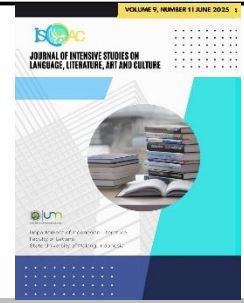

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**THE NARRATIVE OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN FIGHTING DISCRIMINATION
ISSUES ON NAJWA SHIHAB'S SHOW: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS STUDY**

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the use of language by Najwa Shihab through video shows on *her* YouTube channel that aim to build a narrative of women's empowerment against gender discrimination in Indonesia. Through a critical discourse analysis approach, this research examines how the language used by Najwa, both in word choice, metaphor use, persuasive sentences, and agenda setting, serves as a tool to change social perceptions of women. This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. The data of this study were taken from three episodes of Najwa Shihab's show, namely "From Women to Women", "Why Should Women Vote?", and "Why Should We Vote for Women Candidates?". The analysis shows that Najwa Shihab consistently uses strong language to encourage women's empowerment, criticize discriminatory social structures, and fight for gender equality. Metaphors such as "women as agents of change" and persuasive rhetoric used serve to motivate audiences and challenge patriarchal views that limit women's roles. This research contributes to the understanding of how media, through discourse, can play an important role in fighting for social justice and gender equality.

INTRODUCTION

Indeed, language is not only used to communicate. Every language user is required to

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always be critical and sensitive in various "problems" in the use of language. Santoso (2015) argues that producers or producers of texts, such as mass media editors, political elites, women elites, law formulators, educational designers, and so on, must consciously be critical of all forms of language choices that can hegemonize the perspective of ordinary people. Conversely, recipients or consumers of language must also have a sensitivity and criticality that there are language choices formulated in the texts they consume. Without a critical attitude, he unconsciously - even unconsciously - lives in the grip of language hegemony. In gender discourse, one should be able to uncover the dominance of men over women through the forms of language they choose. Conversely, one should be able to expose women's subordinate perspective through the languages they produce. This shows that language as social semiotics (Santoso, 2008), there is a very close and deep relationship between language structure and social structure (Fowler and Kress, 2019). Therefore, cultivating critical language awareness is essential—not merely as an academic exercise, but as a form of social responsibility to reveal and challenge structural inequalities hidden within everyday language use.

Discrimination against women remains an important issue in many walks of life, both in public and private spaces. Although much progress has been made in gender equality efforts, inequality is still common, especially in media representations that reinforce certain gender stereotypes. Morrison; Coulhart & Coulhart (2003) state that women are negatively labeled and metaphorized as animalistic and thus often receive accusations and intimidation. Meanwhile, women are also noble people created by God and deserve the same treatment: to be valued and recognized as men.

Mass media, as an important agent in shaping public opinion, has a very significant role in creating or changing social views towards women. One example of media that often discusses this issue is the program and narrative monologue "Catatan Najwa" and *talk show* hosted by Najwa Shihab, an Indonesian journalist and television presenter known for her courage in raising social and political issues including gender injustice. As a journalist, host, and activist, Najwa Shihab is known to have a great influence on public opinion in Indonesia, especially in fighting for women's rights and voicing social justice. In this context, the language she uses has an important role in shaping people's perceptions of gender and inequality issues.

Through a critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach, this study aims to explore how

Najwa Shihab uses discourse in her show to shape the narrative of women's empowerment and fight discrimination. According to Fairclough (2013), critical discourse analysis not only sees language as a means of communication, but also as a mechanism for maintaining or undermining social power structures. In this case, the language used in the media has the potential to influence how people perceive issues of discrimination against women. Furthermore, Sugerman (2023) said that the purpose of the presence of critical discourse analysis in science is to criticize the unbalanced social life relationship between ruling groups and ordinary people, strong groups and weak ones. In the context of critical discourse analysis, AWK activists are present to see, understand, and criticize the false truth behind the text produced by dominant groups who like to oppress people through text or discourse.

