

# Policy Paper on **Protection Mechanism for Whistleblowers of Sexual Violence in Mass Media**



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We would like to thank International Media Support and the European Union for supporting the development of the policy paper on the protection mechanism for whistleblowers of sexual violence in the mass media. This policy paper aims to encourage press companies to develop standard operating procedures, or SOPs, concerning the prevention and handling of sexual violence targeting journalists.

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## FOREWORD

### The Importance of Newsroom As a Safe Space

Sexual violence against female journalists remains a silent wound in the Indonesian mass media. The cases are real and deep-rooted, yet often met with silence, not due to a lack of evidence, but because the perpetrators are not strangers. They may be senior colleagues, influential sources, or even direct superiors—individuals in positions of power who control the victim’s career.

Research by the Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) in 2023 highlights how power dynamics and patriarchal culture continue to dominate newsrooms. When power intersects with inequality, the victim’s voice is silenced. They are forced to choose between two difficult options: speak up and risk losing their jobs or stay silent to survive in an industry that remains unfriendly to women.

Data from AJI Indonesia in 2023 recorded that out of 89 cases of violence against journalists, at least 13 of the victims were women. The forms of violence varied, from sexual assault and gender-based harassment to doxing and digital attacks.

This is not a personal issue. It is a systemic failure. When the media, as guardians of democracy, cannot protect their own journalists from sexual violence, their integrity and credibility must be called into question, especially when most media companies lack standard procedures for handling such cases, let alone independent teams to receive and address complaints.

An editorial culture that tolerates violence, reinforced by a deeply rooted patriarchal system, dismisses harassment as a trivial or private matter, something to be settled in hushed conversations. As a result, victims are silenced, while perpetrators remain free and unaccountable.

Yet, legally, the protection of victims and whistleblowers is recognized by the state. Law No. 13/2006 on Witness and Victim Protection guarantees that whistleblowers cannot be prosecuted, either criminally or civilly, for testimony given in good faith. Supreme Court Circular Letter No. 4/2011 also reinforces the right to legal protection and fair treatment for whistleblowers.

Unfortunately, legal protection on paper is not enough. In practice, victims and witnesses often face revictimization, psychological distress, and even intimidation. Rather than being protected, they are often sacrificed to preserve the institution's reputation or the perpetrator's position.

This situation prompted AJI to develop the Policy Paper on the Protection Mechanism for Reporters of Sexual Violence in the Mass Media—a concrete effort to push for systemic change, from a culture of silence to a system rooted in justice. Whistleblowers in this context include not only victims, but also witnesses and coworkers who speak up. They must be protected—not punished. Without comprehensive protection, truly free and independent journalism cannot exist.

Freedom of the press cannot stand on fear. Journalists, especially women, must feel safe in carrying out their duties. Sexual violence is not merely a crime against individuals; it is a direct assault on press freedom.

AJI extends its gratitude to International Media Support (IMS) and the European Union for their support of this policy paper, as well as to authors Gadrida Rosdiana Djukana, Rachmawati, and Devi P. Wiharjo, and editors Shinta Maharani and Ansy Damaris Rihi Dara, for their contributions.

The fight to make newsrooms free from violence is not a choice—it is a moral imperative. Without justice for women journalists, there can be no justice for the public they serve.

Thank you.

**Nany Afrida**

President of The Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI)

## I. Introduction

Sexual violence against women journalists remains a largely hidden issue within Indonesia's mass media industry. Many cases are never formally reported, circulating instead as whispers within editorial rooms and journalist communities. Victims often remain silent due to fear, stigma, and a lack of institutional support since press institutions fail to provide meaningful follow-up or protection. At the core of this silence lies a deeply entrenched power imbalance between victims and perpetrators.

The strong patriarchal culture that reinforces male dominance in mass media further discourages victims from speaking up. Perpetrators are frequently direct superiors, senior colleagues, influential sources, or individuals who hold strategic roles in the journalistic ecosystem.

This unequal power structure not only deters victims from reporting but also fosters fear of retaliation, reputational damage, job loss, and restricted access to vital information sources.

This situation underscores the urgent need to establish robust protection mechanisms for whistleblowers, particularly within the patriarchal structures of Indonesia's mass media industry. Whistleblowers, whether victims, witnesses, or colleagues, are individuals who report acts of misconduct or criminal behavior, including sexual violence in the workplace.

Indonesia's legal framework acknowledges and protects whistleblowers through several regulations. Law No. 13/2006 on Witness and Victim Protection guarantees physical, legal, and psychological safeguards for those who report in good faith. It affirms that whistleblowers, along with witnesses and victims, cannot be subject to criminal or civil prosecution for their testimonies.

Additionally, Supreme Court Circular Letter No. 4/2011 reinforces the principle that whistleblowers must not face legal repercussions and are entitled to fair and respectful treatment. Complementing these provisions, the 2011 Joint Regulation—issued by the Ministry of Law and Human Rights, the Attorney General’s Office, the Indonesian National Police, the Corruption Eradication Commission, and the Witness and Victim Protection Agency—offers a more comprehensive framework. It includes guarantees of confidentiality, legal assistance, protective measures, and recovery support for victims when needed.

