



DOI: <https://doi.org/10.38035/jgsp.v3i4>
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Evaluation of Legal Reform and Implementation of Protection for Victims of Sexual Violence in Indonesia Through Law Number 12 of 2022 concerning Criminal Acts of Sexual Violence

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Abstract: In order to guarantee justice and victim recovery, the criminal justice system must provide victims of sexual abuse with legal protection. The Criminal Code, the Domestic Violence Law, and the Child Protection Law were among the laws in effect prior to the passage of Law Number 12 of 2022 concerning Criminal Acts of Sexual Violence (the TPKS Law), did not provide comprehensive protection for adult victims or victims outside the domestic context, creating a legal vacuum. The TPKS Law presents a legal reform that broadens the definition of sexual violence, clearly establishes victims' rights, and provides a more victim-sensitive criminal justice system mechanism, including legal assistance, psychological services, and identity protection. However, its implementation faces challenges, such as subjective definitions, difficulties in establishing evidence, uneven victim protection, harmonization with other regulations, and the law enforcement officials' inadequate capabilities. This paper examines the legislative reforms made by the TPKS Law and their practical efficacy using a normative juridical method using a statutory and conceptual approach. The research findings are expected to provide recommendations for strengthening regulations and supporting policies to ensure optimal, fair, and victim-centered protection for victims of sexual violence.

Keyword: Sexual Violence, Legal Protection, TPKS Law, Legal Reform.

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, providing victims of sexual violence with legal protection has always been a top priority (Sistha et al., 2025). Laws like the Criminal Code (KUHP) and Law Number 23 of 2004 about the Elimination of Domestic Violence (PKDRT Law) were in effect prior to the passage of Law Number 12 of 2022 concerning Criminal Acts of Sexual Violence, and Law Number 35 of 2014 concerning Child Protection, did not provide comprehensive legal guarantees for victims of sexual violence, especially adult victims outside the household (Hairi & Latifah, 2023). This lack of regulation regarding non-physical forms of sexual violence or violence based on power relations resulted in many victims losing

access to justice (Watak, Elias, & Sumakul, 2023). This situation created a gap in protection and exposed the weaknesses of criminal law, which still focused on the perpetrator, rather than the suffering of the victim.

Previous regulations were only able to accommodate a small portion of the reality of sexual violence. The Criminal Code, for example, only recognizes the terms "rape" and "indecent acts," which are very narrow in scope and exclude other forms of sexual violence such as non-physical harassment, sexual exploitation, or forced contraception (Polii, 2022). Domestic Violence Law and Child Protection Law do provide protection, but they are limited to the domestic sphere or to certain age groups (Yunus, 2021). As a result, victims of sexual violence in the public sphere or adults often lack a strong legal basis to seek justice (Hermanata et al., 2025). This situation demonstrates legal discrimination and a weak state orientation toward victim recovery.

The phenomenon of sexual violence continues to increase year after year. There has been a notable rise in incidents, according to data from the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan), both in the private and public spheres (Adelia & Rahmijati, 2024). Many victims are reluctant to report victims due to fear of social stigma, distrust of law enforcement officials, and minimal protection of their identities during the legal process (Thalia et al., 2024). The legal system, which should be a refuge, often exacerbates victims' suffering through trauma-insensitive examination processes. This situation reflects the state's weak role in ensuring victims' safety.

Access to justice for victims of sexual violence faces numerous structural and cultural barriers. Structural barriers arise from a legal system that remains oriented toward physical evidence, thus neglecting the psychological and social aspects of sexual violence (Ismaidar et al., 2025). Cultural barriers stem from persistent patriarchal values, which often blame victims and normalize gender-based violence (Hawini & Sarmauli, 2024). This situation creates impunity for perpetrators and reinforces the injustice experienced by victims. Legal reform is urgently needed to address the roots of this complex problem.

Protection for victims of sexual violence should not stop at law enforcement but should also encompass comprehensive recovery efforts (Fernanda et al., 2025). The state is obliged to guarantee victims' rights to security, rehabilitation, legal aid, and psychosocial support (Arsy & Yulianingsih, 2023). These elements have not been successfully incorporated into the Indonesian legal system for many years. There are no set rules for how law enforcement organizations like the police, prosecutors, and courts should handle cases involving sexual assault from a victim-centered perspective (Iqbal et al., 2025). This systematic gap demonstrates how victim protection has not been a top priority in national legal policy.

