

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Between Women's Protection and the Preservation of Masculine Culture: Indonesian Higher Education Institutions Confront Sexual Violence

Entre la protección de las mujeres y la preservación de la cultura masculina: las instituciones de educación superior de Indonesia enfrentan la violencia sexual

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ABSTRACT Permendikbudristek No. 30 of 2021, issued by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, establishes a framework for addressing this pervasive issue in higher education. Despite three years of implementation, many universities continue to struggle with effectively managing sexual violence cases. A male-dominated system lacking a survivor-centered approach impedes the resolution of cases as envisioned by the university-appointed task force. The objective of this study is to investigate the challenges faced by the task forces in the Special Region of Yogyakarta in addressing sexual violence cases on their respective campuses. Using a qualitative approach, the study collected data through in-depth interviews with lecturers, administrative staff, and students serving on task forces at seven universities in the Special Region of Yogyakarta. The data were analyzed using content analysis. The findings reveal three major challenges faced by university task forces in Indonesia in addressing sexual violence.



These challenges operate at both structural and individual levels and are embedded in a deeply entrenched *habitus* that preserves the *status quo*. The study concludes that there is an urgent need for a survivor-centered approach to sexual violence that is informed by a gender perspective and addresses both structural conditions and individual-level dynamics.

KEY WORDS: gender; masculine culture; sexual violence; university.

RESUMEN El Reglamento del ministro de Educación, Cultura, Investigación y Tecnología (Permendikbudristek) n.º 30 de 2021, emitido por dicho ministerio de la República de Indonesia, establece un marco para abordar este problema generalizado en la educación superior. A pesar de llevar tres años en vigor, muchas universidades siguen teniendo dificultades para gestionar eficazmente los casos de violencia sexual. Un sistema dominado por hombres, carente de un enfoque centrado en la víctima, obstaculiza la resolución de los casos tal como fue concebida por los grupos de trabajo designados por las universidades. El objetivo de este estudio es investigar los desafíos que enfrentan dichos grupos de trabajo en la Región Especial de Yogyakarta al abordar casos de violencia sexual en sus respectivos campus. Mediante un enfoque cualitativo, se recopilaban datos a través de entrevistas en profundidad con docentes, personal administrativo y estudiantes que integran estos grupos de trabajo en siete universidades de la Región Especial de Yogyakarta. Los datos se analizaron utilizando la técnica de análisis de contenido. Los hallazgos revelan tres desafíos principales que enfrentan los grupos de trabajo universitarios en Indonesia al abordar la violencia sexual. Estos desafíos operan tanto a nivel estructural como individual y están arraigados en un **habitus** profundamente establecido que preserva el **statu quo**. El estudio concluye que existe una necesidad urgente de adoptar un enfoque de la violencia sexual centrado en la víctima, fundamentado en una perspectiva de género y que aborde tanto las condiciones estructurales como las dinámicas a nivel individual.

PALABRAS CLAVE: género; cultura masculina; violencia sexual; universidad.

Introducción

This study investigates the paradox between Indonesian government policies aimed at protecting survivors of sexual violence on campuses—predominantly women—and the persistence of a male-dominated culture that hinders the effective implementation of these policies. This contradiction is evident in the challenges faced by Indonesian higher education institutions in addressing sexual violence cases, despite the government's enactment of Ministerial Regulation No. 30 of 2021, issued by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technolo-

gy (Kemendikbudristek, 2021). While this regulation delineates the protocols that institutions must follow when confronting sexual violence, numerous cases continue to encounter obstacles in their resolution, largely due to constraints experienced by the university-appointed task force responsible for handling such incidents.

Following the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology's (hereafter referred to as the Ministry of Education) issuance of the regulation on the prevention and handling of campus sexual violence, there has been a marked increase in reported cases. Prior to the regulation's implementation, campuses recorded minimal reports, primarily attributable to survivor apprehension. However, since the regulation's enactment, several major universities have reported over 40 cases annually. This surge can be attributed to survivors—predominantly women—feeling empowered to report their experiences of sexual violence.

This regulation also serves as the Ministry of Education's pragmatic response to extensive media coverage of sexual violence incidents across various Indonesian universities. In 2018, the widely publicized "A case," involving a female student who experienced sexual violence perpetrated by a peer, garnered significant media attention. A and her supporters utilized media platforms to expose these incidents due to the absence of formal institutional complaint mechanisms. Following this case, numerous sexual violence incidents on campuses in Indonesia were reported, with some involving not only students but also university officials—including lecturers, professors, and staff—as perpetrators. The widespread media coverage of these scandals compelled the Ministry of Education to issue a national regulation (Wiarti, et.al., 2025).

Sexual violence on campus is a longstanding issue in educational settings, and numerous studies have addressed this problem across different countries. Research orientations related to campus sexual violence encompass various aspects. Some studies have focused on prevention strategies through formal and informal mechanisms (Perkins & Warner, 2017; Gleckman-Krut et al., 2022). Various forms of prevention efforts include awareness campaigns, strengthening learning systems, incorporating sexual violence topics into the curriculum, and conducting socialization initiatives. One such preventive strategy involves presenting statistical evidence on the high incidence of sexual violence on campuses, as exemplified by research conducted in the United Kingdom. Previous studies have examined sexual violence in higher education in specific countries, such as a survey-based analysis in the United Kingdom (Steele et al., 2023). This study revealed that 20.5% of respondents experienced at least one attempt or act of forced sexual touching or rape, while 52.7% experienced at least one act of sexual harassment. Additional research has examined sexual violence prevention from the World Health Organization's perspective (Miele et al., 2023). This review, utilizing the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews (PRISMA) methodology, examined frameworks from WHO, UN Women, UNESCO, and

UNICEF. The findings indicate that prevention programs are complex, requiring not only evidence-based practices and high ethical standards but also close collaboration with local governments and non-governmental organizations.

