

## From Newsroom Frames to Courtroom Registers: Language as Patriarchal Legitimation in Sexual Violence Reporting

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines how patriarchal authority is linguistically constructed and contested across media coverage and courtroom registers in sexual violence cases. Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Halliday's transitivity framework, the researcher analyses 784 clauses from 25 online news articles and one courtroom case adjudicated at the Praya District Court in West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. News reports were selected through purposive sampling, focusing on cases where perpetrators were socially significant figures such as father, lecture, and religious leader. AntConc software generated frequency and concordance lists, which were qualitatively coded in ATLAS.ti to identify patterns of agency, responsibility, and identity representation. Findings reveal that media discourse is dominated by material processes (70%), foregrounding acts of abuse and institutional responses, while relational processes assign social roles that frame cases within patriarchal and hierarchies. Courtroom discourse is characterized by relational, verbal, and mental processes, where defendant deploy relational clauses and conditional threats to normalize coercion, mask abuse as paternal care, and silence resistance. This study introduces the concept of discursive paternalism to explain how paternal identity functions as a linguistic resource that reframes coercion as moral duty. By connecting media framing and courtroom registers, the analysis demonstrates that justice is discursively produced across interconnected arena, with media narratives priming societal expectations and courtroom language either reinforcing or challenging them.

**Keywords:** Courtroom, Media, Legitimation, Paternalism, Sexual Violence

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## INTRODUCTION

The internet has become one of the most powerful channels for the rapid circulation of information, making cases of sexual violence highly visible in real time (Rahmah, 2015). News reports, social media posts, and online commentaries can spread within hours, turning private incidents into matters of public debate (Archivist, 1998; Jonsson et al., 2019). This immediacy blurs the line between personal tragedy and public spectacle, shifting once taboo topics into everyday conversation (Wismayanti et al., 2019). While this visibility has the potential to raise awareness and mobilize social action, it also exposes victims and their families to sensationalized coverage and judgment from a mass audience. Because online news often serves as the first, source of information for the public, it frames expectations long before a case enters the courtroom. Understanding this dynamic is crucial for analysing how language in both arenas, media and legal, jointly shapes public perception of sexual violence and society's trust in the justice process. News media do not simply mirror reality, they linguistically construct events and thus play a key role in shaping public perceptions of controversial issues (Iskandar et al., 2023). In doing so, the media constructs a public script that can influence not only collective opinion but also the expectations that society brings into the legal process (Mendes et al., 2019).

Online discussions are also rife with victim-blaming, patriarchal discursive strategies, and the spread of misinformation. Patriarchal culture can be understood as a value system that privileges masculine power and structurally relegates women to subordinate positions in both domestic and public life (Amboy & Basid, 2024). It can further marginalize survivors and obstruct efforts to address the root causes of sexual violence. Yet online coverage is not always neutral. It often reflects and reproduces patriarchal values, embedding cultural assumptions that privilege male authority, foreground perpetrators' respectability, and the background victims' voices (Hotten, 2019). Sexual violence functions as a psychological weapon designed to assert patriarchal dominance and maintain male control over women's behaviour ((Brownmiller, 1993; Jewkes, 2002). The victims and bystanders become increasingly accustomed to hearing accounts of violence without any concrete response, social tolerance for such practices rises.

This normalization of patriarchal control is mirrored in news framing, which may sensationalize cases or present them as moral scandals. In courtroom registers, where survivors may face adversarial questioning that reinforces existing hierarchies (Cheng, 2016; Supardi, 2016). Together, newsroom frames and courtroom discourse operate as interconnected arenas where patriarchal value is reproduced, contested, or legitimized. To critically examine how these power relations are enacted, sustained, or challenged, this study employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as its theoretical framework.

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CDA provides the tools to reveal how ideology is naturalized in public and institutional discourse ((Fairclough, 1995). The analysis employs Halliday's transitivity system within Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013), enabling close examination of how processes, participants, and circumstances are distributed within clauses. This framework is crucial for uncovering how agency, responsibility, and blame are linguistically assigned, and for revealing how patriarchal dominance is reproduced across both arenas. Guide by this framework, this study draws on 25 online news articles and courtroom interrogation transcripts from sexual violence cases involving perpetrators in position of authority, like as a father, lecturer, and religious leaders. These cases were selected to highlight how patriarchal values are negotiated when perpetrators are socially significant figures.