Legal protection can be understood as the state's guarantee of providing citizens with a sense of security from all forms of threats to their human rights (Rambe & Sihombing, 2024). Legal protection in the context of sexual abuse includes both safeguarding the victim before the offender is punished and, during, and after the trial process (Agustini et al., 2021). Modern criminal law doctrine places victim protection as an integral part of a just criminal justice system. This approach shifts the old paradigm, which was too oriented towards perpetrators and punishment, towards a more humane and empathetic approach towards victims.

Legal protection has two main forms: preventive and repressive. Preventive protection aims to prevent sexual violence through education, preventative policies, and safe and accessible reporting mechanisms. Repressive protection focuses on law enforcement against perpetrators and rehabilitation of victims after the crime has occurred (Ningrumsari et al., 2022). These two forms of protection must go hand in hand to ensure victims receive full

justice. An imbalance between prevention and enforcement often results in an unequal and ineffective protection system.

Victims' positions in the criminal justice system are often marginalized due to a legal structure that is still perpetrator oriented. Many victims of sexual violence do not have the space to share their experiences safely and with dignity. The evidentiary process, which emphasizes physical evidence, often renders victims' testimonies less compelling (Hidayat & Liauw, 2021). This leads many victims to feel like suspects in their own cases. Ideal legal protection should strike a balance between the rights of perpetrators and victims and ensure that victims are not re-victimized during the legal process (Rahmi, 2019).

Victimology theory provides a deeper understanding of victims' rights in the criminal justice system. According to a victimology perspective, victims of sexual violence are not merely witnesses, but legal subjects entitled to justice and reparation (Fernando et al., 2025). This approach emphasizes that the state has a moral and legal obligation to prioritize victims at every stage of the legal process. Recognizing victims' rights is a crucial step towards a more humane and just legal system.

Restorative justice theory also serves as a crucial foundation for protecting victims of sexual violence. Restorative justice emphasizes reparation for the harm suffered by victims and accountability for the perpetrators for the consequences of their actions (Al Hikmah et al., 2023). In this approach, justice is measured not only by punishment but also by the extent to which the victim's suffering can be remedied psychologically, socially, and economically. This principle broadens the meaning of justice beyond retributive considerations to include humanitarian and healing aspects.

The principles of non-discrimination and gender equality are integral normative foundations for protecting victims of sexual violence. All victims, regardless of gender, age, sexual orientation, or social status, have the right to equal legal protection. This principle aligns with the mandate of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which Indonesia ratified through Law Number 7 of 1984 (Wardhani & Natalis, 2024). The implementation of this principle forms the basis for establishing a legal system that upholds human dignity and protects vulnerable groups.

The right to repair victims is a fundamental principle of legal protection. Reparation encompasses not only financial compensation but also medical, psychological, social, and legal support. The state has a responsibility to provide integrated service mechanisms that can help victims recover from trauma and move on with their lives (Irawan, Bawole, & Rorie, 2022). The fulfillment of this right measures the extent to which the legal system functions as a protector, not simply a punisher.

The absence of a comprehensive victim protection system demonstrates that Indonesian criminal law is not yet oriented toward victim reparation. Society has traditionally focused on punishing perpetrators while ignoring the suffering of victims. Victim reparation is, in fact, a crucial element of substantive justice. This situation became an important background underlying the birth of the idea of legal reform through the formation of the TPKS Law, which then sought to close the legal vacuum and emphasize the role of the state in guaranteeing equitable protection for every victim of sexual violence.

METHOD

In order to thoroughly examine the legal standards guiding the protection of victims of sexual violence in Indonesia, particularly as they relate to Law Number 12 of 2022 concerning Criminal Acts of Sexual Violence (UU TPKS), this study employs a normative juridical approach. Both a conceptual approach and a statutory regulatory approach are employed. Examining numerous pertinent laws, both those that were in force prior to and following the passage of the TPKS Law, such as the Criminal Code (KUHP), Law Number

23 of 2004 concerning the Elimination of Domestic Violence, and Law Number 35 of 2014 concerning Child Protection, is how the statutory regulatory approach is implemented. Through this approach, the research seeks to identify disharmony, normative gaps, and fundamental changes brought by the TPKS Law in the national legal system. Meanwhile, a conceptual approach is used to understand the basic ideas and principles underlying the protection of victims of sexual violence, such as restorative justice theory, victimology, and human rights, to assess the extent to which the substance of the TPKS Law aligns with the values of justice and humanity. By combining these two approaches, this study not only examines the legal regulations textually but also examines the underlying values and concepts of justice, resulting in a comprehensive analysis of legal reform and the effectiveness of protection for victims of sexual violence in Indonesia.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Legal Reform Through Law Number 12 of 2022 Concerning Criminal Acts of Sexual Violence

