

Sexual Violence in the Educational Sector from a Criminological Perspective

Mohammad Arqon^{*1}, Febrian Chandra², Yesi Elfisa³, Kusaimah⁴, Dipo Fathullah Saputra⁵, M. Arya Amirullah⁶, Tauhid⁷

^{1,2,3,4,5,6}Faculty of Law, Universitas Merangin, Indonesia
Email: ¹arqonmohammad@gmail.com

Abstract

This research is motivated by the increasing cases of sexual violence in educational institutions, which have severe consequences for victims, both physically, psychologically, and socially. This phenomenon is often ignored or covered up by educational institutions and society, making it difficult for victims to obtain justice. From a criminological perspective, sexual violence is influenced by power imbalances, weak legal systems, and social norms that are still permissive towards harassment. The purpose of this study is to analyze the traumatic impacts experienced by victims of sexual violence in educational settings and explore effective prevention strategies. Additionally, this study aims to identify the primary causes of sexual violence and provide policy recommendations for educational institutions and relevant stakeholders. The method used in this research is normative legal research with a qualitative approach. Data collection techniques include literature review, analysis of relevant laws and regulations, and previous studies on sexual violence in the education sector. The results and discussion indicate that victims experience trauma in various aspects of their lives, including anxiety, depression, decreased academic performance, and social marginalization. The lack of effective protection mechanisms in educational institutions increases the risk of revictimization. The conclusion of this study emphasizes the need for a comprehensive approach to preventing sexual violence through strict legal policies, gender-awareness education, and strengthened psychosocial support for victims. Collaboration between the government, educational institutions, and society is key to creating a safe and violence-free educational environment.

Keywords: *Criminology, Education, Sexual Violence*

1. INTRODUCTION

Sexual violence in the educational sector is a deep and complex issue that not only tarnishes educational institutions but also has the potential to destroy the lives of victims, both physically, psychologically, and socially (Gultom & Simamora, 2024). This phenomenon frequently occurs in educational environments at all levels primary, secondary, and higher education—affecting students, university students, and educators alike (Irwan & Janggih, 2022). However, this issue is often ignored or receives minimal attention from both educational institutions and society in general.

From a criminological perspective, sexual violence in education reflects a power imbalance between perpetrators and victims, often leading to fear, trauma, and helplessness. The causes of sexual violence in educational settings include the failure of the education system to enforce strict regulations, a lack of awareness of individual sexual rights, and weak law enforcement against perpetrators. In many cases, sexual violence also occurs due to social norms that support gender inequality or victim-blaming (Masriah, 2024).

Sexual violence is an act that harms individuals physically, mentally, and emotionally, often occurring in situations where there is a power imbalance. Women are particularly vulnerable to various forms of sexual violence, including harassment, rape, sexual exploitation, gender-based violence, and more (Roni & Yusuf, 2024). In addition to causing deep psychological trauma, sexual violence also affects the physical health of survivors, such as injuries, sexually transmitted infections, and unwanted pregnancies. Many victims are afraid to report the abuse due to social stigma, family pressure, or lack of trust in the legal system. Therefore, a holistic approach is essential, including legal protection, psychosocial support, and community education to effectively prevent and address sexual violence.

Sexual violence can affect anyone and occur anytime, anywhere. It has become a widespread phenomenon, appearing in various aspects of life, including within families, educational institutions,

workplaces, and social interactions. Vulnerable individuals, who lack the mental or physical ability to defend themselves, are often the primary victims. The rising incidence of violence against women is a concerning issue, largely driven by societal views that consider women as weak and subordinate to men. Many still perceive men as dominant figures who exploit and mistreat women unfairly. Violence, in essence, has existed throughout history and remains prevalent in modern society (Wartoto & Ginting, 2023).

One of the main challenges in addressing sexual violence in education is the tendency to conceal or downplay such incidents. This is often due to feelings of shame, fear of stigma, or pressure from various parties within the education system. Therefore, it is crucial to examine this issue from a criminological perspective to identify patterns, causes, and impacts of sexual violence in education. Sexual violence can occur in various settings, including educational institutions. A recent example is the case of sexual harassment at Hasanuddin University. As reported by BBC.com, this case emerged when a female student, who was completing her studies, reported an incident of harassment that occurred during a thesis consultation on September 25, 2024.