Another issue that has gained attention in the discourse on sexual violence in higher education is the lack of institutional support from universities to address and eliminate sexual violence. This failure is largely due to universities prioritizing institutional reputation and funding while often protecting perpetrators—particularly those in positions of authority within the institution (Wolters & Smith, 2020). Kerner et al. (2017) also highlight the lack of transparency in the enforcement of sexual violence policies on campuses, revealing systemic flaws that hinder accountability.

Another central concern in global studies on campus sexual violence is the consequences faced by survivors. The mental health impacts of sexual violence are a critical issue (Coulter et al., 2017; Carey et al., 2018). Further studies have investigated advocacy for justice for sexual violence survivors, such as the research conducted by Banyard et al. (2009). Attention is also given to issues of victimization and fear of crime, which create various barriers to addressing sexual violence on campus (Henson & Stone, 1999; Hines et al., 2016; Studeny, 2020). Moreover, research has explored the correlation between sexual violence and substance use, including drug and alcohol abuse, as well as juvenile delinquency (Clodfelter et al., 2010).

Regarding gender issues, extensive research has also been conducted on sexual violence, with particular attention to the increased risks faced by women in campus environments that lack robust systems for prevention and response (Muehlenhard et al., 2017). Studies have also examined the intersections of gender, ethnicity, and sexual identity, alongside issues of victimization, in the context of campus sexual violence (Coulter et al., 2017). Nevertheless, there remains a significant gap in scholarship concerning how gender issues intersect with broader institutional structures—namely, how entrenched university systems and their formal regulations are connected to the deeply embedded cultural mindsets prevalent at the grassroots level within higher education institutions.

In developing countries—particularly in Southeast Asia—there is a general lack of explicit institutional regulations addressing sexual violence. Indonesia is among the few countries that have made institutional efforts by enacting formal regulations, although these are relatively recent, having been established less than five years ago. Following the issuance of this regulation, a range of studies have emerged to respond to the dynamic situation across Indonesian campuses. In the Indonesian context, several scholars have conducted research on sexual violence on campuses, particularly in response to the introduction of the ministerial regulation concerning its prevention and handling (Pangestu et al., 2022; Putratama et al., 2022). These studies evaluate the efficacy of the regulation in reducing sexual violence incidents, although paradoxically, reported cases have increased since the regulation's enactment. Fitriyanti

and Suharyati (2023) focus on this increase in reported sexual violence following the issuance of the regulation. Their findings indicate that women experience the highest rates of sexual violence and that its prevalence in higher education institutions exceeds that of the general population (Wiarti et al., 2026). These quantitative studies primarily examine the relationship between the regulation and potential case reduction.

A significant gap in the literature that warrants further investigation is the detailed implementation of these regulations, particularly regarding the application of gender perspectives in handling sexual violence cases in Indonesia. Numerous instances reveal debates and controversies surrounding the determination of sexual violence, often resulting in survivor-blaming narratives. The A case exemplifies this issue, where the examination team was divided over A's culpability for visiting a male student's residence late at night when the alleged forced physical contact occurred. A controversial comment from a lecturer at the time questioned, "Why did the woman go to a man's place late at night?" Another comment drew an analogy: "If a cat is offered salted fish, of course it will be happy" (Adha, 2018), where the cat symbolized the male student and the salted fish represented A. Such arguments frequently emerge in various cases and are reported by the media. Even in news coverage, the public's divided opinions reveal a weak gender perspective, particularly concerning the positioning of survivors.

The gender perspective is crucial in addressing sexual violence on campuses. This study explores a paradox: while state policies exist, cultural barriers impede their implementation, challenging the Ministry of Education's ability to effectively oversee these measures. The limited understanding of gender perspectives among policymakers, particularly in approaching sexual violence cases from a survivor-centered standpoint, has resulted in gender-biased resolutions within Indonesian higher education institutions. Masculine power dynamics and their dominance in decision-making processes frequently obstruct effective case management. Although each university is mandated to establish a task force, these bodies often appear to serve merely as administrative requirements for state re-reporting. In practice, the task forces' efforts frequently encounter resistance from internal power structures, hindering the development of an equitable campus environment. Achieving a campus free from sexual violence necessitates the integration of a gender perspective in policy implementation. This research investigates how sexual violence issues are addressed in higher education institutions, considering the insufficient support from university leadership and the broader campus community. The study employs a gender perspective, emphasizing the importance of a survivor-centered approach in resolving sexual violence cases.

This article also contributes to the scholarly debate on campus sexual violence in the global context by emphasizing the critical need for synchrony between institutional structures at the macro or institutional level and the strengthening of antiviolence cultural mindsets—grounded in gender perspectives at the micro le-

vel or among the individuals. Without such synchronization, even institutionally comprehensive regulations, supported by established mechanisms and systems, will inevitably face defiance and resistance in their implementation. In contributing to the discourse on campus sexual violence—particularly in countries that lack strong regulatory systems and where masculine dominance remains deeply entrenched—this article highlights the necessity of persistently promoting gender perspectives in all layers of policymaking and implementation processes.

