

## Intimate Partner Violence in *Maid Series*

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### Abstrak

Praktik kekerasan, khususnya terhadap perempuan, masih tetap ada, seperti yang bisa diungkap melalui serial *Maid*. Studi ini membahas kekerasan yang tercermin dalam serial tersebut, yang melalui jenis-jenis kekerasannya dijelaskan secara rinci. Slabert dan Green melakukan penelitian tentang kekerasan dalam rumah tangga yang dialami perempuan dan menjelaskan gagasan kekerasan pasangan intim dalam empat bentuk: kekerasan fisik, pelecehan psikologis, pelecehan seksual, dan pelecehan ekonomi. Penelitian lebih lanjut di IPV memperkuat konsep untuk studi lebih lanjut. Dengan studi pustaka sebagai metodologi penelitian yang diterapkan, data diambil dari semua dialog antar tokoh. Beberapa fakta ditemukan dari serial tersebut bahwa ada tiga bentuk kekerasan yang diterima pasangan tersebut, yaitu: kekerasan fisik yang terlihat pada lebam setelah suami Danielle mencekiknya, dan Paula, ibu Alex, mengalami lebam dan hidung berdarah saat Alex Seorang anak; pelecehan psikologis yang dialami tokoh perempuan karena pasangannya sering melakukan kekerasan terhadap dirinya; dan kekerasan ekonomi dilakukan dalam bentuk penguasaan hampir semua kegiatan yang mengarah pada bisnis ekonomi, seperti pendapatan, pengeluaran, informasi perbankan, utang, dan pinjaman.

**Kata kunci:** *Kekerasan Pasangan Intim, Pelecehan Fisik, Pelecehan Psikologis, Pelecehan Ekonomi*

### Abstract

The practice of violence, especially toward women, still exists, as could be revealed through the *Maid series*. This study discussed the violence reflected in the series, which through its kinds of violence is clarified in detail. Slabert and Green conducted research on domestic violence experienced by women and explain the idea of intimate partner violence in four forms: physical abuse, psychological abuse, sexual abuse, and economic abuse. Further research in IPV strengthens the concept for further studies. Having a literature review as the research methodology applied, the data was taken from all the dialogues between the characters. Several facts were found from the series that there were three forms of violence received by the couple, namely: physical violence that was seen in the bruises after Danielle's husband strangled her, and Paula, Alex's mother, had bruises and a bleeding nose when Alex was a child; psychological abuse experienced by female characters because their partners often commit violence against them; and economic violence is carried out in the form of controlling almost all activities that lead to economic business, such as income, expenses, banking information, debt, and loans.

**Keywords :** *Intimate Partner Violence, Physical Abuse, Psychological Abuse, Economic Abuse*

### INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, patriarchal norms have been rooted in all cultures around the world where men have full power and authority to control women and children in the family. In patriarchal cultures, the highest social structure is held predominantly by men (Lundberg-Love 2007, p.1). Such a culture leads men to have strong personal attributes such as independence and power, whereas women are considered to have fewer valuable attributes.

Judging by this fact, it is safe to say that there is gender inequality that revolves around society. Matheson, Kidd, and Came (2021) discover that the more subordinate women are in a culture, the more prevalent rape and other forms of violence against women are. Thus, it is safe to say there is a definite correlation between inequality between men and women and such violence.

Intimate Partner Violence is defined as the act of abuse within an intimate partnership. In accordance with the definition, the World Health Organization (2021) describes intimate partner violence as a demeanor between intimate relationships that provokes physical, sexual, or psychological damage. This explanation helps distinguish Intimate Partner Violence from different kinds of domestic violence, like elderly violence and child violence. One of the ways to classify intimate partner violence is by the form of its violence. Slabert and Green (2013) classify intimate partner violence into four forms: sexual, physical, psychological, and economic violence.

In her book, *Theorizing Patriarchy*, Sylvia Walby states that violence and sexuality are socially shaped. Men are raised to be macho and accustomed to using violence in social strife. Walby portrays the content of popular films and songs, with his heroic acts of violence, in which male power is revered. Even the issue of rape itself is usually raised as a theme of heroic manliness. This all-male grouping built around the glorification of male power is a factor in varying degrees of rape and violence (Walby 1991, p. 134).

According to feminists, intimate partner violence must be examined in terms of the social context in which it occurs and the patriarchal society that privileges men (Dobash and Dobash 1998, p. 64). As a result, a women's social status is linked to their higher chance of experiencing IPV, including sexual, physical, and emotional abuse. This unequal social structure creates the illusion that men are more superior to women and completely have the right to dominate and use women as possessions.

