

The Paradigm of Sexual Violence Against Women in Indonesia: Between Causes and Solutions

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Abstract

This study examines sexual harassment against women in Indonesia as a structural manifestation deeply rooted in social, cultural, and institutional inequality rather than as an isolated phenomenon. Using a qualitative-descriptive approach through literature review and socio-legal analysis, this research identifies key factors that perpetuate sexual violence, including the surplus of male power within patriarchal structures, victim blaming practices, the lack of sexual and gender awareness education, stigma surrounding reporting, and the objectification of women in the media. These interrelated factors not only reflect the symbolic domination of men over women's bodies and spaces but also highlight the state's and society's failure to establish a comprehensive and just protection system. The findings reveal that addressing sexual harassment requires cross-sectoral, holistic, and sustainable interventions. Progressive legal reforms such as the implementation of the Sexual Violence Crime Law (UU TPKS) must be accompanied by comprehensive, gender-based sexual education, victim-centered law enforcement, and strengthened media ethics in reporting violence. Accordingly, the study recommends that the government enhance the implementation of UU TPKS by improving the capacity of law enforcement officers, expanding integrated protection services across regions, and incorporating comprehensive sexual education into the national curriculum. Society must actively reject the normalization of violence and eliminate stigma against victims, while civil society organizations, educational institutions, and the media should strengthen collaboration to promote awareness, victim-oriented policies, and ethical reporting practices. The synergy among these sectors is crucial to building an inclusive, just, and sustainable system to eradicate sexual harassment against women in Indonesia.

Keywords: Sexual Harassment; Gender Equality; Victim Protection; Patriarchy.

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1. Introduction

Sexual harassment against women in Indonesia is a deeply rooted and culturally embedded social problem. It is not merely the result of individual deviance but rather a manifestation of structural inequality, cultural legitimization, and institutional failure to provide effective protection for victims.¹ Similar to other forms of gender-based violence across the world, sexual harassment in Indonesia has transcended physical boundaries and manifested within symbolic, domestic, public, and digital spaces. Such practices continue to be perpetuated by patriarchal power relations, gender-biased

¹ Martin Pratiwi, "Aksesibilitas Perempuan Disabilitas Dalam Pemenuhan Hak Kesehatan Seksual Dan Reproduksi," *Malahayati Nursing Journal* 5, no. 1 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.33024/mnj.v5i1.7994>.

social norms, and the absence of legal and social systems that prioritize the rights of victims. Although human rights frameworks, both national and international, have emphasized the importance of gender equality and bodily autonomy,² the reality faced by women in Indonesia reveals a significant discrepancy between normative ideals and actual practices.

The grim portrait of sexual harassment in Indonesia can be illustrated through data released by the National Commission on Women and Children (Komnas Perempuan dan Anak), which reported that as of January 1, 2025, there were 12,442 cases of sexual harassment, with 10,693 of the victims being women. The situation is further exacerbated by the fact that the majority of victims fall within the 13–17 age group, accounting for 33.4% of the total number of reported cases.³

Among the numerous incidents of sexual harassment that have occurred in Indonesia, several high-profile cases have drawn national attention. One such case is that of Agni at Gadjah Mada University in 2016, in which a female student was sexually assaulted during a community service program (KKN) but was pressured institutionally to remain silent in order to protect the university's reputation.⁴ Another is the case of Baiq Nuril (2018), a teacher in West Nusa Tenggara who was subjected to verbal sexual abuse by her superior, yet was criminalized for recording the evidence of the harassment.⁵ Even more distressing is the growing number of sexual abuse cases perpetrated by educated individuals—such as doctors, lecturers, and religious leaders—including the notorious case of a cleric who raped thirteen female students (santriwati) in a pesantren. Numerous similar cases involving educators and religious figures continue to emerge to this day.⁶

Ironically, despite significant public discourse surrounding sexual harassment—particularly since the emergence of the #MeToo and #PercumaLaporPolisi⁷ movements in Indonesia—academic literature that integrates structural dimensions such as the surplus of male power, stigmatization of reporting, the objectification of women in media, and the lack of comprehensive sexual education remains limited. Most studies are confined to sectoral approaches that separate legal, cultural, and educational

² Tri Astuti Handayani, Teguh Prasetyo, and Diding Rahmat, “Legal Protection of Women Victims of Sexual Harassment in Indonesia,” *UNIFIKASI: Jurnal Ilmu Hukum* 6, no. 2 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.25134/unifikasi.v6i2.1939>.

³ kemenpppa, “Jumlah Kasus Kekerasan Seksual,” 2025, <https://kekerasan.kemenpppa.go.id/ringkasan>.

⁴ Yaya Ulya, “Agni Bicara: Dugaan Pelecehan Seksual, UGM Dan Perjuangan 18 Bulan Mencari Keadilan,” *bbc*, 2019.

