



Debunking the Normalisation of Sexual Violence on Screen Through #MeToo Movement: The Case of Hollywood Films

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Abstract

This study examines the denormalisation of sexual violence against women in the #MeToo movement-themed Hollywood films. The strong presence of the social-political #MeToo movement in the past decade has influenced Hollywood films. The movement plays a major role in increasing public awareness of how devastating sexual abuse is against women and in challenging the current patriarchal system in society. This study uses descriptive research methods and adopts thematic analysis to critically analyse the denormalisation of sexual violence against women in Hollywood films with the #MeToo movement as their theme. This research used three Hollywood films as the units of analyses: *On the Record*, *Athlete A*, and *Bombshell*. This study found that these films are essential in denormalising sexual violence against women on screen. The findings show the three important characteristics shared among these three films. First, they shed light on the existence of the power imbalance between the perpetrators and victims. Second, they show the transformation of female victims of sexual violence into feminist figures. Last, they denormalise sexual abuse. The findings benefit academics who are interested in movie and gender studies as well as practitioners who promote gender equality and women's rights.

Keywords: *Hollywood film; the #MeToo movement; sexual violence; denormalisation of sexual violence*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji denormalisasi kekerasan seksual terhadap perempuan dalam film-film Hollywood bertema gerakan #MeToo. Kuatnya kehadiran gerakan sosial-politik #MeToo dalam satu dekade terakhir telah mempengaruhi perfilman Hollywood. Gerakan ini memainkan peran utama dalam meningkatkan kesadaran publik tentang betapa dahsyatnya pelecehan seksual terhadap perempuan dan dalam menantang sistem patriarki saat ini di masyarakat. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode penelitian deskriptif dan mengadopsi analisis tematik untuk menganalisis secara kritis denormalisasi kekerasan seksual terhadap perempuan dalam film-film Hollywood dengan tema gerakan #MeToo. Penelitian ini menggunakan tiga film Hollywood sebagai unit analisis: *On the Record*, *Athlete A*, dan *Bombshell*. Studi ini menemukan bahwa film-film ini sangat penting dalam mendenormalisasi kekerasan seksual terhadap perempuan di layar kaca. Temuan menunjukkan tiga karakteristik penting yang dimiliki bersama di antara ketiga film ini. Pertama, mereka menjelaskan adanya ketidakseimbangan kekuatan antara pelaku dan korban. Kedua, mereka menunjukkan transformasi perempuan korban kekerasan seksual menjadi sosok feminis. Terakhir, mereka mendenormalisasi pelecehan seksual. Temuan ini bermanfaat bagi akademisi yang tertarik dengan studi film dan studi gender serta praktisi yang mempromosikan kesetaraan gender dan hak-hak perempuan.

Kata Kunci : *film Hollywood; gerakan #MeToo; kekerasan seksual; denormalisasi kekerasan seksual*

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Introduction

Sexual violence is deeply ingrained and has been normalised in Hollywood films for the sake of plot development (Conolly-Smith, 2013; Projansky 2001). During the period between the 1900s and 1920s, Hollywood productions often portrayed independent women as susceptible to sexual violence. This trend continued, albeit with slight variations, between the 1930s and 1940s, during which Hollywood films incorporated scenes of sexual violence infused with comedic elements (Projansky, 2001). Moreover, the portrayal of aggressive sexual abuse in Hollywood during the 1960s failed to explore the impact on victims, but instead utilised violence to dramatize the film.

Regarding the term 'sexual violence', this study adopts the definition provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), referring it to 'any type of sexual activity that a person does not agree to, including acts where the victim is unable to give consent due to their age, disability, or being under the influence of drugs or alcohol' (2014). This can take many forms, such as unwanted touching, rape, and attempted rape, and can occur in any type of relationship or setting. For example, all sexual acts from one person to another that are not accompanied by the victim's consent, either because the victim cannot give consent or refuse, can be considered a sexual violation. This broad definition of sexual violence is suitable for understanding the depiction of sexual abuse scenes in Hollywood films. That is because, as part of entertainment industries, often, the story of sexual abuse toward women, such as rape or attempted rape, is dramatised and used as an essential part of the film's plot development purposes (Conolly-Smith, 2013).

