



When Power Becomes Belief: Sexual Violence in The *Pesantren* from the Perspectives of Governmentality, Symbolic Violence, and Affective Power

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze sexual violence in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) through the lens of internalized power relations. Unlike previous studies that emphasize individual, normative, or external structural factors, this research examines how power operates internally in shaping students' consciousness, emotions, and religious beliefs. This study employs a critical qualitative approach by integrating the frameworks of governmentality, symbolic violence, and affective power. Data were collected through document analysis, and analyzed using critical thematic analysis. The findings reveal that sexual violence in pesantren is not merely a result of structural domination, but also of the internalization of power that constructs obedience as part of religious identity. Domination is legitimized through symbolic mechanisms that normalize violence, while emotional and spiritual attachments reinforce the silencing of victims. In this context, power is not only exercised but also believed and experienced as truth. This study concludes that sexual violence in pesantren represents a manifestation of internalized and systemically reproduced power. Therefore, a transformation of Islamic educational paradigms is needed, emphasizing ethical relations, critical awareness, and the protection of human dignity.

Keywords: Sexual Violence, Pesantren, Power Relations, Governmentality, Symbolic Violence, Affective Power.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis kekerasan seksual di pesantren melalui perspektif relasi kuasa yang terinternalisasi. Berbeda dengan studi sebelumnya yang menekankan faktor individual, normatif, atau struktural-eksternal, penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana kuasa bekerja secara internal dalam membentuk kesadaran, emosi, dan keyakinan religius santri. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif-kritis dengan mengintegrasikan kerangka governmentality, symbolic violence, dan affective power. Data dikumpulkan melalui analisis dokumen, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan pendekatan tematik-kritis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kekerasan seksual di pesantren tidak hanya terjadi karena dominasi struktural, tetapi juga karena proses internalisasi kuasa yang menjadikan kepatuhan sebagai bagian dari identitas religius. Dominasi dilegitimasi melalui mekanisme simbolik yang membuat kekerasan tampak wajar, sementara keterikatan emosional dan spiritual memperkuat pembungkaman korban. Dalam kondisi ini, kuasa tidak hanya dijalankan, tetapi juga diyakini dan dirasakan sebagai kebenaran. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa kekerasan seksual di pesantren merupakan manifestasi dari kuasa yang terinternalisasi dan direproduksi secara sistemik. Oleh karena itu, diperlukan

transformasi paradigma pendidikan Islam yang menekankan relasi etis, kesadaran kritis, dan perlindungan martabat manusia.

Kata Kunci: Kekerasan Seksual, Pesantren, Relasi Kuasa, Governmentality, Symbolic Violence, Affective Power.

INTRODUCTION

In early May 2026, we were shocked by news reports in various media outlets regarding the actions of a certain cleric or leader of a *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) in Pati, Central Java. According to information provided by the police, the individual in question has now been named a suspect, as he is suspected of having sexually abused 30–50 female students who are still minors, around junior high school (Sekolah Menengah Pertama/SMP) age, and this has been going on for a long time. The suspect's modus operandi involved sending messages via WhatsApp to the victims late at night and into the early morning. According to information from the *Lembaga Perlindungan Saksi dan Korban* (Witness and Victim Protection Agency/LPSK), the suspect committed these heinous acts by exploiting his influence as a religious leader, accompanied by manipulated religious arguments or justifications to instill compliance in the victims (Nashr, 2026; Soedirman & Setiawan, 2016). Around the same time, also in early May 2026, similar cases occurred in Jepara and Lampung. In Jepara, a leader of a *pesantren* there has been named a suspect in connection with alleged sexual violence against his own female students. This case came to light after a female student reported to the police that she had experienced repeated sexual misconduct while at the boarding school. Meanwhile, in Lampung, the depraved actions of a local Islamic boarding school leader enraged residents to the point that they set fire to the boarding school (Selviany, 2026). According to information from the LPSK, the perpetrator committed these heinous acts by exploiting a distorted interpretation of religious teachings, as well as leveraging influence and power dynamics, to manipulate the victims' perceptions and ensure their compliance (Ristiyanti, 2026).

