

Conference Paper

Cultural Religious Challenges in Handling Sexual Violence Cases in Indonesian Islamic Institutions

Istiadah¹, Rohmani Nur Indah¹, and Aprilia Mega Rosdiana²¹Humaniora Faculty, UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia²Psychology Faculty UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia

Abstract

Religiosity is often seen as preventing potential cases of sexual violence. However, on the other hand, the religious aspect can be a challenge when with regards to cases of sexual violence. This is because religious and cultural aspects are assumed to hamper the victim's ability to seek justice. This research involved students of Islamic institutions in Indonesia. Based on the results of the questionnaire and interview, it was found that most victims of sexual violence were women in the early and middle years of their studies. Forms of sexual violence are dominated by verbal, physical, visual and signaling harassment. The victim acknowledged dissatisfaction in processing complaints due to distrust of the institution. Socio-cultural dogma and religious aspects also prevent openness in handling cases because victims tend to protect their names and their institutions. Further efforts are needed in the form of education to reduce the risk of sexual violence. In addition, this study produced a number of recommendations regarding the handling cases of sexual violence in Islamic institutions in Indonesia.

Keywords: culture religious challenges, Islamic institution, sexual violence


Corresponding Author:

Istiadah

isti@bsi.uin-malang.ac.id

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1. Introduction

Today sexual violence cases are not only spread in the public sphere, but also in the academic realm. Islamic institutions that should be a safe place as educational institutions are apparently inseparable from the risk of sexual violence. This paper intends to respond to the views of Ameri et al. [1] that religiosity can prevent the risk of the emergence of cases of sexual violence in Islamic institutions in Iran. Ameri et al. assume that with proper planning and implementation of a conducive cultural-religious program will effectively reduce and counteract risk behaviors such as sexual violence, alcohol and drug abuse, and others. However, the religious aspect also has the potential to be a challenge in itself because it can lead to incompleteness in handling sexual violence cases.

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Nowadays cases of sexual violence are increasingly diverse and continue to be studied in various aspects. The form of sexual harassment and various related factors were the focus of Phipps' research [2] and Pugh and Becker who observed the development of cases in public universities [3]. Meanwhile Pavitra and Becker observed the development of cases of sexual violence in schools [4], as did Ageton who examined the forms of abuse experienced by school students [5]. But what remains a question is how the development of cases of sexual violence found in Islamic institutions. An empirical basis is still needed that can illustrate how the case can befall students in various religious-based institutions.

The development of research on sexual violence in Indonesia is also increasingly diverse. Rusyidi et al. explained the results of preliminary studies on knowledge about sexual violence [6]. Afrianty focused on the variety of domestic violence [7] while Yudhanti et al. examine the protection of victims of sexual violence [8]. More Indonesian researchers have raised intervention for victims of sexual violence such as the study of Prayoga et al. [9] and interventions in the aspects of legal policy such as Rahayu et al. [10] as well as concerning women right as victims of sexual violence investigated by Purwanti and Prabowo [11]. Sexual violence researchers have not linked the handling of victims of sexual violence with cultural religious aspects. Fundamental research is still needed on this matter to fully understand the phenomenon of sexual violence in Indonesia the concern in this study.

The focus of this paper is to find out what types of sexual violence in Islamic institutions and how to overcome them. This paper also looks at how cultural-religious aspects become one of the issues in handling sexual violence. Thus the basis of thought in this paper is the assumption that cases of sexual violence are very thick with cultural-religious issues. Another assumption is that in Islamic institutions some efforts can still be taken to deal with cases of sexual violence.

2. Methods

The data collection on cases of sexual harassment and violence in Islamic institutions uses survey research method. The researchers collected data from a sample and then processed it into a frequency distribution to get a picture of the distribution of cases of sexual harassment and violence in Islamic institutions. The survey questionnaire was adapted from the Sexual Violence Prevention questionnaire of the Ministry of Religion of Indonesia (2019), totaling 22 questions. The sampling technique in filling out the

survey used accidental sampling technique, with the number of participants who filled 237 participants.

This study also uses a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore issues in greater depth so that the data obtained the challenges in handling cases of sexual harassment and violence in Islamic institutions. The main informants in this research are the students who fill out questionnaires who have experienced sexual harassment or violence. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, the sample was chosen based on the specified criteria, which had the information needed by the researchers, was reliable, and was willing to take part in the research. The data collection also involved in-depth interviews using interview guidelines.

