

Power Relations of Sexual Violence in Higher Education in Digital Space: A Critical Sociological Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Digital sexual violence in college is a sociological issue related to academic hierarchies, patriarchal culture, institutional reputations, and digital mechanisms that shape the victim's vulnerability. Platform X becomes an ambivalent space that allows victims to build solidarity and public pressure, but also presents victim blaming, moral surveillance, and delegitimization. This study aims to analyze power relations in the practice of digital sexual violence, the dynamics of victim resistance through platform X, and the production of knowledge about victims, perpetrators, and women's safety. The research uses a qualitative approach with an interpretive-critical paradigm and netnography method. Data were obtained through non-participatory digital observation of 264 selected comments from 1,000 comments on 12 public accounts of platform X, then analyzed using thematic, narrative, and critical discourse analysis based on Michel Foucault's perspective. The results of the study showed that academic power relations weakened the position of the victim, while platform X functioned as a space of resistance as well as disciplinary reproduction. Netizens' comments form a digital truth regime that determines the legitimacy of victims, perpetrators, and women's safety. These findings confirm the importance of campus policies that protect victims, including from victimization, in the digital space.

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Introduction

Sexual violence in the university environment is a social problem that cannot be understood solely as an individual act, but is related to power structures, academic culture, gender relations, and institutional mechanisms that produce victim vulnerability (Kaufmann et al., 2026). Even though universities are positioned as a rational and

meritocratic space, lecturer-student relations, supervisors-guidance, seniors-juniors, and campus-student officials still create inequality in social positions that can place victims in subordinate situation (Sumintak & Idi, 2022).

Attention to this issue has been increasing since the issuance of Permendikbudristek Number 30 of 2021. However, various studies show that victim protection still faces obstacles in the form of social stigma, victim blaming, fear of reporting, and the tendency of institutions to maintain campus reputation (Rohima et al., 2023). This condition shows that sexual violence is not only related to legal aspects, but also to power relations that determine who is trusted, protected, or silenced (Puspytasari, 2022).

The development of digital technology then expanded the arena of sexual violence from the physical space to the digital space. Violence can arise through private messages, gender-based verbal harassment, threats of the dissemination of intimate content, doxing, or other forms mediated by digital technology (Robinson & Mikkelsen, 2023). In the context of higher education, the digital space is an extension of academic power relations because interactions between students, lecturers, campus organizations, and the public are increasingly taking place through social media (Nurhaeni et al., 2022).

Among the various platforms, X is an important space to understand these dynamics. Its open and participatory communication character allows victims and victim advocates to disseminate information, build solidarity, and exert public pressure on institutions (Faturani, 2022). However, the same platforms can also reproduce violence through comments that demean the victim, defense of the perpetrator, the dissemination of identity, and the normalization of sexism (Gorissen et al., 2023). Therefore, X can be understood as a social arena where knowledge, morality, and legitimacy regarding victims and perpetrators are produced and openly opposed (Sumintak & Idi, 2022).

This phenomenon is relevant to be read through the perspective of Michel Foucault who views power as a relationship that is spread in discourse, institutions, and everyday social practices. In the context of digital sexual violence, power works through the production of knowledge, the classification of victims, the formation of public opinion, and the construction of the truth about a case. Therefore, digital sexual violence is not only about acts of violence, but also about the battle of meaning about who to trust, who is to blame, and how the truth is formed (Sumintak & Idi, 2022).

The digital space is also ambivalent. On the one hand, social media is a means for victims to articulate experiences, build solidarity, and challenge institutional dominance. On the other hand, the same space can be an arena for victimization through moral judgment, doubt of the victim, and the reproduction of stigma against women (Bhuptani et al., 2024). In these conditions, netizens' comments are important because they not only reflect public opinion, but also function as a space for the production of knowledge about victims, perpetrators, evidence, morality, and women's safety (Siagian et al., 2024).

Various previous studies have discussed sexual violence in college from the perspective of legal, victim protection, and academic power relations (Kusuma, 2023). Sociological studies also show that patriarchal culture, victim blaming, and power relations inequality reinforce victim vulnerability (Saputra et al., 2024). However, there are still limitations to research that examines how power relations work in the digital space, especially through netizens' comments on platform X. In addition, the use of Foucault's perspective and netnography approach in the study of digital sexual violence in universities is still relatively limited (Sheikh & Rogers, 2024).

Based on this gap, this study aims to analyze how power relations shape the practice of digital sexual violence in universities, how victims build resistance through platform X, and how knowledge about victims, perpetrators, and women's safety is produced through netizens' comments. This research is expected to expand the use of Foucault's power

relations theory in the study of digital sexual violence, enrich the application of netnography in digital sociology, and provide an empirical basis for strengthening digital gender literacy, victim protection, and campus policies that are more responsive to the dynamics of sexual violence in the digital era.

Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with the netnography method in an interpretive-critical paradigm. This paradigm was chosen to understand the meanings produced by digital actors while analyzing how the relationship of power, dominance, resistance, and knowledge production works in online conversations about digital sexual violence in universities. Netnography is used because the object of research is in the form of communication practices and discursive dynamics that occur naturally in the digital space, not through interactions constructed by researchers.

The research is located on platform X chosen because of its open, fast, participatory communication character, and allows the issue of sexual violence to develop from personal experience to public conversation through tweets, threads, reposts, mentions, and hashtags. The object of the research material is public uploads and comments that discuss sexual violence in the university environment, while the formal object is the power relationship and knowledge production about victims, perpetrators, evidence, institutional reputation, morality, and women's safety (Sheikh & Rogers, 2024).

The data source comes from 12 public accounts on platform X that are anonymized as A1-A12 to protect user identities. These accounts include victim accounts, victim supporters, media or campus communities, advocacy accounts, as well as public accounts that spark intensive discussions. The election was conducted purposively with criteria: public, containing the issue of sexual violence in universities, having adequate commentary interaction, and representing a diversity of discourse positions, such as support for victims, institutional criticism, victim blaming, and digital resistance (Saputra et al., 2024).

Data were collected through non-participatory digital observation during April-May 2026. The researcher did not conduct interviews or direct interaction with users. The data collected included tweets, threads, reposts, and public comments obtained through keywords related to campus sexual violence and hashtags that appeared organically. During the collection process, the researcher also compiled analytical memos and reflective notes to record the context of the conversation as well as the development of the narrative.

The initial corpus consisted of about 1,000 comments. After the screening process, 264 comments were selected as core data based on relevance and density of meaning. The selection was carried out by removing off-topic comments, spam, duplication, or comments without context, then grouping the data into three analytical focuses: academic-institutional power relations, resistance and circulation of digital information, and knowledge production about victims, perpetrators, and women's safety. The final result consisted of 70 comments for the first focus, 147 comments for the second focus, and 47 comments for the third focus.

Data analysis was carried out through the integration of *thematic analysis*, *narrative analysis*, and *critical discourse analysis* (CDA). *Thematic analysis* is used to identify patterns of meaning, build code, and formulate key themes. *Narrative analysis* is used to understand how victim experiences, reporting barriers, and resistance strategies are structured as public narratives. Meanwhile, *critical discourse analysis* (CDA) is used to examine how commentary language reproduces or challenges power relations, especially related to victims, perpetrators, campus reputation, victim blaming, and the legitimacy of the victim's experience (Kozinets & Gretzel, 2024).

The three approaches are integrated through an interpretive matrix that connects

themes, narrative structures, discourse positions, and power effects in digital conversations. The validity of the research was maintained through triangulation of sources and theories, peer reading, prolonged engagement for two months, and trail audits. Ethically, research only uses public data. The entire identities of users, institutions, and information that could potentially reveal the subject of the study are disguised, while quotes at risk of being tracked are paraphrased without changing their sociological meaning.

Results and Discussion

1. The Discourse Landscape of Sexual Violence in the Digital Space

Results Conversations about sexual violence in college on platform X show that the digital space works as an arena for the production, fighting, and circulation of meanings about victims, perpetrators, institutions, laws, evidence, and women's safety. *The corpus* analyzed consisted of 264 comments selected from around 1000 comments on 12 public accounts. The data is divided into three analytical focuses, namely academic-institutional power relations, resistance and circulation of digital information, and knowledge production about victims, perpetrators, and women's safety.

The data is not treated as an inferential statistic. Frequency numbers are used to show discursive tendencies, while their sociological meaning is read through commentary citations, coding processes, and Foucauldian analytical memos. In this way, the results section not only contains the author's interpretation, but also shows the empirical traces of the digital comments analyzed.

Table 1. Data distribution and analysis focus

Problem formulation	Focus of analysis	Number of comments	Dominant subtheme
RM1	Power relations shape the practice of digital sexual violence on campus	70	The authority of lecturers/professors as the capital of power (22); the victim's position is weakened (12); Legal Apparatus and Inequality of Justice (10)
RM2	Dynamics of victim resistance and information circulation through platform X	147	Emotional support and social validation (41); public moral condemnation (23); Threads as parrhesia/digital testimonials (19)
RM3	Knowledge production about women's victims, perpetrators, and safety	47	Victim validation and recovery (20); collective support (9); Women's Body Governmentality and Mobility (5)

In table 1 data, it shows that netizens' comments do not stand as random responses. The conversation is grouped into three discursive fields. First, comments on academic

authority, institutional reputation, law, and the victim's position. Second, comments on digital resistance through threads, hashtags, reposts, support, and advocacy. Third, comments that produce knowledge about who the victim is, how the perpetrator should be treated, and how women should manage their own safety.

The coding process is carried out through four layers. *Open coding* is used to capture the meaning directly from a comment. *Axial coding* connects the initial code with the subtheme. *Selective coding* formulates the main theme that answers the formulation of the problem. The Foucauldian memo is then used to read how power, knowledge, normalization, surveillance, and resistance work in commentary. The following table shows an example of the coding process from empirical data to analytical categories.