According to Conolly-Smith (2013), Hollywood films from the 1940s to the 1980s normalized sexual violence against women. Specifically, he analyzed American combat films produced from World War II to the 1990s and found that sexual violence, including rape and attempted rape, was considered "*a productive and therefore necessary story element*" for plot development (Conolly-Smith, 2013, p. 241). Conolly-Smith further asserts that this sexual violence against women in these films "*serves only as a narrative device that clarifies the more important male conflicts lying at the true heart of the film*" (Conolly-Smith, 2013, p. 244). This reinforces harmful cultural attitudes and desensitizes viewers to the seriousness of sexual violence. Moreover, the vast majority of these films failed to explore the impact of sexual crimes on women or the actions of perpetrators. This pattern perpetuated

normalization of sexual violence against women.

Moving on to the contemporary era, a recent study written by Hogan (2022) reveals how the narrative of sexual violence in Hollywood film and television has changed, albeit slowly, in the last thirty years. He argues that from the results of his investigation, it can be seen that there has been a change in the visualization pattern of sexual violence narratives in Hollywood from the 1960s to the 2020s. Specifically, which initially presented sexual violence as an event that was "*regrettable but not particularly shocking or distressing*" changed to "*horrifying, brutal, and deeply traumatising*" (p.215). This condition, stated by Hogan, is a change resulting from the struggle of feminist groups, "*Such shifts over time appear to reflect changes to understandings of and attitudes toward rape and secondary victimisation as the result of decades of feminist advocacy around these issues*" (p. 215).

Not just that Hollywood films in the contemporary era have shifted to become more critical of the issue of sexual violence, but through a recent study, Hollywood films under the strong influence of the feminist movement have made new contributions. The Hollywood film plays a critical role as a journalism's ally to increase public awareness and trust in cases of sexual violence in the real world that are brought to the big screen (Gastón-Lorente & Gómez-Baceiredo, 2022). Furthermore, Gastón-Lorente and Gómez-Baceiredo argue that as an ally, Hollywood film contributes to making 'the real' sexual violence case adapted as a film to be more believable. This contribution is essential because, as argued before, there has been a normalisation of how sexual abuse issues have been presented on the Hollywood screen. In other words, Hollywood films nowadays go hand in hand with the feminist agenda for women's rights, whose core is "*to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression*" (Hooks 2000, viii).

Furthermore, through the most recent feminist movement, the #MeToo movement, Hollywood films nowadays also contribute to fighting the normalisation of sexual abuse on screen. The movement that was first coined by Tarana Burke in 2006 was built to help those who survive sexual violence, especially women of colour, could have a place to heal. Back at that time, this movement only gained little attention from society. Only after a decade can this movement finally have its moment. Through the tweet from American actress Alyssa Milano, the hashtag #MeToo went viral globally until today. She wrote, "*If you have been sexually harassed or assaulted,*





write “me too” as a reply to this tweet.” This movement, argued by Phipps (2020), signifies one of the critical social and political histories which specifically focuses on sexual violence. In line with Phipps, Frechette (2020) further wrote that this movement has also significantly influenced popular culture, especially regarding how pop culture sheds light on how devastating sexual violence is and empowering female victims to speak up and bring down the perpetrator. “*From Hollywood to Capitol Hill, #MeToo has amplified what was once privately held discussions across politics, news, sports, social media, television, film, music, popular books, and art, providing victims with a platform to voice their stories and receive support*” (Frechette, 2020, p.1195).

The #MeToo movement significantly affected the entertainment industry, particularly the film and television industries, as argued by Dockterman (2020). Dockterman suggests that the discourse brought by the movement led to the emergence of various films and television dramas, constituting “pop culture’s first steps into a new era’s debate around consent, harassment, and agency.” However, since film and television making takes years, it took a few years after the movement went viral in 2017 to see its manifestation on screen (Dockterman, 2020). The plot of these films depicts the movement’s core values, showing the moment when victims of sexual crimes dare to speak up and inspire other victims to do the same. Nonetheless, scholarly attention on the impact of the #MeToo movement on screen is still in its infancy.