Existing scholarship has examined media representations of sexual violence, showing that news coverage often emphasizes sensational elements, reproduces rape myths, or frame perpetrators sympathetically (Baker, 2008; Finkelhor, 1994; Mendes et al., 2019; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). While these studies offer valuable insights, they generally treat media and legal discourse as separate phenomena. These separation leaves unexplored how the same case is constructed across both arenas and how news framing may pre-shape public expectations that are later reinforced or challenged in court. Addressing them is essential for understanding how public trust in justice is built through the interplay between media framing and courtroom language.

To address these issues, this study poses two main questions. First, how do online news articles frame sexual violence cases to involve authority figures through linguistic choices such as transitivity patterns, participant roles, and process types? Second, how do newsroom frames and courtroom registers compare in reproducing or challenging patriarchal values?

## METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, using CDA as the main analytical framework. CDA was chosen for its ability to uncover how discourse constructs social realities and reproduces power relations (Fairclough, 2013). CDA is not only a methodology but also a critical lens for demonstrating how language functions as a tool of power, producing, reproducing, or contesting inequality, which is central to understanding sexual violence discourse in both arenas. The analysis was anchored in Halliday's transitivity system within Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), which examines how processes, participants, and circumstances are distributed in a clause (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). Through this framework, the study explained both news texts and excerpts from courtroom interrogations related to the separated sexual violence cases. Halliday's transitivity framework analyses how linguistic choices represent processes (material, mental, relational, verbal, behavioural, existential),

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participants, and circumstances within a clause, thus revealing how agency, responsibility, and power relations are constructed in discourse.

By applying this framework, the study investigates how victims and perpetrators are positioned, how actions are attributed, and how broader social ideologies are reproduced through language. The data consist of 25 online news articles selected through purposive sampling from major Indonesian media outlets, like a Kompas.com, Detik.com, and Tempo as well as prominent regional sources to ensure local representation. The inclusion criteria focused on (a) news reporting cases of sexual violence, (b) cases where the perpetrator was a socially significant figure (father, lecturer, and religious leader), and (c) articles that contained sufficient narrative detail, such as background, chronology, and quotations, rather than short headlines or brief news flashes.

In total, eight cases were purposively selected from a corpus of 25 online news sources, each reporting incidents of sexual violence that occurred between January 2024 until May 2025. The selection was guided by their thematic relevance, completeness of narrative, and the presence of identifiable participants. The analysis revealed that victims were predominantly positioned as the goal within material processes, accounting for 201 clauses across the dataset. Furthermore, 87 clauses explicitly represented the action of perpetrators, 50 clauses used the designation 'suspect', and 22 clauses employed the term 'alleged' in reference to accused individuals. This systematic clause-level coding allows for nuanced understanding of how news discourse linguistically constructs the relationship between victims, perpetrators, and legal authority.

The decision to focus on cases from Nusa Tenggara Barat (NTB) was based on their strong discursive potential. The case was collected in Praya District, which is characterized by a culturally diverse population and strong local socio-religious norms that shape practices and discourse. Sexual violence involving authority figures in this region often provokes public moral debates and attracts extensive media coverage, allowing rich exploration of how power, gender norms, and community reputation intersect in discourse.

On the other hand, courtroom data were drawn from trial transcripts and verified through cross-checking with case summaries to ensure accuracy and completeness. The data capture the language used by judge, prosecutor, witnesses, and defendant during interrogation and deliberation, providing a second site of analysis to compare with media framing. Related news report and courtroom transcripts were cleaned and converted into plain text format for consistency. The text was compiled into two separate sub-corpora, media corpus (25 news online) and courtroom corpus (1 case that was adjudicated at the Praya District Court), enabling comparative analysis between the two domains.

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AntConc software was used to generate frequency lists, keyword lists, and concordance lines to identify recurring lexical items, collocations, and patterns related to agency, responsibility, and gender representation. This step allowed the researcher to detect dominant frames and potential sites of ideological reproduction. Particular attention was paid to verbs representing processes of action (material processes), speech (verbal processes), and mental states (mental processes) as Halliday's transitivity system.

Moreover, qualitative coding was then carried out using ATLAS.ti. Each clause was annotated for process type, participants, and circumstantial elements. Codes were grouped into categories such as foregrounding perpetrator actions, backgrounding victim agency, decontextualization of consent, and moral framing. These categories allowed systematic comparison between the media and courtroom datasets to trace similarities and divergences in discursive strategies. Patterns were interpreted in light of CDA's focus on power ideology, and hegemony, as well as feminist perspectives on patriarchal dominance (Lazar, 2005). This process allowed the researcher to identify recurring linguistic mechanisms that position victims and perpetrators, and to prepare the ground for introducing the concept of discursive paternalism in the findings and discussion sections.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section reposts the results of the transitivity analysis of eight selected cases of sexual violence drawn from 25 online news articles and one courtroom case adjudicated at Praya District Court. It is focusing on participant roles and process types in online news discourse. Findings are presents in terms of four key themes, (a) victim positioning, (b) perpetrator representation, (c) role identity, (d) modus operandi and symbolic authority, and (e) institutional response and intimidation.