Table 2. Digital Comment Coding Process

Data ID	Anonymous comment excerpts	Open coding	Axial coding/subtheme	Selective coding/theme
RM1-1	A high degree is meaningless if the morals are low	The symbolic power of the academic department	The authority of lecturers/professors as the capital of power	Academic-institutional power relations
RM1-18	Senior asked the victims to take down posts for the good name of the study program, they didn't want to, the victim refused to be silent	Silencing victims for the sake of institutional reputation	Reputation management and campus silent culture	Academic-institutional power relations
RM1-57	Evidence of hasty chat was deleted; there is no CCTV footage; Weak Victim Position	Victim vulnerability and burden of proof	The position of the weakened victim	Academic-institutional power relations
RM2-7	Try to make a thread	Case amplification through platform features	Virality, tags, retweets, and threads	Resistance and circulation of digital information

RM2-10	Photos from digital storage and social media screenshots are edited into graphic content; This is sexual violence	Definition of technology-based digital KS	Public education about digital KS/deepfake	Resistance and circulation of digital information
RM2-40	I thought I survived. But he forced a hug, pulled my hips, then...	Victim's testimony through threads and evidence search	Thread as parrhesia/ digital testimony	Resistance and circulation of digital information
RM2-65	If you freeze and can't fight back, it's the body's natural response. You're not stupid. The wrong perpetrator	Validation of trauma response and counter-victim blaming	Trauma education for victims	Resistance and circulation of digital information
RM2-98	There is some info on experiencing similar events. Consolidate to strengthen evidence and witnesses, then report to campus authorities	Referrals for help and formal advocacy pathways	A bridge between social media and handling institutions	Resistance and circulation of digital information
RM2-101	From the comments, it can be seen that many similar incidents occurred. It seems that the perpetrator is looking for a prey	Collective investigation and witness collection	Crowdsourcing evidence and identity	Resistance and circulation of digital information

RM3-2	The victim did not want to be told to take down the evidence. The victim's good name was damaged by the perpetrator	Women's Empowerment of Personal Safety	Women's body governmentality and mobility	Victim-perpetrator-women's safety knowledge production
RM3-5	There is no compromise on the grounds of personal consumption. Digital data can be timeless	Digital evidence as a regime of truth	Knowledge of digital evidence and visibility	Victim-perpetrator-women's safety knowledge production
RM3-46	You're not wrong. Clothing, behavior, or a weak condition does not make the victim guilty. The wrong perpetrator	Victim blaming denial	Victim as an innocent subject	Victim-perpetrator-women's safety knowledge production

Table 2 shows that interpretation is not built directly from the general impression of the researcher, but rather from the movement of data towards code, subthemes, and themes. For example, comments about academic degrees are coded as a symbolic power of academic position. Comments about *take down requests* are coded as victim silencing for the sake of the institution's reputation. Comments on threads and reposts are encoded as case amplification through the platform's features. Thus, the results of the analysis have a trail audit that can be re-examined.

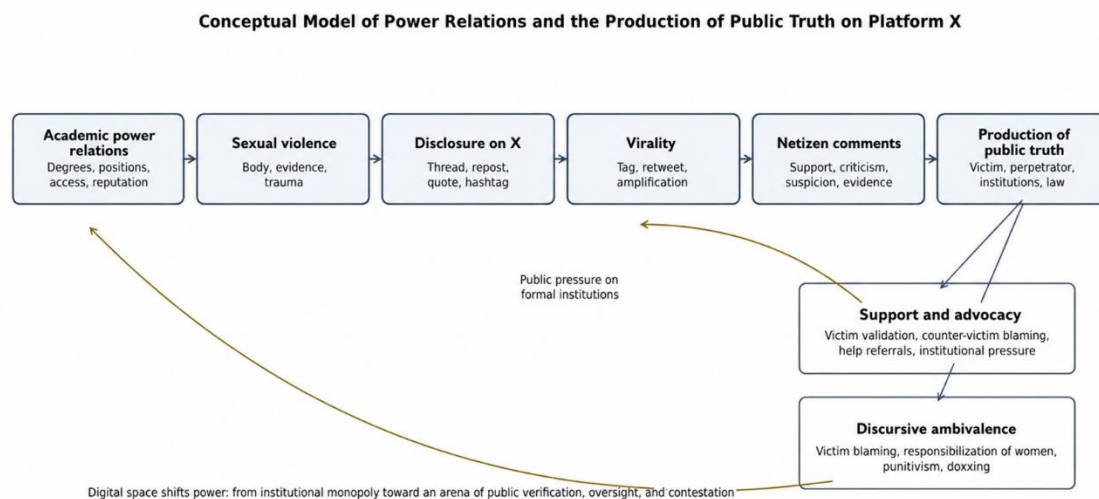


Figure 1. Conceptual model of power relations, virality, netizens' comments, and public truth production Source: Research Data Processed by author et al., (2026).