Only a few scholars have discussed the #MeToo movement in Hollywood. One of them is the result of research from Kornfield and Jones (2021), which investigated thirty episodes from sixteen U.S. television dramas featuring #MeToo activism in their work. They argue that throughout these episodes, there is a significant change in the discourse around sexual violence in a more positive direction, influenced by #MeToo activism. The changes, Kornfield and Jones (2021) argue, can be seen through three feature plotlines, namely “*storylines that map the structural nature of sexual violence, that showcase disclosures leading to social change, and that portray bystanders who intervened to disrupt rape culture*” (p.12). In other words, the study from Kornfield and Jones (2021) provides an understanding of how the #MeToo movement’s influence on the portrayal of sexual violence onscreen produced significant plot changes in Hollywood films. As a result, it contributes to increasing public awareness about sexual violence.

Moreover, other researchers found that the influence of #MeToo activism on screen has created female figures who are more powerful, influential, and able to challenge the patriarchal structure. First, Brüning (2021) argues that in U.S. television dramas, the #MeToo movement created a significant change by creating female protagonist figures who are more articulate and able to address patriarchal issues that are considered detrimental to women. She called this emerging figure the joykill, “*a new postfeminist figure within teen television series*” (p.13). This figure, wrote Brüning, substantially “*joyfully ‘killing’ the patriarchy or at least standing up to some forms of sexual violence*” (p.4). For instance, in one drama that Brüning (2021) analysed, *Riverdale* (2017), after being slut-shamed by her friend, Veronica, does not like the portrayal of other ‘usual’ victims in drama in general who accepts sexism. On the contrary, she shows different reactions. Veronica shows her anger, pointing out how bad the structural obstacles (which she refers to as the patriarchal structure) are, and chooses to take revenge. Brüning (2021) further wrote that “*Veronica’s anger is not depicted as a negative and destructive emotion reserved for ‘angry feminists,’ but instead anger becomes a legitimate, and—as the evolving storyline shows—empowering, productive, and even positive emotion as it becomes enmeshed in postfeminist discourse*” (p.8).

In line with the results of research by Brüning (2021), a study conducted by Posada (2020) which investigates the Hollywood film, *Revenge* (2018), also shows a significant influence of the #MeToo movement in the movie regarding the portrayal of sexual assault. First, even when this film features sexual violence scenes, it does not make it a gratuitous display’ by showing the dramatisation of sexual violence scenes like films of the same genre. However, this movie only shows rape scenes for a short time, indicating that the sexual violence scenes are not being utilised as a plot development tool. Posada (2020) also noted how the ‘final girl’ (the last female survivor) in this film not being portrayed as a victim but as a powerful woman who does not remain silent and chooses to take revenge on the perpetrator, “*Revenge’ identifying the men by their “fear and pain” at the mercy of an aggressive female gaze*” (p.196). Therefore, to this point, we can understand that the influence of #MeToo activism from the study conducted by Brüning (2021) and Posada (2020) resulted in the presence of new and different female figures from other Hollywood films in general, which they called as the joykill and new final girl, respectively. At the same time, these figures also debunked the





portrayal of ordinary female victims in Hollywood cinemas, which were characterised as weak and vulnerable (Conolly-Smith, 2013; Projansky, 2001).

Methods

This study utilized thematic analysis following the framework outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) to develop codes and identify themes in data. By adopting thematic analysis, the researcher tries to find “recognisable reoccurring topics, ideas, or patterns (themes) occurring within the data” (Hawkins, 2017; p.1757). Themes in this context refer to the “common line of understanding occurring within the data” (Hawkins, 2017; p.1757). This type of analysis is advantageous to be applied in this research, especially because it allows the researcher to “summarise, highlight key features of, and interpret a wide range of data sets” (Kiger and Varpio, 2020). Furthermore, the data was managed using NVivo software, with statements and narrations from #MeToo-themed films’ cast transcribed and coded manually to generate initial codes. Recognizable themes were then identified and defined, and themes with the most references from the transcript data were chosen to produce the films’ themes.