Methodology

This study employs qualitative content analysis method, focusing on higher education institutions in the Special Region of Yogyakarta. This province was selected for several compelling reasons: despite being one of Indonesia's smallest provinces, covering only 3,186 km², it hosts the highest concentration of universities in the country, with 126 institutions. Renowned as a “student city,” it attracts learners from across Indonesia. Despite its modest size, the province reported a significant number of sexual violence cases, with 4,726 incidents documented in 2022 (Komnas Perempuan, 2023). Moreover, the A case, which catalyzed the movement for campus sexual violence regulations, occurred within this province. Prior to the implementation of Permendikbudristek No. 30 of 2021, which marked the first national regulation addressing this issue, a state university in the Special Region of Yogyakarta had already enacted its own similar regulatory framework.

Yogyakarta is a Sultanate where the Sultan of Yogyakarta concurrently serves as the Governor of the Special Region of Yogyakarta. Known as the heart of Javanese culture—the dominant ethnic group in Indonesia—Javanese cultural values are deeply embedded in local mindsets and are marked by a strongly patriarchal orientation. One clear example of this patriarchy is the requirement that the Sultanate's ruler be male. In Javanese culture, men are accorded a significantly higher status (Koentjaraningrat, 1994). For instance, in matters of inheritance, men receive twice the share allotted to women. In family contexts, men are designated as heads of households, while women are referred to as homemakers. As heads of households, men are granted privileges within society, particularly access to public and political spheres. Women, as homemakers, occupy structurally institutionalized domestic roles. This cultural mindset—which upholds the superiority of men—fosters a form of masculine domination in which masculinity and violence are often normalized as enduring cultural practices (Connell, 2005). This entrenched masculine culture renders violence a normalized phenomenon. As a consequence, acts of sexual violence against women are frequently framed in ways that shift blame onto female victims, thereby justifying or trivializing the violence committed against them.

Twenty-two in-depth interviews were conducted, primarily with Task For-

ce members from the selected universities. Task force members were chosen as key informants due to their pivotal role in addressing sexual violence cases on campus. These individuals often navigate complex challenges stemming from institutional power dynamics. The sample encompasses a diverse range of institutions, including state universities, pedagogy-focused universities, and religiously affiliated institutions (both Islamic and Christian), to provide a comprehensive perspective on the issue across various higher education contexts in the region.

Results and discussion

Indonesia and the Prevalence of Sexual Violence

Indonesia, with a population exceeding 275 million, is predominantly Muslim and identifies as a democratic nation. The country's history is marked by a period of dictatorial governance, notably the 30-year New Order regime under President Suharto (1968–1998), characterized by militaristic and authoritarian rule that suppressed freedom of expression (Aspinall, 2016; O'Rourke, 2003). The Reformasi movement of 1998 heralded a new era of expressive freedom and open discourse. Since then, Indonesia has experienced a significant expansion in public expression, with social media emerging as a powerful platform for voicing opinions. Indonesia now ranks among the top five countries globally in terms of social media usage (Muthiariny, 2024). Despite these advancements, public discourse on sexual violence remains a relatively recent phenomenon, primarily facilitated by the proliferation of social media platforms. The watershed A case, driven by student activism, marked a turning point in openly addressing sexual violence issues in the country.

The practice of speaking out against sexual violence has increasingly become a new tradition in Indonesia, particularly following the enactment of the Permendikbudristek No. 30 of 2021 and the growing influence of social media. This shift is evident in the rising number of reports of sexual violence made to various institutions. In 2024, the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan), an independent organization addressing sexual violence, reported receiving 4,179 cases in 2022. Of these cases, 2,776 involved cyber-based sexual violence, 623 involved sexual harassment, and 780 were cases of rape (Laoh, 2024). These incidents represent 38.21% of all violence reported to Komnas Perempuan. The organization further noted that most cases of sexual violence occurred in public domains and predominantly affected women. Among those impacted, female university students were the most

vulnerable, accounting for 1,016 cases, followed by private-sector employees with 553 cases (Komnas Perempuan, 2023). Meanwhile, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection provided different data from alternative sources. Their 2023 report highlighted 19,593 cases of violence, with sexual violence accounting for 8,585 cases, predominantly involving students aged 13–17.

Regionally, West Java recorded the highest number of sexual violence cases in Indonesia in 2022, with 61,139 incidents. East Java followed with 53,861 cases, Central Java with 49,920 cases, and the Special Capital Region of Jakarta (DKI Jakarta) with 17,519 cases. Within Java Island, the Yogyakarta Special Region (DIY) reported the fewest cases, with 4,726 incidents (Komnas Perempuan, 2023). However, these figures are not directly comparable due to significant population differences across provinces. The rate of sexual violence in DIY is proportionally as high as in other Java provinces when considering its population of only 4 million, compared to West Java's 50 million, East Java's nearly 40 million, Central Java's almost 35 million, and DKI Jakarta's over 10.5 million.

Outside of Java, Indonesia's main island, North Sumatra reported the highest number of violence cases, with 16,991 incidents. Conversely, West Sulawesi had the lowest reported cases of sexual violence, with only 3 incidents. However, these figures may not fully reflect the reality, given that many individuals are reluctant to report due to the pervasive male dominance in society. In 2020, sexual violence was reported at 79 universities across 29 Indonesian cities. The number of reported cases rose to 8,800 in 2021, indicating a disturbing upward trend in sexual violence within Indonesian universities in recent years.

Since the implementation of the regulation on sexual violence, higher education institutions are mandated to establish task forces for the prevention and handling of sexual violence. These task forces operate under the supervision of the Inspectorate General of the Ministry of Education. The Ministry has also reaffirmed its commitment to addressing what it identifies as the "three major sins" in the education sector: sexual violence, bullying, and intolerance (Kusumah, 2023). In 2023, the Inspectorate General received reports of 200 cases of sexual violence. However, this figure does not encompass all incidents within higher education institutions. These reported cases include those unresolved at the institutional level over the past two years or those involving multiple institutions, thereby necessitating escalation to the Inspectorate General.