Based on the data pattern, the power relationship in the case of digital sexual violence in higher education can be modeled as follows: the power relationship of academic power positions the victim in inequality, the violence is then revealed through threads or uploads on X, the uploads gain virality through tags, reposts, quotes, and hashtags, and then netizens' comments produce the public truth about the victim, perpetrators, institutions, law, and women's safety. However, the production of public truth is not always singular. This can result in support, advocacy, and *counter-victim blaming*, but it can also give birth to *victim blaming*, women's empowerment, punitivism, and *doxxing*.

The model in Figure 1 needs to be read as a circular process, not a simple linear. The relationship of academic power is at an early point because the status of lecturers, professors, campus officials, seniors, or academic figures gives actors symbolic capital and social access. When the victim reveals his experience through X, the digital space turns a case that was originally in a private or institutional relationship into a public issue. Virality expands the reach of cases, while netizens' comments become an arena where the truth is negotiated. At this point, the digital public not only watches, but also assesses evidence, validates victims, pressures institutions, identifies perpetrators, and at the same time sometimes disciplines victims through comments that blame the victim.

2. How Power Relations Work in Shaping Digital Sexual Violence Practices

The first findings show that digital sexual violence in higher education is read by the digital public as a matter of power relations, not just an individual moral deviation. Comments such as high degree mean nothing if the morals are low (RM1-1), professors, positions/status can be silenced (RM1-27), and thus enjoy power relations as influential lecturers and helpless students (RM1-40), showing that netizens associate violence with academic structures. Title, position, and reputation are not seen as neutral, but as symbolic capital that can increase the credibility of the perpetrator and diminish the victim's courage to speak up.

In Foucault's framework, power does not only work through direct prohibition or physical coercion. Power also works through positions, norms, reputations, and knowledge

that are considered legitimate. Perpetrators who have a degree or position can obtain the effect of truth because of their academic status. Instead, the victim is often positioned as the party who must prove experience, maintain evidence, explain the chronology, and face the risk of being blamed. This is where *power-knowledge* seems to work: who is considered knowledgeable, rational, and trustworthy will have an easier time controlling the definitions of right and wrong (Fatoni & Trisno Aji, 2024).

The relationship of institutional power can be seen in the comments on the request for *take down for the sake of the* good name of the study program (RM1-18), the comment on the case that has just been processed after going viral (RM1-56), and the criticism of the settlement of cases as an internal problem of the campus (RM1-65). This data shows that institutions do not always appear to be protectors of victims. Institutions can also work as a disciplinary regime that governs the visibility of cases. Language such as campus goodwill, don't magnify problems, or solve problems internally seems administrative, but the effect is political: attention shifts from victim recovery to institutional reputational protection.

The relationship of lawyers arises when comments highlight the burden of proof, the possibility of criminalization of victims, and inequality of access to justice. Comments about deleted chat evidence, absence of CCTV, and weak victim position (RM1-57) indicate that the victim is under a heavy evidentiary regime. The law can be a means of protection, but it can also be a field of power that disciplines victims. In other words, legality is not automatically synonymous with substantive justice.

The second finding shows that the digital space is an arena of resistance to silencing. The comments tried to make a thread (RM2-7) show that the digital public encourages victims to turn personal experiences into public testimonies. In Foucault's perspective, this action is close to parrhesia, that is, the courage to speak the truth in the face of risk. Victims not only tell their stories, but risk reputation, safety, and possible backlash when bringing experiences of violence into public spaces.

Threads, reposts, and hashtags work as visibility technologies. Through the platform's features, cases that could initially be held within the internal space of the campus became difficult for the institution to fully control. Comments that ask victims to create threads, help share, tag certain accounts, or direct victims to companion institutions show that netizens act as a network for information distribution and support. Here, power of attorney is negotiated because the institution is no longer the only party to determine whether a case is worthy of public knowledge.

However, the digital space is not automatically emancipatory. The data also show the existence of punitivism and the risk of social punishment that goes beyond formal procedures. The comment on social sanctions against the perpetrator and his family (RM2-126) suggests that resistance can turn into a new technology of social control. In this way, platform X functions ambivalently: it opens up space for victims and solidarity, but it can also produce *doxxing*, punitive anger, and mob pressure that ethically needs to be criticized.