Law No. 12 of 2022 establishes provisions for preventing various forms of sexual violence, handling, protecting, and restoring victims' rights, as well as coordinating between central and regional governments and international cooperation to ensure effective prevention and response efforts. Additionally, Law No. 35 of 2014 on Child Protection aims to safeguard children from all forms of violence, including sexual violence. Furthermore, the Indonesian Criminal Code (KUHP) Articles 281, 289, and 290 regulate indecent acts, lewd behavior, and physical harassment. Article 281 of the KUHP states that individuals who commit indecent acts in public may face imprisonment of up to two years and eight months. Article 289 stipulates that lewd acts involving violence or threats of violence can be punished with up to nine years in prison. Meanwhile, Article 290 imposes a maximum sentence of seven years for lewd acts against individuals who are incapacitated, under 15 years old, or unmarried.

Previous studies supporting this research include one conducted by Nurul Asqia and Miftahul Rahma (2024), titled "The Impact of Sexual Violence on Early Childhood." Their study found that children who experience sexual violence often face long-term consequences, including insecurity, fear, and trauma. These children are also at a higher risk of depression and developing distrust toward others. Sexual violence is a serious issue that can lead to lasting physical, mental, and social consequences for victims. The study emphasized that sexual violence not only disrupts children's sense of security but also leads to deep-seated trauma, depression, and loss of trust in their surroundings.

Another study by Franciscus Xaverius Wartoyo and Yuni Priskila Ginting (2023), titled "Sexual Violence in Higher Education from the Perspective of Pancasila Values," highlighted the need for effective legal protection for victims while ensuring that perpetrators receive appropriate sanctions. The study also emphasized the importance of implementing Pancasila values as guiding principles in daily life, ensuring that individuals in higher education institutions recognize that sexual violence is a violation of human dignity and contradicts the principles of social justice and civility.

The main issues explored in this study are the traumatic impact of sexual violence in educational settings from a criminological perspective and the identification of effective prevention strategies. The study aims to analyze the psychological and social effects on victims while providing recommendations to prevent and address sexual violence in educational institutions.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

The method applied in this article is the normative legal research method with a qualitative approach (Irwansyah, 2022). This approach was chosen to deeply explore the traumatic impact experienced by victims of sexual violence, particularly in the context of education, from a criminological perspective. The qualitative approach allows researchers to understand legal phenomena within a broader social context, emphasizing an in-depth comprehension and analysis of the factors influencing the occurrence of sexual violence and its impact on victims.

The techniques used include literature review and doctrinal study. These techniques aim to gather various relevant sources related to the issue under study, such as laws and regulations, policy documents, academic journals, books, and articles discussing sexual violence in the educational sector. The collected

sources are expected to strengthen and support the research findings, helping to resolve the research problem and providing new insights related to the topic.

The data processing from the literature was conducted by utilizing existing references to compare and integrate findings from previous studies (Nasution, 2008). In this process, the researcher identifies similarities and differences between the current research findings and those of prior studies. Additionally, a normative analysis of existing laws and policies is carried out to assess the effectiveness of legal implementation and policies in preventing and addressing sexual violence in education.

This approach enables researchers to present a comprehensive and contextual analysis of sexual violence in educational settings and contribute to the development of better legal policies aimed at protecting victims and preventing future incidents of sexual violence. By using this method, the research is expected to provide a clearer understanding of the influence of legal factors and policies in handling sexual violence, as well as offer recommendations for relevant stakeholders to create a safer and violence-free educational environment.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. The Traumatic Impact of Sexual Violence in Educational Environments from a Criminological Perspective

The traumatic impact of sexual violence in educational settings has significant and long-lasting consequences for victims, affecting various aspects of their lives. From a criminological perspective, the trauma experienced by victims is not limited to physical harm but also encompasses psychological, social, and emotional dimensions (Roni & Yusuf, 2023). Physically, sexual violence can leave visible injuries such as bruises, open wounds, or even tears in certain areas of the body, requiring extensive medical treatment (Asqia & Rahma, 2024).