Various factors contribute to the underreporting of sexual violence cases. First, cultural stigma plays a significant role, as discussing sexual violence is often perceived as bringing shame to the family. However, with the increasing influence of social

media, more cases are being brought to light. Second, there is a widespread lack of trust in the system. Survivors may hesitate to report incidents due to uncertainty about whether their cases will be properly handled and whether they will be treated fairly by their institutions. Third, many higher education institutions demonstrate a lack of seriousness in addressing sexual violence cases. This is often due to a limited understanding of the mechanisms for handling such cases and a lack of gender sensitivity (Eddyono, 2021). Furthermore, interventions disguised as mediation frequently allow institutions to avoid responsibility, revealing a fragile grasp of these issues by many university leaders. In such mediation processes, perpetrators of sexual violence often escape punishment, as one common outcome is the survivor's withdrawal of the complaint, effectively absolving the perpetrator of any sanctions.

The first requirement for higher education institutions following the issuance of the regulations is the establishment of a Task Force for the Prevention and Handling of Sexual Violence (Satgas PPKS). The formation of these task forces on each campus is monitored through an institutionalized IT system. The composition of the task forces is determined by the student population, with students comprising 60% of the members, and more than 60% of the members being women. The names of all task force members are recorded in the Directorate General of Higher Education's information system, which serves as an online database. Secondly, the Directorate General of Higher Education has implemented efforts to raise awareness among lecturers by requiring them to complete a quiz on the Prevention and Handling of Sexual Violence. Lecturers must answer questions based on the knowledge provided. Failure to complete the quiz results in administrative sanctions, as participation is a prerequisite for promotion and career advancement. Thirdly, the Inspectorate General, an agency within the Directorate General of Higher Education responsible for overseeing violations in higher education institutions, directly monitors cases and establishes regulations to ensure consistent mechanisms across Indonesian universities. If a report of sexual violence is filed but no action is taken by the institution, the complainant can report the institution to the Inspectorate General. Institutions that fail to address such complaints may face sanctions, including stopping the financial aid and lowering the level of accreditation (Kemendikbudristek, 2021).

Given these efforts, it can be argued that opportunities for committing sexual violence are becoming increasingly limited. At various universities, students have also initiated their own mechanisms to ensure a safe and comfortable campus environment, free from sexual violence. Several student organizations have been established to monitor cases and support prevention efforts. For example, students have created an organization called Hopehelps, which operates across multiple universities. This organization assists peers who are afraid or hesitant to report sexual violence. In addition to offering initial counseling, Hopehelps has trained hundreds of members

in psychological first aid. The organization provides robust support to survivors of sexual violence, including negotiating with families who may be reluctant to report incidents, accompanying survivors to the police, and assisting with legal aid organizations.

Gender-Based Violence and the Interconnection Between Normalization Processes and the Operation of Power

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a pervasive issue rooted in the systemic gender inequalities that permeate societal structures. This research examines the power imbalances between genders, with a particular focus on the dynamics between men and women, as these are fundamental to understanding the phenomenon. GBV is primarily anchored in discriminatory perspectives that have become deeply entrenched in societal mindsets (Brownmiller, 1975). In patriarchal societies, where male dominated power structures predominate, GBV is as deeply embedded as other forms of oppression, such as racism, caste systems, and colonialism (Shaw, 2017).

The prevalence of sexual violence on a global scale is alarming. According to the World Bank Group (2019), GBV has reached pandemic levels, with one in three women experiencing violence in their lifetime. More than 30% of women worldwide have been subjected to sexual violence, whether by a partner or a non-partner, and 7% of women have experienced sexual harassment from some-one other than their partner.

A critical question arises: Why does sexual violence persist, with the majority of survivors being women? This issue is closely linked to cultural interpretations of male and female bodies across different societies. As Brownmiller (1975, p. 71) argues:

“If they do that his genital could serve as a weapon to generate fear must rank as one of the most important discoveries of prehistoric times along with the use of fire and the first crude stone axe. From prehistoric times to present, I believe that rape has played a critical function. It is nothing more or less than a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear.”

Brownmiller's argument highlights the role of the penis as a weapon used to subjugate women. The cultural construction of women as fearful objects, perpetually subject to intimidation, further reinforces the notion that women are culturally positioned as the property of men.

In the theoretical framework of GBV, Shaw (2017) posits that violence lacking a gender-sensitive perspective, particularly one that fails to consider women's experiences, often results in the reinforcement of patriarchal ideology. This patriarchal power is perpetuated through systemic processes that are iteratively enacted, eventually becoming normalized and tacitly accepted within society. In the Indonesian context, for instance, humor that demeans women is frequently perceived as inno-

cuous. Such derogatory jokes persist in everyday discourse and, in the contemporary digital landscape, manifest as sexual humor that diminishes women's dignity on social media platforms.

Feminist theorist Cockburn (2004) further elucidates this phenomenon, arguing that gender power constructs dynamics in all interactions. Gender norms shape and are shaped by power structures and operate within everyday discourses. This perspective underscores the centrality of human positioning as subjects within these structures to feminist theory as a whole. The power structures in question form a continuum, perpetuating themselves in an ongoing and interconnected manner. Consequently, violence persists because each subject within this structure tends to perpetuate traditions of violence unless there is a conscious effort towards antiviolence processes.