Table 3. Mapping of Foucault's concepts with empirical evidence

Foucault's Concept	Data ID	Empirical evidence	Meaning of analytics
Power	RM1-1; RM1-27; RM1-40	Degrees, positions, and academic status are read as symbolic capital that makes the perpetrator more credible and the victim more difficult to believe.	Power is produced through academic position, institutional access, and social reputation, not just direct threats.
Speech	RM2-10; RM3-46	The commentary defines digital photo manipulation as sexual violence and rejects the victim's fault.	The language of netizens forms a category of true and false: the victim as a legitimate subject, the perpetrator as a deviant subject.
Monitoring	RM1-55; RM1-70; RM2-101	There were demands for CCTV, campus security, tracking of perpetrators, and collecting witnesses through comments.	Supervision no longer belongs only to institutions. Netizens participated in monitoring the perpetrators, the campus, and the legal response.
Power-knowledge	RM1-57; RM3-5	Chat evidence, CCTV, screenshots, and digital footprints are used as the basis for determining the truth.	Knowledge of the case is produced through digital evidence, but the burden of proof often remains on the victim.
Governmentality	RM3-2; RM3-8; RM3-27	The victim and the woman were instructed to guard the evidence, be careful, arrange meetings, and reject suspicious situations.	Security is produced as a technique for women's self-regulation, so that the responsibilities of institutions and actors can shift.
Resistance/parrhesia	RM2-7; RM2-40; RM2-65; RM2-98	Threads, support, referrals for help, and counter-victim blaming are ways for victims and	Resistance occurs through the courage to speak up, collective validation, and the shift of cases from

		netizens to fight silence.	the private space to the public space.
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Table 3 shows that power appears in academic positions that provide actors with symbolic capital. Discourse appears in the way commentators define digital manipulation as sexual violence and reject *victim blaming*. *Surveillance* was seen when netizens asked for CCTV, collected witnesses, checked the pattern of the perpetrators, and supervised the campus response. *Power-knowledge* appears when digital evidence, screenshots, and recordings become the basis for producing public truth. *Governmentality* appears when women are directed to regulate their bodies, mobility, meetings, and evidence as a self-security strategy.

Governmentality in data is ambivalent. On the one hand, the advice to keep the evidence or be careful can be read as practical solidarity. On the other hand, the advice can shift the burden of security to women. Comments such as don't want to be *told to take down* evidence (RM3-2), don't trust new people from social media (RM3-8), and learn to say no if the place or time is suspicious (RM3-27) show how security is produced as a work of self-regulation. In this logic, women are encouraged to continue to be vigilant, as if campus and digital spaces are never completely safe.

Table 4. Analytical answers to power dynamics and resistance

Discussion questions	Analytical answers	Sample data
How is power produced?	Power of attorney is produced through academic positions, campus reputation, legal authority, a culture of silence, and the burden of proof placed on the victim.	RM1-1, RM1-18, RM1-57
How is power negotiated?	Power of attorney is negotiated when the official narrative of the campus, demands of evidence, netizens' comments, and victims' testimonies fight for legitimacy. Victims are not immediately trusted, but digital support can strengthen their position.	RM2-40, RM2-65, RM3-46
How does resistance occur?	Resistance occurs through threads, hashtags, reposts, victim validation, trauma education, advocacy referrals, and crowdsourcing evidence. The digital space has become a counter-public that oppresses institutions.	RM2-7, RM2-57, RM2-98, RM2-101
How are digital spaces changing academic power relations?	The digital space shifts power relations from institutions that control the	RM1-70, RM2-126, RM3-2

	visibility of cases to a digital public that can produce pressure, witnesses, evidence, and counter truth. However, this space remains ambivalent because it also gives rise to victim blaming, punitivism, and doxxing.	
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Power is produced through three layers. The first layer is academic power, namely the position of lecturers, professors, campus officials, seniors, or educated figures who are considered more credible. The second layer is institutional power, which is the ability of the campus to regulate whether a case will be processed, hidden, clarified, or framed as a matter of reputation. The third layer is legal power, which is the regime of proof and possible criminalization that makes the victim have to be careful when speaking. These three layers reinforce each other and make the victim not only face the perpetrator, but also the structure that determines who can be trusted.

Power of attorney is negotiated when victims and netizens enter the discursive space that was previously controlled by the institution. Through threads, comments, reposts, and hashtags, victims gain symbolic allies. Netizens validated trauma, corrected victim-blaming comments, referred help, and gathered additional evidence. These negotiations did not remove the power of the institution, but interfered with its monopoly. Campuses, laws, and perpetrators can no longer fully determine the narrative because the digital public participates in producing the version of the truth that is circulating.

Resistance occurs through the courage of victims to share their experiences, the solidarity of netizens, education about digital sexual violence, and collective action to pressure institutions. The most obvious forms of resistance appear in threads as digital testimonials, supportive comments rejecting victim blaming, and attempts to connect victims with formal advocacy channels. However, resistance also has a dark side when it turns into *doxxing*, extreme social condemnation, or punitive anger. Therefore, digital resistance needs to be read as a productive and risky practice.

The digital space changes the relationship of academic power by moving part of the battlefield from the closed space of the campus to the public space of the platform. If in the campus space the victim can be pressured to be silent, in the digital space the victim can build visibility. If institutions can control formal narratives, netizens' comments can produce counter-narratives. If the evidence was previously in a closed channel, screenshots, threads, and digital archives can be subject to public verification. However, this change does not mean that the victim is automatically safe. The digital space still holds the risk of backlash, identity tracing, and reversal of blame to the victim.