Another pressing issue is the absence of a standardized system for preventing and responding to sexual violence within press institutions. Most media companies lack clear Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to address such cases, leaving victims without formal channels for reporting their concerns. This institutional gap exacerbates the harm experienced by victims.

A permissive organizational culture that tolerates violence, reinforced by deeply entrenched patriarchal norms, has caused sexual violence to be dismissed as a private matter rather than recognized as a serious violation requiring institutional accountability. As a result, cases are frequently handled discreetly and informally.

Sexual violence has far-reaching impacts of causing psychological trauma, endangering the physical safety and career trajectories of women journalists, and ultimately undermining the integrity of the journalistic profession and media ecosystem. Without meaningful cultural transformation and the establishment of clear, supportive mechanisms, victims are likely to remain silent, while perpetrators continue to act with impunity.

## II. Sexual Violence Situation

### Research by The Regulatory Monitor and Media Regulator (PR2Media) and The Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) Indonesia

PR2Media and AJI Indonesia's study (2023) of 852 women journalists from 34 provinces confirms the emergence of sexual violence:

No	Categories (Experience of Sexual Violence)	Percentage
1	Experienced	82,6%
2	Never experienced	17,4%

Kekerasan terjadi di berbagai ruang yakni luar jaringan atau luring (*offline*) dan daring atau dalam jaringan (*online*):

No	Domains	Percentage
1	Online	37%
2	Offline	26,8%
3	Online and offline	18,2%

## The most common forms of sexual violence

No	Sexual Violence	Percentage
1	Offline body shaming	58,9%
2	Offline catcalling	51,4%
3	Online body shaming	48,6%
4	Online sexual/explicit messages	37,2%
5	Unwanted sexual physical touching	36,3%
6	Abusive sexual comments (offline)	36%
7	Abusive sexual comments (online)	35,1%
8	Being shown sexual content (offline)	27,2%
9	Forced to serve sexual desires	4,8%
10	Forced to have sexual intercourse	2,6%

Body shaming is the act of commenting on or insulting someone's physical appearance, such as body shape, weight, or skin color. Catcalling is a form of street sexual harassment involving sexual comments, including pecking sounds, kissing noises, and whistling.

Research by PR2Media and AJI Indonesia, which found that 82.6% of women journalists have experienced sexual violence, shows that this profession carries significant risks for women. Sexual violence is more than just an individual issue. This finding highlights the systemic failure of mass media institutions to provide a safe and fair workspace, especially for women. Perpetrators of sexual violence remain unchecked because some media organizations lack Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for prevention and response, as well as mechanisms to guarantee protection for journalists.

### Lack of Internal Policies in Press Companies

A 2023 study by PR2Media and AJI Indonesia revealed that over half of the respondents (57.2%) reported that their workplace lacked a Standard Operating

Procedure (SOP) for addressing sexual violence. This was attributed to the general indifference of media companies toward the issue. Additionally, several companies claimed they lacked the necessary human resources and financial capacity to formulate such SOPs.

Conversely, 42.8% indicated that their organizations had SOPs for journalist protection, but these did not specifically address the prevention and handling of sexual violence. Some media managers cited financial constraints as a key obstacle to developing SOPs. Their primary focus remains on maintaining business operations amid the company's ongoing financial difficulties. Furthermore, certain employees within these organizations do not regard sexual violence as a critical issue requiring attention.

All 15 informants interviewed in the study underlined the urgent need to draft SOPs for the prevention and management of sexual violence. They also stressed that developing such policy documents requires technical guidance to ensure proper implementation and to prevent them from becoming merely symbolic.

Research also highlights structural factors that exacerbate sexual violence, including:

- Unequal power dynamics between journalists and their superiors or sources;
- The normalization of violence to preserve relationships with key sources, such as officials and public figures.
- Business and advertising interests that deter media companies from taking action against influential perpetrators, as pursuing legal resolution may negatively affect their business.

According to the research, unequal power relations within editorial structures can manifest in cases where editors-in-chief touch journalists without their consent. Such behavior is often normalized by employees, who perceive the editor-in-chief as a fellow. Similarly, the normalization of sexual violence involving sources is evident during journalistic coverage at the Regional People's Representative Council office, where a council member unexpectedly touched a female journalist.

Sexual violence also involves several police officers. Due to established relationships with these sources, some media outlets are reluctant to pursue legal action, fearing it could disrupt their business, especially given the lengthy legal process.

This reflects the media industry's failure to prevent, address, take action on, and protect victims of sexual violence.

This structural failure is a form of systemic breakdown, which includes:

- Organizational structure: the absence of safe, victim- and witness-friendly reporting mechanisms.
- Work culture: the normalization of sexually abusive behavior both in the newsroom and in the field.
- Business interests and power dynamics: perpetrators in influential positions or with advertising ties are often protected to preserve the company's image and profits.
- Lack of internal policies: the absence of ethical guidelines or protocols for addressing sexual violence.

### **The Position of Victims in Power Relations and Work Systems**

Whistleblowers or victims of sexual violence in the mass media industry often occupy structurally weak and vulnerable positions. Most are contract journalists, freelance contributors, or young journalists who lack influence in editorial decision-making.