Marriage and family are social institutions that represent cultural and societal standards and, hence, are frequently an extension of male authority and privilege. According to the World Health Organization (2014), men who force their partners to perform sexual acts believe their behaviors are legal since they are married. Thus, Ali, Dhingra, and McGarry (2016) point out that there is a definite correlation between male power and violence against women. Also, sexual exploitation of girls is unavoidable in a society that prioritizes men's needs over women's and children's.

The issue of intimate partner violence against women has been discussed in several studies and is still a prevalent issue worldwide. A recent study conducted by Lestari, Taria Ayu; Setyowati, Agnes; Yukesti (2019) discuss how intimate partner violence is represented in Colleen Hoover's *It Ends with Us*. They found that the female main character experienced three types of intimate partner violence, such as physical violence, sexual violence, and psychological violence. In accordance with the result, Kinanti (2019) finds that there is also a practice of intimate partner violence caused by the patriarchal society in the novel *Big Little Lies* by Moriarty. Nilasari and Thoyibi (2020) also conducted a similar study. The study aims to expose four causes of intimate partner violence in Paula Hawkins' *Girl on Train*, namely financial problems, men's bad habits, jealousy, and disloyalty. To support her findings, Nilasari and Thoyibi use a sociological approach.

From the previous studies, this study demonstrates that intimate partner violence is shaped by patriarchal society as represented in popular novels. Thus, it is clear that issues about intimate partner violence need to be discussed further nowadays. This research aims to analyze the forms of Intimate Partner Violence that are experienced by the female characters of the *Maid Series* using Slabert and Green's typology. This series was an adaptation of the New York Times best-selling memoir *Maid: Hard Work, Low Pay, and a Mother's Will to Survive* by Stephanie Land. The series tells the story of a young mother who runs away from an abusive relationship and finds a job as a house cleaner to provide for her daughter's life.

## METHOD

This study conducted a literature review by employing supporting books as reference material and gathering information and references in the form of connected journals via the internet media to obtain the data needed for this study. The focus of this research is the drama series *Maid*. The series *Maid* was chosen because it can illustrate intimate partner violence against women, which is something that female characters have experienced. The subject of this study is the entire dialogue in which the female characters are assaulted by their partners. This analysis includes intimate partner violence typology outlined by Slabert and Green and other relevant theories related to patriarchal beliefs that lead to violence against female.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The In Netflix's series *Maid* found three forms of intimate partner violence against women, namely physical abuse, psychological abuse, and economic abuse.

### Psychological Abuse

Psychological violence, which can also be referred to as emotional violence, is described as the use of a variety of public or private behaviors to shame, scare, and control someone, as seen in the following quotation.

*Alex: "I'm not insane, Sean. You're the one that woke me up in a rage over some dirty dishes and punched a hole in the wall."*

*Sean: "I drank too much. I went too far. I'm sorry."*

*Alex: "I picked glass out of Maddy's hair last night."*

*Sean: "I didn't mean for it to be that close to her."* (Episode 1, 00:34:30-00:34:45)

Judging by the above conversation, it can be concluded that the female character experiences psychological abuse by her husband. Punching the wall above Alex is enough to make Alex scared of her partner, as she said to the social service employee in episode 1.

*Alex: "Maddie's dad, he drinks, and he blacks out and punches stuff."*

*Employee: "Punches you?"*

*Alex: "No."*

*Employee: "Punches Maddy?"*

*Alex: "No. Just, last night was different and I got scared."* (Episode 1, 00:09:36 – 00:09:56)

From the above conversation, it is well proven that Sean does not punch Alex. He just punches stuff and throws things around her. His idea of wanting to be dominant in the relationship is in accordance with Ali, Dhingra, and McGarry (2016)'s theory, which states that patriarchal society allows men to think they are powerful, so they can do anything to women, including violent acts.

Not only is Alex experiencing physical abuse from her partner, but she is also experiencing verbal abuse. Every time her partner, Sean, gets drunk and blacks out, he often mocks Alex right in front of her face. Profanity words like "fuck", "shit", and "bitch" are something Alex usually receives when her husband gets mad and drunk.

Expecting the first child is supposed to be a piece of fantastic news, but not with Sean. When Alex tells him she is pregnant, he forces her to have an abortion, which she refuses. Knowing this fact, Sean gets mad and mocks Alex. This condition is captured in Episode 2 when Alex has a monologue with Maddy's pony dolls.