⁵ Aditya YuAli Sulistyawan, “Berhukum Secara Objektif Pada Kasus Baiq Nuril: Suatu Telaah Filsafat Hukum Melalui Kajian Paradigmatik,” *Hukum Dan Masyarakat Madani* 8, no. 2 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.26623/humani.v8i2.1382>.

⁶ Romanti Ananda Rony A, “Mencegah Kekerasan Seksual Di Lingkungan Pendidikan,” *Kemendikbud Go.Id* 19, no. September 2023 (2022).

⁷ Zuraida Zuraida, “Comparing the Effectiveness of Hashtags in Digital Social Movements: A Case Study of #PercumaLaporPolisi and #PolriSesuaiProsedur in Indonesia,” *CHANNEL: Jurnal Komunikasi* 11, no. 1 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.12928/channel.v11i1.339>.

aspects, creating a gap in policy design and the formulation of holistic and just intervention strategies.

Previous studies addressing sexual harassment include research by Rosania Paradias, titled “Perlindungan Hukum Terhadap Korban Pelecehan Seksual” (“Legal Protection for Victims of Sexual Harassment”), which found that the formulation of criminal law to address sexual violence cases is an urgent necessity given the prevalence of such cases in Indonesia. The study highlighted the importance of legal frameworks that protect victims and ensure fair resolution mechanisms.

A second study by Marchelya Sumera, titled “Perbuatan Kekerasan/Pelecehan Seksual Terhadap Perempuan” (“Acts of Violence/Sexual Harassment Against Women”), revealed that sexual harassment against women remains a pervasive social reality, reflecting systemic inequality and social structures that position women as subordinate, weak, and vulnerable to male domination. The primary cause of sexual harassment and violence lies in the patriarchal value system that places women as second-class citizens and legitimizes the exploitation and control of women’s bodies.

A third study by Tamara Penix Sbrag, titled “Sexual Harassment,” demonstrated through epidemiological analysis that sexual harassment is influenced by various factors, including organizational environments (such as workplace culture and power structures), the perpetrator’s characteristics, and the social and institutional position of the victim.

Building upon these previous studies, the present research possesses originality in its analytical deepening of the social, cultural, and structural contexts underlying sexual harassment in Indonesia. This study specifically focuses on elaborating the root causes of the phenomenon comprehensively, encompassing the dimensions of patriarchy, power relations, social norms, and the weaknesses of legal systems and law enforcement – areas that have not been extensively explored in prior research.

Based on the aforementioned considerations, this article aims to fill that academic gap by developing an interdisciplinary analysis that explores in depth the root causes of sexual harassment against women in Indonesia, while offering tangible solutions grounded in legal, cultural, educational, and public policy perspectives. Anchored in feminist theory, sociology of law, and empirical experience, this study strives not only to identify the problem but also to promote systemic transformation toward a more just, equal, and safe society for women. In this spirit, the narrative of victims is not merely framed as a story of suffering but as a foundational element for a broader movement of social change.

2. Research Method

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with a library research design, aimed at conducting a comprehensive analysis of the causal factors behind sexual

harassment against women in Indonesia and formulating applicable solutions. This approach was chosen because it effectively captures the complexity of social phenomena rooted in structures of power, cultural norms, and gender constructions within society.

The primary data in this research were obtained through a literature review of various academic sources, including scholarly journal articles, national and international institutional research reports, case documentation, mass media news, as well as statutory regulations related to the theme of this study – such as the Law on Sexual Violence Crimes (UU TPKS) and the Indonesian Criminal Code (KUHP). The reviewed literature spans the years 2010–2024, in order to capture the evolution of discourse and the latest policy responses concerning the issue of sexual harassment in Indonesia.

Data analysis was conducted using the content analysis method, by identifying thematic patterns derived from narratives, case studies, and theoretical frameworks presented in the literature. To strengthen the validity of the data, this study applies source triangulation techniques by comparing information from various types of publications and perspectives – including feminist, legal, and sociological viewpoints. Furthermore, an intersectional approach is employed to understand how social identities such as class, age, and educational status contribute to women’s vulnerability to sexual violence.

3. Research Results and Discussion

3.1. A Brief Overview of Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment refers to any form of behavior with sexual nuance or connotation that is carried out unilaterally without the consent of the victim. Such acts may manifest in speech, writing, symbols, gestures, or actions that contain sexual elements. An activity is considered sexual harassment when it meets certain criteria, namely the existence of coercion or imposition of will by the perpetrator, the act being motivated by the perpetrator’s personal desire, the absence of consent from the victim, and the infliction of suffering, discomfort, or harm upon the victim.

