

THE CONTESTATION OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE DISCOURSE IN INDONESIAN STATE ISLAMIC HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: A GENDER COMMUNICATION ANALYSIS

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.30983/humanisme.v4i2.35674>

<i>Submission: February 29, 2026</i>	<i>Revised: March 10, 2026</i>	<i>Accepted: May 25, 2026</i>	<i>Published: June 26, 2026</i>
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Abstract

The contestation of sexual violence discourse within State Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN) in Indonesia reflects tensions between gender equality, religious values, and institutional authority. This study aims to examine how sexual violence discourse is contested within PTKIN and how gendered power relations, religious values, and institutional interests shape communication practices surrounding prevention and response mechanisms. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, the research draws on data collected through interviews, observations, and analyses of online news and institutional documents. The findings reveal three interconnected forms of discourse contestation: the operation of gendered power relations in defining sexual violence, communicative silencing that constrains victims' voices and reporting practices, and competing narratives surrounding prevention and response mechanisms. These contestations demonstrate that sexual violence is not merely a legal or ethical issue but also a communicative and ideological arena in which progressive and conservative interpretations of gender, religion, and institutional responsibility compete for legitimacy. The study contributes to communication scholarship by conceptualizing sexual violence discourse as a site where gendered power relations, religious authority, and organizational interests intersect and shape institutional responses. Its novelty lies in offering a contextual understanding of discourse formation within Islamic higher education, thereby extending gender communication studies beyond conventional legal and policy-centered approaches.

Keywords: Discourse Contestation, Sexual Violence, Gender Communication

Background

The contestation of sexual violence discourse at State Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN) has stimulated the emergence of critical awareness regarding the social and cultural constructions that have long normalized gender-based violence. Cases of sexual violence continue to increase in higher education institutions, both in general universities and in Islamic religious universities.¹ The situation has been described as alarming, with a rapid survey conducted across 16 Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia identifying 1,011 reported cases of sexual violence. The data were collected through a rapid assessment coordinated by the Indonesian National Commission on Violence Against Women and the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and were presented at a national workshop on the prevention and handling of violence in 2019.² This critical awareness arising from the discursive contestation has not only challenged narratives that blame victims but has also encouraged communities to demand structural transformation.³ Furthermore, the contestation of discourse does not merely produce divergent interpretations, but is associated with shifts in how sexual violence is framed, as indicated by emerging discursive tendencies toward more inclusive, egalitarian, and gender-sensitive perspectives. The discourse on sexual violence

has undergone a significant shift, moving from victim-blaming tendencies toward greater recognition of perpetrator accountability. This shift reflects changes in social values and gender attitudes, thus opening opportunities for policy interventions and gender equality education.⁴ Changes in policy discourse are needed to encourage universities to support victims more effectively and to revise institutional language that has historically normalized sexual violence.⁵ These findings indicate that the contestation of sexual violence discourse has generated a new awareness that prevention and response efforts at PTKIN must prioritize victim protection.

Academic literature addressing sexual violence at State Islamic Higher Education Institutions remains limited and lacks comprehensive exploration. Existing studies on sexual violence within PTKIN tend to focus on descriptive and normative aspects, such as conceptual understandings of sexual violence, institutional regulations, and organizational responses.⁶ And Usfiryatul (2021)⁷; Suhairi (2021).⁸ Empirical and analytical studies particularly those employing a gender communication perspective

¹ Irwan & Hardianto Djanggih, "Pencegahan Dan Penanganan Kekerasan Seksual Di Lingkungan Perguruan Tinggi," *Journal of Philosophy (JLP)* 3, no. 2 (2022): 260–77, <https://doi.org/http://www.pasca-umi.ac.id/index.php/jlp/article/view/1471/1697>.

² Muhammad Jailani, "Tinjauan Socio Legal Kebijakan Pencegahan Dan Penanganan Kekerasan Seksual (PPKS) Di Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam (PTKI) – Sk Dirjend Pendis Kemenag RI – Draft Peraturan Rektor Tentang PPKS," *Journal of Gender and Social Inclusion in Muslim Societies* 1, no. 2 (2020): 119, <https://doi.org/10.30829/jgsims.v1i2.8724>.

³ Rahma Az-Zahra and Ni Gusti Ayu Roselani, "A Critical Discourse Analysis of Sexual Violence Narratives in The Jakarta Post," *Lexicon* 11, no. 1 (2024): 34, <https://doi.org/10.22146/lexicon.v11i1.93145>.

⁴ Zoe Abrams, "Explaining Societal Shifts in Victim Blaming and Perpetrator Culpability for Sexual Violence: Evidence From the #MeToo Era," *Sex Roles* 91, no. 7 (2025): 1–28, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-025-01590-6>.

⁵ Gena K. Dufour, "The Insidiousness of Institutional Betrayal: An Ecological Systematic Review of Campus Sexual Violence Response Literature," *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse* 25, no. 5 (2024): 3903-3922., <https://doi.org/10.1177/15248380241265382>.

⁶ Robiatul; Adawiyah, Reza Hilmy Luayyin, and M. Nabat Ardli, "Analisis Permendikbud Ristek No 30 Tahun 2021 Dan Konstruksi Sosial Kekerasan Seksual Di Perguruan Tinggi Perspektif Sosiologis," *Al Qodiri: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial Dan Keagamaan* 19, no. 3 (2022): 781–96.

⁷ Siti Rof'ah & Maksun Marfu'ah, Usfiryatul, "Sistem Pencegahan Dan Penanganan Kekerasan Seksual Di Kampus," *Kafa'ah Journal* 11, no. 1 (2021): 95–106, <http://kafaah.org/index.php/kafaah/index>.

