and ensure that the victim submits to his will.

Selfishness and utilitarianism are reflected in the language used by the perpetrator, who focuses only on his own desires without considering the needs or emotional state of the victim. The perpetrator speaks pragmatically, only showing interest in what he wants from the meeting and does not leave room for the victim to express his or her opinions or feelings. The choice of words used by the perpetrator, indicates a utilitarian attitude in which the victim is only seen to the extent that he can benefit the perpetrator. Thus, the perpetrator considers the victim as a sexual object and murder, putting aside the humanistic side and focusing on the self-serving aspect. This selfish attitude is reflected in phrases such as "in the room for 3 hours maximum 2 sexual intercourse", where the perpetrator judges their interactions only based on the benefits he can get.

Premeditation or measurable planning can be seen from the way the perpetrator arranges his message in a clear and structured way. Word choice indicates a measured communication pattern, reflecting intentions that have been carefully planned in advance. Phrases like "can it be tomorrow afternoon?" indicate how the perpetrator ensures that the time and place are planned. This planning suggests that conversations are not just spontaneous exchanges of information, but part of the plan. The perpetrator's language indicates a predetermined intention and goal, where he tries to direct the victim towards a certain decision that suits his will. The perpetrator not only talks but also structures the conversation to fit his personal plan, creating the impression of neat and organised planning. Communication between the perpetrator and the victim not only reflects emotions but also reveals structures of domination and manipulation. Attitudes toward emotional detachment, dominance, selfishness and measurable planning in the perpetrator's language reveal psychological conditions that tend to be manipulative and focused on personal gain. The emotional detachment he dis-

plays, for example, limits the existing emotional connections, while the dominance and control he exercises ensures that the conversation moves according to his desires.

One of the main characteristics of ASPD is the lack of the ability to connect emotionally.[17] The perpetrator shows strong emotional detachment. In their messages, perpetrators tend to use neutral language and focus on transactional aspects such as financial rewards and meeting times without showing signs of emotional attachment or concern for the victim as an individual. This attitude shows a disregard for the feelings and rights of the victims. This emotional detachment not only indicates a lack of empathy but also serves as a mechanism that allows the perpetrator to manipulate and control others without feeling guilty.[18] Individuals with ASPD tend to see others as tools to achieve goals. Instead of being emotionally engaged, the perpetrator prefers to focus the conversation on the condition of creating emotional distance. This detachment is a common aspect of ASPD,[19] in which one sees a beneficial rather than an emotional relationship.

Domination and control as a form of manipulation

The perpetrator shows dominance and control in his conversations, especially by setting conditions in his favour. Offers of money for gasoline costs are prepared to dominate the victims. The urge to control and dominate others is a key aspect of antisocial behaviour patterns.[20] Individuals with ASPD often seek control over others[21] using manipulation or oppression to ensure that interactions are in their favour.[22] Domination by the perpetrator through communication is an indication of manipulative attitudes that are common in individuals with ASPD.[23] Heru sees himself as stronger and entitled to maintain this control.[24] In this case, the financial offer made by the perpetrator can be seen as an attempt to ensure that the victim follows his wishes without considering his own wishes. People with ASPD often take advantage of the weaknesses or needs of others[25] and in this case, the perpetrator uses the victim's financial needs as a tool to achieve his or her goals.

Extreme selfishness and utilitarianism

Extreme selfishness or utilitarianism is one of the characteristics of ASPD, in which a person focuses only on what benefits him or her without think-

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ing about the feelings or well-being of others.[26] In the perpetrator's conversation, this selfishness is evident through how he is attracted only to meet his needs. The perpetrator views the victim as a tool to achieve goals without showing concern or appreciation for himself. ASPD is usually characterised by a failure to consider the needs of others.[27] In the context of ASPD, utilitarianism refers to the tendency to take advantage of social relationships or interactions only to achieve certain outcomes that benefit oneself. Perpetrators use language that emphasizes the transactional aspect that is characteristic of antisocial personality.[28] Individuals with ASPD often see interpersonal relationships as something measurable or interchangeable, putting aside emotional and moral values.[29] This reflects extreme selfishness, where the perpetrator only sees the victim in a context that benefits him and there is no indication that he cares about the emotional or psychological impact of the interaction on the victim.

Planning and premeditation

Premeditation, or structured planning, is a trait often found in individuals with ASPD.[30] They tend to perform well-planned actions and avoid spontaneity.[31] In communication with the victim, the perpetrator shows a very structured and results-oriented communication pattern. He sets the timing of the meeting and certain conditions and ensures that the interaction goes according to plan without involving feelings or attachments. Individuals with ASPD typically tend to act with clear goals[32] and they often hide their true intentions behind seemingly calm or restrained attitudes.[33] This careful planning allows the perpetrator to achieve their goals.[34, 35] By focusing on a measurable plan and ignoring emotional factors, individuals with ASPD can often manipulate situations to gain complete control without showing feelings of guilt.[36]

Conclusion

This study found that the communication patterns of perpetrators in intimate partner femicide cases showed the characteristics of ASPD. The perpetrator showed a detached emotional attitude, strong dominance and control over the victim, a selfish and utilitarian attitude that only thinks about personal gain and care-

ful planning (premeditation). The language used by the perpetrator reflects emotional manipulation, lack of empathy and a tendency to control the victim psychologically. These findings confirm the importance of analysing communication patterns as a tool to detect the risk of violence in intimate relationships early and help prevent extreme violence such as mutilation. couples, as well as to support the development of strategies for preventing violence in intimate relationships.

Ethics

This study was a secondary analysis based on the currently existing data and did not directly involve with human participants or experimental animals. Therefore, the ethics approval was not required in this paper.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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Data access

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable individual request.

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