Psychologically, children who experience sexual violence often suffer from stress, depression, guilt, regret, fear of interacting with others, nightmares, and anxiety-related disorders. In extreme cases, they may develop suicidal thoughts, physical complaints, or face unintended pregnancies. What should be a safe and nurturing educational environment instead turns into a place of fear and distress (Ramadhani & Nurwati, 2022). Many victims also face social marginalization, which exacerbates their trauma.

Criminological studies indicate that victims of sexual violence are often more vulnerable to revictimization, meaning they are at risk of experiencing similar violence in the future. Factors such as a lack of social support, power imbalances, and fear of reporting incidents contribute to this cycle of violence. Additionally, the psychological pressure faced by victims can lead to deviant behaviors, including substance abuse or involvement in criminal activities as a means of escaping their trauma.

The social impact of sexual violence, particularly on women, includes stigma and discrimination. Victims may feel anxious or uncomfortable in social interactions, even with close friends and family. The criminological perspective highlights that victims of sexual violence are at a higher risk of experiencing further trauma in the future due to inadequate social support and fear of reporting incidents. In educational settings, the failure of institutions to protect students from sexual violence can contribute to the development of criminal behaviors later in life, both for victims and perpetrators.

Furthermore, the long-term consequences of sexual violence extend beyond emotional and psychological well-being to economic and educational setbacks. Many victims experience severe psychological disorders, such as chronic anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and social anxiety (Batian, 2024). Feelings of alienation and low self-esteem hinder their ability to form healthy relationships with peers, family, and society. The loss of a sense of security, which is fundamental in an educational environment, significantly affects their learning process and academic performance. This can lead to academic decline and avoidance of social interactions (Putri, 2024). Psychological trauma often shapes a negative self-perception, leading victims to feel worthless or undeserving of protection and support (Ramadhani & Nurwati, 2022). In many cases, they struggle to continue their education or maintain healthy relationships due to feelings of shame or unresolved trauma (Zuliani & Sapir, 2024).

Educational institutions often fail to provide adequate protection mechanisms for students, both in terms of prevention and response to sexual violence. A lack of prompt and appropriate responses can worsen the victim's traumatic experience and prolong its effects. The criminological perspective emphasizes that systemic failures in handling sexual violence cases can lead to revictimization, where victims continue to experience similar violence due to fear, stigma, or lack of trusted support systems (Roni & Yusuf, 2023).

Victims who do not receive justice or adequate protection often struggle with emotional recovery, making them more vulnerable to future violence or criminal involvement. Criminological studies suggest that victims who lack sufficient social support are more likely to engage in destructive behaviors, such as substance abuse or criminal activities, as a means of coping with their trauma.

The social consequences of sexual violence are profound. Victims often face stigma and discrimination that isolate them from their social environments. In education, victims may feel alienated from classmates and even their own families. Fear of judgment prevents many from seeking help or reporting their experiences, further deepening their social isolation. Additionally, sexual violence affects not only the victims but also their relationships with family and friends, creating tensions in interpersonal interactions as victims struggle to reintegrate into society (Putri, 2024).

One crucial aspect in addressing the impact of sexual violence is the role of education in prevention and protection. If educational environments can foster a culture that upholds individual rights and emphasizes awareness of sexual violence prevention, it can contribute to a reduction in sexual violence cases (Wulandari, 2024). Therefore, educational institutions must not only focus on handling existing cases but also establish proactive protection systems to mitigate the risk of sexual violence at an early stage.

Overall, the traumatic impact of sexual violence in education is highly complex, affecting multiple dimensions of victims' lives. The criminological perspective highlights that, beyond the direct impact on victims, an unresponsive educational system can exacerbate the cycle of violence and increase the risk of revictimization (Yantika & Jamba, 2025). Hence, a comprehensive response based on an in-depth understanding of sexual violence's consequences is essential for creating a safe educational environment. Strengthening protection mechanisms and effective psychosocial interventions is also necessary to assist victims in their recovery and reintegration into society in a healthy and constructive manner.

Sexual violence in education should not only be viewed as a violation of victims' physical and psychological integrity but also as a criminal act with broad social and legal implications (Nurisman, 2022). The criminological perspective focuses on the factors contributing to sexual violence and how criminal law can ensure justice and protection for victims while preventing future incidents (Behuku, 2024).