### 1. Transitivity Overview of The Media Corpus

A comprehensive transitivity analysis was conducted on 784 clauses extracted from 25 online news reports covering eight high-profile sexual violence cases. Table 1 summarizes the results, revealing a strong dominance of material processes (70%), followed by relational (11%), mental (8%), verbal (7%), existential (3%), and behavioural processes (1%). This distribution highlights that news reporting focuses heavily on concrete actions and events, foregrounding perpetrators' agency while placing victims in goal positions.

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Table 1:  
*Transitivity overview of the media corpus*

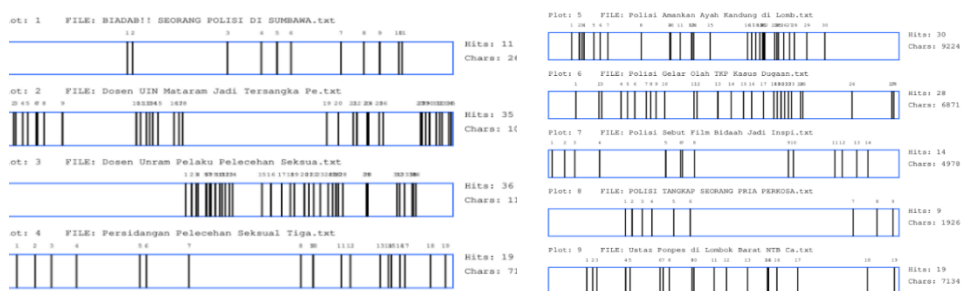
Types of Processes	Roles	Frequency of distribution	Percentage distribution
Material	Act	551	70%
Mental	Sense	59	8%
Relational	Being	88	11%
Verbal	Say	57	7%
Behavioral	Behave	1	1%
Existential	There	28	3%
Total		784	100%

Material processes are dominant in the news coverage, with reports frequently detailing concrete actions such as *melakukan* (to commit), *memaksa* (to force), *membekap* (to smother), *menyuruh* (to order), *mencium* (to kiss), *meraba* (to grope), and *catcalling* (to harass verbally), among others. Such a linguistic focus constructs the perpetrators as active agents who initiate and control the unfolding events, while positioning the victims as recipients or ‘goals’ of these material actions. This aligns with the conventions of crime and legal reporting, where emphasis is placed on the acts performed and their direct impact on the victims. Through these material processes, news discourse not only documents the sequence of criminal events but also reinforces the dynamics of agency and passivity, clearly delineating the roles of perpetrator and victim in the public imagination.

### a. Victim Positioning

The grammatical patterns are reinforced lexically, as indicated by the AntConc frequency scan, [korban] ‘victim’ appears 201 times across eight news topics. It is positioning [korban] ‘victim’ as goal or affected, making the victim the most frequently foregrounded participant. In contrast, perpetrators were referred to explicitly in 87 clauses with the term [*pelaku*] ‘perpetrator’, 50 clauses with [*tersangka*] ‘suspect’, and 22 clauses with [*terduga*] ‘alleged’. These results, visualized in figure 1-3, provides a quantitative foundation for the thematic analysis that follows and highlight how news reporting foregrounds victims while simultaneously naming and socially locating perpetrators.

Figure 1:  
*Distribution of the term [korban] 'victim' in online news reports*



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Figure 1 presents the frequency distribution of the term [korban] ‘victim’ across the eight selected cases, generated using AntConc’s wordlist and concordance functions. The term appeared 201 times in the media corpus, with the highest occurrences found in Case 2, Case 3, and Case 5. This quantitative result indicates that online news discourse consistently foregrounds the victim’s position within narrative of sexual violence. The frequent mention suggests that news discourse constructs the victim as the central figure in the narrative, emphasizing their experience and vulnerability. By consistently positioning victims as goal or affected participants. Media reporting highlights the impact of sexual violence but simultaneously frames victims as passive recipients of action rather than active agents.

This concordance lines show that these lexical items overwhelmingly occur as actor or goals within material process clauses, for example:

(2) DO2e<sup>1</sup> *AW melakukan aksi cabulnya ke sejumlah mahasiswa di Fakultas XXX dengan modus bimbingan skripsi.*  
‘AW carried out acts of sexual misconduct on several female students at the faculty of XXX under the guise of thesis supervision.’