Sexual harassment, therefore, constitutes a form of sexualized behavior carried out without consent, which may generate feelings of discomfort, fear, offense, or humiliation for the victim.⁸ In many cases, the purpose of such conduct is not sexual gratification per se but the exertion of dominance or the degradation of another person’s dignity. As a manifestation of sexual violence, sexual harassment is rooted in a spectrum of unwanted sexual acts, which, while

⁸ Iman & novrianza Santoso, “Dampak Dari Pelecehan Seksual Terhadap Anak Di Bawah Umur,” *Jurnal Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan* 10, no. 1 (2022).

distinct from rape or sexual assault, share an underlying connection in their violation of bodily autonomy and integrity.⁹

Essentially, sexual harassment is not solely driven by sexual desire but represents an abuse of power or authority.¹⁰ Although perpetrators often disguise their actions under the pretext of affection or romantic interest, the core of such behavior lies in the desire to dominate and objectify others sexually. The perpetrator derives a sense of symbolic satisfaction or “power meaning” from subjugating another person’s body and dignity, often unconsciously and without verbal acknowledgments.¹¹

Generally, sexual harassment can take multiple forms, reflecting both the imbalance of power and the violation of personal integrity. The first is physical harassment, including unwanted sexual contact such as kissing, touching, hugging, pinching, stroking, massaging the neck, or pressing one’s body against another without consent. The second form is verbal harassment, encompassing unwanted comments about someone’s private life, body parts, or appearance, including jokes or remarks with sexual undertones.

Next, non-verbal or gestural harassment involves sexually suggestive body language such as repeated winking, lewd gazes, hand movements with sexual implications, or other suggestive gestures. Visual harassment occurs when someone displays pornographic materials—such as photos, images, posters, or digital content—either directly or through electronic means such as email, text messages, or social media. Lastly, psychological or emotional harassment includes persistent, unwanted invitations, coercive requests for dates, or insults containing sexual implications.

Sexual harassment may be experienced by both men and women in various forms, ranging from sexually suggestive remarks and covert physical contact to explicit propositions or acts leading to sexual assault. Accordingly, sexual harassment may be categorized as physical, verbal, non-verbal, visual, and psychological or emotional—all representing violations of the fundamental right to safety and human dignity.

Sexual harassment constitutes a violation of human rights, as it breaches the principles of respect for human worth, dignity, and personal freedom. Legally,

⁹ Anggreany Haryani Putri and Dwi Seno Wijanarko, “Perlindungan Hukum Terhadap Perempuan Korban Kekerasan Secara Verbal (Catcalling),” *KRTHA BHAYANGKARA* 15, no. 1 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.31599/krtha.v15i1.594>.

¹⁰ F. Y. Santoso, “Woman and the Conservation of Nature in Erin Brockovich Film,” *LITERA KULTURA: Journal of Literary and Cultural Studies* 9, no. 2 (2021).

¹¹ Fitra Mandela and Esterria Romauli, “Subordinasi Dan Objektifikasi Seksualitas Karakter Perempuan Dalam Novel Dracula Karangan Bram Stoker : Perspektif Feminisme,” *Jurnal Bahasa Asing* 15, no. 2 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.58220/jba.v15i2.20>.

Law No. 12 of 2022 on Sexual Violence Crimes (UU TPKS) provides a comprehensive legal foundation for addressing various forms of unwanted sexual conduct that cause suffering to victims. The law regards sexual harassment not merely as a moral offense but as a criminal act involving coercion, abuse of power, and violations of the right to security and bodily integrity.

From a legal standpoint, sexual harassment can occur in both physical and non-physical forms. Physical harassment includes direct contact with the victim's body—such as touching, hugging, kissing, or other indecent acts—committed without consent. Non-physical harassment includes verbal statements, gestures, or acts with sexual connotations, such as comments, jokes, looks, or sexually suggestive messages that cause discomfort and demean the victim's dignity. These acts are regulated under Articles 5 and 6 of the Sexual Violence Crimes Law, with varying penalties depending on the severity of the act and its consequences.

From the perspective of criminal law, the essential elements for establishing the offense of sexual harassment are: (1) the presence of sexual conduct, (2) lack of consent from the victim, and (3) the infliction of physical or psychological suffering. This reflects the application of the principle *nullum crimen sine lege*—that no act can be punished without prior legal definition. Thus, the Sexual Violence Crimes Law reaffirms the victim-oriented approach, positioning the victim as a protected legal subject rather than a passive sufferer.

Furthermore, the regulation embodies both the principle of legal certainty (*rechtszekerheid*) and the principle of legal justice (*gerechtigheid*). Legal certainty is reflected in the clear classification of nine types of sexual violence, while legal justice is manifested in the protection of victims' rights to receive treatment, protection, recovery, and restitution. This aligns with the values of Pancasila, particularly the second and fifth principles, which emphasize respect for human dignity and social justice as the foundation of national law.