This study is grounded in critical discourse theory developed by researchers such as Fairclough (2013) and van Dijk (2008), who emphasize the importance of examining the relationship between language, power, and ideology. van Dijk (2008) argues that mass media play a major role in reinforcing or undermining the hegemony of certain ideologies, including those related to gender. Therefore, using a critical discourse approach, this article will analyze how Najwa Shihab, through language and framing in her shows, can make a positive contribution to women's empowerment and fight against ongoing gender discrimination in Indonesia.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods. The data source in this research is a *YouTube* video downloaded from Najwa Shihab's *YouTube* channel for three episodes, namely *From Women for Women*, *Why Women Should Vote*, and *Why Should We Vote for Women Candidates?* Data collection in this study was carried out through listening and recording techniques. The data were analyzed using the Spradley Technique with the stages of 1) data identification, 2) data reduction, 3) data classification, 4) coding and categorization, 5) data interpretation and unitization, 6) data triangulation, 7) compilation of findings, 8) discussion, 9) drawing meaning, and 10) drawing conclusions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This research aims to explore how Najwa Shihab uses discourse in her shows to shape

narratives of women's empowerment and against discrimination. This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. There are three Najwa Shihab videos used as data sources, namely *From Women to Women*, *Why Women Should Vote*, and *Why Should You Vote for Women Candidates?* The steps taken to collect data are 1) downloading Najwa Shihab's narration videos on her official *YouTube* channel; 2) transcribing the speech; 3) coding the elements that contain speech relevant to the research objectives such as sentence structure, word choice, use of metaphors, tone, and other ways used to shape meaning or influence the audience.

Data were analyzed using Spradley's technique with stages 1) data identification (sorting out data relevant to the research focus, such as narratives, cultural values, and the reality of value application); 2) data reduction (simplifying data without losing meaning and categorizing data according to the research focus); 3) data classification (grouping data according to the research focus); 4) coding and categorization (after initial coding, more detailed coding was carried out to identify main themes and then group the coded data into broader categories according to the research focus); 5) data interpretation and unitization (analyzing the content of the written stories, reviewing each story, analyzing the predictive patterns in the stories, connecting the data with the socio-cultural context); 6) data triangulation (carried out using time and technique/method triangulation; 7) compilation of findings (the main themes resulting from the analysis are arranged in such a way based on the research focus); 8) discussion/discussion (describing and discussing the findings); 9) drawing meaning; and 10) drawing conclusions. The research results are described as follows.

1. Empowerment Narratives in the Episode "From Women to Women"

a. Lexical Choice and Framing

One of the techniques Najwa uses is strong and assertive word choice. In addressing issues of gender inequality, violence against women, or the role of women in politics and society, Najwa tends to choose words that exude a spirit of empowerment. Words like "equality," "gender justice," "women's empowerment," and "women's rights" often appear in her conversations. "Women not only deserve equal rights, but should also get the opportunity to lead." In this statement, Najwa uses words like "rights," "opportunity," and "lead" that highlight a proactive and empowering attitude.

This word choice serves to change the audience's perception of the role of women. These words frame gender issues not just as women's problems, but as social problems that must be solved by the whole society, thus breaking down norms that discriminate against women.

b. Metaphor and Symbolism

Najwa often uses metaphors and symbolism to frame the discourse of women's empowerment and criticize social norms that discriminate. Metaphors serve to change the way audiences perceive complex issues and give them a more positive image of women. In discussing the role of women, Najwa may use metaphors such as "Women are agents of change" or "Women's voices are key to the nation's progress." These metaphors equate women with a force that can drive change, directly contradicting traditional views that often see women as objects or victims.

In this case, the metaphor forms a discourse that positions women as active subjects who can play a role in social change, countering the stereotype of women as passive or subordinate. Through this narrative strategy, Najwa not only redefines the role of women in the public sphere but also challenges deep-rooted cultural assumptions. Her consistent use of empowering metaphors serves as a form of resistance and rearticulation of women's identities in society.