In the context of habitus (Bourdieu, 2020), violence becomes a deeply embedded structure within society, yet it is not immutable. The strength of this violent structure is due to the process of habitualization, where violence is normalized over time. Bourdieu posits that symbolic violence operates through intangible means such as symbols, ideas, and beliefs, rather than through physical force. This form of violence functions at the cultural level, profoundly influencing individuals' perceptions and behaviors. Within this structure of habitus, power domination is never neutral. Habitus is inherently socially hierarchical, and within it, masculine domination occupies a substantial space in the *champs de force* (field of power contestations) (Bourdieu, 1998). The efficacy of symbolic violence lies in its internalization by individuals, who are subsequently compelled to accept and reproduce it through existing hierarchies and power imbalances (Burawoy, 2019).

An example of this can be seen in cases of sexual violence, where social media is rife with harassment directed at women through stickers, pornographic images, and other demeaning content. Women's bodies are frequently objectified and ridiculed. However, these instances are often dismissed as mere "jokes," with little regard for their seriousness. When challenged, the response typically downplays the harm, reinforcing the trivialization of violence against women.

Foucault (2008) introduces the concept of the "Panopticon Tower" to elucidate the omnipresent surveillance mechanisms that enforce authority within society. This oversight is executed by various entities, including state apparatuses, religious ins-

titutions, and cultural norms, all of which function as regulatory bodies overseeing societal behavior. The “Panopticon Tower” reveals the relationship between power and knowledge (Foucault, 1980). Power and knowledge operate jointly to discipline individuals—each historical era enacts its own disciplining processes toward bodies and sexualities through knowledge-power configurations (Foucault, 1978).

In the contemporary context, media has emerged as a new regime of power, further extending this surveillance paradigm. The persistence of masculine culture and patriarchal structures can be attributed to the continuous process of habituation through repetition. The seeming immutability of these cultural and structural paradigms is reinforced by the exercise of power, wherein policymakers often operate from a perspective that subordinates women. Moreover, the act of surveillance, manifested through various forms of panopticon towers, serves as a mechanism for perpetuating this power dynamic.

The Preservation of Masculine Culture and Power Contestations

Addressing sexual violence in Indonesian higher education institutions presents significant challenges, primarily due to the deeply entrenched cultural norms that position women as subordinates, making it difficult to establish new structures for handling such cases (Rigual et.al., 2022; Udasmoro & Rahmawati, 2023). Higher education functions as a habitus—a system of dispositions encompassing arenas and social practices that are continuously reproduced through repeated habituation, eventually forming a deeply entrenched and institutionalized system (Bourdieu, 2020). Sexual violence thrives within such a habitus when the prevailing social practices create conditions that normalize and sustain actions otherwise recognized as harmful or abusive. In Bourdieu’s (1998) framework, this is closely tied to masculine culture, wherein social practices are dominated by discourses that perpetuate male power. On Indonesian campuses, for instance, sexually charged jokes often rely on metaphors that objectify and demean women. A common example is the analogy likening women to “salted fish” and men to “cats who enjoy looking at salted fish”—a form of verbal harassment frequently propagated by senior students. These expressions constitute gender-based violence as they are commonly used to victimize survivors, most of whom are women. This entrenched habitus of violence necessitates transformation to enable new ways of understanding and addressing sexual violence. Introducing a gender perspective—particularly one that recognizes verbal sexual harassment as a legitimate form of violence—is a crucial step in challenging and disrupting this deeply rooted habitus, even though such efforts will inevitably face considerable resistance.

Two pervasive cultural dynamics hinder efforts to combat sexual violence on campus. The first is the dominance of masculine culture (Bourdieu, 1998) within the hierarchical power structures of academia, where leadership—both administrative and academic—is predominantly male. The second is the hierarchical power relations based on age and rank, particularly between lecturers, staff, and students. In this context, lecturers, especially those holding the title of Professor, occupy the most hegemonic positions, while students remain at the lowest end of the power spectrum.

These hierarchical cultures resist adaptation to new structures, often resulting in verbal and symbolic opposition from campus communities. Universities frequently encounter resistance that trivializes the issue of sexual violence and undermines the efforts of newly established task forces. This resistance to new structures is part of an effort to preserve the status quo of a dominant habitus (Bourdieu, 2020). It serves to reaffirm masculine domination (Bourdieu, 1998) in everyday social interactions, particularly those between men and women, seniors and juniors, or superiors and subordinates. Survivor-blaming is a common manifestation of this resistance, with statements such as “men will be men” or “women should know how to behave” often being justified by religious teachings. For instance, the belief that “women must cover their awrah (parts of the body)” is used to rationalize the notion that “it’s no wonder they became victims of sexual violence,” despite the fact that many survivors who wear hijabs render such reasoning irrelevant. This paradox highlights the reluctance of universities’ members to genuinely address sexual violence from the survivor’s perspective, reducing the newly established structures to mere lip service (Eddyono, 2021).

Permendikbudristek No. 30 of 2021 represents a pivotal structural shift aimed at challenging the mindset that perpetuates the culture of sexual violence in Indonesia. This regulation constitutes a mechanism for initiating a new process of habituation (Bourdieu, 2020) within the educational culture of Indonesia, thereby enabling the formation of a new habitus—one free from sexual violence. This regulation mandates that universities implement preventive and responsive measures in practice. The preservation of masculine culture is now being confronted by new powers, with various “panopticon towers” (Foucault, 2008) —both the Ministry of Education and the broader public—monitoring compliance. In this context, the “Panopticon Tower” should be understood in a more constructive sense—not as a mechanism for exercising dominance over others, but as a disciplinary instrument in the creation of a new, state-sanctioned habitus. Universities that fail to establish task forces or enforce the regulation face sanctions from the Ministry of Education. In a press release, Indonesia’s Minister of Education, Nadiem Makarim, emphasized:

"If they do not implement the PPKS (Prevention and Handling of Sexual Violence) process in accordance with the ministerial regulation, various sanctions will be imposed, ranging from financial penalties to accreditation issues" (Charterine & Rastika, 2021: 1).