To select the films for analysis, the study focused on films that adopted the dynamics of the #MeToo movement into their storyline and used two main characteristics of the movement to determine inclusion. Firstly, the film must focus on the sexual crimes committed by the perpetrator against their victims. Secondly, the film must highlight how the victims voice what they experience and fight the perpetrators. The films were selected through an online Boolean search using keywords such as “the #MeToo themed movies” and “#MeToo films.” The researcher read and analyzed several web pages from the Boolean search to look for the film’s title, filtering them based on the earlier characteristics and production year. Drama series inspired by the #MeToo movement and non-English language films were excluded from the final selection.

After the above processes, the final film lists analysed in this study are *Bombshell*, *On the Record*, and *Athlete A*. These three films are relevant and compelling samples for studying the #MeToo movement because they offer diverse perspectives on the topic of sexual harassment and abuse in various contexts. *Bombshell* is a fictional account of a high-profile sexual harassment case in the media industry, *On the Record* is a documentary that explores sexual assault allegations against a prominent figure in the music industry, and *Athlete A* examines the institutional enabling of sexual

abuse in elite sports. Analyzing these three films together provides a more extensive understanding of the #MeToo movement and its influence on different aspects of society.

No.	Movie Title	Theme
1.	<i>Bombshell</i> (Dec 13, 2019)	The film depicts the toxic work culture and sexual harassment at Fox News, with a focus on the experiences of the women who came forward with allegations against former Fox News CEO Roger Ailes.
2.	<i>On the Record</i> (May 25, 2020)	The film explores the experiences of women who have accused Russell Simmons, a prominent figure in the music industry, of sexual assault, and the challenges they faced in speaking out
3.	<i>Athlete A</i> (June 24, 2020)	The film examines the institutional enabling of sexual abuse within USA Gymnastics, including the case of Larry Nassar, and the courage of the survivors who came forward to hold the organization accountable.

Table 1. Film samples

Results and Discussion

In this part, this study will critically explore three recurring themes from the result of the thematic analysis of the data set. These three themes primarily discuss firstly; the imbalance of power between the perpetrators and victims, secondly; the emergence of feminist figures throughout the films, and how films under investigation denormalise sexual violence on screen.

The Imbalance of Power between the Perpetrators and Victims

One of the central themes that emerged from the data is how Hollywood films present unequal relationships between perpetrators and victims. Initially, this theme is an essential part of capturing changes in how the movie debunked the normalisation of sexual violence through the development of the plot. Notably, this theme will





become the foundation to signify how the story changes at the movie's end and, at the same time, how the films contribute to denormalising sexual violence (see the emergence of feminist figures section).

This theme plays a role as a background of the films, which can be seen at the beginning of all the movies under investigation. For instance, at the beginning of all of the films, the plot shows the same pattern, which shows how victims of sexual violence are in an inferior and less powerful position compared to those who are perpetrators of sexual crimes. The inferiority inherent in victims of sexual violence is generally described through how the victim is bound to a system that positions itself as a powerless individual compared to the perpetrators. On the contrary, the perpetrators can be identified as elite with an influential role in the community.

For example, in *Bombshell*, all victims of sexual crimes are Roger's employees who work at the office he leads. The relationship between Roger and his employees is imbalanced in terms of power. It is depicted through a superior-subordinate relationship. Roger represents an influential man through his position as a company leader who controls his employees' careers. Meanwhile, Roger's employees represent the spectrum of 'the powerless.' They are in a vulnerable position and willing to accept harassment from Roger to maintain their professional careers in the company. In one scene, as an illustration, when Kayla, Roger's new employee, comes to Roger's office to ask for a career promotion, Roger sexually harasses Kayla. He forced her to lift her skirt by saying, "Now, pull your dress up and let me see your legs. It's a visual medium, Kayla. Come on. Higher. Come on. You have a great body."