Criminal law plays a crucial role in penalizing perpetrators and protecting victims. It serves to enforce social norms prohibiting all forms of violence, including sexual violence. Under Law No. 12 of 2022 on Sexual Violence Crimes (TPKS), all forms of sexual violence are classified as human rights violations, requiring criminal accountability for perpetrators. In the context of education, these crimes represent a breach of individual rights, particularly the right to safety and secure education.

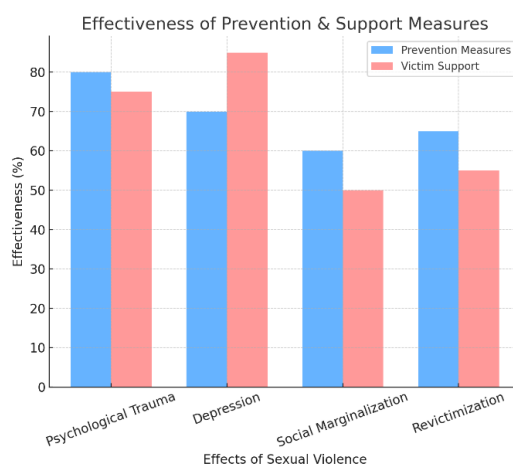


Figure 1. Forms of Violence in 2024 (%)

Source: SIMFONI PPA (Online Information System for the Protection of Women & Children)

As a criminal offense, sexual violence is subject to imprisonment, fines, or rehabilitation measures for perpetrators. However, despite existing legal frameworks, implementation challenges persist, including difficulties in investigation, evidence collection, and providing adequate psychological support for victims. From a criminological standpoint, sexual violence in education results from an interplay of individual, social, and structural factors. Individual factors include perpetrators with violent tendencies or sexual disorders, while social and structural factors—such as power imbalances, patriarchal gender norms, and lack of awareness about sexual rights—further exacerbate the situation. Educational institutions, as social entities, bear a significant responsibility in transforming mindsets and practices that sustain a culture of sexual violence (Kartika & Najemi, 2020).

Based on the data in Figure 1, there were 14,472 cases of sexual violence, making it the most prevalent form of violence compared to others. This figure highlights the urgent need for special attention regarding the traumatic impact experienced by victims. Sexual violence in the educational sector does not only affect individual victims but also has a systemic impact. Victims often suffer from long-term psychological trauma, loss of motivation to study, and declining academic performance. Ultimately, these consequences affect the overall quality of education.

The failure of the education system and the judiciary to provide effective protection for victims can exacerbate the traumatic effects they experience. Many victims of sexual violence, due to fear or shame, do not report their cases to the authorities. Even when they do report, they often face uncertainty in the legal process. Revictimization frequently occurs when victims do not receive adequate support during legal proceedings, or when perpetrators are not punished fairly and strictly. This can prolong the cycle of violence and worsen the victim's trauma, potentially leading to criminal behavior, both by perpetrators who go unpunished and by victims who feel denied justice.

On the other hand, perpetrators who receive light or no punishment may feel they are immune to consequences, increasing the likelihood of them repeating their actions. From a criminological perspective, better criminal law policies must address the root causes of sexual violence, such as power imbalances, gender stereotypes, and a lack of awareness about sexual rights. Strengthening the role of education in raising awareness about sexual violence and individual rights is also a key preventive strategy to reduce the rate of these crimes.

3.2. Efforts to Prevent Sexual Violence in the World of Education

Prevention of sexual violence in educational institutions is very important to implement so that similar incidents do not occur again in the future. The government, as the institution that has authority in the education sector, has the responsibility to formulate policies that ensure the implementation of education without sexual violence. One important step is to advocate for educational policies that oppose sexual violence, which can be continuously implemented through outreach to educational institutions.

This initiative aims to provide deeper insight to education administrators regarding the triggering factors, underlying reasons, and ways to prevent acts of sexual violence (Herdiana, 2023).