In conclusion, within the legal perspective, sexual harassment is not merely a breach of decency but a violation of citizens' constitutional rights. Through the Sexual Violence Crimes Law, the state guarantees fair legal protection, enforces deterrence against perpetrators, and restores victims' dignity—representing a responsive legal system that upholds justice and gender equality.

3.2. Analysis of the Factors Causing Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment, which has become a social reality, can currently be identified by tracing its root causes from several perspectives.¹² A review of the relevant literature shows that the causes of sexual harassment can be explained as follows:

a. The Surplus of Male Power and Hierarchical Positions

The phenomenon of sexual harassment against women in Indonesia cannot be separated from the structural reality of patriarchal power relations and hierarchical social organization that color various aspects of both public and private life.¹³ At the core of this issue lies what can be referred to as the surplus of male power—a condition in which men, both culturally and institutionally, gain disproportionate authority, often without adequate systems of accountability. This surplus of power is deeply embedded in social norms that privilege male dominance and normalize gender-based control, ultimately resulting in the marginalization and objectification of women in many spheres of life.¹⁴

In such a social configuration, women are often positioned as subordinate subjects, where their autonomy and bodily integrity become negotiable in the face of men's perceived entitlement over women's bodies. This dynamic is particularly evident in contexts characterized by hierarchical structures—such as educational institutions, workplaces, and bureaucratic systems—where men in superior positions exercise both symbolic and practical control over women in inferior positions. Sexual harassment, in this regard, is not merely a personal violation but rather a manifestation of institutionalized gender inequality.¹⁵

A concrete example supporting this statement can be seen in the case of sexual harassment experienced by a female student at Gadjah Mada University (UGM) by a male lecturer during a community service program

¹² Y. A. Wahyuddin, "Budaya Machismo Dan Kekerasan Gender (Femicide) Di El SalvadorBudaya Machismo Dan Kekerasan Gender (Femicide) Di El Salvador," *Indonesian Journal of Peace and Security Studies (IJPSS)* 2, no. 2 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.29303/ijpss.v2i2.50>.

¹³ Cyrus Mugo et al., "'When They Are All Grown, I Will Tell Them': Experience and Perceptions of Parental Self-Disclosure of HIV Status to Children in Nairobi, Kenya," *BMC Public Health* 23, no. 1 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-023-15387-3>.

¹⁴ Iswadi Bahardur, "Perlawanan Perempuan Terhadap Dominasi Laki-Laki: Analisis Pemikiran Feminis Kate Millet Terhadap Novel Lalita Karya Ayu Utami," *Madah: Jurnal Bahasa Dan Sastra* 13, no. 2 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.31503/madah.v13i2.503>.

¹⁵ Kristin Marwinda and Yosep Bb Margono S, "Dominasi Laki-Laki Terhadap Perempuan Di Ranah Domestik Dalam Novel Safe Haven Karya Nicholas Sparks," *Salingka: Majalah Ilmiah Bahasa Dan Sastra* 17 (2020).

(Kuliah Kerja Nyata or KKN).¹⁶ This case clearly illustrates two main dimensions: the surplus of male power and institutional hierarchical structures. The lecturer, who acted as a field supervisor, abused his academic authority to violate the student's physical and psychological safety. The university's initial response, which prioritized institutional reputation over justice for the victim, revealed the structural barriers that hinder accountability and victim-centered recovery. Only after receiving widespread public pressure and media attention did the case finally gain institutional acknowledgment.

Another notable example is the case involving Herry Wirawan, a boarding school caretaker who was proven to have committed sexual harassment against 13 female students (santri).¹⁷ This case vividly demonstrates how male dominance is institutionalized through socially respected roles such as teacher, cleric, or spiritual mentor. In this instance, Herry's status as an authoritative figure within a religious environment served as both a shield from suspicion and a means of gaining access to the victims' bodies and psyches. This power is not merely individual but systemic—reinforced by a social structure that tends to glorify male authority while simultaneously undermining the voices of victims, particularly those from vulnerable groups such as young women in faith-based educational institutions.

This case underscores that the surplus of male power in patriarchal societies is not only reflected in interpersonal relations but is also reinforced by social institutions and cultural norms that position men as holders of moral and spiritual authority. When public trust in religious teachers or community leaders is not balanced by strong accountability mechanisms, these positions are highly susceptible to being abused for systematic and covert sexual violence. In this context, sexual harassment becomes the most visible manifestation of power inequality that has long been naturalized within Indonesia's social structure.