Roger's powerful position is used to fulfill his interests and commit sexual violence against his female employees in the office in exchange for professional career opportunities. The victims are trapped in Roger's system, where they have no choice but to be silent under Roger's violence because they want to maintain their professional careers. In Roger's context, through his supreme position as 'the boss,' he feels entitled to do the sexual abuse because he got the power to dominate his victims, in this context, his female employees. His power and domination can be captured through how he threatened his employees. Furthermore, Roger also asked his employee to give their 'loyalty' in exchange for receiving career safety. Regarding the term loyalty, one of Roger's victims describes that "With Roger, it's always about loyalty. He says he can fix things if you are loyal. And you can guess

the ultimate expression of loyalty. Roger likes to joke, "to get ahead you gotta give a little head."

Moreover, if Roger's victims refuse to be sexually assaulted by him, Roger will give punishment to destroy their careers. As an illustration, employees who choose to fight Roger will end up in a place where their job has no future. For example, Gretchen, a news anchor at Roger's office who refused to be harassed by Roger, who also stood against sexual misconduct behavior from her male colleagues in the office, had to experience a setback in her career development. Roger did that intentionally to punish Gretchen's behavior. Primarily, Roger's 'punishment and gift' to his employees is an open secret in the office that has been going on for years. However, no one in the office dares to report Roger because they know his power could quickly destroy someone's life. For instance, Gretchen's lawyer warned her when she wanted to fight Roger, "If Roger finds out you came to us, he won't just fire you. He will bang us with a million-dollar lawsuit. He will attack you personally. These men, they care more about their reputations than they do money. Roger won't stop. You know that."

Unlike with *Bombshell*, in *Athlete A*, the form of imbalance of power that results in sexual violence toward the victims is fundamentally different. In this movie, the perpetrators did not sexually assault their victims just because they needed 'patronage' from the perpetrators but because the victims were utterly powerless because of their young age. The perpetrator, a serial paedophile Dr. Larry Nassar, is well-known as a prominent person and an important figure in the USA Gymnastics (USAG) community. One of the reasons why Nassar is considered a significant figure is because of his background, which includes 29 years of working experience as a doctor for the USAG women's program and a Michigan State University doctor. By this status, Nassar molests hundreds of children during his career as a doctor.

Nassar's efforts to build the image of 'the good guy' in front of his victims and his important position in the community made Nassar look so much more potent in front of his victims, primarily children and teenage girls. Consequently, all of his victims were molested 'unconsciously' by Nassar since they were trapped in the same system as Nassar. That is because most of his victims are young gymnasts who are powerless. They often cannot differentiate the limitation of what 'normal and appropriate' physical examination is and what is not. As an illustration, one of Nassar's victims, Maggie, asks her other friends whether what Nassar did to her is normal or not, "Does he do





this to you? Is this normal?" and her friend answers Maggie, "Yeah, like, he does it to me, too."

Furthermore, this film also shows that the imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victims is not the only factor that causes sexual violence. But 'the system' itself also plays a role. The system refers to the culture in the USAG, which has been corrupted and covered hundreds of sexual assault reports to protect their 'image.' One prominent example in the film is the story of Maggie, whose career was hampered by the USAG by deleting her name as a representation of the USA team at the 2016 Olympics because she reported Nassar's crimes to the USAG. Jennifer Sey, one of USA's former gymnasts, stated that gymnasts who were victims of sexual violence in the USAG environment were silenced by the system and had to 'live' in an abusive environment. She said, "when we knew that there was a sexual abuser in our midst, we would never say anything. We were just.... We felt utterly powerless."

Meanwhile, from *On the Record*, the imbalance of power can be captured by the unequal socioeconomic status relationship between the perpetrator and the victims. The accused, Russell Simmons, is known as the king of hip-hop and a prominent person among black people and society in general in the United States. As the boss, he has power over all of his co-workers who works for him. Drew Dixon, one of Russell's co-workers at Def Jam Recordings who works as an executive, was sexually harassed by him repeatedly until finally, she was violently raped by him in 1995. In one of the film's scenes, Drew tells the audience how stressed and depressed she was after the incident by saying that she was "reduced to nothing" and "a trash."