Cases of sexual violence are not limited to this year alone. Such cases have long been occurring in this country. They are like the tip of the iceberg; similar cases are actually far more numerous than what surfaces in media reports. Consequently, in recent years, the issue of sexual violence within religious educational institutions, particularly *pesantren*, has garnered increased attention in both academic and public discourse. *Pesantren*, which are fundamentally oriented as Islamic educational institutions that, by definition, function as spaces for the formation of the "perfect human being" or *insan kamil* (Al-Ghazali, 2005), individuals possessing strong moral character, etiquette, intellectual capacity, and spirituality, face a paradoxical reality when instances of sexual violence actually occur within them. This phenomenon indicates that educational institutions are not always safe and comfortable spaces for accessing education, but can also become arenas for the reproduction of violence hidden within social and cultural structures (Hefner, 2009; Yenti et al., 2025).

Research on sexual violence in educational institutions has grown significantly over the past decade, particularly since awareness of this issue has increased. In the context of general education, research indicates that sexual violence

is inextricably linked to institutional structures, hierarchical relationships, and organizational cultures that enable domination and the silencing of victims (Elboj-Saso et al., 2022; Hurtado, 2021). These studies confirm that educational institutions are not always neutral and conducive spaces for learning; rather, they often become arenas for the abuse of power that can reproduce social inequality.

In the context of Islamic education, particularly in pesantren, research on sexual violence indicates that hierarchical authority structures, religious legitimization of the kiai figure, and a strong culture of obedience are key factors in shaping asymmetrical power relations (Hefner, 2009). Research conducted by Yusup et al. (2023) confirms that the position of the kiai as a central figure not only holds administrative authority but also carries symbolic and spiritual roles, which under certain conditions can create opportunities for the abuse of power.

If research is clustered, most studies in the pesantren context still employ approaches limited to three main streams. *First*, a normative-religious approach that emphasizes the importance of morality, ethics, and religious education as a solution to sexual violence. This approach views violence as a deviation from Islamic values without critiquing the social structures that enable violence (Hefner, 2009). *Second*, the legal and policy approach, which focuses on victim protection, institutional regulation, and reporting mechanisms (Attala & Nurhaeni, 2024). *Third*, the gender and patriarchy approach, which highlights the unequal power dynamics between men and women as the root of violence (Sa'adah, 2023). Although these three approaches make important contributions, they have not fully explained how sexual violence can occur systemically and be reproduced within institutions possessing strong religious legitimacy.

Recent developments in the literature are increasingly focusing on the analysis of power relations as a key factor in understanding sexual violence. This approach is influenced by the thought of Michel Foucault, who views power as something productive and dispersed within social relations, rather than merely a tool of repression (Foucault, 1991). Within this framework, sexual violence is understood not merely as an individual act, but as part of a power mechanism that operates through discipline, control, and the normalization of behavior. Studies in education indicate that power can operate through the hidden curriculum and everyday practices that shape compliance (Wozolek, 2020).

However, the application of a power relations perspective in studies of sexual violence in Islamic boarding schools still tends to be limited to external aspects, such as the dominance of authority and social position disparities. Research has not extensively explored how power operates internally in shaping individuals' consciousness, emotions, and beliefs. This is where the research gap becomes significant, as this study employs a governmentality approach, which emphasizes that power operates through processes of internalization that lead individuals to actively regulate themselves in accordance with prevailing norms (Foucault, 1991). This approach remains rarely utilized in the context of Islamic education, particularly in Islamic boarding schools.

Additionally, Pierre Bourdieu's (2001) concept of symbolic violence also makes a significant contribution to understanding how domination can occur

unconsciously because it has been culturally legitimized. Several studies have employed this concept to analyze violence in education (Apriantika et al., 2023; Martono, 2019), yet its application within the context of Islamic boarding schools and sexual violence remains highly limited. Nevertheless, practices such as ta'dzim and reverence for authority have the potential to function as symbolic mechanisms that reinforce domination.