The enactment of Law Number 12 of 2022 concerning Criminal Acts of Sexual Violence (UU TPKS) represents a significant milestone in Indonesia's criminal law reform journey. Its development was a long and dynamic process, both politically and socially. Strong support came from civil society, non-governmental organizations, and women's advocacy groups, demanding a comprehensive legal framework to protect victims of sexual violence. This demand intensified following the rise in cases of sexual violence that were not handled fairly due to limited legal instruments. Substantial public pressure ultimately prompted the government and the House of Representatives (DPR) to immediately pass this law as a manifestation of the state's responsibility to fulfill human rights, particularly the right to security and dignity.

The creation of the TPKS Law was inseparable from a long struggle spanning over a decade, marked by rejection and ideological debate. Before its enactment, the Draft Law on the Elimination of Sexual Violence (RUU PKS) underwent substantial revisions and title adjustments, ultimately becoming the TPKS Law. This debate was heavily influenced by differing moral, political, and religious interpretations. Despite facing resistance, the successful enactment of this law demonstrates that the state is beginning to recognize the importance of a victim-centered approach in the criminal justice system. This reform marks a shift in the legal paradigm from a perpetrator-centered approach to victim protection and rehabilitation.

The urgency of the TPKS Law arose from the real need to address the legal gap that the Criminal Code and other sectoral laws were unable to address. Complex cases of sexual violence demand a new legal instrument capable of accommodating social realities and the increasingly diverse forms of sexual crimes. This law not only addresses law enforcement aspects but also emphasizes the state's responsibility for prevention and victim rehabilitation. Thus, the TPKS Law symbolizes a shift in the national legal perspective on sexual crimes, which has often been overlooked and underestimated.

The legal reforms realized through the TPKS Law demonstrate the state's commitment to the principles of substantive justice and gender equality. Criminal law is no longer seen solely as a tool of retribution but also as an instrument of social protection that prioritizes humanity. This change reflects the alignment of national law with international norms, such as the CEDAW Convention and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which place the protection of women and victims of sexual violence as part of the state's obligations. The TPKS Law demonstrates that the law must be responsive to victims' suffering and able to address the challenges of the times with a more equitable approach.

Criminal law reform through the TPKS Law also strengthens Indonesia's legal position in building a victim-centered justice system. Previously, the Indonesian criminal justice system tended to position victims as objects in the legal process. Through the TPKS Law, victims are recognized as subjects with legal rights that must be respected and protected. This step marks a significant transformation in the modern criminal law system, which demands a balance between the rights of perpetrators and victims. This transformation is also part of national legal reform oriented towards the values of social justice and respect for human dignity.

The TPKS Law introduces several substantial reforms not previously found in other laws. One of the most important aspects is the expansion of the definition of sexual violence, stipulated in Articles 4 through 14. This law not only regulates physical forms of sexual violence but also encompasses non-physical violence such as verbal harassment, sexual exploitation, forced contraception, and technology-based sexual violence. The recognition of new forms of sexual violence demonstrates the law's adaptation to social and technological developments. This broad coverage strengthens the position of victims who were previously unprotected by conventional criminal law.

The TPKS Law not only broadens the definition but also highlights the specific recognition of victims' rights, as outlined in Articles 67 to 71. These rights consist of the following: the right to information, the right to legal assistance, the right to rest, the right to protection, and the right to compensation. This regulation provides a strong legal basis for the state and law enforcement officials to provide services oriented to the needs of victims. Victims' rights, previously scattered across various regulations, are now systematically codified in one clear legal instrument. This codification ensures legal certainty and strengthens victims' standing before the law.

The state is entrusted with significant responsibility for protecting victims of sexual violence. The TPKS Law stipulates the state's obligation to ensure integrated services for victims, including medical, psychological, social, and legal assistance. Institutions such as the Witness and Victim Protection Agency (LPSK), the police, and relevant ministries are mandated to collaborate in providing an effective and sustainable protection system. This responsibility emphasizes that handling sexual violence is not solely the responsibility of law enforcement, but rather a collective responsibility of the state to ensure a sense of security for its citizens. This principle aligns with the constitutional mandate, which affirms the state's obligation to protect all Indonesian citizens.

Another important reform concerns the regulation of restitution and compensation for victims. Restitution is a form of compensation imposed on the perpetrator, while compensation can be provided by the state if the perpetrator is unable to pay. This provision demonstrates a more progressive approach to justice, as it emphasizes not only criminal punishment but also the rehabilitation of the victim. This mechanism represents a breakthrough in the Indonesian criminal law system, which previously did not explicitly regulate victims' rights to compensation for sexual violence.