⁸ Nur Afni Khafsoh & Suhairi, "Pemahaman Mahasiswa Terhadap Kekerasan Seksual Di Kampus," *Marwah: Jurnal Perempuan, Agama Dan Jender* 20, no. 1 (2021): 61 – 75, <https://ejournal.uin-suska.ac.id/index.php/marwah/article/viewFile/10487/6578>.

are still scarce and have yet to engage with emerging discursive elements such as policy language, power relations, and cultural narratives. Several factors contribute to this gap. First, discourses of sexual violence are frequently produced and legitimized through formal institutional policies. Second, shifting meanings associated with victims are influenced by religious and cultural norms. Third, dominant institutional discourses are rarely documented in systematic ways. For instance Ostridge (2025), emphasizes that formal policies on sexual violence in higher education function not only as administrative regulations but also construct power relations that discursively silence victims' experiences.⁹ Similarly Gukurume & Shoko (2023), show that discourses surrounding survivors are shaped by institutional frameworks of spirituality and morality, which often restrict recognition and protection for victims.¹⁰

The concept of sexual violence in this study is grounded in Johan Galtung's framework of the violence triangle, which consists of direct, structural, and cultural violence. According to Galtung (2018), sexual violence can be categorized as a form of direct violence because it is visible and involves identifiable perpetrators, expressed through both verbal and nonverbal actions. However, direct sexual violence whether verbal, physical, or psychological remains inseparable from the structural and cultural systems that support and legitimize it.¹¹ Sexual violence is often understood as gender-based violence, as empirical evidence demonstrates that most cases are committed by men, with women

disproportionately positioned as victims, whether in private or public rooms^{12, 13, 14, 15}. His gendered pattern reflects how sexual violence is shaped by social norms, gender roles, and cultural values that sustain unequal power relations. The phenomenon is therefore not merely an individual act but is deeply embedded in broader structural inequalities. As noted by Rifa'at (2019), sexual violence is often driven by imbalanced power relations, rooted in gender inequality that normalizes and perpetuates discriminatory attitudes toward women.¹⁶

Within social and cultural constructions, women are often stereotyped as *the second sex*, positioned as if they lack presence and autonomy, while meaning and authority are assumed to be defined by men. This phenomenon is reflected in the context of Indonesian State Islamic Higher Education Institutions, where women continue to encounter various structural and cultural barriers, including gender stereotypes, marginalization, and the predominance of patriarchal values within both academic and socio-religious

¹² Muhammad Riyyan Firdaus, Neneng Gina Agniawati Agniawati, and M Solahudin, "Johan Galtung's Theory of Violence and Conflict: A Study of Pela Gandong's Local Wisdom as a Media for Conflict Resolution in Ambon," *Guntung Djati Conference Series 4* (2021): 831–48, <http://www.conferences.uinsgd.ac.id/index.php/gdcs/article/view/440/252>.

¹³ Raineika Faturani, "Kekerasan Seksual Di Lingkungan Perguruan Tinggi," *Jurnal Ilmiah Wabana Pendidikan* 8, no. 15 (2022): 480–86, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7052155>.

¹⁴ Dartnall & Rachel Jewkes Elizabeth, "Sexual Violence against Women: The Scope of the Problem," *Best Practice & Research Clinical Obstetrics & Gynaecology*, 27, no. 1 (2013): 3–13, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bpobgyn.2012.08.002>.

¹⁵ Diana Rahmasari Rakhmawati, Dina Mutimmatul Faidah, Iman Pasu Purba, "Strengthening the Ecosystem for Preventing and Handling Sexual Violence on Campus to Support Achievements SDGs Gender Equality," *E3S Web of Conferences* 450, no. 01007 (2023): 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/202345001007>.

¹⁶ Farid Rifa'at, Adikarti & Muhammad, "Kekerasan Terhadap Perempuan Dalam Ketimpangan Relasi Kuasa: Studi Kasus Di Rifka Annisa Women's Crisis Center," *SAWWA: Jurnal Studi Gender* 14, no. 2 (2019): 175–90, <https://doi.org/10.21580/sa.v14i2.4062>.

⁹ Lindsay. Ostridge, "Sexual Violence, Secrets, and Work: Rulingrelations of Campus Sexual Violence Policy," *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue Canadienne de Sociologie* 62, no. 1 (2025): 34–54.

¹⁰ Simbarashe Gukurume and Munatsi Shoko, "Policing Toxic Masculinities and Dealing with Sexual Violence on Zimbabwean University Campuses," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 79, no. 3 (2023): 1–8, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v79i3.8625>.

¹¹ Johan Galtung, "Violence, Peace and Peace Research," *Organicom* 15, no. 28 (2018): 33–56, <http://dx.doi.org/10.11606/issn.2238-2593.organicom.2018.150546>.

environments.¹⁷ The limited representation of women in strategic leadership roles within PTKIN is evident from data indicating that only seven of the 58 State Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN) in Indonesia are headed by female rectors.¹⁸ This cultural construction persists through dominant gender belief systems that structure everyday social life.¹⁹ From a sociological perspective, sexual violence occurs as a result of interactional processes that produce unequal bargaining positions, role status, and hierarchical relationships between men and women. Cultural elements characterized by patriarchy, domination, and exploitation reinforce these inequalities, enabling gendered power relations to operate as a form of symbolic and material control. Such dynamics are also evident in higher education institutions, where power abuse may manifest, for example, in cases where lecturers misuse their authority over students.²⁰ These interactions affirm that sexual violence is not merely an isolated behavioral act but is rooted in structural and cultural contexts that legitimize unequal gender relations and normalize coercive practices. According to Wulandari et al., (2025), insights from gender communication

reveal a shift in women's communicative behavior from being silenced to becoming more assertive and capable of articulating their experiences.²¹

Gender communication offers an important perspective for examining the ways in which communication processes shape, reinforce, and reproduce gendered power relations within social institutions and everyday interactions.²² Feminist scholarship argues that the marginalization and violence against women are not solely rooted in patriarchal social structures; they are also reproduced and legitimized through language, discourse, and social interaction patterns that systematically place women in subordinate positions.²³ Within this framework, communication constitutes a strategic site for examining the mechanisms through which gender inequality is legitimized and reproduced, including within Islamic State Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN).

To better understand these dynamics, Deborah Tannen (1990) argues that interactions between men and women can be understood as a form of cross-cultural communication. Men and women often employ different communication styles because they are shaped by distinct socialization experiences.²⁴ These differences may generate misunderstandings, particularly when one communication style is granted greater

¹⁷ Aziza Meria et al., "Women's Leadership Model in Islamic Religious College (PTKIN) in Implementing Gender Responsive Program Policies (Case Studies at IAIN Bukittinggi, IAIN Ponorogo, and IAIN Metro Lampung) Aziza," *Gender Equality: International Journal of Child and Gender Studies* 8, no. 2 (2022): 149–60, <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.22373/equality.v8i2.13224>.

¹⁸ Nina Nurmila, "PROPOSING FEMINIST INTERPRETATION OF THE QUR'AN AND AFFIRMATIVE POLICY TO SUPPORT WOMEN LEADERSHIP IN INDONESIAN STATE ISLAMIC HIGHER EDUCATION," *Musawa, Jurnal Studi Gender Dan Islam* 19, no. 2 (2020): 125–40, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.14421/musawa.2020.192.125-140>.