3. Discussion

3.1. Cases of Sexual Violence in Islamic Institution

The results of the questionnaire from 237 respondents show that the dominant sexual violence is in the verbal and physical domains, followed by visual, psychological and gestural violence which are summarized in Table I.

TABLE 1: prevalence of sexual harassment

Coercion Case	Σ	%
Verbal	121	51
Physical	104	44
Visual	68	29
Psychological	55	23
Gestural	48	20

Verbal sexual harassment was reported in 121 cases. It is triggered by verbal or unwanted comments about a person’s personal life or body parts or appearance, jokes, sexually suggestive comments, and chats. In Islamic institutions, the verbal coercion case ranks highest (51%). Phipps in his research found that female students at the bachelor level were easy targets for verbal coercion [2]. It is also suspected by Pugh and Becker as a tactic used by men to lead to further sexual violence [3].

In the second place, the meditative coercion case is physical violence. 104 students of Islamic institutions reported having experienced abuse such as being kissed, patted, pinched, glanced or stared at passionately. The data show that nearly half of the students of Islamic institutions who filled out this questionnaire were sexually abused in physical form. This finding is in line with studies conducted by Pavithra and Relton among

adolescent schoolgirls in Tirunelveli District, Tamil Nadu, India revealed the prevalence of different forms of sexual abuse ranging from forceful exposure of genitalia to physical touch in public places [4].

Students who have experienced written or graphic sexual harassment (displaying pornographic material, sexual screen savers or posters, or harassment via email and other modes of electronic communication) were sixty-eight out of a total of 237 students. It indicates that almost one-third of students have experienced sexual harassment from visual coercion. Advances in information technology make sexual harassment like this increase because of the ease in accessing it.

The next coercion case is psychological sexual harassment. This is indicated by requests and persistent unwanted invitations, unwanted dating invitations, sexual insults or reproach. This case was experienced by fifty-five students. This is a fact that a quarter of students have experienced psychological sexual abuse. In the millennial era, culture is increasingly eroded by the times giving a bad impact on human behavior. Even though Indonesia as an eastern country which is famous for its manners and strong traditions, finally with the globalization of its people, it has been increasingly bold to openly invite the opposite sex to date or bullying through sexual harassment

In the latter type of sexual harassment through cues, fifty-five students claimed to be victims of sexual violence through body language or movements with a sexual tone, repeated blinding, gestures with fingers, and licking of the lips. Of all respondents, almost a quarter of students have experienced sexual harassment even though it was only through a gesture.

TABLE 2: Perpetrators of sexual violence

Perpetrators	Numbers
Strangers	54
College male students	34
Friends	25
Relatives	4
Lecturers	3
Security officers	2
Faculty staff	2
Neighbors	2
College seniors	1
Private teachers	1
Boss	1
Total	129

Table II shows that those who sexually abused female students were 54 (51.86%) of other unknown people, 34 (26.35%) by students, 25 friends, 4 siblings, 3 lecturers, 2 from security guards, 2 from the education staff, 2 from their neighbors, private tutors, seniors, and employer is one person. This phenomenon shows that the perpetrators of sexual violence vary. The highest perpetrators of sexual violence are people who are not known by the victim. The data also show that the perpetrators of sexual violence are students, showing that the victims experienced sexual violence from their peers. Families also become perpetrators of sexual violence, so victims also experience sexual violence from those closest to their environment. Perpetrators of sexual violence can come from an educational environment and they are respected people such as lecturers, education staff, seniors, and alumni.

The data show that the party who committed the most sexual harassment was a person unknown to the victims. The next offender is friend, but not from the same Islamic institution. It means that most of the female students are victims of people outside the Islamic institution or fellow students. This finding is in line with the findings of Rusyidi, et al, in contrast to Tirto id's findings that the most perpetrators of sexual harassment on campus are peers and the second offender is a lecturer. The data of this study state that the perpetrators of sexual violence cases are dominated by men [6]. It is supported by the findings of Ameri et al involving 448 Iranian students who stated that there was a significant tendency to commit sexual violence in men aged 18-20, especially for those who live in rural areas [1]. In this group, it was stated that there was a negative correlation with religiosity, that is, the lower the religiosity, the higher the potential to become sexual harassers.