Here, the perpetrator /AW/ is placed in the actor role, initiating the action, while the victims are represented as goals, passively receiving the action. This convergence of grammatical and lexical evidence highlights a consistent discursive pattern in which agency is attributed to the perpetrator, whereas the victim is positioned as the recipient of harm.

## b. Perpetrator Representation

The actor in the transitivity framework is represented through various phrases, such as *perpetrator*, *alleged*, and *suspect*, and is often explicitly identified by their professional roles, such as father, lecturer, police officer, or even as a religious leader. This is evident in the distribution of the perpetrator, alleged, and suspect within the online news reports, as follows,

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<sup>1</sup> For clarity and traceability, each clause cited in the Findings is referenced using a symbolic code indicating the case type, news number, and clause number.

DO = *Dosen* case (lecturer perpetrator)

PO = *Pondok Pesantren* case (Islamic boarding school perpetrator as a religious leader)

AY = *Ayah* case (father perpetrator).

Number (e.g. 3) is clause of body of news article within that case.

Letter (e.g., d) is differential identity to distinguish multiple cases with the same perpetrator type.

This coding system ensures that all examples are traceable to their original context and facilitates consistency in qualitative analysis.

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Figure 2:  
*Distribution of the term [pelaku] ‘perpetrator’ in online news reports*

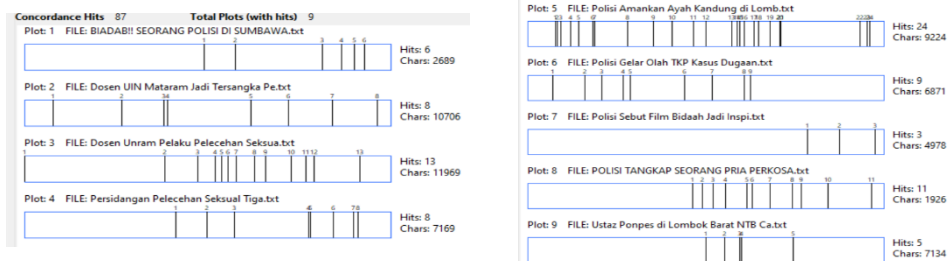


Figure 2 present the combine frequency counts of [pelaku] ‘perpetrator’, [tersangka] ‘suspect’ and [terduga] ‘alleged’ across the media corpus. These terms collectively occurred 159 times, including 87 times for [pelaku] ‘perpetrator’, 50 times for [tersangka] ‘suspect’, and 22 times for [terduga] ‘alleged’, with each case consistently naming the accused at least once. The repeated use of these term aligns with journalistic conventions of objectivity and the legal principle of presumption of innocence, yet it also frames perpetrators as the grammatical actors of clauses, placing emphasis on their actions and identities. At the same time, this linguistic pattern frames sexual violence as an individual act, rather than a structural or cultural problem, by focusing attention on the accused as a singular figure. So, these item typically occurs as actor in material processes, reinforcing the grammatical pattern in which perpetrators are represented as the initiators of harmful acts.

### c. Role Identity

Beyond material processes, relational clauses (11%) play a crucial role in assigning identity to perpetrator, frequently co-occurring with lexical items such as [dosen] ‘lecturer’, [ayah] ‘father’, and [agamawan] ‘religious leader’. Relational processes, the next most frequent type, serve a critical function in categorizing social actors, assigning identities, and constructing relationships (e.g., “the perpetrator is a police officer,” “the victim is a student”). These clauses not only situate individuals within institutional and patriarchal hierarchies but also reflect the broader sociocultural frameworks, especially patriarchal power relations, within which these crimes are reported and interpreted. The frequent explicit mention of perpetrators’ professional or familial roles, as well as their authority and proximity to victims, functions linguistically to reinforce or sometimes even legitimize existing social structures, subtly shaping public perception and discourse about accountability.

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For instance below:

AY23a *Terdakwa yang merupakan ayah kandung korban*  
 ‘The defendant, who is the biological father of the victim’

Such clauses categorize perpetrators by their institutional or familial roles, underscoring the breach of trust that frames these cases as particularly shocking.