¹⁹ Wilodati Wilodati & Siti Komariah Pebriaisyah, Bz Fitri, "Kekerasan Seksual Di Lembaga Pendidikan Keagamaan: Relasi Kuasa Kyai Terhadap Santri Perempuan Di Pesantren," *Sosietas* 12, no. 1 (2022): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.17509/sosietas.v12i1.48063>.

²⁰ Ariani Hasanah Soejoeti and Vinita Susanti, "Memahami Kekerasan Seksual Dalam Menara Gading Di Indonesia," *Community: Pengawas Dinamika Sosial* 6, no. 2 (2020): 207, <https://doi.org/10.35308/jcpds.v6i2.2221>.

²¹ Happy Wulandari, Dyah Pithaloka, and Sherly Aidya Pasya, "Gender-Based Interpersonal Communication Behavior: When Women No Longer Muted," *LONTAR: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi* 13, no. 1 (2025): 473–80, <https://doi.org/10.30656/lontar.v13.i1.10288>.

²² dan Natalie Fixmer-Oraiz. Wood, Julia T., *Gendered Lives: Communication, Gender, and Culture*, 14th ed. (Cengage, 2020), <https://www.cengage.com/c/student/9798214144870/?filterBy=Student>.

²³ Michelle M. Lazar, "Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis: Articulating a Feminist Discourse Praxis," *Critical Discourse Studies* 4, no. 2 (2007): 141–164., <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/17405900701464816>.

²⁴ Deborah Tannen, "Gender Differences in Topical Coherence: Creating Involvement in Best Friends' Talk," *Discourse Processes* 13, no. 1 (1990): 73–90, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/01638539009544747>.

legitimacy than the other. Within the context of Islamic State Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN), this perspective provides valuable insight into how women's experiences, voices, and reports of sexual violence may be marginalized, dismissed, or insufficiently acknowledged due to divergent communication patterns operating within institutional environments that remain influenced by patriarchal norms and power structures. Consequently, gender communication studies are concerned not only with linguistic differences between men and women but also with the ways in which language and communication practices reproduce unequal power relations. This perspective is particularly relevant for examining the discourse of sexual violence in PTKIN, as it allows researchers to investigate how institutional communication, responses to survivors, and the representation of women within academic settings may either perpetuate or challenge existing gender hierarchies and inequalities.

From the perspective of gender communication, this phenomenon can be understood through Cheri Kramarae's Muted Group Theory, which builds upon the work of Shirley and Edwin Ardener on women and communication.²⁵ The theory posits that communication systems are largely shaped by dominant groups that possess greater social, cultural, and institutional power. As a result, subordinate groups often have limited opportunities to define experiences, articulate concerns, and influence public discourse.²⁶ Within patriarchal contexts, women's

²⁵ Kramer, Cheri, Barrie Thorne, Nancy Henley, "Perspectives on Language and Communication," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 3, no. 3 (1978): 638–651., <https://doi.org/https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/493507>.

²⁶ Divya Hangesty Khaerunnisa and Irwansyah Syawal, Marsaa Salsabila, Afifah Dwiandini, "Exploring the Role of Muted Group Theory in Understanding Women's Experiences: A Systematic Literature Review," *International Journal of Humanity Studies (IJHS)* 7, no. 2 (2024): 279–94, <https://doi.org/10.24071/ijhs.v7i2.7305>.

perspectives are frequently marginalized because the prevailing communicative norms, language structures, and institutional practices are predominantly constructed from male-centered viewpoints. This marginalization operates as a form of silencing that sustains existing gender hierarchies and inequalities.²⁷ Therefore, Muted Group Theory provides a critical analytical lens for investigating how patriarchal communication structures within PTKIN may influence the recognition, expression, and institutional handling of sexual violence cases involving women.

According to Uzair Jan et al., (2023), power dynamics in society are reflected in its communication system, where those in power are able to express their thoughts and experiences more effectively within dominant discourse.²⁸ In contrast, subordinate groups must adjust their communicative practices to gain recognition and opportunities to be heard. Setyowati et.al (2023) further highlight that language in communication generally reflects experiences from a male point of view, making it difficult for women to fully articulate their own experiences from their own perspectives.²⁹ Based on this review, it is evident that current studies on sexual violence primarily highlight case prevalence and the effectiveness of prevention and response programs, while the contested discursive dimensions remain insufficiently examined.

The purpose of this study is to provide a new perspective on sexual violence at State Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN)

²⁷ Kramer, Cheri, Barrie Thorne, Nancy Henley, "Perspectives on Language and Communication."

²⁸ Muhammad Hamza & Ishtiaq Muhammad Uzair Jan, Muhammad, Riaz Ullah, "Muteness and Oppression of Women in The Wasted Vigil from the Perspective of Patriarchy and a Muted Group Theory," *University of Chitral Journal of Linguistics and Literature* 7, no. II (2023): 292–300, <https://jll.uoch.edu.pk/index.php/jll/article/view/349/278>.

²⁹ Retno Manuhoro Setyowati, Errika Dwi, and Setya Watie, "Muted Group Theory Anomalies in Online Gender-," *Journal of Social Research* 3, no. 1 (2023): 252–65, <https://ijsr.internationaljournallabs.com/index.php/ijsr/article/view/1939/1137>.

by examining it as a contested discourse. Sexual violence is not merely a moral or legal issue; it is also a linguistic and communicative construction that reproduces power relations and shapes public responses. The novelty of this study lies in its reconceptualization of sexual violence in PTKIN as a discursive and communicative phenomenon. Previous studies on sexual violence in PTKIN have primarily focused on legal frameworks, institutional policies, prevention mechanisms, and victim protection. Consequently, they have largely overlooked how language, media representations, and everyday communication practices construct meanings of sexual violence, legitimize particular narratives, and influence perceptions of victims and perpetrators. To the best of current scholarly knowledge, studies on sexual violence in PTKIN have not systematically examined how gendered communication practices and discursive processes shape the construction of sexual violence and responses to victims. This study addresses that limitation by applying a gender communication perspective to analyze the discursive processes through which sexual violence is represented, contested, and normalized within PTKIN contexts. In doing so, it reveals how communication practices reproduce or challenge gendered power relations, offering an analytical dimension that has remained largely absent in previous PTKIN scholarship.