Furthermore, the affective dimension of power relations has also begun to receive attention in contemporary studies. The affective power approach emphasizes that power operates not only through structures and symbols, but also through emotions and subjective attachments (Pedwell, 2014). In the context of education, the emotional relationship between teachers and students can serve as a powerful medium in shaping compliance and loyalty (Wozolek, 2020). However, this dimension has scarcely been explored in studies of sexual violence in Islamic boarding schools, even though the relationship between kiai and santri is deeply imbued with emotional and spiritual elements.

Therefore, this research occupies a position at the intersection of: studies on sexual violence, the sociology of education, power relations theory, and critical Islamic education. This study explicitly shifts the paradigm from a normative approach toward a critical-structural approach, emphasizing that sexual violence in Islamic boarding schools is the result of power relations that are not only external but also internalized within individuals' consciousness, emotions, and religious beliefs. Based on this gap, the novelty of this research lies in how power is internalized as belief, examined through an integrative approach that combines governmentality (internalization of power), symbolic violence (legitimization of domination), and affective power (emotional-spiritual dimensions).

This study shifts the focus from external power to internalized power; from physical domination to cognitive, emotional, and religious domination. Thus, this approach will address the question of why victims do not resist and tend to remain silent. This study argues that sexual violence in Islamic boarding schools cannot be understood merely as deviant behavior, but as a consequence of power configurations that are internalized, legitimized, and reproduced within the practice of Islamic education.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using a critical qualitative research design. This approach was chosen because the study aims not only to describe the phenomenon of sexual violence in Islamic boarding schools but also to uncover the power relations that operate covertly and are internalized within the subjects' consciousness, emotions, and religious beliefs (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Denzin, 2012).

Epistemologically, this study is rooted in the critical constructivist paradigm (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2011), which views social reality as a construction shaped by power relations, ideologies, and social practices. Therefore, this study is a library research effort that seeks to conduct a critical analysis of Islamic educational practices within the pesantren context.

This study employs an interdisciplinary approach that integrates three main theoretical frameworks: first, Michel Foucault's Governmentality, which aims to analyze how power is internalized and shapes self-governance (Dean, 2009; Foucault, 1991); second, Pierre Bourdieu's Symbolic Violence, which aims to explain the legitimization of domination through cultural and symbolic practices (Bourdieu, 2001; Swartz, 2012); and third, Affective Power, which aims to understand the role of emotions, spirituality, and attachment in shaping compliance (Pedwell, 2014; Wozolek, 2020). . These three approaches are used in an integrated manner to reveal how power operates structurally, symbolically, and affectively in shaping the students' compliance. The analysis is deepened through discourse analysis to examine the production of truth (Foucault, 1991), habitus analysis to understand dispositions of obedience (Bourdieu, 2001), and affective analysis to explore emotional and spiritual dimensions (Pedwell, 2021). The focus of the analysis is on: the process of internalizing power into beliefs that produce compliance and silencing. These three approaches are used in an integrated manner to reveal how power operates structurally, symbolically, and affectively in shaping the students' compliance. The analysis is deepened through discourse analysis to examine the production of truth (Foucault, 1991), habitus analysis to understand dispositions of obedience (Bourdieu, 2001), and affective analysis to explore emotional and spiritual dimensions (Pedwell, 2021). The focus of the analysis is on: the process of internalizing power into beliefs that produce compliance and silencing. The following table illustrates the integration of these three main theoretical frameworks:

Table of Integrative Framework of Power

Analytical Dimension	Governmentality	Symbolic Violence	Affective Power
Primary Focus	Internalization of power within consciousness	Legitimation of domination through symbols and meanings	Influence of power through emotions
Mode of Operation	Self-governance	Naturalizes domination (doxa)	Emotional attachment
Level of Operation	Cognitive	Cultural-symbolic	Affective
Key Mechanisms	Discipline, normalization	Habitus, legitimacy	Loyalty, dependency
Form of Compliance	Perceived as true	Seen as natural	Felt emotionally
Nature of Power	Subtle, productive	Invisible	Intimate
Violence Potential	Self-silencing	Misrecognition	Emotional silence
<i>Pesantren Context</i>	<i>Internalized obedience</i>	<i>Legitimized hierarchy</i>	<i>Emotional devotion</i>
<i>Implication</i>	<i>Silencing victims</i>	<i>Violence unrecognized</i>	<i>Difficult resistance</i>

