



# Unveiling the epidemic: Exploring patterns and factors of violence against women in Indonesia

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** The paper explores the issue of violence against women in Indonesia, focusing on its various forms, contributing factors, and implications. **Methods:** Drawing upon a comprehensive analysis of secondary data from reputable sources, including government reports and previous research studies, the study highlights the pervasive nature of gender-based violence and its detrimental effects on the physical and psychological well-being of women and children. **Finding:** The research reveals a sharp increase in cases of violence against women, particularly sexual and psychological violence, with familial contexts being predominant settings for such incidents. Factors contributing to this phenomenon include legal awareness, patriarchal culture, economic instability, allegations of infidelity, and early marriage. **Conclusion:** The findings underscore the urgent need for comprehensive efforts to address societal norms, legal frameworks, economic disparities, and cultural attitudes to effectively combat violence against women and ensure their protection and empowerment.

**KEYWORDS:** gender-based violence; legal awareness; patriarchal culture; women's empowerment.

## 1. Introduction

In the Indonesian public administration system, the role of the government is the most important and strategic, so the political will to take concrete action on strengthening government functions in strengthening the public administration system in Indonesia needs to be done immediately. There are many crucial problems related to the image of the public bureaucracy as a working tool and policy implementation tool in public administration practice. Public service reform builds trust in public services provided by public service providers in line with the wishes and demands of all citizens. Improving public services for citizens is the responsibility of the state as the management of public services. Standards are needed to provide clear rules to achieve these conditions. Public services are carried out to meet service needs following laws and regulations. Public services for every citizen and resident for goods, services, and/or administrative services provided (Law No. 25 of 2009).

Quality public services are one of the main pillars of maintaining community welfare. The quality of these services is not only reflected in the efficiency and effectiveness of the bureaucracy, but also in the concern for the protection of women from all forms of

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violence. Public services that are not running will have an impact on all sectors. To anticipate these conditions, it is necessary to standardize services to the community following the authority given by the central government to local governments by Law Number 23 of 2014 concerning the Regional Government. Along with the growing awareness of the importance of the issue of violence against women, the government has taken steps to ensure that public services include the protection of women and child victims of violence. The accountability and responsiveness of the public bureaucracy in providing quality services is the essence of effective governance. This is in line with the perspective of modern public administration which emphasizes the importance of the dimensions of professionalism, transparency, and accountability of the government bureaucracy in carrying out its functions and role as a public servant (Iskandar, 2017).

Protection of women and children from violence is part of the public services provided by the government to women and children victims of violence. Violence against women and children is no longer a neglected problem. Data shows that cases of violence against women and children are still worrying, and even tend to increase. Seeing the increase in cases of violence is a strong basis for the government and related stakeholders to encourage the acceleration of reducing cases of violence against women and children. Referring to Presidential Regulation No. 7 of 2023 on Presidential Regulation No. 65 of 2020 on the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, the Ministry of PPPA has new functions in terms of providing final referral services for women victims of violence that require national, cross-provincial and international level coordination and providing services for children who need special protection that requires national and international level coordination (KPPPA, 2023).

Protection of Women and Children in the Minister of Women's Empowerment and Child Welfare Regulation 2 of 2022 concerning Service Standards for the Protection of Women and Children is an effort to protect and implement the rights of women and children from all forms of violence, discrimination, special protection, and other problems. The existence of these service standards is not only a guideline for the government in carrying out its duties as a public servant, but also a real commitment to provide fast, accurate, complete, and integrated services to the community. This is a reflection of the government's moral and ethical responsibility to protect and implement the human rights of women and children, including their right to live without violence and discrimination. Quality public services, and protection of women and children from all forms of violence is not just an option, but an integral part of the government's mission to realize welfare and justice for all citizens. This research discusses more about violence against women and explores the factors that cause violence against women, which is currently in the public spotlight.

## 2. Methods

The research uses secondary data as the main data for analysis. Data is collected from reliable sources such as government agency report data, previous research, and related survey data. Data collection instruments will include analyzing reports from relevant agencies. The data analysis conducted is a descriptive analysis by identifying the incidence of violence based on time and factors that cause violence against women.