This is evident in the distribution of [ayah] ‘father’ and [dosen] ‘lecturer’ within the online news reports, as follows

Figure 3:  
*Distribution of the term [dosen] ‘lecturer’ and [ayah] ‘father’ in online news reports*

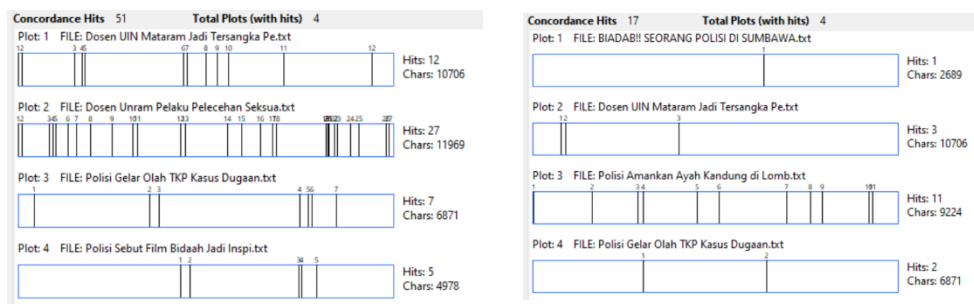


Figure 3 shows the frequency of perpetrator social role identifiers, such as [dosen] ‘lecturer’ and [ayah] ‘father’ across the media corpus. The term [dosen] ‘lecturer’ appeared 51 times, while [ayah] ‘father’ appeared 17 times, indicating that media reports frequently identify perpetrators by their professional or familial roles. This distribution suggests that online news coverage not only reports the criminal act but also foregrounds the social position of the accused, framing the event as a breach of trust within educational and family institutions. Together, the frequency data and transitivity coding show how media discourse simultaneously foregrounds the actions and identities of perpetrators, constructing them as both active agents and socially accountable figures.

#### d. Modus Operandi and Symbolic Authority

The analysis revealed that perpetrators frequently used relational and verbal processes to manipulate victims psychologically and to legitimize abusive acts through culturally meaningful roles or religious discourse. These clauses often present perpetrators as actor or sayers who issue instructions, give orders, or make claims that normalize the abuse.

Representative clauses include:

DO3d *Ia menyuruh korban menganggapnya sebagai ayah.*  
 ‘He told the victim to consider him as a father.’  
 AY7b *Ia meminta korban untuk memijat tubuhnya.*  
 ‘He asked the victim to massage his body’

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DO4f *Oknum dosen tersebut menggunakan dali-dalil bisa memberikan ilmu kepada korban dengan syarat membersihkan kemaluan.*

‘The perpetrator, a lecturer, used religious justifications to convince male students that he could transmit spiritual knowledge, on the condition that they clean their genital under his instruction, as part of a so-called ritual.’

These examples demonstrate how perpetrators invoke symbolic role identity, [ayah] ‘father’ and [dosen] ‘lecturer’ to position themselves as trusted authority figures. In transitivity terms, such clauses typically feature the perpetrator as actor or carrier of relational processes, while the victims are placed as goal, reinforcing their passivity and dependence.

### e. Institutional Response and Intimidation

Several clauses also indicate institutional level actions aimed at suppressing the case or discouraging victims and witnesses from participating in legal proceedings.

PO27g. *Pada saat diantarkan panggilan, mereka\* bilang akan datang.*

‘When the court summons was delivered, they said they\* would come.’  
(Note. They refers to the witnesses or relevant parties can be clarified if needed).

PO28g. *Pada saat hari H (Persidangan) mereka<sup>2</sup> kok mengbilang.*

‘On the actual court day, they suddenly disappeared.’

PO29g. *Kami menduga ada intimidasi dan upaya dilakukan pihak ponpes melalui keluarga untuk menghalangi saksi korban untuk bersaksi di pengadilan.*

‘We suspect there was intimidation and that the pesantren (Islamic boarding school) attempted, through the victims’ families, to prevent the witnesses from testifying in court.’

These clauses illustrate how external actors are represented as agents of material processes that hinder the legal process. Victims and witnesses appear again as goals, showing their vulnerability not just to perpetrators but also to systemic pressures. Together, these patterns suggest that sexual violence discourse in educational settings does not merely describe individual actions but also reflects wider power structures in which perpetrators exploit their institutional status and victims face collective pressure that silences their voices.

## 2. Transitivity Overview of The Courtroom Register

From the transcripts of eight separate trial hearings, 167 clauses were identified and coded for transitivity analysis. Table 2 summarize the process distribution, revealing that verbal processes are the most frequent (43%), reflecting the inherently dialogic nature of courtroom discourse. Relational

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<sup>2</sup> In this context, [mereka] ‘they’ refers to [santriwati] ‘female students’ who have become victims of sexual harassment.

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and behavioural (19%) and mental (15%) are also prominent, they provide crucial insight into intention, emotional impact, and the presence of evidence.