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research results will be explained in the following points:

1. Power as a Mechanism of Internalization: The Perspective of Governmentality

The concept of governmentality was first introduced by Michel Foucault (1991) as an attempt to understand the transformation of forms of power in modern society. In his works *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (2021) and *The History of Sexuality* (1990), Foucault explains that power no longer operates solely through repressive mechanisms or direct coercion, but rather through a more subtle process: the regulation of individual behavior by shaping the way people think, act, and understand themselves. Within this framework, governmentality refers to “the art of governing” that operates through the internalization of norms, so that individuals voluntarily regulate themselves in accordance with the rationality of power. Thus, Foucault’s primary focus lies on the philosophical and genealogical dimensions – namely, how forms of power develop and transform over time and how such power shapes the human subject.

Nevertheless, the concept offered by Foucault tends to be abstract and is not yet fully operational for use in empirical analysis. Therefore, Mitchell Dean (2009) developed governmentality into a more systematic and practical analytical framework. Dean not only retained Foucault’s basic ideas regarding power relations and the formation of the subject, but also organized them into an analytical tool that can be used in social research. He proposed four main dimensions in the analysis of governmentality, namely [1]. Fields of visibility; [2]. Technologies of government; [3]. Forms of knowledge; and [4]. Forms of subjectification. These four dimensions enable researchers to identify how power operates in concrete practices, including how a phenomenon is made visible, how regulatory techniques are applied, how knowledge is used to legitimize power, and how individuals are shaped into compliant subjects.

Thus, the main difference between Foucault and Dean lies at the conceptual and operational levels. Foucault provides a strong theoretical foundation regarding how power operates productively through the internalization and formation of the subject, while Dean offers analytical tools to examine these phenomena empirically. In the context of this research, Foucault’s thought is used to explain how power is internalized in the consciousness of santri, whereas Dean’s framework is used to systematically analyze how this process unfolds in the practical life of the pesantren.

Conceptually, the relationship between the two is complementary. Foucault provides a “theoretical lens” for understanding power relations, while Dean offers “analytical tools” for dissecting how power operates in social reality. By integrating the two, this study is not only able to explain how power becomes belief, but also how this process can be identified, analyzed, and critiqued in the context of sexual violence in Islamic boarding schools.

Weber distinguishes between power (*Macht*) and authority (*Herrschaft*). Power refers to the ability to impose one’s will, whereas authority is power that has attained legitimacy, such that compliance arises from trust in the validity of that authority (Bendix, 1998; Weber, 1978). In other words, legitimacy is the foundation that transforms power into socially accepted authority.

This concept of governmentality is essentially an extension or development of the three models of power legitimacy as outlined by Max Weber (1978), namely: [1] Traditional legitimacy; [2] Charismatic legitimacy; and [3] Legal-rational legitimacy.

First, traditional legitimacy stems from customs and traditions deeply rooted in society. Compliance is granted because something is considered “the natural order of things.” In his sociological theory of power, Max Weber asserts that power is not enough merely to be held; it must be recognized as legitimate in order to endure and be obeyed. Legitimacy is the primary foundation that makes individuals or groups willing to comply with authority without always being forced to do so. In the context of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), their leaders (kiai, tuan guru, ustaz, or other titles) are obeyed because of their traditional status, and the hierarchical relationships that serve as a model are considered part of customs and religion that are deeply rooted in society.

Second, charismatic legitimacy: the position of a pesantren leader stems from their personal qualities deemed extraordinary, such as piety, authority, or spiritual ability. In the context of the pesantren, the kiai is respected because they are considered to possess religious charisma and are believed to have divine blessing (barakah); those who obey are believed to receive this blessing. This blessing has positive implications within the community, bringing many benefits and advantages – socially, politically, and even economically.