## 3. Results and Discussion

Gender remains an ongoing topic of discussion in contemporary society. Within societal narratives, females are frequently depicted as lacking strength and incapable of assuming leadership roles. They are often relegated to positions of insignificance or relegated to secondary status. Moreover, women are frequently relegated to the status of

second-class citizens. Pratiwi (2017) highlighted (in Shlomo, 2023) that this perspective has emerged as a pervasive issue, leading to discrimination against women across various domains including politics, economics, social interactions, cultural spheres, and beyond - extending even into marital relationships. Irwan (2015) (in Shlomo, 2023) further underscores that gender-based discrimination has become a root cause of challenges for women and children, impacting not only their physical well-being but also their psychological health. Article 1 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women/CEDAW defines discrimination against women as any differentiation, exclusion, or limitation based on gender, which may diminish or completely impede the acknowledgement, enjoyment, and exercise of human rights and freedoms. Gender-based violence manifests through various means such as subjugation, stereotyping, the imposition of double standards, marginalization, and direct violence against women.

Gender-based violence represents a manifestation of gender bias. These acts of violence targeting women encompass physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. Unsriana (2014) highlighted (in Shlomo, 2023) that such violence can manifest within familial, societal, and governmental spheres. This violence arises from a perspective of male supremacy, where violence against women serves as an affront to human dignity. Sexual violence stands out as a prevalent form of discrimination against women. According to Irfan (2011), sexual violence involves coercive intercourse, contradicting religious and legal principles. The display of violence underscores the disproportionate power held by male perpetrators, both in physical prowess and psychological coercion, enabling them to perpetuate discrimination and maintain dominance.

Essentially, UPTD PPA serves as the primary support system for victims dealing with sexual violence. The organization implements various initiatives annually, including awareness campaigns targeting issues such as domestic violence (KDRT), violence against women (KTP), violence against children (KTA), and human trafficking (TPPO). Acts of violence against women represent a breach of their fundamental rights, encompassing a spectrum from verbal abuse to physical harm and infringements upon their basic liberties. Examining the international frameworks outlined in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) underscores the impediment that violence poses to women's ability to enhance their capabilities and participate actively in societal dynamics.

Indonesia has already adopted a fundamental principle reflecting the essence of humanism, as echoed in the second tenet of Pancasila highlighting "Equitable and Civilized Humanity." This underscores the nation's foundational ethos and legal framework, which have enshrined the principle of equal recognition of human rights for both genders under the law. As articulated in Article 27, paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, "Every citizen enjoys equal status before the law and governance and is accountable for upholding the principles of law and governance without exception." This alignment with Pancasila or the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia is further corroborated by the enactment of Law Number 7 of 1984, which ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), thereby mandating Indonesia's proactive engagement in advancing gender parity (Purwanti, 2020).

Violence against women is stated as an act of a person against the opposite sex that includes coercion, threats, and arbitrary actions that cause physical, psychological, and sexual suffering that occurs in the public or private sphere. Mustafinah & Yentriyani (in Ningrum & Hijri, 2022) related to violence, the National Commission on Women divides violence into 3 domains of violence against women, namely (1) the personal domain; in the personal sphere, the perpetrator is related to the victim by blood or close relatives, marriage or intimate relationship (dating) with the victim; (2) in the public domain; in the public sphere, the perpetrator and victim are not related by blood or marriage; (3) the realm of the state, the perpetrator is a state apparatus in a duty capacity. Meanwhile, forms of violence against women are divided into four groups: (1) violence against wives

(KTI), (2) dating violence (DV), girl-child violence (KTAP); (3) violence committed by ex-husband (KMS); and (4) ex-boyfriend violence (KMP).

The development of cases of violence against women in Indonesia is increasing sharply, according to the data of the PPA Symphony of the Ministry of Women's Empowerment for 2018-2022. The number of cases of violence with female victims in 2018 was 18,141 cases, in 2022 it increased to 25,052 cases. A sharp increase in cases occurred in 2021 (an increase of 24% compared to the previous year). The development of cases of violence against women during 2018-2022 can be seen in the following Figure 1.