The "Panopticon Tower" (Foucault, 2008) is thus activated as a disciplinary mechanism, wherein the regulatory framework serves not only to oversee institutional compliance but also to prescribe specific sanctions against perpetrators of sexual violence within higher education. These sanctions encompass a range of measures, including mandating public apologies from perpetrators, which may be disseminated via the university's official website or media outlets. A notable case from a university in Yogyakarta exemplifies this approach, where a lecturer was required to issue a public apology on social media, an incident that subsequently gained significant traction across Indonesian media platforms (CNN Indonesia, 2024a). The sanctions further extend to more severe punitive measures, such as dismissal from one's position or, in cases of egregious violations, termination of employment for faculty, staff, or expulsion of students (Aisyah, 2021; Kemendikbudristek, 2021). The Inspectorate General serves as a supervisory body—a "panopticon tower"—overseeing universities' responses to sexual violence cases within their institutions.

Beyond institutional oversight, the media also functions as a panopticon tower, scrutinizing cases that remain unresolved by universities. Social media users, or "netizens," similarly act as informal monitors through their online platforms. Many public universities are observed by social media accounts named after the university, followed by the term "menfess," which refers to messages posted anonymously by senders. These accounts disseminate reports of sexual violence or related incidents, rallying public attention and support until the cases are resolved with sanctions publicly acknowledged.

Higher education institutions often face significant administrative pressure due to stringent government policies. This administrative burden is compounded by social pressure from both traditional and social media, which play crucial roles in ensuring that cases of sexual violence are addressed promptly. Universities are disciplined through this "Panopticon Tower" mechanism, thereby compelling them—whether willingly or not—to adhere to government-mandated regulations and standard operating procedures. In some instances, university leaders, including deans or even rectors, have been compelled to resign from their positions after facing mounting pressure from these external forces (CNN Indonesia, 2024b; DetikEdu, 2024). However, the challenge lies in the fact that these are often cases that have been exposed by the media. In reality, many other cases remain hidden, with some successfully concealed or overlooked by these panopticon towers of surveillance.

A member of the PPKS task force at a university highlighted the difficulties in enforcing regulations and fulfilling their responsibilities due to the pervasive masculine culture within higher education institutions:

“The PPKS task force has previously made recommendations to the rector, and decisions have been made. One case involved a student as the perpetrator. There was also a case involving a lecturer as the perpetrator. We even communicated the decision to the faculty. But I start to feel, is it worth it being a task force member? We’ve put in so much effort, but along the way, I feel like there’s a lack of unity. And [this disunity] comes from the faculty officials no less. The faculty already knows because the perpetrator has admitted their wrongdoing. He’s admitted his wrongdoing” (Interview with W, member of the task force at a university in Yogyakarta on the 20th of July 2024).

The task force member’s account reveals that not all decisions are implemented by faculties, even when they are required to impose sanctions on those who commit sexual violence. This reluctance stems from a pervasive belief that such wrongdoing is not serious. The perception that the offense is minor or forgivable is rooted in everyday practices where masculine cultures continue to be perpetuated. For example, male lecturers may touch female students by placing an arm around their shoulders, justifying it as a paternal gesture. This cultural justification normalizes such behavior, particularly unwanted touching, by framing it as a societal custom.

In practice, however, there is a noticeable disparity in the imposition of sanctions related to these issues. When a student engages in inappropriate touching, they are often sanctioned according to the task force’s recommendations. However, when the perpetrator is a lecturer, various measures are frequently taken to avoid imposing any sanctions. This disparity was also noted by the same task force member:

Interviewer: Based on the recommendations, what happens? Are all the recommendations then formalized, ensuring that the sanctions imposed align with the recommendations?

W: When it’s a student, yes, the sanctions are exactly as recommended. So, when there’s a case and the perpetrator is a student, the recommendation matches exactly what’s written in the formal decision. But when it comes to a lecturer—like in the recent case—I don’t think the sanctions implemented by the faculty are appropriate. This lecturer has been a repeat offender. He was punished before, and he should have been suspended. But then another report came in, and I was shocked. Why did the deanery suddenly say that he’s allowed to teach this semester?

Interviewer: For the lecturer’s case, does the decision come from the rector or the deanery?

W: From the rector, but ultimately, there’s a difference in perspective between the deanery and the rectorate.

Interviewer: Why do the sanctions differ from the rector's decision?

W: Because the deanery doesn't dare to enforce it, because the person is one of their own, a colleague in the same department.

This account illuminates two salient cultural aspects influencing the application of sanctions within higher education institutions. Firstly, the esteemed position of lecturers within both societal and campus hierarchies often leads university leaders, particularly those in deanship positions, to hesitate in imposing sanctions. This reluctance is especially pronounced when the perpetrator holds a significant institutional position, such as that of a senior lecturer, department official, or professor. Secondly, the cultural proximity between faculty leadership and lecturers, often exacerbated by shared departmental affiliations or familial connections, creates a sense of discomfort among faculty leaders when faced with the prospect of sanctioning colleagues. This phenomenon underscores how cultural and interpersonal dynamics can significantly influence policies that should, in principle, be applied impartially.

The inconsistency in the application of sanctions between students and lecturers highlights the entrenched social hierarchy within Indonesian higher education institutions. In the Indonesian context, students occupy a subordinate position relative to lecturers, making it easier for universities to impose sanctions on them. The prevailing belief that students need to be educated often justifies enforcing academic penalties, such as suspension, in line with established ethical norms. However, when it comes to sexual violence, there is often a tendency within universities to negotiate leniency for students, assuming they may not have fully understood that their actions constituted sexual violence.