The TPKS Law also places special emphasis on protecting the identity and confidentiality of victim data. This provision is crucial to prevent social stigma and discriminatory treatment of victims. The investigation and trial processes must ensure the security of the victim's identity so that it is not exposed to the public. This protection symbolizes respect for the dignity and privacy of victims, which have often been neglected in judicial practice. This policy also encourages more victims to come forward without fear of social pressure or threats from the perpetrator.

A comparison of the TPKS Law with the Criminal Code and the Domestic Violence Law demonstrates significant progress in terms of legal substance and orientation. The Criminal Code only regulates rape and indecent acts, with narrow and patriarchal definitions.

The TPKS Law broadens the scope of sexual violence and affirms the recognition of various forms of violations that were previously not considered criminal acts. This fundamental difference reflects a paradigm shift from a law that solely protects public morality to one that protects the dignity and rights of victims as individuals.

The Domestic Violence Law does protect against sexual violence, but its scope is limited to domestic relationships. The TPKS Law goes further by protecting all victims regardless of the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim. This protection applies in public spaces, the workplace, educational institutions, and even digital spaces. This universal approach eliminates discrimination against victims previously excluded from the protections of the PKDRT Law. This expansion marks progress towards a more inclusive and gender-just law.

In terms of legal structure, the TPKS Law provides a more systematic and comprehensive framework. Every stage of case handling, from reporting, investigation, prosecution, to victim recovery, is clearly regulated with principles of inter-agency coordination. This contrasts with the previous system, which was fragmented and dependent on the interpretation of each law enforcement agency. This clarity of legal mechanisms increases legal certainty and strengthens the effectiveness of protection for victims of sexual violence. Legal innovation is also evident in the recognition of the state's role in ensuring services for victims. Previously, victim protection was largely delegated to non-governmental organizations or civil society. Through the TPKS Law, the state is obligated to provide comprehensive services and ensure that victims' rights are met. This approach demonstrates a shift in legal responsibility from an individualistic approach to a structural approach based on social justice.

Consistence with human rights principles is a key value that distinguishes the TPKS Law from previous regulations. This law places respect for human dignity as the foundation of its formulation and implementation. Protection for victims of sexual violence is no longer considered an optional policy but rather a constitutional obligation of the state. This principle makes the TPKS Law not only a criminal law instrument but also a concrete manifestation of the state's commitment to human rights protection and gender justice in Indonesia.

Implementation and Challenges of Victim Protection in Practice

An important change to Indonesia's criminal justice system has been brought about with the passage of Law Number 12 of 2022 addressing Sexual Violence Crimes. Police officers are currently being instructed to take a victim-centered approach, prioritizing humanity, justice, and recovery. The police, as the first line of defense in the law enforcement process, are obligated to provide victim-friendly treatment, including maintaining confidentiality and ensuring the victim's safety during the investigation. Prosecutors and judges are also expected to apply restorative justice principles in adjudicating sexual violence cases to prevent victims from being revictimized. The existence of institutions such as the Witness and Victim Protection Agency (LPSK) plays a crucial role in ensuring that victims' rights to protection and compensation are fully fulfilled.

The implementation of the TPKS Law is also supported by service institutions and civil society organizations that provide legal, psychological, and medical assistance to victims. The synergy between law enforcement and advocacy organizations is an indicator of the successful implementation of this law. In many cases, advocacy organizations play a crucial role in helping victims understand their rights and access state-provided services. However, the limited number of advocacy staff and the uneven distribution of services remain serious obstacles, particularly in remote areas. Public awareness of the TPKS Law also needs to be increased so that people can report sexual violence without fear or shame.

The implementation of the TPKS Law requires law enforcement officers to have a thorough understanding of the definitions and categories of sexual violence as stipulated in Articles 4 to 14. Many officers still adhere to the old paradigm that views sexual violence solely as a moral issue, not a serious crime. This creates bias in the investigation and prosecution process, especially when victims lack sufficient physical evidence. This paradigm often leads to victims being blamed for the violence they experience, ultimately hindering the justice process. Continuous training is needed so that all officers comprehensively understand the substance of the TPKS Law and apply it with empathy.