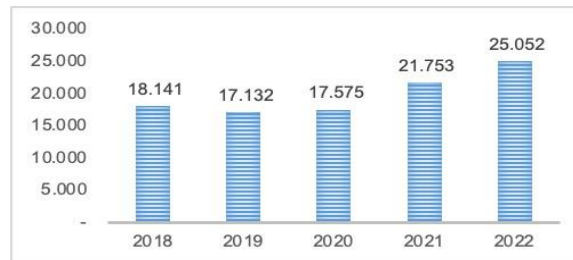


Fig 1. Number of women violence cases in Indonesia, 2018-2022 (PPA Symphony, 2018-2022)

When viewed by age group, the largest percentage of victims of violence in 2022 came from 13-17 years old, which amounted to 30.2 percent and the age group 25-44 years old, which amounted to 30 percent and the smallest came from the age group of 5.4 percent. The full development can be seen in the following Figure 2.

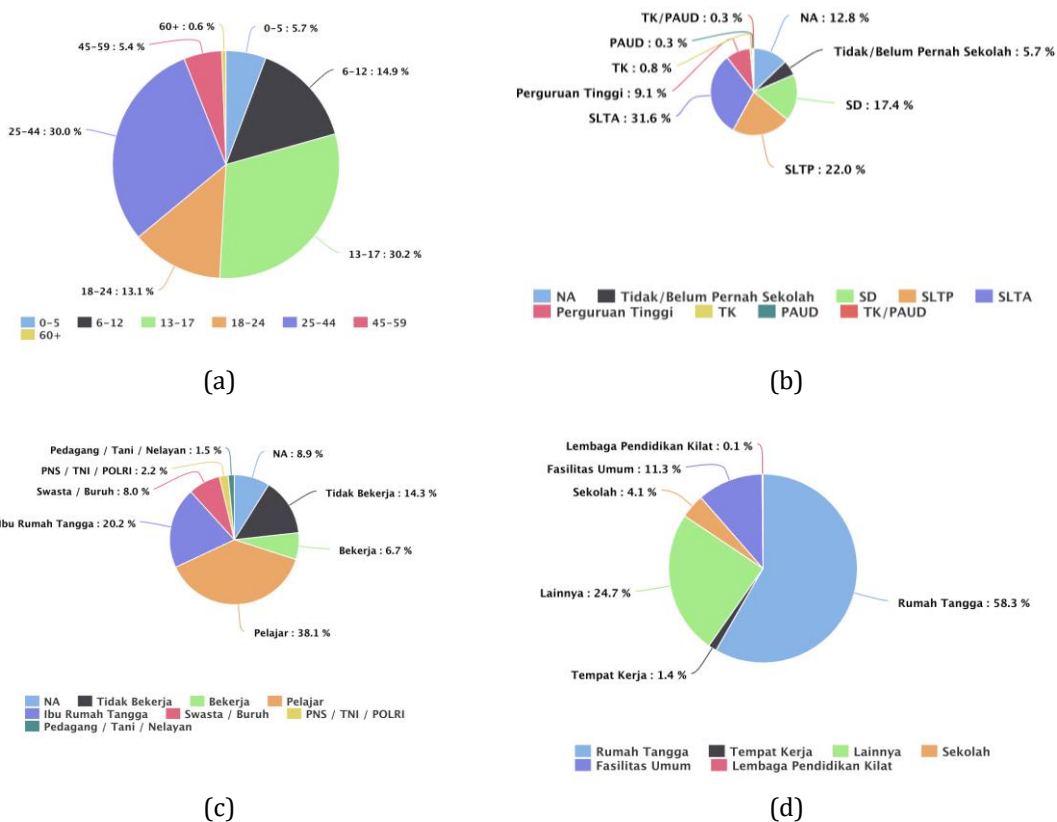


Fig 2. (a) Percentage of female victims in Indonesia by age group in 2022; (b) Percentage of female victims in Indonesia by education in 2022; (c) Percentage of female victims in Indonesia by occupation in 2022; (d) Percentage of female victims in Indonesia by place of occurrence in 2022 (PPA Symphony, 2018-2022)