The interaction between male power structures and institutional hierarchies is also evident in the bureaucratic context, where female employees—especially those with honorary or contractual status—often become victims of sexual harassment by male officials in higher positions.¹⁸ For instance, this occurred in the case of a contract worker in Solo who was allegedly forced

¹⁶ Aprilia Kartika Putri et al., "Analisis Pergerakan Wacana Kasus Agni," *Kajian Linguistik Dan Sastra* 2, no. 2 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.22437/kalistra.v2i2.24690>.

¹⁷ Dewi Intan, "Perlindungan Hukum Kekerasan Seksual Di Sekolah Studi Kasus: Kasus Dugaan Pemerkosaan Oleh Herry Wirawan," *Jurnal Rechten : Riset Hukum Dan Hak Asasi Manusia* 4, no. 3 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.52005/rechten.v4i3.103>.

¹⁸ Desy Ratnasari, Hana Panggabean, and Rustono Farady Marta, "Persepsi Kesetaraan Jender Terhadap Perempuan Anggota DPR Pada Jabatan Strategis Di DPR," *PALASTREN: Jurnal Studi Gender* 14, no. 1 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.21043/palastren.v14i1.8146>.

by her superior, a civil servant at the Solo City Government, to kiss him on the lips.

In such situations, the threat of job loss, social stigma, and the ineffectiveness of reporting systems further intensify victims' vulnerability. These conditions also indicate that sexual harassment in Indonesia is not merely an individual deviant act but rather a consequence of power abuse legitimized by unequal gender structures.

b. The Phenomenon of Victim Blaming

One of the structural causes that sustains the practice of sexual harassment in Indonesia is the culture of victim blaming, namely the tendency to blame the victim for the sexual violence they have experienced.¹⁹ Victims of sexual harassment in this position do not only experience violence from the perpetrator but also suffer secondary violence in the form of social, institutional, and even legal judgment, which places them as the cause of the violence they endured. This culture stems from social constructions laden with gender stereotypes and conservative moral values that judge women's behavior, clothing, and expression as indicators of "willingness" or "provocation," rather than as autonomous forms of individual expression.²⁰

Victim blaming reinforces an ecosystem of impunity for perpetrators. When society, law enforcement officers, or even educational and workplace institutions focus more on the victim's behavior rather than the perpetrator's actions, the reporting process and law enforcement become biased and unfavorable to the victim. As a result, many victims are reluctant to report, and sexual harassment becomes a latent phenomenon that is difficult to eradicate.²¹

A clear example of this phenomenon can be seen in the case of Baiq Nuril Maknun in West Nusa Tenggara. Baiq Nuril, an honorary staff member at a high school in Mataram, became a victim of verbal sexual harassment by the school principal where she worked. Instead of receiving protection, Baiq Nuril was criminalized after recording the conversation as evidence to defend herself. She was accused of violating the Electronic Information and

¹⁹ Bunga Suci Shopiani, Wilodati, and Udin Supriadi, "Sosietas Jurnal Pendidikan Sosiologi Fenomena Victim Blaming Pada Mahasiswa Terhadap Korban Pelecehan Seksual," *Sosietas : Jurnal Pendidikan Sosiologi* 11, no. 1 (2021).

²⁰ Chelly Maes, Joris Van Ouytsel, and Laura Vandenbosch, "Victim Blaming and Non-Consensual Forwarding of Sexts Among Late Adolescents and Young Adults," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 52, no. 4 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-023-02537-2>.

²¹ Lee M. Johnson, Rehan Mullick, and Charles L. Mulford, "General versus Specific Victim Blaming," *Journal of Social Psychology* 142, no. 2 (2002), <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224540209603898>.

Transactions Law (UU ITE) for allegedly distributing immoral content.²² This case clearly reflects the face of victim blaming within the legal system: a victim who tried to defend herself and seek justice was criminally charged, while the perpetrator initially escaped legal consequences.

The Baiq Nuril case illustrates how the social and legal systems, which have not yet fully sided with victims, reinforce a culture of silence and perpetuate gender-based power imbalances. The refusal to recognize victims as individuals deserving of protection, and instead positioning them as being at fault, represents a form of symbolic violence deeply rooted in the patriarchal system. Victim blaming is not merely a social reaction but part of the power structure that sustains domination and impunity for perpetrators.

c. Gender Lack of Sexual and Gender Education

One of the deeply rooted causes of sexual harassment in Indonesia is the lack of sexual education and critical understanding of gender equality – both at the family level and within educational institutions and broader society.²³ Sexual education in Indonesia is generally still considered taboo, often reduced merely to biological reproductive aspects, and rarely touches on the most essential dimensions such as bodily autonomy, consent, and power relations. As a result, many individuals – particularly adolescents and young men – grow up in environments that fail to equip them with critical awareness about ethical and relational sexual behavior.²⁴

When knowledge about sexuality and gender relations is suppressed by conservative norms, customs, and traditions, the public sphere becomes filled with myths, false assumptions, and patriarchal narratives that distort the relationship between men and women. Men are often socialized with a dominant mindset – where aggressiveness is considered masculine – while women are taught to be passive and submissive, without an understanding of personal boundaries or the importance of consent in sexual and social interactions. The lack of literacy described above is one of the main reasons why sexual harassment is often seen as “trivial,” justified, or even unrecognized as a form of violence by the perpetrators themselves.