Table 2:  
*Transitivity overview of the courtroom corpus*

Types of Processes	Roles	Frequency of distribution	Percentage distribution
Material	Act	15	9%
Mental	Sense	20	12%
Relational	Being	32	19%
Verbal	Say	72	43%
Behavioral	Behave	25	15%
Existential	There	3	2%
Total		167	100%

### a. Courtroom Discourse and Familial Authority

The courtroom corpus reveals that perpetrator frequently used relational and conditional processes to justify his action and maintain psychological control over victims.

Excerpt 1: The intimidating speech

- Ps<sup>3</sup> : *“Apa yang terdakwa katakan kepada korban A1, sampai korban A1 tidak berontak ketika saudara memegang \*\*\* korban A1?”*  
“What did the defendant said to victim A1 that made A1 not resist when you touched A1’s \*\*\*?”
- Ay : *“Ini kan Bapak!”*  
“I’m your father!”
- Ps : *“Korban A1 tidak berontak?”*  
“Victim A1 did not resist?”
- Ay : *“Hanya nangis sebentar, trus diem.”*  
“She only cried for a short time, then stayed silent.”

This utterance constructs a relational and mental identifying clauses, equating the carrier [I] with the attribute /your father/. The clause implicitly draws on cultural schemas of paternal authority, framing physical proximity as normal and legitimate.

Excerpt 2: Threat of Disownment

- (1) Ps : *“Apalagi yang saudara katakan kepada korban A1<sup>4</sup>?”*

<sup>3</sup> The letter [Ps] is used as a coding marker to indicate the utterances of the public prosecutor.

While the [Ay] is used to indicate utterances delivered by the defendant, in this case the biological father of the victims. The case selected and used as a point of comparison in this study concerns a sexual violence case in which a biological father abused his two daughters over a period of several years.

<sup>4</sup> A1 is the coding used for victim child 1, as there are two child victims in this case.

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- “What else did you said to victim A1?”
- Ay : “*Kalau kamu tidak mau, saya dan ibumu tidak mau mengakui kamu sebagai anak lagi?*”  
“If you don’t comply, your mother and I will no longer acknowledge you as our child.”
- \*\*\*
- (2) Ps : “*Apakah terdakwa sering melakukan kekerasan?*”  
“Does the defendant often commit acts of violence?”
- Ay : *(menunduk dan mengangguk)* “*Pukul pake kayu, kadang jambak rambut, trus diikat pake kabel.*”  
(bowing head and nodding) “I hit her with a stick, sometimes pulled her hair, then tied her up with a cable.”
- Ps : “*Biasanya dipukul karena apa?*”  
“why would you hit her?”
- Ay : “*Kalo pergi maen dan kalo jarang ngikutin kemauan Bapak.*”  
“If she went out to play or if she didn’t often follow my wishes”.

These clauses combine a conditional circumstance (if you don’t comply) with a material process (acknowledge), through which the defendant threatens to revoke the victim’s social status and belonging within the family. This discursive strategy transforms compliance into a moral obligation and frames resistance as a risk of exclusion. Such a construction does more than narrate events. It actively reproduces a power relation in which paternal authority is positioned as the gatekeeper of identity and acceptance.

Thus, these excerpts demonstrate that courtroom testimony is not merely a site of factual reconstruction but also a site of discursive contestation, where authority is asserted, negotiated, and resisted. The defendant strategically invokes relational processes [ini kan Bapak!] ‘*I’m your father*’ to naturalize his authority, while conditional clauses operate as tools of emotional coercion, reasserting hierarchical control and silencing victim agency. This aligns with CDA’s view of discourse as a form of social practice (Fairclough, 1995, 2013) showing how language performs the dual function of describing events and legitimizing power.

### Excerpt 3: Judicial Sentencing

- Jd<sup>5</sup>: “*Setelah menimbang tuntutan Jaksa Penuntut Umum (JPU), penasehat hukum, and keabsahan alat bukti, kami menetapkan dalam amar keputusan, hukuman bagi saudara terdakwa berupa hukuman pidana selama 19 tahun dengan denda sebesar satu milyar rupiah, dan subsidi enam bulan kurungan.*”  
“After considering the demands of the public prosecutor, the defence counsel, and the validity of the evidence, we hereby pronounce the verdict: the defendant is sentenced to 19 years’ imprisonment and a fine of IDR 1 billion, with a subsidiary penalty of six months’ detention.”

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<sup>5</sup> [Jd] is used as the coding abbreviation for the **Judge** in the courtroom transcripts.