When viewed based on education, most cases of violence against women occurred among women with a high school education level, namely 31.6 percent, while the smallest occurred in kindergarten/early childhood education at 0.3 percent. Viewed by occupation, the largest percentage of victims of violence in 2022 came from students at 38.1 percent and the smallest came from traders/farmers/fishermen at 1.5 percent. The highest data on the occupation of victims is students, which means that many adult female victims of violence are still students. Viewed from the PPA Symphony data, sexual violence is the most common case reported to the office, especially in provincial and district/city offices that handle women's empowerment and child protection affairs. The data shows that sexual violence against girls and psychological violence against adult women are in the first place.

In the context of sexual assault litigation, if a child is the victim of a sexual crime, the defendant's right to be tried under the law known as the Child Protection Act can be asserted. In the case of adult women, evidence is limited to tools such as psychological assessments, autopsies, and evaluations by psychiatrists and specialists. As a result, it is very rare for violence against adult women to be brought to justice as it often involves consensual acts. A lack of understanding of other forms of sexual coercion, such as sexual assault and rape, leads to many sexual offenses not being legally addressed. The lack of a legal framework makes it difficult for victims to access justice (Haslita et al., 2021).

One of the causes of violence against women in the family makes it difficult to protect victims and enforce the law on events, namely in cases of domestic violence, the family takes place in the context of close personal relationships, especially between husband and wife about the relationship in the marriage system, which is also regulated in the Civil Code or Marriage Law No. 1 of 1974. The position of the perpetrator and victim makes violence against women in the family considered private law, so the resolution of these cases is often carried out amicably or within the family environment. Settlements of cases of violence against women are often resolved in the private sector or even end peacefully often at the expense of the victim. This issue cannot provide a deterrent effect for perpetrators of violence (Sukadi & Ningsih, 2021). The development of data on the number of women victims of violence by age group of victims of violence and other forms of violence between January and June 2021 from Komnas Perempuan Sintaspuan can be seen in the following Figure 3.

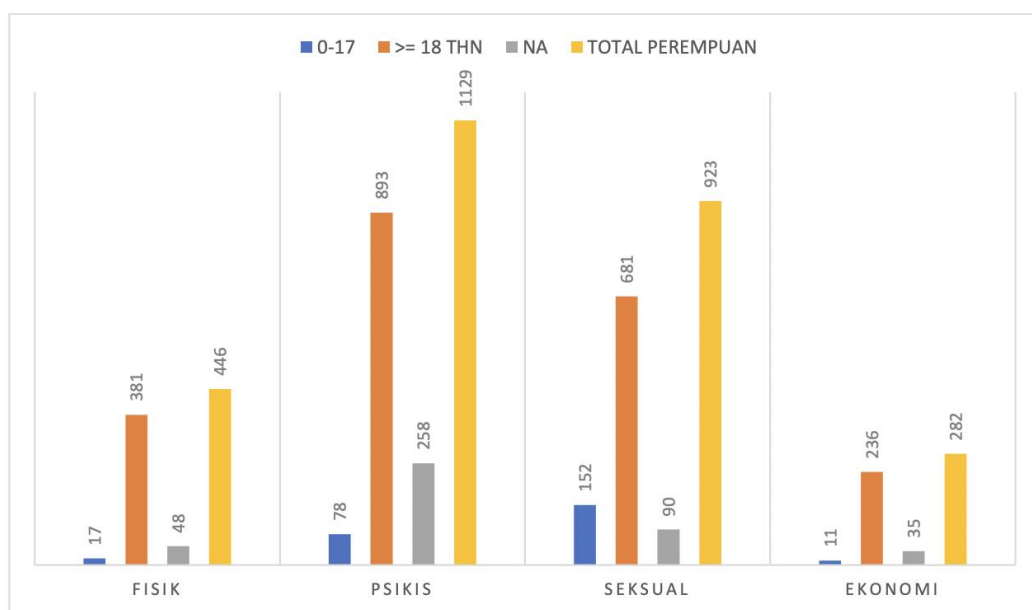


Fig 3. Number of women victims of violence by age group of victims of violence and forms of violence January to June 2021 (Sintaspuan KP in Gerak Bersama in data report synergy database on violence against women)

The factors that cause violence against women according to Sulaeman et al. (2022) are as follows.