²² Zaenal Abdi and Syamsuddin Radjab, “Analisis Putusan Hakim Tingkat Kasasi Terhadap Kasus Baiq Nuril Maknun,” *Alauddin Law Development Journal* 3, no. 1 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.24252/aldev.v3i1.14824>.

²³ Osi Karina Saragih, Murniyati Yanur, and Juli Natalia Silalahi, “Sosialisasi Dan Edukasi Peran Satuan Tugas Pencegahan Dan Penanganan Kekerasan Seksual (SATGAS PPKS) Terhadap Resiliensi Mahasiswa Korban Kekerasan Seksual Di Universitas Palangka Raya,” *Jurnal Masyarakat Madani Indonesia* 2, no. 4 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.59025/js.v2i4.177>.

²⁴ Anita Herawati and Husda Oktavianoor, “Pemberian Edukasi Seksual Dan Pubertas Pada Remaja : Literature Review,” *Dinamika Kesehatan Jurnal Kebidanan Dan Keperawatan* 12, no. 1 (2021).

An example reflecting the impact of the absence of comprehensive sexual and gender education can be found in cases of catcalling.²⁵ Ironically, both perpetrators and the general public often regard such acts as “jokes” or “youthful mischief,” rather than as violations and degrading actions toward women’s bodily integrity.²⁶ Such reactions indicate that harassment is frequently not recognized as violence due to the lack of understanding about consent and bodily boundaries from an early age.²⁷

In many schools and educational institutions, there is no curriculum explicitly teaching about bodily rights, equal relationships, or how to identify and report harassment.²⁸ Even teachers and educational staff often do not receive standardized training on how to appropriately respond to cases of sexual violence. In such conditions, victims are often trapped in shame, fear, and ignorance of their rights, while perpetrators remain unaware that their actions violate ethical and legal norms.

The lack of sexual and gender education also worsens the stigma against victims who dare to speak out. Without a critical framework that understands the structure of violence, society tends to blame victims for being “too open” or “inviting attention.” This further narrows the safe space for women and other vulnerable groups, reinforcing a deeply entrenched culture of silence.

From a structural perspective, strengthening sexual and gender education should not only be the responsibility of families but also a duty of the state through the national education system. The implementation of a curriculum based on gender equality and comprehensive sexual education must become part of educational reform. The state should not merely respond reactively to cases of sexual violence through legal measures but must act preventively by empowering knowledge from an early age, instilling ethical values, and dismantling discriminatory norms within the education system.

d. The Stigma of Reporting

Sexual harassment against women in Indonesia continues to occur systemically, one of the main reasons being the strong stigma surrounding

²⁵ Angeline Hidayat and Yugih Setyanto, “Fenomena Catcalling Sebagai Bentuk Pelecehan Seksual Secara Verbal Terhadap Perempuan Di Jakarta,” *Koneksi* 3, no. 2 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.24912/kn.v3i2.6487>.

²⁶ Ida Ayu Adnyaswari Dewi, “Catcalling : Candaan, Pujian Atau Pelecehan Seksual,” *Acta Comitatus* 4, no. 2 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.24843/ac.2019.v04.i02.p04>.

²⁷ Dien Gusta Anggraini Nursal et al., “Edukasi Perilaku Seksual, Gender, Dan HIV/AIDS Pada Siswa SMA Negeri 6 Padang Dan Masyarakat,” *Jurnal Warta Pengabdian Andalas* 30, no. 1 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.25077/jwa.30.1.85-93.2023>.

²⁸ Pinky Saptandari, “Beberapa Pemikiran Tentang Perempuan Dalam Tubuh Dan Eksistensi,” *Surabaya: BioKultur* 2, no. 1 (2013).

the act of reporting such incidents, which serves as a significant barrier for victims seeking justice. This stigma arises from social constructions that tend to blame victims, question their morality and credibility, and frame reporting as a threat to social order or the reputation of families and institutions. Consequently, reporting sexual harassment is often perceived not as an act of asserting one's rights or seeking justice but as a shameful act that tarnishes reputations and disrupts social harmony.²⁹

In practice, reporting sexual harassment is rarely viewed as a legal right; rather, it is often perceived as a violation of cultural norms of modesty and family honor. Women who report harassment frequently face various forms of intimidation, including social ostracism, online harassment (cyberbullying), pressure from their workplace or educational environment, and even retaliatory legal threats from perpetrators. In many instances, victims are forced into a dilemma between telling the truth and preserving their social or professional survival.