However, because of the unequal power in terms of socioeconomic status that they have, Drew chose not to report Russell because she believed that her report was just nonsense back at that time. Drew said, "No one's going to take me seriously. He's like 'Russell Simmons,' like who's going to believe he raped me?". After the incident, Drew walked away from Russell's office and worked at another recording company. However, to her surprise, she still had to experience sexual violence from her new boss at the workplace. Despite her horrible undertaking in the music industry, Drew still works and does her job because she thinks the harassment is 'the culture,' and she has to adapt to it. Nevertheless, she describes how working in the music industry is very hard for women. "My kids know generally that men behave inappropriately with me in the music industry and that's all. I'm sad...I really didn't understand that all

of those other violations of my physical boundaries were breaking me down."

Besides Drew's story, the film also shows Russell's other victims. One is Sheri Sher, a young black musician who knew Russell as a prominent person in the music industry. On the day of the incident, Sher was invited to Russell's new office, which she 'taught' they would have a business conversation. "So I thought he was going to talk business, and the next thing, you know, I'm pinned down to the the couch, and I could remember, it happened so fast. He had his pants down, and he took what he wanted (he raped me)." However, Sher's case is quite the same as Drew, where she also did not dare to report Russell and chose to live with her trauma. "Everybody was taught sad things happen. You just didn't talk about it.. And then I am finally realize all these years.. I wasn't okay." In other words, the story of Drew and Sheri, who was sexually assaulted by Russell but had no courage to report him, indicates how unequal power relationship, especially in terms of socioeconomic status, is a significant reason behind the system which allows sexual violence exists.

The Emergence of Feminist Figures

Throughout all of the films, the theme of the emergence of feminist figures is central to the #MeToo-themed films. The appearance of this figure is critical and essential for unlocking and initiating the #MeToo movement in the movie. 'The feminist figure' refers to the female figure in the film who chooses not to remain silent after receiving sexual violence but publicly fights against the perpetrators. They initiated the movement and expanded it so that other victims would join it to fight against it and bring down the perpetrators. Furthermore, the appearance of this feminist figure can also be seen as an essential turning point indicating how Hollywood films inspired by the #MeToo movement seeking to fight the normalisation of sexual abuse against women on the film screen. The reason is before the emergence of this socio-political movement, most Hollywood films tended to present the character of a female victim of sexual assault as someone vulnerable and weak, thus having no power to fight the perpetrator. On the contrary, this research shows that Hollywood films that adopt the values of the #MeToo movement present a plot development that is different from the story plots of Hollywood films, which contain other elements of sexual violence. Primarily, this research found out that the victims who at the beginning of the movie are depicted as weak, vulnerable, and have no courage to report the perpetrators turned out to be feminist figures at the end of the film.





In *Bombshell*, several feminist figures play an essential role in the initiation and expansion of the movement against the perpetrator. First, Gretchen Carlson, a former Fox News Anchor, was sexually assaulted by Roger at the beginning of her career at Fox. After many abusive years, Gretchen finally chose not to remain silent about Roger's behaviour. She finally decides to fight back against his assault by reporting Roger through a legal way to bring him down. She said that, "What do I want? I want this (Roger) behavior to stop. Someone has to speak up. Someone has to get mad." After that, Gretchen publicly alleged Roger and tried to invite other victims to participate in reporting the harassment that Roger did to the legal investigators in her office. However, Gretchen's efforts to ask other victims to join her movement have not received much support until other feminist figures arise. "No woman gets to sue her boss. Rule number one of corporate America, you don't sue your boss. I jumped off a cliff. I thought one of them would stand with me," said Gretchen. Gretchen's challenging situation changed after Megyn Kelly, another feminist figure as well as one of Roger's victims, chose to speak up and began to support the movement. Megyn joined the movement to report Roger to the investigators and began to open conversations and ask other victims to join the action. As a result, other victims who remained silent all this time showed up and reported Roger's sexual crime. As an illustration, after Kayla learned that Megyn had joined the movement, she was inspired by her bravery and started to speak up and report Roger as well.