2. Use of Rhetoric and Persuasive Sentences

Najwa Shihab is very adept at using persuasive rhetoric in building narratives of women's empowerment. In interviews or discussions, she often uses sentences that encourage audiences to think critically about gender inequality and call them to action. "Women's empowerment is a right, not a given." This sentence clearly has rhetorical power that raises awareness and deconstructs the view that women's empowerment is something that is "given" by others, but rather a right that should be obtained by every individual.

This persuasive sentence can be analyzed as an attempt to spread an ideology that changes the audience's way of thinking about gender equality. It also serves to challenge dominant views that may trivialize or ignore the rights of women in society. In this way, rhetorical strategies become a powerful tool to reshape public discourse and inspire collective action.

3. Discourse Structure and Agenda Setting

In many of her programs, Najwa consciously raises topics that speak to gender inequality and the need for women's empowerment. This choice of topic is crucial in agenda setting, which is how the media organizes and focuses audience attention on certain issues. Najwa often raises issues about the wage gap between men and women, gender-based violence, and the underrepresentation of women in politics. On every occasion, she makes space for female interviewees to speak, giving them a platform to voice their experiences.

In Critical Discourse Analysis, *agenda setting* is considered a tool to see how the media shapes public discourse. Najwa consciously raises issues that are considered taboo or less discussed by the mainstream media, creating a new, more progressive narrative about the role and rights of women in society. Her approach reflects a deliberate effort to reframe public priorities and push for structural change through media influence.

a. A Critique of Social Structure and Power

One of the most prominent aspects of Najwa's discourse is her critique of social and power structures that support gender inequality. In many programs, she invites the audience to think about how existing social structures - whether in law, politics, or culture - often discriminate against women. The statement "There is no longer any reason not to give women equal space in the political, economic and social world." directly challenges entrenched social norms and structures that limit women's role in society.

In this case, language functions as a tool to expose and question systems that discriminate. The discourse used by Najwa challenges existing patriarchal structures and challenges dominant ideologies that maintain gender inequality. Her approach exemplifies how critical media engagement can contribute to the deconstruction of oppressive social orders and the construction of emancipatory alternatives.

b. Strengthening Positive Identity for Women

In addition to criticizing the existing system, Najwa also works to reinforce a positive identity for women through language. She often talks about the great potential of women, both as individuals and as part of a community. The statement "Women can be amazing leaders, as many great women around the world have proven." not only encourages women to see themselves as potential leaders, but also counters the perception that leadership is a male domain.

In this sense, language helps shape and reinforce women's positive identities, motivating them to fight for their rights and against existing inequalities. This discursive strategy not only constructs a counter-narrative to dominant gender ideologies, but also fosters a sense of collective empowerment among female audiences. By legitimizing women's agency and contributions through affirmative language, Najwa contributes to the symbolic reconfiguration of gender roles in public consciousness.

4. Empowerment Narratives in the Episode "*Why Should Women Vote?*"

The language used by Najwa not only reflects the existing social reality but also functions as a tool to influence public opinion, criticize power structures, and fight for social change in the context of gender. The following are some aspects that can be analyzed from Najwa Shihab's use of language in creating a narrative of women's empowerment and criticizing the system that discriminates against women in this episode. This episode serves as a discursive space where political participation is framed as both a right and a responsibility for women.

a. Word Choice and Power Discourse

Najwa Shihab's choice of words in her programs, especially those related to women, often reflects a firm, bold and authoritative stance. She uses language that champions women's rights and challenges social norms that discriminate. For example, in talking about gender inequality or violence against women, Najwa often uses words like "*women's rights*," "*equality*," "*gender justice*," and "*women as agents of change*." These word choices not only reflect the spirit of empowerment, but also implicitly criticize systems that treat women unfairly. This word choice can be analyzed as a tool to critique dominant ideologies that support gender inequality. By choosing strong words, Najwa strengthens the empowerment narrative and shifts the existing discourse on women's roles in society.