The experiences of Agni and Baiq Nuril, as previously discussed, exemplify numerous other cases in Indonesia where victims of sexual harassment must endure lengthy, painful reporting processes that often lead to revictimization. This situation is exacerbated by law enforcement institutions that still lack victim-centered service standards. At many police stations, victims are interrogated with prejudiced questions, pressured to provide physical evidence that is difficult to obtain, or simply not believed—especially when the perpetrator holds a higher social or institutional position.

Stigma surrounding reporting is also pervasive in workplace contexts. Many women workers—particularly those in the informal or creative sectors—are reluctant to report sexual harassment for fear of losing their jobs, not being believed by their superiors, or being told to “resolve it amicably,” a practice that effectively perpetuates impunity. This demonstrates that reporting sexual harassment is not merely a matter of individual courage but a complex and risky decision situated within an ecosystem that remains unsupportive of gender-based justice.³⁰

e. The Objectification of Women in the Media

One of the cultural factors that perpetuates sexual harassment in Indonesia is the objectification of women in mass and digital media. Objectification refers

²⁹ Rosania Paradias and Eko Soponyono, “Perlindungan Hukum Terhadap Korban Pelecehan Seksual,” *Jurnal Pembangunan Hukum Indonesia* 4, no. 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.14710/jphi.v4i1.61-72>.

³⁰ SITI MARIYAM and ADHI PUTRA SATRIA, “FENOMENA TIDUR BERSAMA BOS : POTRET DOMINASI PRIA DI TEMPAT KERJA,” *GANEC SWARA* 17, no. 2 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.35327/gara.v17i2.468>.

to representational practices that reduce women to mere visual or sexual objects – stripped of autonomy and complexity – and presented primarily for the satisfaction of the male gaze. The media plays an active role in shaping and disseminating images of women whose social value is determined by physical appearance and sexual appeal.³¹ Over time, this shapes social perceptions that normalize harassment by positioning women's bodies as public spaces open to visual or verbal exploitation.³²

Objectification manifests in various media forms: television advertisements using women's bodies to sell unrelated products; soap operas and films reinforcing stereotypes of women as passive, weak, or seductive; and social media content that algorithmically prioritizes sexualized images for engagement.³³ Women are often portrayed wearing revealing clothing, adopting sensual gestures, or depicted as lacking intellectual depth. Such portrayals not only reinforce gender stereotypes but also shape public attitudes that trivialize or justify violations of women's personal boundaries.. Women are often portrayed wearing revealing clothing, adopting sensual gestures, or depicted as lacking intellectual depth. Such portrayals not only reinforce gender stereotypes but also shape public attitudes that trivialize or justify violations of women's personal boundaries.

This phenomenon is further amplified by social media algorithms that prioritize visually appealing and "profitable" content. Female influencers, for instance, who post personal photos as expressions of self-identity, frequently receive inappropriate or sexualized comments, regardless of their original intent. This indicates that society still lacks sufficient media and gender literacy to understand that women's bodily expression is not a legitimate basis for objectification or harassment.

The objectification of women in the media not only increases the risk of sexual harassment but also makes it more difficult for victims to obtain justice. When a woman who has appeared in the media becomes a victim of harassment, public discourse often blames her for "drawing attention" or "being too open," a clear reflection of victim blaming perpetuated by uncritical media narratives and popular culture.

Addressing the complex causes of sexual harassment in Indonesia requires systemic, interdisciplinary, and transformative solutions. Sexual harassment is

³¹ Ulya Aanggie Pradini, "Perempuan Sebagai Objek Seksual Dalam Tabloid Otomotif (Analisis Semiotika Foto Pada Rubrik 'Cepot' Hal 34 Tabloid Motorplus)," *Jurnal Interaksi Online* 2, no. 3 (2014).

³² Karina Nabila Vanska Putri Sinulingga, Sunarto, and Hedi Pudjo Santosa, "Analisis Resepsi Khalayak Terhadap Objektifikasi Perempuan Dalam Serial Netflix 'Squid Game,'" *E-Jurnal UNDIP* 11 (2023).

³³ Ranti Siswanti, Sunarto, and Amida Yusriana, *Representasi Objektifikasi Seksualitas Wanita Pada Iklan Kondom Sutra Versi "Mantap – Mantap Makin Mesra" Di Antv Pada Pukul 02.00 WIB Malam, Interaksi Online*, vol. 10, 2022.

not merely an individual moral failure but a structural problem rooted in patriarchal culture and an insufficiently protective legal framework. Therefore, the solution must operate across three interconnected domains: education, legal reform, and cultural transformation.