*"When I told me I was pregnant, he sat me down on that chair and he brought me a cup of mint tea. He told me that he would hold my hand every step of the way. All tenderness. But then, when I told him that I wasn't gonna get an abortion, he took the chair and all the rest of my belongings, and he threw them out into the rain. He*

*screamed at me and told me that I was a fucking whore. And he said that I was ruining his bike trip and that I was also ruining his life.” (Episode 2, 00:47:52 – 00:48:50)*

Based on Alex’s monologue above, it can be concluded that Sean started to abuse her when she refused his order to abort the baby. In this context, it is clear that Sean has the tendency to control Alex’s body and decisions. Alex being controlled by her partner is also seen in episode 9 when her father comes and visits their house. Sean clearly knows that Alex hates her biological father because of his abusive behavior that left her with deep childhood trauma, yet he forces Alex to sit right next to her father and greet him nicely when she does not want to.

*Alex: I don’t wanna ...*

*Sean: Sit ... down (Episode 9, 00:07:15 – 00:07:20)*

In this scene, Sean tells Alex to sit while pointing at the dining room chair next to her father. Alex has nothing to do but obey her partner’s command; she’s scared of his anger flares up again and he does something crazy to her and their only daughter. Through this scene, it shows that Sean is more dominant in the relationship. Alex does not even have a chance to finish her words, yet Sean keeps forcing her to obey his command.

### **Physical Abuse**

The use of physical action to cause pain and injury, such as slapping, hitting, kicking, punching, burning, and choking, is referred to as physical violence. This type of abuse leaves visible bruises and wounds all over the victim's body. In this series, Danielle and Alex’s mother experience physical abuse, as shown in the following quotation.

*Danielle: “You see that? (Showing her scar) This motherfucker tried to strangle me. You think it started out like that? No, it grows like mold.” (Episode 2, 00:26:09 - 00:26:26)*

In this scene, Danielle shows Alex the bruises that her husband made after he strangled her. The bruise is lingering around her neck—a concealer could not even conceal it. She said abusive behavior cannot be fixed. It will keep growing like mold. She also said that it is her third time staying at a domestic violence shelter, which means that this is not her first time being abused by her husband. Another female character that experienced physical abuse by her partner is Alex’s mother, Paula. However, the difference is that she never tells anybody that she is being abused.

*Alex: “I spent the last couple of nights at Dad’s. Why didn’t you ever tell me that he hit you?”*

*Alex’s mom: “Oh, damn, Alex. Why would you want to bring up that dark shit, huh?” (Episode 5, 00:53:22 – 00:53:40)*

In this scene, Alex finds the truth about their parents’ divorce. She used to believe that their parents separated because they fell out of love, but the truth is that her father abused her mom a lot. When she stayed at her father's house, the friction of childhood memories came across her mind. She remembered she was hiding from her father in the kitchen cupboard. Minutes later, she saw her mother’s nose was bleeding and several bruises were covering her face.

### **Economic Abuse**

Controlling revenue, expenditure, banking information, debts, and loans are all examples of economic abuse. Restrict access to the use of goods like transportation and

technology, which enable us to stay and work, along with property and everyday necessities like clothing and food, can all fall under this category. It could also entail throwing things away and refusing to pay household expenses as seen in the following quotation.

*"I was opening a bank account because I don't have one. Because Sean took my ATM card when I didn't pay the electric bill. Or I was isolated in a trailer for two years without any access to money and that's financial abuse." (Episode 3, 00:26:30 – 00:26:52)*

Living together with her partner for two years, Alex was not allowed to manage her finances. Her partner controls everything. She barely had any money. If she wanted to buy something, she had to ask her partner's decision first. Sean also limited Alex's access to being financially independent. When she tells Sean she wants to be independent in terms of finances, he hates the idea. He does not directly say no to her, but he is limiting any access and things that she needs to have to earn her own money. He refuses to pay Alex's phone bill and tells her to share the phone with him, although he knows she already put her number on cleaning ads.

*Alex: My phone is almost out of minutes...*

*Sean: Do we need to keep your phone on? Can we just share mine?*

*Alex: I put my number on cleaning ads. People need to be able to call me.*

*Sean: Yeah, but nobody is. I mean... Right?*

*Alex: I'm trying. (Episode 8, 00:39:28 – 00:40:02)*

From the above conversation, it seems that Sean looks down on Alex and is unsure if she can earn her own money. He has restricted her ability to contact her potential customers. Without her number, Alex could not get any customers. This one proves that Sean doesn't want to facilitate Alex to earn her own money.

## CONCLUSION

Violence never chooses its victims. It can happen to anybody, anywhere, and anytime. In the Maid series, produced in 2021, many events are revealed and show the reality that violence is still there, surrounding women's lives. Throughout the series, intimate partner violence, as part of domestic violence, practices its cruelty in three forms, and all involve women as the ones who accept the violence; they are physical, psychological, and economic abuse.

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