Meanwhile, in *Athlete A*, the sexual harassment case committed by Nassar for approximately twenty years was finally uncovered by Rachael, one of Nassar's victims, in 2005. Through the extensive publication of reports made by Rachael, she plays a critical role as the feminist figure in the film. Before undergoing the trial process in the court, Rachael said, "I'll be testifying with great detail in open court in front of him, knowing that we both have the same memories, and I hate that idea. I hate it, but if I don't, he can continue, and I hate that idea more." Her statement illustrates that she is eager to fight Nassar, even though it means that she also had to expose her horrible experience publicly. She chooses to be in the front of the movement to stop Nassar's behavior. Based on her lawyer's statement, Rachael was the only public face who dared to appear in 2018 to report Nassar. Furthermore, after the news of Rachael's report went viral, it triggered and inspired other victims to report Nassar and made them partake in giving victim impact statements in court

against Nassar. Andrea Munford, Michigan State University Police's detective, said, "Those victims knew to report because of Rachel's disclosure. She (Rachael), you know, at that point, she was the only public face."

Furthermore, in *Bombshell*, Drew Dixon is the feminist figure who plays a significant role in bringing down Russell Simmons. Although in the early part of the film (as previously described in the imbalance of power between the perpetrators and victims section), Drew still doesn't dare to report Russell, primarily because of Russell's 'powerful' position. That is because he is influential for both the hip-hop industry and the Black community. Nevertheless, she finally decided to fight him precisely two decades after he raped her when the #MeToo movement went viral. She was inspired by the bravery of female victims who spoke up the truth and reported the perpetrators. After that, the films showed how she turns into an influential figure and chooses to bring down and report Russell. The other factor that gave her the power to speak up was that many of Russell's other victims needed her bravery and action so that they could take action behind her. "There were other women and other black women who Russell had assaulted, but they would go on the record unless I go on the record," said Drew after The New York Times called her. After learning about this, she publicly reported Russell and showed up in the New York Times newspaper to take revenge on Russell.

Denormalisation of Sexual Violence

Moving on to how the films under investigation denormalise sexual violence, the main pattern is that scenes of sexual assault are not the main focus, nor be used as a medium to objectify women's bodies. As an illustration, *On the Record* and *Athlete A* did not display visualisations of sexual violence throughout the films, even while the victims conveyed narratives about the incidents of sexual abuse they experienced. Conversely, the sexual assault narratives are depicted through 'signs' while displaying photos and videos that support the victim's description, which is unrelated to the sexualisation of women's bodies or dramatisation of the suffering of the victims. For instance, in *Athlete A*, signs like 'funny' describe female genitalia. For example, when a coach called one of a mother of Nassar's victims, she said that "I want to let you know that I overheard from Maggie and another athlete that Larry Nassar was touching her funny, and Maggie told her he was, you know, touching her private parts." Meanwhile, at the same time, the film supports the narrative by showing photos of Maggie's activities as a professional





athlete at the USAG. Moreover, in *Bombshell*, when Drew describes the rape incident, the scenes focus more on the emotion on her face while adding some visualisation of her story. For instance, the illustration of flowing water illustrates drew's narration of how she took a shower with her clothes on after the rape incident.

Yet, in *Bombshell*, only an insignificant part of the film portrays the scenes of sexual harassment. For instance, when Megyn reports Roger's sexual crimes to the investigators and has to retell the incident when she was sexually harassed by him decades ago. She said, "In those days, our meetings were career-strategy sessions mixed with good advice and comments like, "The most basic thing is confidence. Feel at home in your own skin. If you're confident, you're sexy. I'm sure you have some sexy bras. I'd love to see you in those." Along with Megyn's narratives, the film adds some visualisation where Roger is trying to touch and get close to Megyn while she refuses him shockingly. However, this visualisation still can be considered far from exploiting the female body compared to the typical Hollywood films, which also contain sexual violence scenes.