Digital sexual violence in college cannot be understood as a stand-alone individual act. But it is formed in a network of academic, institutional, legal, and digital power relations. Academic status produces the credibility of the perpetrator. Institutions can set case visibility through reputation language. The law can protect, but it can also be a tool for disciplining victims. On the other hand, platform X opens up space for victims and netizens to produce counter-truths through threads, hashtags, reposts, supportive comments, and evidence collection.

The main contribution of these findings is to show that the digital space transforms academic power relations from relationships that tend to be vertical to more distributed and debated ones. The digital public is not only a spectator, but also a participant in producing discourses about who the victim is, who the perpetrator is, what evidence is legitimate, which institutions should be held accountable, and what form of justice is considered appropriate. However, these changes are ambivalent. Digital spaces can support victims, but they can also strengthen moral oversight of victims. Because it can be *counter-public*, but it can also be an arena for punitivism and *doxxing*.

Thus, the Foucauldian reading helps to explain that power is not simply oppressive from above. Power of attorney also circulates through comments, evidence, reputation, legal language, solidarity, security advice, and virality mechanisms. Power is produced by institutions, negotiated by the digital public, resisted by victims and their supporters, and then reproduced in new forms. It is at this point that platform X becomes an important space to read the transformation of academic power relations in the case of digital sexual violence in universities.

3. The Dynamics of Resistance in Platform X Against Digital Sexual Violence

Further findings suggest that platform X serves as a digital resistance space. Data from the second study showed the dominance of emotional support and social validation, with 41 comments. In addition, there are threads such as digital testimonials, virality, tags, retweets, education about digital sexual violence, *crowdsourcing* evidence, and calls for punishment. Comments such as "try to make a thread", "go viral", "help share", "*Twitter please do your magic*", and "gas other campuses speak up" show that netizens understand X as a space to raise cases that are considered difficult to get an adequate response through formal channels.

Table 5. Distribution of the Dominant Subtheme of RM2

Subtheme	Number of Comments
Emotional support and social validation	41
Public moral condemnation	23
Thread as parrhesia/digital testimony	19
Public education about digital KS/deepfake	14
Punitive justice and deterrent effect	11
A bridge between social media and handling institutions	8
Moral oversight of the victim's actions	8
Identity/digital space-based vigilance advice	8
Virality, tags, retweets, and threads	6
Crowdsourcing evidence and identity	5
Trauma education for victims	4

Victim threads are an important form of digital resistance. In a thread, victims or survivors can compile a chronology, describe experiences, display evidence, tag specific accounts, and connect personal experiences to public attention. Threads are not just a medium for venting. In this context, thread becomes a discursive practice to produce

counter-truths. The victim did not wait for the institution to give the stage. The victim creates his own stage through digital narratives.

In Foucault's perspective, this practice can be read as parrhesia, that is, the courage to speak truth in risky situations. Victims who speak up do not only convey information. But it takes social, legal, and emotional risks. Because it is trustworthy, but it can also be attacked. Then it can be supported, as well as it can be blamed. Therefore, digital testimonials should not be understood as simple actions. This is a political act because it shifts the position of the victim from the object of violence to the subject of knowledge. (Siregar et al., n.d.)

Virality is an important mechanism in this fight. Tags, retweets, mentions, and hashtags allow cases to move out of the closed spaces of the campus. When the case goes viral, the institution loses some control over the narrative. The reputation of the campus is no longer managed only through official statements. That reputation is negotiated in public conversation. This is where the digital space works as a *counter-public sphere*. Because it provides an alternative arena for victims and victim advocates when formal channels are considered slow, biased, or closed.

However, these findings also show that X is not a purely emancipatory space. Along with solidarity, victim *blaming*, *doxxing*, stereotyping, and punitive anger emerged. Some comments questioned the victim's actions, such as why the victim wanted to be escorted home, why he used certain applications, or why he was not more careful. Comments like this suggest that the digital space can produce moral oversight of the victim. Support for the victim can be mixed with advice that transfers the responsibility for safety to the victim.

On the other hand, punitive anger also appears strongly. Demands such as "*blacklist*", "*social sanctions*", "*do not make room for the perpetrators*", or "*must be punished accordingly*" show that the digital public produces a disciplinary regime against the perpetrators. Sociologically, this represents an important change. If previously campus institutions had great authority to determine sanctions, the digital space now participates in forming public moral courts. Justice is not only imagined through formal procedures, but also through social exclusion, collective rejection, and the destruction of the legitimacy of the perpetrator.

Discussions with previous research suggest that these findings reinforce, stating that social media is becoming an arena for the production of new knowledge about sexual violence, solidarity, advocacy, and resistance to institutional domination (Sumintak & Idi, 2022). These findings are also in line with (Faturani, 2022), which suggests that the disclosure of sexual violence on platform X elicits a diverse range of social reactions, from victim support to re-victimization. However, this study expands on these findings by showing that the ambivalence of the digital space is not just a matter of positive and negative responses. Ambivalence is a form of power work. Digital spaces support victims, but also keep an eye on them. The digital space oppresses institutions, but it can also drive social judgments that go beyond procedures.