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The sentencing exchange represents the final discursive act that closes the narrative trajectory constructed across both media and courtroom arenas. By declaring the verdict “the defendant is sentenced to 19 years’ imprisonment and a fine of IDR 1 billion”, the judge performs what Austin (Oishi, 2006; Searle, 1968) terms a verdictive speech act, where the utterance itself enacts legal reality. This moment not only imposes punishment but symbolically reaffirms institutional authority and signals to the public that justice has been rendered. When viewed alongside media framing, which primes public expectations through detailed accounts of the crime, the sentencing speech provides a form of narrative closure that either confirms or disrupts those expectations. Thus, the courtroom verdict does not merely conclude the legal process but functions as a key site where public trust is either strengthened or eroded reinforcing the argument that justice is discursively constructed across interconnected arenas.

The findings of this study reveal that language in both media reporting and courtroom interrogation operates as a key site where sexual violence is narratively constructed socially interpreted, and ideologically contested. The dominance of material processes in online news foregrounds perpetrators’ action and situates victims as passive goals, shaping public understanding of sexual violence as a sequence of concrete events. Conversely, the courtroom corpus is characterized by a high frequency of relational and verbal processes, which shift the focus from narrating acts to assigning roles, legitimizing authority, and negotiating meaning. Thus, these discursive patterns illuminate how newsroom frames and courtroom registers do more than simply report facts or gather evidence. They actively shape social perceptions of justice, victimhood, and accountability.

## 1. Victim Positioning and Media Framing

The analysis of 25 online news articles shows that material processes dominate (70%), positioning victims primarily as goals or affected participants. The lexical frequency of [korban] ‘victim’, appearing in 201 clauses, underscores how news discourse foregrounds victims’ suffering, constructing them as the narrative center and passive objects of harm (Baker, 2008; Mendes et al., 2019). This focus may elicit public sympathy and mobilize outrage but also risks portraying victims as passive objects of harm, leaving little room for their agency or resistance. This finding echoes previous research that critiques media for highlighting victimhood while underrepresenting survivors’ voice and actions (Brownmiller, 1993; Hotten, 2019; Sharaby, 2019).

However, this study extends those findings by showing how victims’ passivity is not just implied but grammatically encoded through transitivity patterns, which systematically background their agency. Moreover, the repeated use of relational processes to identify perpetrators by social roles [*ayah*] ‘father’ and [*dosen*] ‘lecture’ confirms Jewkes (2002) observation that

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sexual violence is framed as a breach of moral and social order. The discourse frames sexual violence as a betrayal of trust rather than merely a criminal act. This double framing simultaneously heightens moral condemnation and reaffirms the institutional respectability associated with these roles, reinforcing the power hierarchies in which the abuse occurred. Thus, media narratives both raise awareness and participate in the reproduction of cultural scripts that normalize male authority (Burt, 1980; Ernanda, 2023), a tension that shapes public expectations long before the case enters the courtroom.

## 2. Courtroom Discursive Strategies and Power Negotiation

The courtroom data reveal a heavy reliance on verbal and relational processes, consistent with Conley and O'Barr (2019) work showing that trials are spaces where identities and authority relations are discursively negotiated. This study contributes new insight by illustrating how a defendant strategically use relational identifying clauses [*Ini kan Bapak!*] 'I am your father' to normalize coercion, a finding that complements Lazar (2005) feminist CDA perspective that discourse sustains gendered hierarchies through naturalization. Such clauses are not simply descriptive but performative. They reassert the perpetrator's authority and reframe coercive acts as morally justified.

The conditional threat, such as [*tidak mengakui kamu sebagai anak lagi*] 'I will no longer acknowledge you as our child' combine conditional circumstances with material processes, transforming compliance into a moral obligation and positioning resistance as the pathway to expulsion from the family. These utterances operate as emotional blackmail, a discursive strategy that enforces obedience through fear rather than physical force.

Importantly, courtroom discourse is not one sided. Prosecutor's question, for example [*Apa yang terdakwa katakan kepada korban A1?*] 'What did the defendant said to victim A1?', function as counter discourses that compel the defendant to account for his actions and disrupt attempts to normalize abuse. Witness testimonies and victim statements further break the silence imposed by patriarchal norms, shifting the narrative from passive endurance to active pursuit of justice. Thus, the courtroom emerges as a contested discursive space where authority is simultaneously reasserted by defendant and challenged by legal actors.

## 3. Inter-Arena Reinforcement and Discursive Paternalism

When viewed together, the media and courtroom corpora reveal a connected discursive chain in which cases of sexual violence are first framed, then adjudicated through language. Media coverage relies heavily on material processes, narrating what perpetrators did and positioning victims as passive goals, thereby foregrounding the physicality of violence and constructing a moral script that calls for justice. Courtroom discourse then shifts to

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relational and verbal processes, focusing on who the participants are, what identities they claim, and how accountability is negotiated.