Furthermore, all of the films in this research try to convey to the audience that sexual assault can have horrible effects on the victims. That is critical to capture because, based on the previous literature in this research, many Hollywood films before the #MeToo movement era only used sexual crime scenes as part of plot development to make the movie more engaging. Consequently, it has an impact on the normalisation of sexual abuse of women on the film screen. Furthermore, it eliminates space for discourse about how terrible the result of the crime is on the victims and what punishment the perpetrators should receive. Therefore, through this research, the researcher finds data that Hollywood films that have recently emerged and adopted the spirit of the feminist #MeToo movement carry a narrative that sexual violence is a traumatic, horrifying event and can quickly destroy a person's life. For example, in the film *Bombshell*, Kayla, who Roger sexually abused, experienced deep trauma and depression. The film portrays a scene when she tells her best friend about the incident by crying until she falls to the ground. Furthermore, in *Athlete A*, Rachael stated that due to the trauma she experienced after being harassed sexually for years by Nassar, she would never forget her memory of the crime. Then, not much difference from Rachael, in the film *On the Record*, Drew stated that she was deeply traumatised and depressed by the rape incident committed by Russell. Drew states that:

And when I got home, I got in the shower with all my clothes on and I took like a cold shower lying down just crying and I was laid there for a really long time. I was reduced to nothing. In that moment, I was nothing. I was trash. Nothing about me mattered. Nothing about anything that makes me who I am mattered. I was a physical object. I was a physical device. I was some physical thing that he utilized for his pleasure.

Moreover, the efforts to denormalise sexual violence in Hollywood films are also supported by how films present sexual offenders as guilty parties and must be held accountable for their actions. Most notably, in *Athlete A*, at the end of the film, the plot focuses on how Nassar, a serial paedophile, sits on trial and must receive a 175-year sentence in Michigan state prison. The scene shows how the judge gave Nassar a sentence equivalent to the death penalty while also portraying how the victims who joined the movement against Nassar rejoiced at the outcome of the judge's decision. Meanwhile, in *On the Record*, although the court is still running and has not yet issued a verdict on the lawsuit Russell received, the film's narrative displays scenes where Russell has socially received attacks from many of his victims over reports of sexual violence. Moreover, in the final part of *Bombshell's* movie, Roger Ailes, the perpetrator of sexual crimes against his employees for years, finally had to lose the lawsuit against him and was proven guilty of the sexual crimes he committed. The final part of the film shows how Roger was dishonorably fired. On the contrary, Gretchen, one of Roger's victims, looks enthusiastic about Roger's overthrow because she managed to get compensation money from the company of twenty million dollars for the lawsuit she won. These plots can be understood as part of the film's attempt to denormalise sexual violence, particularly in the plot development section, which focuses on efforts to depict discourse about how the perpetrator must be responsible for his actions and receive punishment legally and socially.

Conclusion

This research demonstrates that all the films under investigation shows characteristics which primarily have the purpose to denormalise sexual violence on the screen. It can be seen from at least few characteristic, such as firstly, how the movie depict that sexual assault against women





have a devastating impact; secondly, how the perpetrators even the most powerful ones should be responsible and get punished for what they did; thirdly, how the film did not make the portrayal of sexual violence against women as the main focus nor objectifying it; lastly and most importantly, how all the films shows a plot development where the weak victims at the beginning turned to be a powerful feminist figures at the end of the story and bring down the perpetrators. The above result may mark a significant and fundamental change to denormalise the portrayal of sexual violence toward women in Hollywood films after the emergence of the #MeToo movement. In other word, Hollywood film in the #MeToo era is marked by the film's efforts to focus more on creating public awareness about the discourse of sexual violence. The results of the analysis of Hollywood #MeToo-themed films in this study, therefore, corroborate the results of research by several scholars who demonstrated that the #MeToo movement has a significant influence on the way Hollywood depicts sexual violence on women onscreen.

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