TABLE 3: The forms of sexual violence

Forms	Number
Rape	4
Sexual intimidation	13
Sexual exploitation	11
Forced prostitution	2
Sexual slavery	2
Sexual Torture	4

In addition to sexual harassment, the questionnaires that were distributed also showed some forms of sexual violence that were experienced by students on campus. Rape is an attack in the form of coercion of sexual relations, an attack carried out with violence, threats of violence, detention, psychological pressure, abuse of power, or by

taking advantage of a coercive environment. The number of students who experienced rape was 4 students out of 236 students who filled out the questionnaire.

The data also show that 13 students have experienced sexual intimidation, which is an act that attacks the sexuality to cause fear or psychological suffering to women victims. Sexual intimidation can be conveyed directly or indirectly through letters, SMS, e-mail, and others. Threats and attempted rape are also part of sexual intimidation. The number of students who have experienced sexual exploitation is 11 students. Sexual exploitation is an act of abuse of unequal power, or abuse of trust, for the purpose of sexual satisfaction, as well as to obtain benefits in the form of money, social, political and others.

The form of sexual violence in the form of forced prostitution was also experienced by 2 students, namely a situation where someone experienced deception, threats, and violence to become sex workers. Forms of sexual violence in the form of sexual slavery were also experienced by 2 students. That is a situation where the perpetrator feels that he is the owner of the victim's body so that he has the right to do anything, including obtaining sexual satisfaction through rape or other forms of sexual violence. Sexual torture was also experienced by 4 students, sexual torture is a special act of attacking an organ and a person's sexuality, which is done intentionally, causing great pain or suffering, both physical, spiritual and sexual.

3.2. Efforts to Manage Sexual Violence Cases

In Islamic institutions, comprehensive handling of sexual violence cases is needed considering its role as an educational institution that prioritizes Islamic values and character education in order to realize a superior generation. For this reason, it is appropriate to enforce sexual violence. As stipulated in the Decree on the Prevention of Sexual Violence in Islamic Higher Education in 2019, the education unit organizing religious higher education must provide personal protection, honor, dignity, and the right to a sense of security for the academic community from the threats and practices of sexual violence.

3.3. Challenges for Handling Sexual Violence Cases

Sexual violence on campus is a major problem that disrupts the education and quality of life of all students. Pugh and Becker show that the complexity of handling cases needs to depart from an equivalent consensus [3]. Some of the challenges faced in reaching

that consensus is in evaluating issues around sexual violence in Islamic institutions. Only then will an adequate understanding be reached to arrive at the best solution in overcoming sexual violence on campus.

Phipps points out that so far there seems to be no serious institutional action addressing the problem of sexual harassment and violence in the college context [2]. This is triggered by the complexity of the challenges in overcoming the problem of sexual violence. Thick socio-cultural influences in the context of gender and other structures such as power relations between perpetrators and victims have an impact on the protection of institutions or institutions and perpetrators of sexual harassment. Among the challenges raised from the results of interviews with respondents as victims of sexual violence include religious and cultural aspects.

3.3.1. Religious aspects

From the results of interviews with victims, the victim deliberately did not immediately report incidents of sexual harassment experienced and did not tell anyone because she thought she had committed a grave sin in the form of adultery. The victim felt dirty and was not forgiven for what had happened to her. The victim personally feels ashamed of a friend or another person when talking about the sexual harassment incident she experienced. From the interview results it is known that the victim felt helpless, she did not realize that she was a victim who was entitled to justice. She felt she had no power to defend herself for justice. Bongiorno's research states that society is more empathetic to male offenders than female victims and considers women guilty of sexual harassment cases [12].

Victims do not dare to report to educators or campus officials because they feel the sexual harassment experienced was an immoral act that will result in being expelled from the campus and will damage the good name of her family and even the good name of the campus labeled religion. Burt believes that the cultural effect is greater in rape victim [13]. Bergman, et al. said that reporting victims of sexual harassment sometimes worsened work, psychological, health outcomes and negatively impacted the organization regarding organizational recovery [14]. Moreover, the victim does not want to be considered to be an ungodly child because it causes his parents to be sad, disappointed and bear the shame of the consequences of sexual abuse that he has experienced. Regarding the relationship with God, the victim feels she is unforgivable because she feels guilty for the sexual harassment she experienced. She felt that she would carry the sin throughout her life.