Third, legal-rational legitimacy is based on the legal system, regulations, formal rules, and rational procedures. Examples of this can be found in modern institutions such as the state and formal schools, which are managed based on rules rather than traditional and charismatic figures. Pesantren are still far from achieving legal-rational legitimacy.

Etymologically, governmentality derives from two words: “government,” meaning governance and regulation; and “mentality,” meaning a way of thinking. Terminologically, governmentality refers to a way of “regulating people” not through coercion, but by making them willing to regulate themselves. Governmentality can also be understood as a form of rationality in regulating human behavior (Foucault, 2021).

Theoretically, governmentality does not operate in a crude (repressive) manner, but through subtle and internal means via three main mechanisms: *first*, the formation of subjectivity. At this stage, individuals are shaped to: think in accordance with norms, feel guilty when they violate them, and regard obedience as a virtue. In the context of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), students believe that obedience to the religious leader (kiai) is piety, and defying his authority is wrong and a sin.

The *second* mechanism is self-governance. At this stage, individuals will regulate themselves without the need for constant supervision. In the context of the pesantren, students remain obedient even when unsupervised, even silencing themselves and not daring to speak up when faced with injustice.

The *third* method: normalization (making something feel “ordinary”). Certain practices are repeatedly reinforced, taught as truths, and eventually taken for granted. In the context of Islamic boarding schools, hierarchical relationships are considered normal, and absolute obedience is regarded as ideal.

In the context of this study, the research findings indicate that sexual violence in Islamic boarding schools cannot be understood solely as the deviant acts of individuals, but rather as part of a power mechanism that operates through a process of internalization. Within the framework of governmentality developed by Michel Foucault, power is no longer understood as merely repressive but also as productive, shaping the ways in which individuals think, feel, and act (Foucault, 1991; Dean, 2009).

In the context of Islamic boarding schools, students' obedience to the kiai's authority does not always stem from external coercion, but from a process of self-governance that unfolds through discipline, instruction, and daily practices. Students learn to internalize norms of obedience as part of their religious identity. This aligns with findings in educational studies indicating that educational institutions function as spaces for producing obedient subjects through mechanisms of discipline and normalization (Wozolek, 2020).

Thus, sexual violence does not occur in a vacuum, but within a context in which individuals have been conditioned to be obedient, submissive, and unquestioning of authority. Under these conditions, power relations become invisible, as they have become internalized within the individual's consciousness. This finding reinforces the argument that sexual violence in educational institutions often persists not because of a lack of rules, but because of the success of the system and customs in fostering internal compliance (Hurtado, 2021).

2. The Legitimization of Domination through Symbolic Violence

In addition to the internalization of power, this study found that sexual violence is also legitimized through symbolic mechanisms that make domination appear natural and legitimate. From the perspective of symbolic violence as proposed by Pierre Bourdieu (2001), domination does not always occur through physical violence, but through a system of meanings unconsciously accepted by those who are dominated. This means that domination occurring through symbols, meanings, language, and norms, which are unconsciously accepted as truth, even in the absence of physical coercion, is not perceived as violence, yet still produces inequality and domination.

In the theory of symbolic violence, there are three key concepts: [1]. *Habitus*, which refers to patterns of thought and habits that form naturally from long-term social experience (Bourdieu, 1990, 2001); [2]. *Doxa*, which refers to beliefs considered absolute truths that are not questioned, let alone debated, because they are taken for granted and considered natural (Bourdieu, 2020); and 3. *Field* (arena), which is the social space where power relations occur. This social space is structured in such a way that individuals and groups interact, compete, and vie for various forms of available resources (economic, social, cultural, and symbolic) (Bourdieu, 1992). The field also provides the structure within which habitus and doxa operate and are reproduced.

Mindsets and habits formed through social experiences operate through a process of internalization and legitimization in three stages, namely: [1]. Legitimization of meaning, in which individuals come to believe that certain rules

and norms are “right,” “natural,” or “the way things should be”; [2]. Internalization (*habitus*), where at this level individuals: have absorbed these values over a long period and made them part of their way of thinking (*habitus*); and [3]. Misrecognition (*méconnaissance*), where at this stage individuals are unaware that they are being dominated, and even accept that domination. At this stage, violence is no longer recognized as violence.