This study is based on the argument that the contestation of discourses surrounding power relations, speaking authority, and the prevention and handling of sexual violence constitutes a crucial element in understanding how sexual violence is constructed and responded to within State Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN). Power relations in this context not only represent hierarchical interactions between lecturers and students but also involve institutional structures that determine who is entitled to speak, be recognized, and be trusted in defining and evaluating cases of sexual violence.

Speaking authority becomes a central arena in which the legitimacy of narratives concerning victims, perpetrators, and institutions is negotiated, ultimately influencing policy directions related to prevention and response efforts. Meanwhile, discourses on the prevention and handling of sexual violence reflect an ongoing contestation among religious values, moral norms, and principles of gender justice that continue to be negotiated within academic spaces. These contested discourses shape meanings, strategies, and policy orientations, thereby determining the trajectory of sexual violence prevention and response at PTKIN.

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach by mapping discourses on sexual violence in higher education institutions as represented in Indonesian online news reports. Online news was selected as the primary object of analysis because digital media function not only as channels for reporting events but also as discursive spaces where meanings, narratives, and power relations surrounding sexual violence are constructed, circulated, and contested. Through news coverage, institutional responses, victim experiences, public perceptions, and broader gender ideologies become visible and open to critical examination. The digital reports were systematically identified and categorized based on their relevance to the focus of this research. The analysis produced three main categories of findings. First, the discourse on academic power relations in the reproduction of sexual violence, which includes bureaucratic, academic, and patriarchal discourses. Second, the discourse of communicative silencing as a discursive practice, which consists of symbolic, cultural, and structural forms of silencing. Third, the discourse on the Prevention and Handling of Sexual Violence, which covers narratives on strengthening the governance of PPKS (Sexual Violence Prevention and Handling Task Forces), socialization efforts, and institutional infrastructure support. From a gender communication perspective, online news

provides a strategic site for examining how language, representation, and communication practices shape public understandings of sexual violence and reproduce or challenge existing gendered power relations. Through these categories, the study investigates how discourses on sexual violence are constructed, negotiated, and reproduced within digital media spaces. It further examines how institutional communication, gendered power relations, and media representations shape public understandings of sexual violence and influence policy responses within State Islamic Higher Education Institutions.

Primary data for this study were obtained from online news reports and visual materials accessible through digital search platforms, as well as semi-structured interviews with informants who possess in-depth knowledge of the research focus. These informants included university leaders, representatives from the Gender and Child Study Centers (PSGA), task force members, and volunteers from three PTKIN institutions: UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, UIN Sumatera Utara, and IAIN Lhokseumawe. In addition, non-participant observation was conducted, in which the researcher acted solely as an observer without engaging in the daily activities of the participants. To complement the primary data, documentation studies were also carried out to collect supporting information such as documents, books, archives, written records, images, and photographs, including reports and other relevant materials associated with the research topic. Following data collection, data validity was examined using source triangulation, which involved validating field findings by comparing them with relevant theoretical references. Data analysis was carried out concurrently with data collection. The analytical framework used in this study followed the Miles and Huberman model, consisting of three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

Result and Discussion

The contestation of discourse on sexual violence in PTKIN is reflected in competing narratives regarding the causes, impacts, and appropriate institutional responses to sexual violence. While some actors frame sexual violence as a moral and individual problem, others emphasize its structural dimensions rooted in unequal gender relations and power imbalances. In several cases, concerns over institutional reputation may also influence how incidents are communicated and addressed. These competing interpretations demonstrate that the discourse on sexual violence is not only influenced by religious authority and institutional structures, but also by gender relations that shape how students, lecturers, and policymakers understand the issue. From a gender communication perspective, this study identifies three forms of discourse contestation: power relations discourse, communication silencing, and discourse on the prevention and handling of sexual violence. Examining these forms of contestation provides insight into how sexual violence is constructed, negotiated, and responded to within State Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN). The three forms of discourse contestation are discussed in the following sections.

Academic Power Relations in the Reproduction of Sexual Violence

The discourse of power relations within higher education institutions cannot be separated from the social structure and academic culture that shape interactions among actors. Power dynamics are evident in relationships between lecturers and students, leaders and staff, as well as seniors and juniors, relationships that often contain implicit or explicit dimensions of authority. These power relations are reproduced through language, symbols, and institutional regulations, functioning as a form of discursive contestation against dominant narratives. In this context, the reproduction of sexual violence is

not merely an outcome of individual behavior, but a manifestation of structural and cultural conditions that legitimize unequal relationships and normalize coercive practices. The findings of this study show several patterns of discursive domination embedded in academic interactions that contribute to the reproduction of sexual violence. These patterns emerge in communication styles, institutional language, hierarchical expectations, and symbolic practices that reinforce the subordination of certain groups, particularly women within academic settings. To illustrate these patterns more clearly, the forms of dominant discourse present in academic interactions are mapped in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Academic Power Relation Discourses




Form of Discourse	Description	Illustrative Cases
Bureaucratic Discourse	Institutional bureaucracy operates slowly, lacks victim-centered procedures, and delays sanctioning processes against perpetrators.	 <p>Source: https://www.tempo.co/hukum/korban-kekerasan-seksual-sesalkan-universitas-islam-riau-lambat-memproses-sanksi-eks-dekan-1176830</p>
Academic Discourse	Victims face academic consequences, including threats to grades, supervision, or graduation prospects when they resist or report misconduct.	 <p>Source: https://regional.kompas.com/read/2025/05/22/161432978/kasus-dugaan-pelecehan-dosen-uin-mataram-sahabat-saksi-korban-pelaku-punya</p>
Patriarchal Discourse	Patriarchal campus culture reinforces impunity for perpetrators, legitimizes coercive behavior, and silences victims through gendered norms.	 <p>Source: https://tirta.id/kultur-patriarki-mendorong-kekerasan-seksual-di-kampus-berulang-hau6</p>

Table 1 illustrates how mechanisms of power operate through communicative practices, institutional procedures, and socio-cultural norms. Power is exercised discursively by shaping meanings, regulating interactions, and influencing

how particular behaviors are interpreted within institutional settings. In higher education, authority figures such as lecturers or institutional leaders may misuse their positions to normalize unequal power relations that increase the vulnerability of subordinate groups to sexual violence. While formal institutional policies may emphasize prevention and protection, actual practices in reporting, investigation, and decision-making processes do not always reflect these commitments. In this context, bureaucracy functions not only as an administrative structure but also as a discursive mechanism that shapes what is recognized as legitimate knowledge, credible evidence, and acceptable institutional responses. Drawing on Foucault’s conception of power/knowledge, institutional procedures contribute to the production of particular “regimes of truth” that influence whose voices are heard, whose experiences are validated, and how access to justice is negotiated.