Difficulty in obtaining evidence is a major challenge in sexual violence cases. Many cases fail to be prosecuted because victims are unable to produce physical evidence due to late reporting or fear of social pressure. The TPKS Law has expanded the types of admissible evidence, including psychological testimony, audio recordings, and digital communications. However, in practice, law enforcement still tends to rely on conventional evidence such as post-mortem examinations (*visum et repertum*). The reluctance to use a more progressive evidentiary approach results in many victims not receiving the justice they deserve.

The integrated services for victims of sexual violence stipulated in the TPKS Law are still not functioning optimally. Many hospitals, police departments, and service agencies lack effective coordination mechanisms. This lack of synchronization between agencies often leads victims to be moved from one agency to another without clear treatment. This situation exacerbates the psychological trauma of victims who should receive empathetic and structured treatment. The development of an effective one-stop service system is urgently needed to prevent victims from being trapped in exhausting bureaucracy.

Harmonization between laws and regulations remains a fundamental issue in the implementation of the TPKS Law. Several provisions in the Criminal Code (KUHP) and the Child Protection Law are not fully aligned with the new norms introduced by the TPKS Law. This disharmony creates overlapping authority and confusion in the application of articles, particularly in cases involving children or adult victims. Reformulation of derivative regulations and technical guidelines for law enforcement is key to ensuring consistent application of the law throughout Indonesia. Clarity of norms is also crucial to prevent multiple interpretations that could harm victims.

The social stigma against victims of sexual violence remains a major obstacle to the implementation of the TPKS Law. The public often blames victims for their experiences by questioning their clothing, behavior, or personal background. This perception creates deep fear and discourages victims from reporting. While the TPKS Law guarantees the protection of victims' identities, its implementation has not always been consistent in practice. Public education and social campaigns involving the media and community leaders are essential to changing the public's perspective on victims of sexual violence.

Efforts to strengthen the implementation of the TPKS Law require real synergy between government institutions and civil society. The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KemenPPPA), the Witness and Victim Protection Agency (LPSK), the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan), the Police, and the Prosecutor's Office have crucial roles that must work in harmony. Increasing the capacity of officers through gender-based training and victim perspectives can improve case handling in the field. Cross-agency collaboration must also focus on developing an integrated information system so that each case can be monitored transparently. This synergy not only expedites the legal process but also provides certainty and comfort for victims.

Evaluation of the effectiveness of the TPKS Law must consider the extent to which victims' rights are actually implemented. The rights to justice, restitution, and identity protection must be measured based on the victim's experience during the legal process. Many victims still feel that the justice system has not sided with them, despite the strong legal

protections already in place. Effectiveness assessments must also include aspects of service quality, officer professionalism, and community involvement in oversight. Honest and ongoing evaluations can form the basis for further reforms to improve the victim protection system in the future.

Protecting victims of sexual violence is not only a legal responsibility but also a moral responsibility of the state to its citizens. The TPKS Law provides a strong legal basis for creating a fair and gender-equitable justice system. However, its implementation requires collective awareness, the support of qualified human resources, and the courage to uphold humanitarian values. Legal transformation will only be meaningful if it can provide a sense of security, justice, and dignity for victims of sexual violence. The law must be an instrument of healing, not merely a means of punishing perpetrators.

CONCLUSION

Law Number 12 of 2022 concerning Criminal Acts of Sexual Violence represents a significant milestone in Indonesian legal reform, particularly in protecting victims of sexual violence, who have been marginalized by a perpetrator-centered criminal justice system. This law broadens the definition of sexual violence, guarantees victims' rights, and affirms the state's responsibility to provide protection, reparation, and access to justice. This reform represents a shift in the legal paradigm from a retributive approach to a victim-centered, human rights-based system. However, its effectiveness still faces serious obstacles, such as limited understanding of the law among law enforcement officials, weak inter-agency coordination, and strong social stigma that discourages victims from reporting. These structural and cultural barriers demonstrate that legal reform is not merely normative; it also requires changes in practice, institutional culture, and public awareness.

Improving the effectiveness of the implementation of the TPKS Law requires sustainable, strategic steps based on cross-sector collaboration. Harmonization between the TPKS Law and the new Criminal Code and Criminal Procedure Code must be implemented immediately to prevent overlapping norms and unclear authority in law enforcement. Law enforcement officers need to be equipped with special training that emphasizes a gender perspective, empathy for victims, and the ability to handle sexual violence cases professionally. Psychological, medical, and legal support services must also be expanded to the regional level so that victims throughout Indonesia have equal access to recovery and justice. Further legal reforms that emphasize victim protection as a top priority need to be continuously encouraged so that the law truly becomes a means of restoring human dignity, not merely a tool for prosecuting perpetrators.

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