### 1. Legal awareness factor

Legal awareness is an authentic state originating from recognizing and implementing the principles embedded within it, stemming from an individual or societal conscience to comprehend the legal messages it contains. The term "legal perception" is linguistically defined with its foundation in "perception," denoting the grasp and comprehension of law in general. As elucidated by Ewick and Silbey, "legal perception" denotes individuals' comprehension of the law and legal institutions, particularly the understanding that imbues significance in individuals' experiences and behaviors. According to them, "legal consciousness" evolves through action, making it a pragmatic subject for empirical investigation. To clarify, legal perception pertains to "law in action" rather than "law as regulations, standards, or doctrines" (Marsinah, 2014).

According to Soekanto (in Sulaeman et al., 2022), there are four elements of legal perception, namely legal knowledge, knowledge of legal content, legal attitudes, and patterns of legal behavior. The nature of legal compliance three factors can affect people's compliance with the law, namely (1) compliance with the law due to sanctions; (2) Determining legal compliance by maintaining relationships and (3) Internalizing legal compliance because the community knows the purpose and function of the law (Febriyanti NH & Aulawi Anton, 2021 in Sulaeman et al., 2022).

### 2. Patriarchal culture

Patriarchal culture is a social construct that examines the dynamics between genders within society. In certain scenarios, there is a perceived necessity to safeguard women, particularly within socio-cultural realms, as women's subordination to men stems from entrenched social structures and cultural norms that sometimes propagate unfavorable values and behavioral paradigms hindering societal progress.

The resultant marginalization of women relegates them to a secondary status, often termed "second-class citizens," disregarding their significance. Broaching the topic of women as a collective poses several challenges. The notion of defining a fixed "place for women" in society implies uniformity across all societies. However, the reality is far from such simplicity. According to Gheaus, both men and women are entitled to equal treatment, hence any disparity due to gender differences constitutes a form of gender injustice. Gender disparity arises when individuals unfairly discriminate against women out of animosity or prejudicial beliefs, perpetuating a cycle of inequality. The imbalanced and disproportionate dominance of patriarchal systems, if left unchecked, deviates from the primary function of societal hierarchical structures, often perpetuating injustices (Gheaus, 2012). Gender-based violence epitomizes hegemonic masculinity and is predominantly prevalent in traditional cultures resistant to change, where male actions are often driven by emotions like rage and unfounded jealousy (Chowdhury, 2015).

Patriarchy originates from the term patriarchy, denoting a framework where men hold pivotal roles and act as the ultimate authority. This pervasive patriarchal framework within societal culture fosters gender disparities that permeate various facets of human existence. Men wield significant dominance in society, relegating women to minimal or negligible influence across economic, social, political, and psychological spheres, including within the confines of marriage. Such imbalances in gender roles serve as fundamental barriers hindering individuals' access to equitable rights (Rokhmansyah, 2016).

Social historians and other scholars often differ on the meaning and usage of the word "patriarchy". Some use it loosely, to refer to a social system in which men have more power and access to resources than women. By this definition, any culture that leaves a

written mark is patriarchal. Others use it in a narrower sense, to refer to a social system in which older men, especially fathers and heads of households, have power over women, children, and men. He is in a subordinate position, such as servants, slaves, and serfs. By this definition, most Western cultures were patriarchal until the 18th or 19th century and still retain vestiges of patriarchy today, such as fathers' continued power over their children. (This narrower definition of patriarchy is sometimes called "patriarchy" or "patriarchalism".) Others avoid using the term altogether, arguing that it is too politicized and associated with feminism; they prefer terms they consider more neutral, such as "male dominance", "paternal power", or "gender inequality" (Encyclopedia.com., 2018) Today, the term is often used to refer to "male power", specifically the power relationship between men and women, in which male dominance over women takes place and is exercised, appearing in a variety of ways (Bhasin, 2000).