However, in cases of sexual violence, bureaucratic procedures often restrict victims’ pathways to justice, allowing perpetrators to escape accountability under procedural pretexts. Another narrative reveals that academic power is enacted in lecturer–student relationships, especially during supervision or assessment, where lecturers control academic outcomes such as grades or graduation status. Patriarchal discourse further reinforces this domination by marginalizing vulnerable groups and legitimizing coercive practices.

Taken together, these discursive patterns demonstrate that power relations significantly hinder efforts to prevent and address sexual violence in higher education institutions. Within the specific context of PTKIN, the normalization of authority misuse, bureaucratic barriers, and patriarchal norms is often reinforced by hierarchical interpretations of religious authority and socio-cultural values that emphasize obedience, respect for seniority, and institutional reputation. These conditions create an environment in which victims may hesitate to

report abuse, while perpetrators can exploit their symbolic and institutional legitimacy. As a result, sexual violence persists and remains inadequately addressed despite the presence of formal regulations and prevention mechanisms.

The discourse of academic power relations in higher education reflects asymmetric structures in which authoritative actors exercise substantial control over academic activities while vulnerable groups occupy subordinate positions. As shown in Table 1, the reproduction of sexual violence operates through three interconnected mechanisms. First, academic legitimacy provides lecturers and other authority figures with symbolic power that can be mobilized to influence, pressure, or coerce students. Second, hierarchical campus relations normalize unequal interactions, making certain forms of boundary violations appear acceptable within everyday academic life. Third, institutional procedures for addressing sexual violence often function in ways that limit victims' access to justice. Together, these mechanisms demonstrate that sexual violence is not merely an individual misconduct but a manifestation of institutionalized power relations that reproduce gender inequality and sustain conditions in which abuse remains difficult to challenge.

Several informants confirmed the presence of communication practices shaped by power relations in sexual violence cases within State Islamic Higher Education Institutions. One informant stated: *“One of the causes of sexual violence is power relations. There are students who experienced inappropriate behavior during thesis supervision. This is why there are regulations specifying that consultations must take place during office hours and in lecturers' rooms or within the campus environment.”* (W, female, 52 years old, interview, 2 July 2024). A similar view was expressed by another informant: *“Power relations still exist within the academic community, and this is one of the factors contributing to sexual violence. Many victims are women, but power relations are not only between lecturers and students. They also occur among lecturers and among students, especially in senior–junior relationships.”*

(D, male, 48 years old, interview, 18 July 2024). This statement was further reinforced by another informant: *“There was a report of a student who became a victim of sexual violence, and the perpetrator was a lecturer. Although the student's identity was not revealed, the lecturer publicly stated in class that his reputation had been damaged and he threatened students who he believed were responsible for harming his reputation.”* (H, female, 34 years old, interview, 3 July 2024).

Communication Silencing Discourse as a Discursive Practice

The discourse of communication silencing refers to discursive practices that regulate who is allowed to speak, how certain experiences may be expressed, and the extent to which these expressions are recognized within social spaces. Such silencing practices restrict participation, limit expression, and reduce the representation of women or other vulnerable groups affected by sexual violence, thereby weakening the legitimacy of their voices. Empirical studies demonstrate that survivors of sexual violence frequently encounter victim-blaming, intimidation, stigma, and negative social reactions when disclosing their experiences, which often discourages further disclosure and reinforces silence. Research has shown that institutional responses, cultural norms, and unequal power relations contribute to the marginalization of survivors' narratives, limiting their recognition as legitimate knowers of their own experiences.³⁰ In higher education settings, organizational communication practices and hierarchical institutional cultures may further shape whose voices are heard and whose experiences are dismissed, creating conditions in which survivors' testimonies struggle to gain legitimacy within institutional decision-making processes.³¹

³⁰ Courtney E Ahrens, “Being Silenced: The Impact of Negative Social Reactions on the Disclosure of Rape,” *American Journal of Community Psychology* 38 (2006): 263–74, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-006-9069-9>.

³¹ Vinda Maya Setianingrum, “Crisis , Voice , Reputation : Organisational Communication and University Response to Sexual Violence Cases,” *Jurnal Studi Komunikasi*

Communication silencing is not merely the absence of speech; it is a systematic process that positions certain narratives as credible while delegitimizing others, ultimately reinforcing power inequalities. This condition results in the marginalization of victims' perspectives and creates a communication environment where gendered injustices persist. Table 2 presents the various forms of communication silencing discourse identified in this study:

Table 2. Communication Silencing Discourses

Form of Discourse	Description	Illustrative Cases
Symbolic Silencing	Silencing through language, symbols, stereotypes, and moral judgments that delegitimize victims' voices.	<p>Source: https://news.detik.com/berita/d-3219489/komnas-perempuan-jangan-salahkan-pakaian-wanita-di-kasus-pelecehan-seksual</p>
Cultural Silencing	Silencing reinforced through cultural norms emphasizing shame, honor, and the need to conceal sexual abuse.	<p>Source: https://tirto.id/riset-enggan-laporkan-kekerasan-seksual-karena-takut-dianggap-aib-gy4t</p> <p>Source: https://www.detik.com/edu/perguruan-tinggi/d-7539967/kasus-kekerasan-seksual-di-kampus-masih-banyak-puan-kebijakan-tak-pro-perempuan</p>
Structural Silencing	Silencing embedded in institutional policies, procedures, or regulations that disadvantage victims.	<p>Source: https://www.detik.com/edu/perguruan-tinggi/d-7539967/kasus-kekerasan-seksual-di-kampus-masih-banyak-puan-kebijakan-tak-pro-perempuan</p>

Table 2 shows that communication silencing in sexual violence cases in higher education occurs in an interdependent manner, where symbolic silencing functions as a narrative, cultural silencing acts as a value system, and structural silencing operates as a mechanism. In the context of PTKIN, these discourses are

shaped and reproduced by actors who possess institutional authority, including university leaders, faculty members, disciplinary bodies, and other administrative structures that regulate campus communication. Symbolic silencing appears in narratives that attribute sexual violence to women's dress, behavior, or perceived moral shortcomings, despite the fact that many victims are Muslim women who wear the hijab. Cultural silencing is reinforced through religiously framed notions of family honor, institutional reputation, and the obligation to avoid public disgrace, which encourage victims to remain silent and discourage reporting. Structural silencing is manifested in institutional procedures that prioritize maintaining campus image, provide inadequate reporting mechanisms, and fail to impose firm sanctions on perpetrators while ensuring comprehensive protection for victims. Through these mechanisms, institutional authority does not merely regulate communication but also determines which voices are considered legitimate, whose experiences are recognized, and how sexual violence is publicly interpreted within PTKIN. These discourses confirm that communication functions as a tool of social control shaped by power relations, patriarchal ideology, religious-cultural norms, and institutional interests.