b. Metaphor and Language Style

Najwa Shihab often uses metaphors or language styles that reinforce messages of empowerment and critique systems that oppress women. These metaphors serve to frame gender issues in a broader perspective, which not only sees the problem as an individual challenge but as a social issue that requires structural change. In her interviews she uses phrases such as "*women must be given space to speak*," "*women are the force of change*," or "*women are not just seen as objects, but as empowered subjects*." These phrases create a

positive image of women as active, strong and capable of leading change. Metaphors such as *"women as the force of change"* serve to counter traditional representations that portray women as passive and subordinate figures in social structures.

c. Use of Persuasive Sentences and Rhetoric

Najwa often uses effective rhetorical techniques to persuade her audience and shape public opinion. This rhetoric not only invites the audience to think critically about gender issues, but also to participate in social change. The persuasive and assertive sentences used also signal an active stance in criticizing structures that discriminate against women.

Statements such as *"We must now move to realize gender equality in all sectors of life,"* or *"We cannot continue to allow the existing system to curb women's potential,"* are examples of sentences that raise awareness and encourage change. These persuasive sentences can be analyzed to see how language is used as a tool to shape opinions and spread ideologies that support women's empowerment. By choosing words that are active and inviting, Najwa challenges the status quo that discriminates against women and calls the audience to action.

d. Agenda Setting and Issue Selection

One important aspect of critical discourse analysis is the way a speaker or journalist chooses and organizes the issues discussed. Najwa Shihab has consistently raised issues relevant to women's empowerment, such as gender-based violence, the wage gap, discrimination in the workplace, and the representation of women in politics and the media. Najwa does not just talk about gender inequality in general, but often relates these issues to real-life examples, such as cases of violence against women or the systemic barriers women face in achieving leadership positions. Najwa chooses to focus on issues that may be overlooked by the mainstream media, thus shaping a new, more inclusive and progressive discourse. This is a form of critique of the media and the wider system that often ignores or trivializes women's issues.

e. Discourse on Power Structure

Najwa often criticizes existing power structures, whether in political, legal or social contexts, that support gender inequality. In her discourse, she highlights how existing systems often disadvantage women, either directly through violence, or indirectly through policies or social norms. Her choice of words and framing strategies consistently reveal the embedded nature of power relations that marginalize women's voices and roles.

In interviews or *talk shows*, Najwa may talk about the existence of patriarchal systems that discriminate against women and reinforce inequality. For example, in discussing unequal pay, she would emphasize that this is not just an individual problem but a systemic problem that requires policy change. Through this, it can be seen how language is used to shape, maintain, or change existing social structures. The critique of patriarchal structures through language shows how Najwa uses discourse to attack and challenge dominant ideologies that discriminate against women.

f. Narrative of Defense and Empowerment

On many occasions, Najwa Shihab uses language to defend women's rights and fight for gender equality. On the other hand, she also champions women's empowerment by emphasizing the importance of women's voices in decision-making and their active role in society. Najwa often expresses that women should be given equal opportunities to have a voice and participate in various sectors of life, whether in politics, economics, or social affairs. At every opportunity, she encourages women to not only be part of the change, but also the leaders of change. The narratives built by Najwa challenge unequal power structures and explore the potential of women as agents of change. The language used by Najwa Shihab can be understood as a highly effective tool for creating narratives of female empowerment and criticizing systems that discriminate against women. With her bold word choices, strong use of metaphors, and ability to raise gender issues openly and critically, Najwa plays an important role in fighting for women's rights and promoting more equitable social change.