This hierarchical dynamic creates a disparity in how rules are applied based on whether the perpetrator is a lecturer or a student. A member of the task force from another university, identified as A, elaborated on this point:

"The way I see it, there seems to be some sort of intervention or tendency to pressure the PPKS task force when handling certain cases. But this is more directed toward specific cases, for instance, those involving lecturers or educational staff. Or in cases where the reported individual is not from here but has a high profile. Students are somewhat limited in this regard because, for cases involving lecturers and educational staff, students are generally not involved, as there are specific procedures for handling such cases under the rules. Cases involving them are handled by the Directorate of Human Resources" (Interview with A, member of the task force at a university in Yogyakarta, on the 20th of July 2024).

This illustrates how Indonesia's deeply rooted masculine culture intersects with issues of social hierarchy. Interventions often occur when the perpetrators are lecturers, educational staff, or individuals with a high profile, such as politicians, public

figures, or those with substantial financial or social capital. These interventions frequently aim to shield such individuals from punishment. This is evident in several high-profile cases reported in the media, where senior officials involved in sexual violence often escape public scrutiny. Only a few cases continue to be followed by netizens and receive sustained attention on social media.

The foregoing analysis indicates distinct mechanisms shaping Indonesia's response to sexual violence. The creation of a new habitus (Bourdieu, 1998; 2020) through a process of habituation—systematic discipline needs to be applied via the “Panopticon Tower”—institutionalized by the state. However, this structure has yet to effectively instigate individual-level transformation for two primary reasons. First, the regulatory system does not yet address consciousness or attitudinal change. Second, the habituation process is still relatively recent—less than five years—resulting in a predominantly administrative approach that has not yet matured into a comprehensive perspectival shift.

Gender Perspective in Dismantling Entrenched Masculine Culture

One of the most urgent forms of collective awareness required to fully implement a new habitus that rejects sexual violence is the development of a wide-ranging gender perspective. A strong gender perspective, particularly in addressing sexual violence from a survivor-centered approach, presents a critical entry point for resolving such cases in accordance with established regulations. This approach helps to mitigate biased views against women (Studeny, 2020; Shaw, 2017). Within the Indonesian educational context, the Ministry of Education has issued guidelines mandating universities to implement gender mainstreaming in their operations, as outlined in Minister of National Education Regulation No. 84 of 2008. However, the enforcement of this regulation has been weak and inconsistent. This ineffectiveness is largely attributable to limited understanding of gender-based violence among university administrators, faculty members, and students. A persistent mindset that places the burden of prevention on women—expecting them to guard their behavior and sexuality to avoid violence—exemplifies the strength of masculine culture in universities (Hines et al., 2016; Henson et al., 1999), not only in Indonesia but globally.

In an attempt to align with the sexual violence regulation, many universities have appointed gender experts to their task forces, though this is not uniformly practiced across all institutions. The task force members, especially those from academic staff, are often selected for their understanding of gender issues, primarily because they teach gender studies at their respective universities. However, challenges arise when the execution of recommendations from these gender-sensitive task forces is left to

university leaders who may lack a deep understanding of gender perspectives or are indifferent to them. This insufficient gender perspective significantly hampers the effective handling of sexual violence cases.

Furthermore, some faculties do not adequately address sexual violence, often shifting the responsibility to the task force. This lack of accountability can lead to ineffective case management and provoke backlash from netizens on social media. For instance, sanctions may be too lenient, or there may be procedural errors in handling cases. A task force member at a university highlighted this issue:

“Actually, we expect the faculties to be proactive. Currently, there are only seven of us. But even if there were 20 or 30 of us, and we made as much noise as possible, if the academic community doesn’t want to listen, it’s pointless. For example, during outreach efforts, if they don’t want to engage, what else can we do? The same applies to handling cases. One of the reasons why handling cases is centralized within the university’s PPKS task force is because faculties struggle to manage them effectively. Their perspectives aren’t aligned—they don’t have a gender perspective. We actually have the task of building capacity at the faculty level so that the handling of cases isn’t entirely centralized, as it’s overwhelming. Hopefully, that can be achieved” (Interview with A, member of the task force at a university in Yogyakarta on the 25th of July 2024).

Some universities attempt to maintain the *status quo* by appointing a Task Force Chair who is unlikely to rigorously address cases of sexual violence. Often, this individual has little to no prior involvement in gender-related activities, allowing a masculine mindset to dominate their decisions. The appointment of both male and female members who share a masculine mindset (Bourdieu, 1998) illustrates how the reproduction of permissive masculinities continues to thrive within society. As a result, the implementation of recommendations frequently favors the perpetrators, who are predominantly male.

The absence of a survivor-centered approach is a significant barrier to dismantling the entrenched masculine and patriarchal perspectives within higher education institutions. A task force member elucidated this issue as follows:

“We once handled a case main challenge that universities face in resolving cases of sexual violence on campus. The first, and most crucial, is changing the mindset and awareness of the importance of a gender perspective among faculty leaders so that they understand the necessity of addressing sexual violence cases with a gender-sensitive, victim-centered approach. The second issue is the limited human resources, which hinders the swift resolution of cases” (Interview with Y, member of the task force at a university in Yogyakarta on 3rd of September 2024).

The lack of a gender perspective is sometimes evident even within the investigation teams responsible for examining cases (Banyard, et.al., 2009). While the Task

Force appoints these teams to investigate cases, impartiality toward survivors is often compromised.