The discourse of communication silencing presented in Table 2 shows the presence of power control exercised by university authorities, reinforced by patriarchal social structures and supported by particular interpretations of religious discourse. Three important points emerge from the data in Table 2. First, victims of sexual violence, most of whom are women, often face negative narratives, such as being blamed for dressing improperly or for violating religious norms, which positions them as responsible for the incident. Second, sexual violence is frequently constructed as a moral disgrace that threatens institutional and religious reputation, leading victims to remain silent in order to preserve social harmony and family honor. Third, regulations

and policies for the prevention and handling of sexual violence in universities do not fully support victims, resulting in bureaucratic obstacles in their implementation. In this context, religious discourse interacts with patriarchal values by emphasizing women's responsibility for maintaining morality while marginalizing their voices and experiences. Consequently, silencing discourses not only restrict victims' opportunities to communicate but also reproduce patriarchal power relations and sustain gender inequalities within faith-based higher education institutions.

The silencing of communication among victims of sexual violence in universities whether symbolic, cultural, or structural has generated various responses from informants. One informant stated: *“Sexual narratives are often seen as mere jokes. Comments on social media that use sexual terms to demean women are frequently ignored.”* (NH, female, 35 years old, interview, 7 August 2024). Another informant added: *“Even though many people are now brave enough to speak out, some still consider the issue of sexual violence as something shameful. Victims often feel embarrassed to report their cases to the integrated service unit for the prevention and handling of sexual violence on campus.”* (FF, male, 22 years old, interview, 5 July 2024). This point was reinforced by another informant who stated: *“The handling of sexual violence victims must be improved so that more people are encouraged to speak up and report their cases. In accordance with the Directorate General of Islamic Education decree on PPKS, we are establishing an interim PPKS unit and preparing standard operating procedures as technical guidelines, and all of this is led by the Gender and Child Study Center.”* (S, male, 55 years old, interview, 1 July 2024).

Discourse on the Prevention and Handling of Sexual Violence

The discourse on the prevention and handling of sexual violence in State Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN) has developed through interactions among regulatory frameworks, institutional authority, religious values, and public demands for accountability.

Rather than functioning solely as a mechanism of legal compliance, this discourse represents a site where competing meanings regarding gender relations, institutional responsibility, and victim protection are negotiated. Within PTKIN, narratives of prevention and handling are constructed through policies, official statements, educational programs, and campus communication practices that shape how sexual violence is understood and addressed. The increasing prominence of this discourse reflects broader shifts in public awareness, while also revealing how institutional actors seek to legitimize particular understandings of safety, morality, and justice within the academic environment. The various forms of discourse on the prevention and handling of sexual violence identified in this study are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Discourses on the Prevention and Handling of Sexual Violence


Form of Discourse	Description	Illustrative Cases
Strengthening PPKS Governance	Development of PPKS structures and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).	 <p>Source: https://wartaindonesia.org/pelatihan-dan-pendampingan-pengurus-satgas-ppks-uin-sumatera-utara-perkuat-komitmen-cegah-kekerasan-seksual-di-lingkungan-kampus/</p>
PPKS Socialization	Educational and literacy programs such as seminars, workshops, and public lectures.	 <p>Source: https://www.newsrbacch.com/2025/03/psga-ia-in-lhokseumawe-gelar-edukasi.html</p>
Infrastructure Support	Provision of physical facilities, digital systems, supporting policies, and human resources.	 <p>Source: Institutional Archive</p>

Table 3 explains that the discourse on the prevention and handling of sexual violence in

PTKIN serves as a strategic effort to create a safe educational environment. The discourse presented in Table 3 shows that strengthening PPKS governance is based on regulatory frameworks, particularly the Director General of Islamic Education Decree No. 5494 of 2019 on Guidelines for the Prevention and Handling of Sexual Violence in Islamic Higher Education Institutions. These regulations are implemented through the development of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and the establishment of an Integrated Service Unit (ULT) or a dedicated PPKS task force. In addition, to ensure the sustainability of PPKS policies, socialization activities are carried out for the academic community, not only to provide understanding but also to encourage active participation in reporting sexual violence cases on campus. Another discourse identified in Table 3 highlights the provision of infrastructure as part of PPKS policy implementation, including safe campus layouts, CCTV or other digital systems, stickers, banners, and other symbolic materials supporting prevention efforts. However, the discourse also reveals an important tension between policy formalization and its practical effectiveness. While the establishment of SOPs, task forces, and reporting mechanisms reflects institutional commitment, their effectiveness remains contingent upon organizational capacity, leadership support, and trust among victims. In several PTKIN contexts, preventive measures such as banners, campaigns, and surveillance systems may function symbolically as visible indicators of compliance, yet do not automatically guarantee increased reporting or victim protection. This indicates that PPKS governance is not merely a technical matter of policy implementation but also a contested institutional process in which regulatory mandates, organizational culture, and power relations interact to shape how sexual violence cases are recognized, reported, and addressed. Thus, the discourse of prevention and handling reflects both institutional progress and the continuing

challenges of translating formal commitments into substantive protection for members of the academic community.

The discourse on the prevention and handling of sexual violence, as presented in Table 3, positions PTKIN not merely as institutions responsible for responding to incidents but as actors expected to cultivate a campus environment grounded in justice, integrity, and human dignity. Table 3 highlights three important issues. First, despite the existence of formal regulations, their implementation remains uneven, as some institutions have yet to establish dedicated task forces or provide accessible and effective reporting mechanisms. Second, limited awareness of gender equality and sexual violence among members of the academic community continues to hinder prevention efforts. Third, victim-centered support services remain inadequate, contributing to victims' reluctance to disclose and report their experiences.