Moral, religious, and social values currently need to be integrated into the education curriculum. The goal is for both teachers and students to understand, recognize, and avoid the possibility of sexual violence occurring. The government needs to play an active role in overseeing the implementation of education in these institutions. If there are signs of sexual violence, immediate action, such as the application of strict sanctions, needs to be taken to prevent similar incidents from recurring. This bold step also serves as a warning to other educational institutions not to provide opportunities for sexual violence to occur (Hilmin, 2024).

Collaboration among various stakeholders, including legislative bodies, society, and non-governmental organizations, must also be strengthened to build synergy in preventing and addressing potential sexual violence. Through this strategy, all parties involved in education administration can respond quickly in preventing acts of sexual violence, so that a safe and comfortable educational environment for all students can be realized (Herdiana, 2023). Sexual violence in education is not only a legal issue but also a social issue that requires a deep understanding of power dynamics, social norms, and the judicial system. Understanding the traumatic impact experienced by victims is crucial in formulating more effective policies for prevention, mitigation, and rehabilitation. With a more comprehensive approach in criminal law and criminology, a safer, fairer educational system that supports the recovery of sexual violence victims can be created.

Preventing sexual violence in educational institutions is very important to implement so that similar incidents do not recur in the future. Educational institutions, both schools and universities, must be safe and comfortable places for students and university students, free from the threat of sexual violence. Sexual violence not only harms the physical and psychological well-being of victims but also disrupts the educational process, which should focus on developing students' potential. Therefore, prevention efforts must be carried out comprehensively and sustainably, involving various parties, from the government and educational institutions to society.

The government, as the authority in educational policy, has a significant responsibility in creating an educational environment free from sexual violence. One key step that needs to be taken is to formulate an educational policy that firmly and comprehensively opposes sexual violence. This policy is not only intended to address existing cases of sexual violence but also to prevent such incidents in the future. Continuous outreach to education administrators, both at the school and university levels, needs to be carried out so that they have a deep understanding of the causes, impacts, and preventive measures for sexual violence (Herdiana, 2023). Additionally, the government must integrate this policy into broader regulations, such as policies governing oversight of educational institutions, ensuring that every case of sexual violence is handled seriously. Through these regulations, schools and universities are expected to establish a more structured prevention system, ranging from awareness education about sexual violence and training for teaching staff to providing safe reporting channels for victims.

Another preventive effort that can be undertaken is the internalization of moral, religious, and social values in the education curriculum. These values are important in teaching students from an early age about the importance of respecting and upholding individual rights, as well as avoiding all forms of violence, including sexual violence. Education about respect for the body and the privacy of others should be part of character education implemented in schools and universities (Hilmin, 2024). With this approach, students will be more sensitive to signs of sexual violence and more capable of identifying deviant behavior and reporting it to the relevant authorities.

One important step in preventing sexual violence is the application of strict sanctions against perpetrators. In many cases, clear and firm action against perpetrators of sexual violence can serve as a strong message that sexual violence will not be tolerated in educational settings. Sanctions should be applied not only to perpetrators of sexual violence but also to those responsible for managing educational institutions who fail to handle cases of sexual violence seriously. For example, administrative sanctions or even revocation of operational permits for educational institutions that do not have adequate mechanisms for preventing and handling sexual violence (Batian, 2024). This action serves as a warning to all educational institutions not to provide loopholes or opportunities for sexual violence to occur.

Thus, prevention efforts can be more effective, and educational environments can be free from similar incidents in the future.

Preventing sexual violence in educational institutions also requires collaboration between various parties, including legislative bodies, society, non-governmental organizations, and the mass media. Cooperation among these institutions is crucial to building public awareness of the dangers of sexual violence and the importance of protecting victims. Through this collaboration, stronger synergy can be created in preventing and addressing sexual violence while providing greater support for victims (Herdiana, 2023). Legislative bodies play an important role in drafting stronger and more effective laws to handle cases of sexual violence. Meanwhile, society, through various organizations and victim support groups, can help educate about women's and children's rights and provide a platform for victims to report incidents of sexual violence without fear or shame.

An equally important effort is providing outreach and education to students about sexual violence, both in the form of formal education in the classroom and through seminars or specialized training. This outreach can help students recognize signs of sexual violence and provide a clearer understanding of what constitutes sexual violence and how to protect themselves from potential threats. Students must also be given an understanding of the importance of avoiding actions that could lead to sexual violence, such as teasing or failing to respect others' boundaries. Emphasizing this awareness applies not only to those who may become victims but also to potential perpetrators so that they understand the legal and social consequences of their actions (Irwan & Djanggih, 2022).