The concept of symbolic violence provides a robust framework for understanding why sexual violence in *pesantren* is often unrecognized, unchallenged, and even, under certain conditions, legitimized. Unlike overt forms of physical violence, symbolic violence operates through subtle mechanisms – namely, through systems of meaning, norms, and beliefs accepted as normal (Bourdieu, 2001).

In the context of Islamic boarding schools, the relationship between the *kiai* and the *santri* is built upon a strong symbolic structure, such as the concepts of *ta'dzim* (respect for the teacher), *barakah* (blessing), and obedience as part of piety. This structure not only shapes pedagogical relationships but also creates symbolic legitimacy for the *kiai*'s authority. Under these conditions, authority is not only respected but also believed to be an unquestionable truth that must not be challenged, let alone resisted, thereby opening the door to the abuse of power (Bourdieu, 2001; Scott, 2007).

Through the lens of symbolic violence, sexual violence can be understood as part of a power relationship that has been symbolically legitimized. Victims are not only in a structurally subordinate position but also in a position that has been cognitively and culturally shaped to accept that authority. Consequently, actions that are objectively acts of violence may undergo misrecognition (*méconnaissance*) – that is, they are not recognized as violations but rather as ambiguous or even justified within certain frameworks.

Furthermore, symbolic violence explains why victims often struggle to resist or report violence. This is not merely due to fear of punishment, but because of the internalization of values that cause victims to doubt their own experiences. In many cases, victims may feel guilty, unworthy, or even view what happened as part of an educational process or a spiritual test. Thus, silencing is not only external but also internal.

Furthermore, symbolic legitimation also operates at the community level. The *pesantren* environment, which upholds the values of obedience and respect for authority, can indirectly foster a culture that makes it difficult to disclose acts of violence. Narratives such as preserving the institution's reputation, respecting teachers, or avoiding slander can function as symbolic mechanisms that maintain structures of domination. In this context, symbolic violence does not occur solely in individual relationships but is also collectively reproduced.

In *pesantren* practice, concepts such as *ta'dzim*, *barakah* (blessing), and obedience to the *kiai* become part of the *habitus* that shapes students' perspectives on authority. These relationships are not merely social but also symbolic and religious. Consequently, actions that are actually forms of violence may be perceived as part of the educational process or even as a spiritual test.

This finding aligns with research showing that symbolic violence in education operates through cultural legitimization that makes power imbalances difficult to recognize (Apriantika et al., 2023; Martono, 2019). In the pesantren context, this legitimization is reinforced by religious authority, creating conditions where victims not only struggle to resist but also struggle to identify themselves as victims.

Thus, sexual violence does not occur merely because of the presence of perpetrators and victims, but because of a symbolic system that justifies and normalizes such acts. This suggests that efforts to prevent violence are not sufficient if they rely solely on formal regulations; they must also address the underlying structures of meaning that underpin social practices.

3. The Affective Dimension: Emotions, Spirituality, and Silencing

One of the most significant findings of this study is the role of the affective dimension in reinforcing power relations. The affective power approach demonstrates that power operates not only through structures and symbols, but also through emotions and subjective attachments (Pedwell, 2014). A key characteristic of the affective power theory proposed by Carolyn Pedwell is its emphasis on emotions and attachments. Unlike classical approaches that view power as rational or structural, Pedwell emphasizes that emotions are not merely personal reactions but social mechanisms that shape compliance, relationships, and identity.

Theoretically, Pedwell (2014) argues that affective power has four main characteristics: *first*, emotion as a medium of power. In other words, emotion serves as the pathway through which power enters an individual, operating through love, not merely structures, but felt relationships such as respect, fear, and loyalty. *Second*, it is relational and interpersonal. Affective power emerges not merely from structures but from the relationships experienced in the teacher–student, leader–follower, and kiai–santri dynamics. *Third*, it precedes rationality. Following the affective turn approach, individuals often feel first and think later; decisions and compliance are influenced by emotions. This makes power more deeply ingrained and difficult to resist. *Fourth*, power is reproduced in subtle ways. Because it is emotionally based, it is not perceived as coercion; rather, it is viewed as a meaningful relationship. Consequently, power becomes intimate and enduring. Thus, it is difficult to resist this abuse not because of a lack of awareness, but because of emotional and spiritual bonds.