These findings suggest that the discourse of prevention and handling extends beyond regulatory compliance and reveals a gap between institutional commitments and practical implementation. The persistence of limited reporting mechanisms, low gender awareness, and inadequate support services indicates that PPKS governance remains constrained by organizational culture, institutional capacity, and existing power relations. Consequently, the discourse reflects an ongoing struggle to transform formal policy commitments into substantive protections capable of fostering a genuinely inclusive and equitable campus environment.

This situation was addressed by several informants. One informant stated: *"We have only recently established the task force. The regulation has been in place since 2021, but we faced several obstacles, and we are currently preparing the SOP as well."* (FH, female, 35 years old, interview, 9 August 2024). Another informant added: *"For socialization, we, as student volunteers, have conducted activities both offline and online, such as public discussions. We also socialize the issue to*

student organizations, because they will later disseminate the information to students in each faculty, but these efforts need to be intensified.” (M, female, 20 years old, interview, 19 July 2024). A further informant commented: *“A consultation or counseling room already exists, but it is still combined with the task force office. It would be better if there were a separate room. CCTV has not been installed in all areas and is still limited to certain locations. Warning stickers and banners are already available, but they need to be increased in number.”* (A, female, 20 years old, interview, 23 July 2024).

This study found that the issue of sexual violence in PTKIN generates a sharp contestation of discourses. The contestation occurs between progressive and conservative values, causing sexual violence to be viewed not only as an ethical and legal problem but also as a site of ideological struggle. On one hand, progressive actors frame sexual violence as a violation of human rights and gender justice that requires institutional accountability and victim-centered policies. On the other hand, conservative perspectives often interpret discussions of sexual violence through moral, religious, and reputational considerations, emphasizing the protection of institutional image and traditional gender norms. As a result, sexual violence becomes a discursive arena in which different actors compete to define the meaning of gender justice, institutional responsibility, and religious authority within PTKIN.

In addition, the contestation raises questions about authority, specifically, who has the right to speak and what standards should be applied in PTKIN environments. The contestation of sexual violence discourse in PTKIN is based on three key findings. Power relations serve as the main arena of contestation, where formal regulations are considered essential for protecting vulnerable groups, while others argue that highlighting power relations is excessive and may undermine the authority of academic leaders. Communication silencing, from a progressive perspective, is seen as a manifestation of patriarchal culture and academic hierarchy,

whereas conservative narratives emphasize the importance of protecting the institution's reputation. The debate over strategies for preventing and handling sexual violence is reflected in demands for strict implementation of regulations, while other discourses propose moral, religious, and internal institutional approaches instead. This study demonstrates that the discourse on sexual violence in PTKIN does not exist in a neutral space, rather, it is heavily influenced by political, cultural, and ideological dimensions, marked by a struggle between efforts to promote structural change and attempts to maintain traditional norms.

The contestation of sexual violence discourse cannot be separated from the social and cultural contexts in which it exists. According to Marfu'ah (2021), higher education institutions carry the mandate not only to transfer knowledge, but also to uphold ethics and morality especially PTKIN, which is grounded in Islamic values as the foundation for implementing the Tridharma of higher education.³² However, in practice, the discourse on sexual violence in PTKIN constitutes a contested arena in which religious values, patriarchal gender ideologies, and progressive demands for gender justice intersect and compete. While conservative interpretations frequently frame sexual violence through moral and behavioral lenses, gender-sensitive perspectives emphasize unequal power relations, victims' rights, and institutional responsibility in addressing sexual violence.

In cultural settings, the issue of sexual violence often shifts into one of morality, family honor, or even a shameful matter that must be concealed. Educational institutions, therefore, do not merely reflect socio-cultural values; they also reproduce and negotiate sexual violence discourses according to their interests and institutional identity. Likewise, gender perspectives and power relations emphasize that discourse is never neutral, but is always tied to

³² Marfu'ah, Usfiyatul, “Sistem Pencegahan Dan Penanganan Kekerasan Seksual Di Kampus.”

structures of power. Thus, the contestation of sexual violence discourse is not limited to legal or policy debates, it also reflects the struggle over power, norms, and cultural values embedded in society.

These findings are consistent with Vernacularization Theory by Levitt & Merry (2009), which states that global issues such as sexual violence cannot be immediately accepted at the local level because differences in language, values, and norms require the discourse to be translated or vernacularized into terms, symbols, and narratives that align with local cultural contexts.³³ According to Mendesa (2022), sexual violence in educational settings should not be viewed merely as an individual experience, but rather as a structural crisis rooted in patriarchal culture and institutional power mechanisms.³⁴ Failures in preventing and addressing sexual violence are not only the result of administrative negligence, but also a manifestation of epistemic violence, where knowledge of victims' experiences is marginalized and deemed invalid.³⁵ Universities must promote critical awareness among students and academics, create victim-centered discourses, and foster gender equality perspectives.³⁶ Such critical awareness influences university structures and discourses in interpreting the issue of sexual violence. Sexual violence frequently occurs when individuals in

positions of authority, such as lecturers or university officials, exploit their power to pressure or silence victims. The issue is often reduced to a matter of individual morality, making it easier to blame survivors while ignoring the structural roots and gender injustices involved. This phenomenon illustrates that sexual violence discourse is inseparable from patriarchal cultural constructions, configurations of power relations, and the legitimization of religious norms. As a result, victims' experiences are often reduced to personal moral issues, overlooking the structural and institutional foundations of the violence.

The study of sexual violence discourse in PTKIN not only describes the phenomenon, but also discusses how institutions respond to cases and how victims' experiences are either recognized or denied. This shows that discourse is a struggle for meaning between patriarchal values, institutional power, and religious norms, all of which directly influence the acknowledgment and protection of victims. From a gender communication perspective, the use of gender-biased language reproduces and legitimizes sexual violence discourse within academic spaces. This is evident in victim-blaming narratives, which demonstrate how language is used to reproduce gender stereotypes and reinforce patriarchal domination. As a result, unequal communication occurs in academic interactions, causing victims' voices to be ignored. Furthermore, communication practices grounded in particular religious interpretations are often used to frame sexual violence cases as individual moral violations. Therefore, this study emphasizes the urgency of structural and cultural transformation in educational institutions and highlights the need for further research focusing on resistance, policy development, and critical practices aimed at combating sexual violence.