This shift does not disrupt the narrative but continues it. The courtroom becomes the site where media framed identities, such as ‘father’, lecturer’ or religious leader, are contested, reasserted, or reframed. Thus, these two arenas function as complementary stages of meaning making, shaping whether society views justice as fair and effective or biased and exclusionary.

This study introduces the concept of discursive paternalism to capture how paternal authority is linguistically mobilized across both arenas. In media discourse repeatedly foregrounds perpetrators’ paternal or institutional roles, framing the crime as a violation of trust but also reaffirming the authority tied to those roles. Within the courtroom, defendant strategically deploy relational clauses [*ini kan Bapak!*] ‘I am your father!’, conditional threats, and identity claims to naturalize control, mask abuse as paternal care, and silence resistance. This utterance illustrates discursive paternalism, which can be defined as a communicative strategy whereby one party deliberately redirects the interpretation of speech act to reshape its consequences or stakes (Townsend, 2021). In this way, paternal identity is weaponized as a discursive resource, reframing coercion as protection and compliance as moral duty. Meanwhile, the public script established by news reports primes societal expectations, and the courtroom register either reaffirms or challenges these expectations through its interrogation, judgment, and sentencing.

Moments of resistance are equally significant. Mental processes like [*menyadari*] ‘realized’ and verbal disclosures signal the victims’ internal awakening and public testimony, marking discursive points where patriarchal power is challenged. In line with cyber feminist perspectives, such discursive acts can be read as attempts to reclaim narrative authority and contest patriarchal hierarchies that have long been embedded in institutional and media discourse (Amboy & Basid, 2024). Prosecutorial interventions and witness statements reframe abuse as criminal rather than paternal, destabilizing the legitimacy of the defendant’s authority. This demonstrates that justice is discursively constructed not solely in the courtroom but through the interplay between public and institutional discourse.

Finally, the sentencing speech act, in which the judge pronounces a 19 years prison term and fine of IDR 1 billion, serves as narrative closure and providing symbolic accountability. As a verdictive speech act (Searle, 1968), the judgement does not merely describe punishment but enact it. It is signaling to the public that legal authority has acted and the case is resolved. This closure reinforces the notion that language is central not only to representing justice but to performing it. Completing the cycle that began with media framing and culminating in institutional decision-making. As Sari et al. (2024) note in their analysis of crime narratives, such endings function to restore a sense of harmony and legal order, inviting audiences to see justice

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as having been served even when the underlying power relations remain contested.

## CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that language in both media and courtroom arenas does more than report events. Constructs meaning, negotiated, authority, and shapes how society perceives justice in cases of sexual violence. The transitivity analysis revealed that media coverage is dominated by material processes, foregrounding perpetrators' actions and positioning victims as passive recipients of harm. In these news texts, authority figures such as fathers, lecturers, and religious leaders are consistently foregrounded as powerful actors, while victims are grammatically positioned as affected goals of material processes. By contrast, courtroom discourse is characterized by relational and verbal processes that negotiate identity, legitimacy, and accountability. Thus, these findings show that news framing and courtroom either reinforces or challenges these expectations through interrogation, testimony, and sentencing. In the media, patriarchal authority is largely reproduced through grammatical patterns that foreground perpetrators' social status and background victims' agency. In courtroom these same values are sometimes reinforced through defendants' identity claims, but they are also contested by prosecutorial questioning and victims' testimony, which reframe the abuse as criminal rather than paternal. The study's key theoretical contribution is the articulation of discursive paternalism, a concept that captures how paternal authority and institutional identities are linguistically mobilized to normalize coercion, mask abuse as caring, and frame compliance as moral duty. This contribution advances CDA by offering a framework for understanding how power and patriarchy are discursively reproduced across both public and institutional domains. In doing so, it positions media and courtroom discourse as interconnected sites of patriarchal legitimation rather than separate spheres. Practically, these insights highlight the need for survivor-centered reporting practices that avoid sensationalism and victim-blaming. As well as courtroom procedures that minimize the re-traumatization of survivors and disrupt the legitimation of abuse through paternalistic language. To build on these findings, subsequent studies could expand the scope beyond a single region to compare how discursive paternalism operates across different cultural or legal contexts in Indonesia or internationally. Longitudinal research could also trace how media framing influences trial outcomes and public trust overtime. Furthermore, computational linguistic approaches, such as collocation networks or sentiment analysis, could be used alongside CDA to identify broader patterns in large-scale corpora. Finally, interdisciplinary collaborations with psychology and legal studies could explore how linguistic framing affects victim recovery, reporting behavior, and community responses to sexual violence.

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