Technology can also be an effective tool in preventing sexual violence in education. The use of applications or digital platforms that allow students and university students to report sexual violence anonymously can make it easier for victims to access justice. Additionally, these platforms can be used to provide educational materials on preventing sexual violence and inform victims about their rights and the legal procedures they can follow. Technology-based education, such as e-learning or interactive video platforms, can also be used to provide broader and more easily accessible understanding for people of various ages and backgrounds. In this way, information on preventing sexual violence can be disseminated more evenly across all educational institutions.

Not only at the higher or secondary education levels, but prevention of sexual violence also needs to be carried out from an early age. Children who receive education about their bodies and personal rights from a young age will better understand what others can and cannot do to their bodies. Age-appropriate sex education is crucial so that children have a basic understanding of personal boundaries and know how to report if they become victims of sexual violence (Asqia & Rahma, 2024). In addition to prevention, providing psychological support for victims of sexual violence is also important. Victims of sexual violence often experience deep trauma, which can negatively impact their lives in the long run. Adequate psychological support, whether in the form of counseling or therapy, is essential to help victims cope with their trauma and move forward with their lives in a better way.

Educational institutions play a critical role in preventing sexual violence by ensuring that students have access to counseling services. These services should not only provide psychological support for victims but also offer mental health education to all students, helping to create a culture of awareness and prevention. In addition, institutions must implement strict policies that protect victims and encourage reporting without fear of stigma or retaliation. From a legal standpoint, educational institutions have an obligation to safeguard students, as stipulated in various laws, such as Law No. 12 of 2022 on Sexual Violence Crimes (TPKS), which mandates victim protection and institutional accountability. Failure to provide a safe environment may constitute negligence, potentially leading to legal consequences for institutions that fail to act decisively against sexual violence.

From a criminological perspective, sexual violence in education often occurs due to power imbalances, where perpetrators-often in positions of authority-exploit their influence over victims. The lack of strict enforcement and institutional inaction further perpetuate a cycle of victimization. Criminologists emphasize that early intervention and strict punitive measures serve as deterrents against potential offenders. Implementing mandatory sexual violence prevention training, whistleblower protections, and confidential reporting mechanisms within educational institutions can help reduce crime rates in these settings. Moreover, criminal law should not only focus on punishment but also on

rehabilitation, ensuring that offenders do not repeat their actions while victims receive long-term support.

Looking ahead, the legal and educational framework must evolve to incorporate technological solutions for sexual violence prevention. Digital reporting platforms, AI-based monitoring in institutions, and integration of sexual violence education into school curricula will be key advancements in tackling this issue. Governments should also strengthen laws by imposing heavier penalties on institutions that fail to address sexual violence effectively. Future policies should focus on victim-centered approaches, ensuring psychosocial rehabilitation, legal assistance, and reintegration programs for survivors. Additionally, international collaboration in sexual violence prevention can contribute to a more comprehensive and standardized approach across educational institutions worldwide. By continuously refining laws, policies, and prevention strategies, societies can work towards eliminating sexual violence in education and ensuring a safe learning environment for future generations..

4. CONCLUSION

Sexual violence in the educational sector is a serious issue with widespread impacts, affecting victims physically, psychologically, socially, and academically. From a criminological perspective, sexual violence often occurs due to power imbalances, weak protection systems, and social and cultural factors that perpetuate gender inequality. The long-term effects of sexual violence include psychological trauma, depression, social marginalization, and the possibility of revictimization. To address this issue, synergy between the government, educational institutions, and society is necessary to create effective prevention policies. This can be achieved through moral-based education, strengthening legal regulations, and enforcing strict sanctions against perpetrators. Additionally, psychosocial support for victims must be prioritized to aid their recovery and prevent further negative consequences. Preventing sexual violence requires a comprehensive approach that includes strengthening the legal system, raising awareness through education, and ensuring strict oversight of educational institutions. With these measures, educational environments can become safe spaces free from the threat of sexual violence.

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