This study addresses a gap in previous research, which has largely focused on gender inequality in relation to sexual violence. For example, O'Connor (2023), discusses how layered

³³ Sally Levitt, Peggy, and Merry, "Vernacularization on the Ground: Local Uses of Global Women's Rights in Peru, China, India and the United States.," *Global Networks* 9, no. 4 (2009): 441-461., <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-0374.2009.00263.x>.

³⁴ Tanya Horeck and Jessica Ringrose Mendesa, Kaitlynn, "Sexual Violence in Contemporary Educational Contexts," *GENDER AND EDUCATION* 34, no. 2 (2022): 129-33, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2022.2032537>.

³⁵ Tiffany Page, "Sexual Misconduct in UK Higher Education and the Precarity of Institutional Knowledge," *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 43, no. 4 (2022): 566-83.

³⁶ Fitri Meliya Sari Fitri, Ainal, Muhammad Haekal, Almukarramah, "Sexual Violence in Indonesian University: On Students' Critical Consciousness and Agency," *Gender Equality: International Journal of Child and Gender Studies* 7, no. 2 (2021): 153-67, <https://jurnal.ar-raniry.ac.id/index.php/equality/article/view/9869>.

power structures and gender bias persist in higher education institutions despite existing policies, making sexual violence difficult to eliminate.³⁷ Meanwhile, Bull (2024) highlights the importance of victim-centered perspectives in responding to sexual violence, arguing that policies should be more responsive to victims' needs.³⁸ This study advances existing PTKIN research by moving beyond normative and policy-oriented analyses of sexual violence. It examines how discourse functions as a site of power, revealing the communicative processes through which gender hierarchies, victim-blaming narratives, and institutional silences are reproduced and legitimized within PTKIN contexts.

This approach distinguishes the present study from earlier works and offers practical contributions by emphasizing the need for more gender-sensitive PPKS policies. Its theoretical contribution lies in integrating discourse analysis, gender communication studies, and feminist perspectives, resulting in a more comprehensive understanding of sexual violence issues in PTKIN. Thus, this study provides both theoretical and empirical contributions that have not been widely examined in previous literature.

The contestation of sexual violence discourse requires strategic measures to pave the way for more just and equal social change. The issue of sexual violence in PTKIN is not only an individual problem, but also a structural one, produced by patriarchal culture, institutional power relations, and the legitimization of religious norms. A critical discourse analysis approach using a gender communication perspective is essential to reveal how language, narratives, and religious representations construct

and contest the meaning of sexual violence within academic settings.

This study demonstrates that the discourse of sexual violence within PTKIN is not merely shaped by legal and ethical considerations but is also embedded in broader structures of power, patriarchal cultural norms, and institutional communication practices that often marginalize victims. Through a gender communication perspective, the findings reveal how language, narratives, and institutional responses contribute to the reproduction of unequal gender relations, thereby extending existing discussions on sexual violence beyond regulatory and moral frameworks toward a more critical understanding of discursive power. Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of gender communication scholarship in Islamic higher education by highlighting the role of communication practices in sustaining or challenging gender-based inequalities.

Based on these findings, institutional policies should be reformulated to address not only moral and legal dimensions but also the structural, social, and cultural factors that shape the persistence of sexual violence. Practically, PTKIN can integrate gender-responsive communication principles into curriculum development, lecturer training programs, student orientation activities, and institutional communication guidelines. Furthermore, regular gender-sensitivity assessments and mandatory capacity-building programs for academic leaders and staff should be implemented to ensure policy effectiveness. Equally important is the establishment of safe, transparent, and victim-centered reporting mechanisms through strengthened special service units equipped with psychosocial, legal, and communication support systems. Through these concrete measures, PTKIN can foster institutional accountability, transform patriarchal communication practices, and promote a more inclusive academic environment that is responsive to the prevention and handling of sexual violence.

³⁷ Pat. O'Connor, "Is Gendered Power Irrelevant in Higher Educational Institutions? Understanding the Persistence of Gender Inequality," *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews* 48, no. 4 (2023): 669-686., <https://doi.org/10.1080/03080188.2023.2253667>.

³⁸ Anna Bull, "Learning from Survivors: Reporting Parties' perspectives on How Higher Education Institutions should Address Gender-Based Violence Andharassment," *Higher Education Quarterly* 78, no. 3 (2024): 1123-1137., <https://doi.org/10.1111/hequ.12517>.

Conclusion

This study extends gender communication theory by demonstrating that communicative practices function not only as sites for the construction of gender identities and inequalities, as emphasized in existing scholarship, but also as strategic mechanisms through which patriarchal authority is reproduced, legitimized, resisted, and negotiated in public discourse. The findings reveal that sexual violence discourse constitutes a dynamic communicative arena where competing actors deploy narrative framing, symbolic representations, moral claims, and rhetorical strategies to shape social legitimacy and influence policy outcomes.

The study further advances feminist communication scholarship by challenging explanations that interpret resistance to victim-protection policies primarily as ideological or cultural opposition. From the research findings, it appears that this rejection is manifested through a strong social stigma against victims and minimal support for the implementation of comprehensive and consistent victim protection policies. Instead, it shows that such resistance is actively produced through communicative processes that frame gender justice initiatives as threats to prevailing moral and social orders. This perspective highlights discourse as a mechanism of social control that shapes public acceptance, political legitimacy, and institutional responses to sexual violence.

Theoretically, this research proposes a discourse-contestation framework within gender communication theory, positioning public debates on sexual violence as communicative struggles over authority, meaning, and gendered power. This framework broadens existing understandings of how patriarchal dominance is maintained and contested in contemporary public spheres by emphasizing the interaction between discourse, legitimacy, and power negotiation. Practically, the findings provide a foundation for developing more effective victim-centered

communication strategies, strengthening public advocacy, and informing policy interventions that advance gender justice and the protection of victims' rights.

This study has several limitations. First, the analysis was based on selected discourse sources, which may not fully capture the diversity of perspectives surrounding sexual violence discourse in society. As a result, the findings primarily reflect dominant narratives identified within the examined texts. Second, limited access to key actors involved in the discourse contestation restricted the study's ability to explore interaction dynamics and communication strategies in greater depth. Future research may address these limitations by incorporating a wider range of discourse sources and including the perspectives of key stakeholders, such as survivors, advocates, policymakers, and media actors, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of sexual violence discourse and its implications for public communication and policy development.

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