The state of acceptance in the culture of society places women lower than men or husbands, resulting in high cases of violence committed by men against women and often these conditions are considered legal measures to keep women subordinate as well as a form of settlement when problems occur between husband and wife.

### 3. Economic factors and poverty

Poverty is often understood as the inability to meet basic needs such as food, clothing, housing, education, and health care. The main poverty indicators are: Inadequate or insufficient food, clothing, and shelter, limited ownership of land and means of production, poor social protection and many people are illiterate, and limited sanitation and health services (Rosana, 2019 in Sulaeman et al., 2022). Economic status is related to violence, this is because most respondents are economically dependent on their husbands, while the economic status of the husband who is unemployed and works odd jobs makes the husband himself have to work hard to provide for the family. This causes emotional instability between husband and wife which leads to violent behavior.

### 4. Factors alleging infidelity

Pittman (1989) defines infidelity as a breach of trust, a betrayal of the relationship, or a violation of an agreement, while Leeker and Carlozzi define infidelity as a violation based on subjective feelings that a partner has violated a set of rules or standards of a relationship. This offense creates feelings of jealousy and sexual competition. The contributing factors to infidelity are marital problems, emotional and sexual dissatisfaction, length of marriage, presence of children, relationship goals, psychology, personality, sexual attitudes, and ideals of other partners (Syamsuri & Yitnamurti, 2017). Sexual or emotional acts in the form of adultery are caused by husbands or wives who have intimate relationships with other people and violate the commitment or trust between the two parties. Adultery is often one of the causes of violence against women.

### 5. Early marriage factors

Pittman (1989) defines infidelity as a breach of trust, a betrayal of the relationship, or a violation of an agreement, while Leeker and Carlozzi define infidelity as a violation based on subjective feelings that a partner has violated a set of rules or standards of a relationship. This offense creates feelings of jealousy and sexual competition. The contributing factors to infidelity are marital problems, emotional and sexual dissatisfaction, length of marriage, presence of children, relationship goals, psychology, personality, sexual attitudes, and ideals of other partners (Syamsuri & Yitnamurti, 2017). Sexual or emotional acts in the form of adultery are caused by husbands or wives who have intimate relationships with other people and violate the commitment or trust between the two parties. Adultery is often one of the causes of violence against women.

Marriages that occur at a young age or child marriage are marriages involving adolescents who have not reached the age of 20 and are believed not to be ready for marriage. Adolescence is also a period of vulnerability to possible pregnancies resulting from early (young) marriage. Some of the possible risks include miscarriage, untimely birth, low-weight babies, congenital abnormalities, susceptibility to infections, anemia during pregnancy, pregnancy poisoning, and death. The impact of early marriage on adolescents is that they will experience psychological distress that will affect their marriage and their children if they have children in the future. In addition, early marriage will also affect family quality and have a direct impact on low family welfare. Among adolescents, child marriage is considered a solution to avoid sin, namely sexual relations outside of marriage. (Kusmiran, 2011 in Syalis et al., 2002). Early marriage is very vulnerable to violence committed by the husband or wife. This condition occurs because of emotional immaturity so violence often occurs.

#### **4. Conclusions**

Violence against women in Indonesia persists as a pressing issue, with a significant increase in reported cases, particularly sexual and psychological violence. These forms of violence are deeply rooted in patriarchal norms and cultural attitudes, exacerbated by factors such as economic instability, allegations of infidelity, and early marriage. Addressing this issue requires comprehensive efforts to challenge societal norms, enhance legal frameworks, and empower women. It is imperative to prioritize the protection and empowerment of women and children to mitigate the pervasive impact of gender-based violence.

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Not applicable.

#### **Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.



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