3.3.2. Cultural aspects

From the results of interviews with victims, the reason why victims are reluctant to ask others for help about sexual harassment that they have experienced is that they are afraid of being blamed. Moreover, they were considered unable to guard themselves or complacent and are willing to be intimidated by the perpetrators. The wrong understanding that sexual harassment is a result of women's behavior that causes the harassment has become a stereotype by the public. So the victim thinks that when she reported the sexual abuse, she would get a social judgment that what she has experienced is the result of her being unable to take care of herself. This is supported by McMahon's research stating that 53% of students agree that sexual harassment occurs as a result of the actions of women themselves such as dressing gently or drinking alcohol [15]. Thus, the existence of these stereotypes makes the victim choose to remain silent rather than report sexual harassment she has experienced. Ullman revealed that most victims of sexual harassment are afraid of getting negative ratings from others [16].

The victim was also afraid that when she told her close friend she would be scolded, distrusted again and shunned. And victims are also afraid to tell their educators, lecturers, guardians or the campus for fear that what they say is not trusted by them and is considered an unimportant problem and is threatened their studies. Ageton's research also shows that victims of sexual harassment get negative reactions such as being blamed by people they trust. As a result of sexual harassment she has experienced, guilt arises in the victim and tends to blame herself so that victims of sexual harassment again become victims of the reaction of the surrounding community [5].

In Indonesia, cases of sexual violence show increasingly complex symptoms that do not only lead to sexual criminal behavior. As affirmed by Rahayu et al., in the discourse of social and cultural constructs, complexity emerges as a manifestation of discrimination in aspects of gender bias in patriarchal culture [10]. Based on the mindset of women as an object and inferior sex, as found by Prayoga et al., women are associated as the object for ridicules, insults, and anger by the "ancient patriarchal advocates" [9]. In fact, the right of women to obtain legal protection through legislation also has not received full support. The urgency of establishing the law on the elimination of sexual violence according to Purwanti and Prabowo is still urgent as a crucial initial step [11]

Through the results of the interview, the victim would prefer not to report to the police for shame, fearing that the events experienced would be known to many people and felt useless because she thought she would not get the help she hoped for. Victims prefer to report to the woman crisis center rather than the police. Victims are also reluctant

to consult with the counseling unit that has been provided by the campus because they are worried about people's assessment that she is having problems. The data also show that the victims have low access to get an agency to achieve legal justice. As reported by Afrianty, only in big cities, they can find local activists to help women to exercise agency and take action to achieve social and legal justice by working with women who experience violence [7]. The finding of Siti et al. confirmed that counseling unit has proven to be effective not only for female students but also for the disabled person as victims of sexual violence [17].

Because the handling of sexual violence is strongly influenced by religious and cultural aspects, collaboration with related parties is needed. Yudhanti et al. stated that Islamic institutions can apply the handling model that is implemented in the area of local government, namely through cooperation with the social rehabilitation service for victims of sexual violence and legal aid institutions [8]. This synergy will result in complete handling of sexual violence cases. This is because according to Wells, sexual violence may cause long-term impacts on victims, their families and the community [18]. Accordingly, the religious-cultural challenge requires real actions that are sustainable and so that the handling of sexual violence cases is completely done based on the target.

As the implication of the finding in this study, the socio-cultural and religious challenge in handling sexual violence can be started from several strategic steps. One of them is by utilizing online networking through social media for awareness-raising. In addition, Linder et al. said that it can also be used for community building and interrupting power dynamics as activism strategies [19]. Through such openness, support from families through strong communication can also help strengthen victims of sexual violence. With this power, according to Rossetto and Tollison, the victim will not hesitate in making a complaint in a case of sexual violence that befalls her [20].

4. Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that cases of sexual violence in Islamic institutions do not mean less prevalence compared to other non-religious institutions. This is because sexual violence does not always correlate with religious cultural aspects which actually often becomes a challenge in the process of handling the case. In Islamic institutions, the form of sexual violence is dominated by verbal, physical, visual and signaling harassment. The victim acknowledged dissatisfaction in processing complaints due to distrust of the institution to give her the right to justice. Socio-cultural dogma and

religious aspects also prevent the openness of handling cases because victims tend to protect their names and their institutions. Further efforts are needed in the form of education to prevent the increased risk of sexual violence. In addition, this study produced a number of recommendations to achieve the completeness of handling cases of sexual violence in Islamic institutions in Indonesia.

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