The contribution of this finding is the ambivalent concept of digital resistance. This concept explains that X becomes a space of resistance because it gives victims access to public visibility, solidarity, and pressure. However, X is also a disciplinary space because public comments can test, supervise, advise, and even blame the victim. Thus, the digital space is not just a communication tool. This is a new field of power that changes the relationship between victims, institutions, the law, and the public.

4. Production Knowledge on Women's Victims, Perpetrators, and Safety

The findings of the study show that netizens' comments act as a space for the production of knowledge about victims, perpetrators, and women's safety in cases of digital sexual violence in universities. Perpetrators are constructed as predators, abuse of power, and subjects who deserve legal and social sanctions. This construction can be seen in criminal prosecutions, *blacklists*, deterrent effects, and moral condemnation that place sexual violence not as a private problem or a misunderstanding of relationships, but as a public crime. Thus, netizens rejected efforts to reduce cases as internal campus affairs and instead pushed them to become an issue that must be socially accounted for.

Table 6. Distribution of RM 3 Dominant Subtheme

Subtheme	Number of Comments
Victim validation and recovery	20
Collective support for victims	9
Women's body governmentality and mobility	5
Mentoring and advocacy infrastructure	5
Campus/digital space as an unsafe space	3
Punitive knowledge of the perpetrator	2
Victim as an innocent subject	2
Knowledge of digital evidence and visibility	1

Instead, victims are often produced as subjects who are brave, traumatized, worthy of trust, and entitled to recovery. Support such as "we believe", "you are not wrong", or "good luck" have not only an emotional meaning, but also epistemic because it gives legitimacy to the victim's experience as legitimate knowledge. In Foucault's perspective, this process shows that knowledge is always born in the power relations that determine who can speak and who can be trusted.

Another important finding is the emergence of *counter-victim blaming* as a form of counter knowledge against patriarchal culture. Many commenters rejected the notion that clothing, relationships with the perpetrator, delays in reporting, or the victim's trauma response could be used as a basis for blaming the victim. This discourse challenges the standard of the "ideal victim" which requires the victim to report immediately, have perfect evidence, or show a specific response in order to be trusted. Through the digital space, the blame is returned to the perpetrator and not to the victim.

However, the production of knowledge about women's security shows an ambivalent character. On the one hand, netizens admit that campuses and digital spaces have not become safe spaces for women. Campuses that are normatively seen as rational and civilized spaces are actually read as spaces that can reproduce vulnerability. The digital space is understood not only as a means of expression, but also as a medium that allows harassment, manipulation of images, the dissemination of content, and public judgment.

On the other hand, the security discourse often shifts to women's responsibility. Various comments encourage women to be more careful, regulate mobility, limit certain interactions, or always keep evidence. Although it appears to be protective, the advice shows a form of *governmentality*, which is self-regulation that shifts some of the responsibility of security from actors and institutions to women. Thus, the support provided by the public can still contain disciplinary logic.

These findings reinforce previous research that showed that *victim blaming* and patriarchal culture are important factors in the reproduction of sexual violence on campus. However, this study expands the discussion by showing that the main problem lies not only in formal reporting or protection procedures, but also in the battle of public knowledge about victims, perpetrators, evidence, and the definition of sexual violence itself. Therefore, handling sexual violence is not enough through regulation, but also requires discursive transformation in the digital public space. Conceptually, this study offers a model of digital truth-power circulation in sexual violence in higher education. This model explains that digital sexual violence does not move linearly from perpetrator to victim, but through a

series of inter-forming relationships between academic power, institutional management, legal channels, digital testimony, virality, public comment, and knowledge production.