“We once handled a case. The investigation team sided with the perpetrator and defended him, arguing that there was no evidence the male perpetrator, who was a fellow faculty member of one of the investigators, committed penetration. According to them, it could not be proven that the alleged perpetrator engaged in penetration, even though there were witnesses, albeit not directly witnessing the act. This investigator then issued a dissenting opinion.” (Interview with Y, member of the task force at a university in Yogyakarta on the 3rd of September 2024).

A gender-sensitive perspective is crucial in challenging religious-based interpretations that may inadvertently harm survivors of sexual violence “(Brownmiller, 1975; Shaw, 2017). This is exemplified by a case at a religiously affiliated university in Yogyakarta, where a male student coerced his dating partner into sexual relations. Despite the coercion resulting in the survivor’s pregnancy and subsequent childbirth, the university failed to sanction the perpetrator for rape within the context of the relationship. Instead, the institution-imposed sanctions based solely on the perceived immorality of premarital sexual activity, rather than addressing the fundamental issue of coercion.

Another significant concern expressed by many task force members across various universities is the issue of intervention from higher leadership, particularly university administrators. The patriarchal perspectives of those overseeing the task force often lead to interventions due to close ties with the perpetrator or pressure from higher authorities. For instance, when a perpetrator is a student, whose parent holds a national-level position, the parent pressures the university, which in turn pressures the task force to reduce sanctions or allow the student to graduate without completing mandatory counseling. The underlying question is why these interventions occur. Although there is no definitive answer, the absence of a gender perspective plays a substantial role in the continued protection of perpetrators who have clearly committed sexual violence.

A task force member explained:

“Interventions typically occur because stakeholders attempt to address sexual violence issues with political considerations in mind. For example, orders may come from higher-ups they are acquainted with, such as important figures in government or the political sphere. These university leaders usually have a low level of gender awareness, leaving them with no foundation to resist such interventions. Those engaging in these interventions are not only men but also women. These women lack a strong gender perspective, and because men predominantly hold power structurally, they are compelled to conform to this masculine culture” (Interview with S, member of the task force at a university in Yogyakarta on September 4, 2024).

In the context of higher education, even though gender perspectives are regulated—particularly the importance of gender mainstreaming—the regulations issued in 2008 have had little impact when addressing sexual violence. In practice, male power and mindsets dominate, and when conflicts arise, the *status quo* prevails, with efforts made to preserve the established culture.

Conclusions

The challenges faced by university task forces in the Special Region of Yogyakarta in addressing sexual violence are complex and attest to how deeply masculine and patriarchal modes of thought remain entrenched. Task forces must contend with multiple interconnected factors, ranging from institutional structures to individual-level attitudes embedded in the broader habitus of higher education.

The findings of this study identify three major challenges faced by university task forces, extending from macrolevel structures to the grassroots mindsets prevalent across university communities. First, a deeply entrenched structure, or habitus, operates as a stable system. It is continually reproduced through processes of habituation in which masculine dominance seeks to preserve the status quo and obstruct the formation of a new habitus for preventing sexual violence. In Indonesia, a new process of habituation has been initiated through regulations and strict disciplinary mechanisms comparable to Foucault's Panopticon, which serves as a form of institutional surveillance and control. However, this coercive disciplinary approach has failed to address the deeper problem of limited gender awareness, thereby reducing the effectiveness of these efforts. Under this system, women survivors may never receive genuine justice or institutional support because they are treated as objects expected to conform to the dominant forms of public discourse and opinion circulating within the habitus. Even when a case is reported, the truth tends to be constructed according to a regime of truth upheld by a social environment that largely favors men. Second, task forces face structural challenges rooted in individual-level attitudes.

These attitudes manifest themselves in the reluctance of university policymakers and leaders to enforce the regulation and implement task force recommendations when cases arise. The underlying problem is university leaders' limited gender awareness, which leaves them susceptible to external influence even after the task force has issued its recommendations. Moreover, because collective power is largely controlled by male leaders, the system is not fully implemented. Instead, it is interpreted through the perspectives of individuals whose thinking is shaped by deeply rooted religious, cultural, and traditional structures.

The third challenge involves individual actors with institutional affiliations. Intervention is a recurring problem that prevents cases from being fully resolved in accordance with task force recommendations. In the Indonesian context, individuals can wield greater power than institutions, particularly when those institutions are controlled by groups intent on preserving the status quo and avoiding involvement in cases thought likely to tarnish the university's reputation. Task forces must contend with two forms of intervention. The first is internal intervention by university leaders. Pressure from within the university can allow perpetrators of sexual violence to escape punishment when leaders decline to impose sanctions because of their close relationships with the perpetrators. Such internal intervention primarily benefits faculty perpetrators; students are less likely to receive the same leniency. The second is external intervention, which arises from the influence of political power over university affairs when sexual violence cases occur. Both students and faculty members may benefit from this form of intervention because they are protected by prominent public or political figures with whom they have personal or political connections. Students may be protected by relatives who hold political office, while faculty members may receive protection through influential partners.

The study concludes that addressing sexual violence requires a survivor-centered approach informed by a gender perspective and directed at both structural conditions and individual-level dynamics. One way forward is to challenge the prevailing habitus more constructively through policy and its implementation.

This study is limited by its focus on a single Indonesian province. Research in other provinces is therefore needed to provide a more comprehensive picture of the challenges involved in addressing sexual violence in relation to Indonesia's complex power relations. Differences in social class, gender, and ethnicity may create distinct challenges for task forces in different locations. Future research should therefore examine other Indonesian regions with different characteristics. Research in communities with different cultural and religious backgrounds would offer a more comprehensive foundation for strengthening systems for addressing sexual violence in

Indonesian higher education.

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Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Author contributions:

The authors participated in drafting the work and analyzing the documents.

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