3. Empowerment Narratives in the Episode "*Why Should I Vote for Women Candidates?*"

In this episode, Najwa Shihab constructs a strong narrative that emphasizes the importance of women's political participation. Through her choice of language, she not only empowers women but also critiques the systemic barriers that hinder their involvement in politics. Here are some aspects that can be analyzed from Najwa Shihab's use of language in creating a narrative of women's empowerment and criticizing the system that discriminates against women in this episode.

a. Lexical Choice & Syntax

In critical linguistic studies, the lexical choice and syntax used by Najwa Shihab can

reflect how she constructs narratives that support women's empowerment. For example, in *talkshow* programs or interviews, Najwa often chooses words that are assertive and authoritative, which shows a proactive and empowering attitude. In talking about issues such as violence against women, wage inequality, or discrimination, Najwa usually uses strong terms such as "basic rights," "gender justice," or "women as agents of change," indicating a clear position against injustice.

b. Use of Metaphors and Rhetoric

Najwa Shihab often uses metaphors and rhetorical expressions in responding to social and gender issues. For example, in a discussion about women's empowerment or a critique of an oppressive system, she might use phrases like "women's voices must be heard" or "women as future leaders." In the sentence "Women must have the space to speak and take action," or "Our biggest challenge is to create a system that allows women to reach their full potential." not only invites the audience to think about empowerment, but also voices criticism of systems that silence women's voices.

c. Topic Selection and Agenda Setting

Najwa Shihab has consistently raised topics related to women's empowerment, ranging from public policy, gender-based violence, to the representation of women in the media. The choice of topic itself is a form of criticism of the wider system that tends to ignore or trivialize women's issues. In the *Mata Najwa* program, Najwa Shihab often invites female resource persons to discuss important topics, giving them space to voice their opinions on inequalities they experience, such as unequal wages, access to education, or legal injustice.

d. Discourse on Power Systems and Structures

One of the distinctive features of Najwa Shihab's language is her ability to criticize existing power structures. In many of her interviews and programs, she not only addresses individual issues, but also questions the social and political structures that allow gender inequality to persist. In discussing gender inequality, Najwa often highlights how certain legal, political and cultural systems disadvantage women, for example in terms of equal legal rights, access to leadership positions, or protection of women victims of violence.

e. Use of Social Context and Current Issues

Najwa Shihab is also very good at connecting global issues with the local Indonesian

context. For example, when discussing the #MeToo movement or gender equality in Indonesia, she often explores how these issues impact Indonesian women in particular. This can be seen in her statement "Around the world, women are starting to talk about their experiences, and that should also happen in Indonesia," or "Gender equality is not just for women in cities, but also for women in the regions." The language used by Najwa Shihab can be seen as a powerful tool to critique systems that discriminate against women and create narratives of empowerment. With her bold word choices, use of uplifting metaphors, and ability to raise gender issues in a broader social context, Najwa has succeeded in opening up a more inclusive discussion about women's equality and empowerment in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that the language used by Najwa Shihab can be seen as a very effective tool in creating a narrative of women's empowerment and criticizing the system that discriminates against them. With strong word choice, uplifting metaphors, and sharp criticism of existing power structures, Najwa succeeds in opening up space for social change. Her discourse not only reflects progressive views on gender equality, but also serves as a tool to challenge patriarchal ideologies that discriminate against women, give women the space to speak out, and change social perceptions of their role in society. This research also provides a deeper understanding of how media, particularly *talk show* programs, can be an important platform for social change related to women's empowerment.

Based on the findings in this study, it is recommended for future researchers to expand the analysis to other media programs that discuss gender issues so that it can be seen whether there are differences or similarities in the way women's empowerment discourse is built in different media. In addition, the results of this research can be a comparative study of discourse in various countries. International research on women's empowerment discourse in the media can be conducted to compare how language is used to criticize gender discrimination in various cultural contexts. In addition, further researchers can examine how audiences respond to the discourse built by Najwa Shihab, as well as its impact on changing attitudes and actions in society towards the issue of gender equality. Finally, longitudinal research should be conducted on this issue to observe the changes in discourse in the media over time and its impact on the development of gender equality in Indonesia could also be an

interesting focus.

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