In the context of sexual violence in Islamic boarding schools, the relationship between students and clerics is often built through strong emotional bonds, such as love, respect, fear, and the hope for divine blessings. These bonds foster deep loyalty, which under certain conditions can hinder resistance to violence. Students submit not only due to the institutional structure but also because of emotional attachments that make them reluctant or unable to resist.

This finding aligns with studies showing that emotions play a significant role in the reproduction of power relations in education (Wozolek, 2020). In the context of sexual violence, the affective dimension can create internal conflict within the victim, between the experience of violence and the religious beliefs they hold.

Consequently, silencing is not only external (through social pressure) but also internal, where victims silence themselves because they feel guilty, afraid, or unworthy of speaking out. This explains why many cases of sexual violence in Islamic boarding schools go unreported or are reported too late.

4. Integration: When Power Becomes Belief

By integrating these three perspectives, this study demonstrates that sexual violence in Islamic boarding schools is the result of a complex configuration of power that operates through three main dimensions: *first*, internalization (governmentality), which leads to the cultivation of students' compliance. *Second*, legitimization (symbolic violence) that results in the justification of domination. *Third*, affect (affective power) that results in emotional bonds. These three dimensions are intertwined and create a condition where power is not merely exercised but is believed to be the truth.

In this context, sexual violence is no longer perceived as a violation but is accepted as part of a broader system of meaning. This finding expands upon previous studies that tended to view sexual violence as a result of external factors, by demonstrating that the root of the problem lies in the internalization of power within consciousness, emotions, and religious beliefs.

The findings of this study have significant implications for the study of Islamic education. Normatively, Islamic education aims to shape the "insan kamil", a civilized, intellectual human being who achieves justice. However, when power relations are not critically examined, education can become distorted and transform into a mechanism for reproducing domination. This aligns with the view that education is not always emancipatory but can also serve as a tool of social control (Hefner, 2020).

Therefore, a paradigm shift in Islamic education is needed, one that positions the teacher, student relationship as an ethical rather than a dominant one, opens space for criticism of authority, and integrates the values of justice and victim protection. Thus, preventing sexual violence requires not only structural interventions but also an epistemological transformation in understanding authority, obedience, and pedagogical relationships within Islamic education.

This study shows that sexual violence in Islamic boarding schools is a manifestation of power that is internalized, legitimized, and internalized as a belief, thereby fostering compliance and silencing that enable the systemic reproduction of violence.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that sexual violence in Islamic boarding schools cannot be understood solely as a deviation in individual behavior, but rather as a manifestation of complex and internalized power relations. By integrating perspectives on governmentality, symbolic violence, and affective power, this study finds that power within the pesantren context operates not only structurally but also permeates the cognitive, symbolic, and affective dimensions of the individual. This study emphasizes that the primary challenge in addressing sexual violence in Islamic

boarding schools lies not only in structural reform but in the ability to deconstruct and reconstruct how power operates within consciousness, emotions, and religious beliefs. Without such transformation, education risks continuing to reproduce domination in increasingly invisible forms

Within the framework of governmentality, students' compliance is shaped through the internalization of norms that make subordination part of religious identity. The perspective of symbolic violence reveals that domination is legitimized through a system of meanings deemed normal and legitimate, making it difficult to recognize violence as a violation. Meanwhile, the dimension of affective power reveals that the emotional and spiritual bond between students and clerics reinforces obedience and creates internal silencing. Thus, this study confirms that sexual violence in Islamic boarding schools is the result of a process in which power is not only exercised but also believed in, experienced, and legitimized as truth. This situation leads to the systemic reproduction of violence, as victims are silenced not only externally but also internally.

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