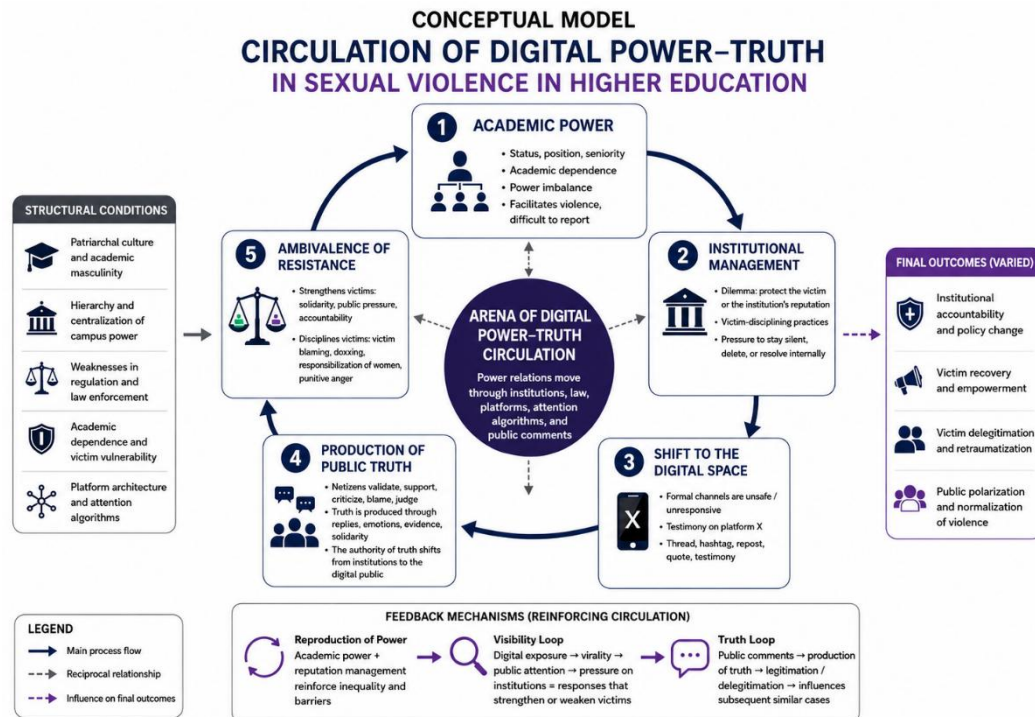


Figure 2. Conceptual Model of Digital Power-Truth Circulation in Sexual Violence Source: Research Data Processed by author et al., (2026).

Theoretically, this study expands the use of Michel Foucault's theory of power relations in the study of sexual violence in universities. The findings show that power works not only through academic and legal institutions, but also through comments, virality, hashtags, digital evidence, and moral categorizations produced by the digital public. Thus, power-knowledge is no longer monopolized by formal authorities, but is also produced in the social media space.

This research also expands the concept of disciplinary power. If in the disciplinary campus work through academic hierarchies, bureaucracy, and a culture of silence, then in the digital space discipline emerges through the demands of evidence, supervision of comments, moral judgment, and certain standards regarding victims who are considered worthy of trust. In addition, the concept of governmentality appears in various security advice that encourages women to supervise and regulate themselves. This condition shows that the discourse of protection can turn into a mechanism of control over women's bodies and mobility.

Other findings show the relevance of the concept of parrhesia in the study of digital sexual violence. Speaking up through threads is not just an act of communication, but a brave practice of conveying the truth in a situation full of social, legal, and symbolic risks. Victims not only recount experiences, but also produce knowledge that challenges the dominance of institutions and culture of silence.

Sociologically, this study shows that universities can no longer view sexual violence as an internal problem that can be resolved through administrative procedures. As cases enter the digital space, institutions are faced with a new form of public oversight born out of a distrust of formal protection. Therefore, campuses need to develop handling mechanisms that are not only legal-formal, but also sensitive to digital dynamics, including protection from victimization, doxxing, upload-based criminalization, and comment attacks.

Overall, this study confirms that digital sexual violence in higher education is a process of power-truth production that moves across spaces, from campuses to digital platforms, from institutions to the public, and from victim experiences to social discourse. The digital space opens up opportunities for resistance and solidarity, but it does not remove dominance. Instead, it creates a new arena in which power is constantly produced, negotiated, and contested.

Conclusion

This study concludes that digital sexual violence in higher education cannot be understood as an individual act, but rather as a social practice formed by academic, institutional, legal, and digital power relations. Power relations work through the authority of lecturers, campus officials, seniors, and other academic actors that put victims in vulnerable positions due to academic risk, social stigma, institutional pressure, evidentiary demands, and potential criminalization. In platform X, the power relationship does not disappear, but transforms through netizens' comments, virality, hashtags, threads, and public debates about the victim, perpetrator, and the truth of the case. The study's findings suggest a complex power-truth circulation: campuses produce vulnerability through academic hierarchy and institutional reputation protection, while platform X opens up space for resistance through digital testimony, solidarity, and public pressure. However, the digital space is also an arena for victim blaming, moral supervision, doxxing, and women's responsibility, so that resistance and reproduction of domination take place simultaneously.

Theoretically, this study expands the use of Michel Foucault's theory of power relations in the study of digital sexual violence. Power works not only through formal institutions, but also through digital discourses that shape public knowledge about victims, perpetrators, evidence, morality, and women's safety. Power-knowledge is present in comments, viral narratives, collective validation, and public judgments that determine the legitimacy of the victim's experience. Meanwhile, victim testimony through threads can be understood as the practice of *parrhesia*, which is the courage to convey the truth in the midst of social and symbolic risks.

Sociologically, this study emphasizes that the handling of sexual violence must go beyond the legal-formal approach. Campuses need to develop safeguards that include academic, legal, psychosocial, and digital security. In addition, it is necessary to strengthen digital gender literacy, safe reporting mechanisms, and public ethics that are in favor of victims. Thus, justice is not only determined by regulations, but also by the way institutions and digital societies produce the truth about sexual violence.

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