First, comprehensive reform of sexual and gender education must be the foundation for prevention. Education should move beyond biological reproduction to include an understanding of consent, bodily autonomy, personal boundaries, power relations, and gender equality. Such a curriculum should be integrated from primary through higher education and supported by teacher training to ensure inclusive, ethical, and context-sensitive delivery.³⁴ Education must serve not only as a tool for learning but also as a long-term strategy for cultivating collective awareness that dismantles masculine dominance and promotes mutual respect.³⁵

Second, the legal system and reporting mechanisms must be restructured to be victim-centered and trauma-informed. The stigma of reporting—rooted in victim-blaming and institutional distrust—can only be overcome by creating mechanisms that prioritize victims' psychological safety and dignity. Police officers, prosecutors, and judges must undergo gender-sensitivity training to handle cases without bias or revictimization. Integrated Service Centers (Unit Layanan Terpadu) and Crisis Centers should be expanded, especially in rural or underserved regions. In addition, the justice system should incorporate restorative justice approaches that center the voices and recovery of victims rather than focusing solely on retributive punishment.³⁶

Third, cultural transformation through media reform and public campaigns is essential. The objectification of women in media must be addressed through stricter regulation of advertising, film, and television content that depict women in sexist or reductive ways. Broadcasting institutions and advertisers must be held accountable for their content, and the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPI) should actively monitor and sanction violations of gender equality principles.³⁷ At the same time, social media should be utilized as a platform for educational campaigns and victim advocacy, emphasizing narratives of recovery, courage, and justice to counter patriarchal dominance.

³⁴ Oma Komarudin, "Kritik Terhadap Kurikulum Berbasis Kesetaraan Gender," *At-Ta'dib* 9, no. 2 (2016), <https://doi.org/10.21111/at-tadib.v9i2.320>.

³⁵ Iswah Adriana, "Kurikulum Berbasis Gender," *Tadris* 4, no. 1 (2009).

³⁶ Suhardin Suhardin, Ahmad Hunen, and Erwina Erwina, "Performa Guru : Sertifikasi Dan Gender Study Ex Post Facto Di Sindang Bareng Bogor," *Action Research Literate* 7, no. 2 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.46799/ar.v7i2.134>.

³⁷ Suhrawardi, "Hubungan Paparan Pornografi Melalui Elektronik Terhadap Perilaku Seksual Remaja," *Jurnal Inovasi Penelitian* 3, no. 7 (2022).

Finally, the role of community organizations and civil society must be strengthened to complement state efforts in reaching the grassroots level. Communities play a vital role in creating safe spaces, promoting legal literacy, and empowering victims to speak without fear. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), women's groups, and progressive religious institutions have a crucial responsibility to challenge normative narratives that normalize violence and silence victims.

4. Closing

4.1. Conclusions

Sexual harassment against women in Indonesia is not an isolated phenomenon but rather a manifestation of deeply rooted structural inequalities embedded within social, cultural, and institutional relations. This study reveals that the surplus of male power within patriarchal structures, the persistence of victim blaming, the lack of sexual education and gender awareness, the stigma surrounding reporting, and the objectification of women in the media are the primary factors that perpetuate the cycle of sexual violence. These causes not only reflect the symbolic domination of men over women's bodies and spaces but also expose the failure of both the state and society to establish a comprehensive and just protection system. Efforts to address sexual harassment require cross-sectoral, holistic, and sustainable interventions. Progressive legal reforms—such as the enactment of the Law on Sexual Violence Crimes (UU TPKS)—must be accompanied by comprehensive sexuality education grounded in gender equality, the improvement of victim-centered law enforcement systems, and the enhancement of media capacity to ethically and empowering frame issues of violence. More importantly, cultural transformation is essential: dismantling narratives that normalize violence, challenging hegemonic constructions of masculinity, and restoring women's agency as autonomous social subjects.

4.2. Suggestions

Based on the findings of this research, it is recommended that the government strengthen the implementation of the Law on Sexual Violence Crimes (UU TPKS) by enhancing the capacity of law enforcement officers to adopt a victim-centered approach, expanding integrated protection services across all regions, and integrating comprehensive, gender-sensitive sexuality education into the national curriculum. The community is expected to play an active role in building a culture that rejects violence and sexual harassment by eliminating stigma against victims, resisting narratives that normalize violence, and fostering collective awareness of the importance of respecting bodily autonomy and consent. Meanwhile, relevant stakeholders—including educational institutions, civil society organizations, and the mass media—should strengthen cross-sectoral collaboration to educate the

public, advocate for victim-centered policies, and apply ethical reporting standards that empower rather than blame victims. Ultimately, synergy between the government, society, and all stakeholders is the key to building a comprehensive, just, and sustainable protection system to eradicate sexual harassment against women in Indonesia.

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