According to a 2022 report by AJI Indonesia in collaboration with the Safe Public Space Coalition, the majority of sexual violence victims in the media are women employed as temporary staff, freelance contributors, interns, or contract journalists. Of the 25 recorded cases, 16 involved non-permanent employees.

This highlights how employment status influences victims' ability to report abuse. Lacking job security, access to effective internal complaint mechanisms, and structural support from the editorial team, many victims choose to remain silent.

The research also shows that newcomers to the workforce are often afraid to report incidents due to fear of job loss or stigmatization. Meanwhile, perpetrators frequently hold positions of greater authority within media organizations—such as senior editors, managers, influential sources (including officials), security personnel, or business partners with close ties to the editorial team.

The Legal Aid Institute for the Press (LBH Pers) in its 2023 Year-End Report highlighted that not all media outlets have complaint mechanisms or standard operating procedures (SOPs) for handling sexual violence. This situation makes

it even more difficult for victims—particularly non-permanent employees—to access justice or legal support.

The National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan), in its 2023 Annual Report, also noted that workplaces, including media offices, are among the sites where violence against women occurs, especially in the presence of unequal power dynamics between victim and perpetrator. Key sources or media owners often obstruct case resolution, as many journalists feel unsafe reporting incidents when the perpetrator holds significant business or political influence.

A survey by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) published in 2017 showed that one in two female journalists experienced gender-based violence in the workplace. Female journalists have experienced sexual harassment, psychological abuse, online trolling (the act of someone deliberately posting something online with the aim of disturbing), and other forms of gender-based violence while working.

As many as 48% of women journalists have experienced gender-based violence in their work, and 44% have experienced online harassment.

The most common forms of gender-based violence experienced by female journalists were verbal harassment (63%), psychological harassment (41%), sexual harassment (37%), and economic harassment (21%). Almost 11% had experienced physical violence.

As many as 45% of the perpetrators were people outside the workplace, including sources, politicians, readers, or listeners, while 38% were bosses or supervisors. A total of 39% of the victims experienced harassment by anonymous attackers.

Of the data, as many as two-thirds (66.15%) of women journalists did not file formal complaints. As for those who filed complaints, 84.8% did not believe adequate action had been taken in all cases against the perpetrators. Only 12.3% were satisfied with the results. Another finding is that only 26% of workplaces have policies covering gender-based violence and sexual harassment.

In this environment, whistleblowers face multiple risks, including:

- Revictimization, such as being ostracized, blamed, or disbelieved;
- Professional threats, including loss of access to coverage assignments, career stagnation, or indirect dismissal;

- Lack of secure reporting systems that guarantee confidentiality and protection from retaliation;
- Normalization of abuse by media institutions seeking to maintain business or political ties with perpetrators.

These conditions often stem from the absence of safe reporting mechanisms and internal policies that ensure confidentiality, protection, and justice for whistleblowers. In many media organizations, a culture of silence and tolerance toward sexual violence prevails over the will to acknowledge and address the problem.

Many victims choose not to report incidents out of fear of being disbelieved or negatively judged by colleagues or society. Furthermore, existing internal complaint systems often fail to prioritize victim safety, support, and access to adequate psychological assistance.

Even when Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are in place, they frequently contain significant shortcomings. First, the existing SOPs lack specificity and fail to provide detailed guidance on handling sexual violence cases. Second, they are not operational, making them difficult to implement when incidents occur. Third, they do not clearly outline sanctions for perpetrators, leading to ambiguity in enforcement. Finally, protections for those who report such cases are not clearly defined, creating additional vulnerabilities for the whistleblowers.

### **Gaps in Media Company Policies**

Most media companies that claim to have SOPs for handling sexual violence (42.8%) have not developed them comprehensively and lack a clear structural framework.

The absence of structure refers to the following:

1. No safe, victim-friendly reporting process  
The SOPs do not outline clear steps for victims to report incidents, such as identifying the appropriate recipient of the report or explaining how the internal investigation will be conducted.
2. No dedicated unit or designated personnel to handle cases  
There is no established mechanism for reporting sexual violence. If a case occurs, it is unclear whether the report should be submitted to Human Resources (HR), the ethics team, or a specialized unit for sexual violence.

3. No guarantees of confidentiality and protection for whistleblowers  
The SOPs lack mechanisms to ensure that the victim's identity and the contents of the report remain confidential and are not misused to harm the victim.
4. No clear sanctions for perpetrators  
Many SOPs are merely normative and fail to specify concrete disciplinary actions or sanctions for proven perpetrators of sexual violence.

Existing policies often fail to answer the following questions:

- How should victims report incidents?
- How should reports of sexual violence be handled appropriately, taking into account the confidentiality of identities and transparency in dealing with victims and perpetrators?
- How can companies protect victims and whistleblowers from threats and intimidation?
- How can female journalists be involved in the development and evaluation of SOPs?

### **Whistleblower Protection as a Priority**

AJI Indonesia urges mass media companies to establish safe, effective, and victim-centered mechanisms for reporting sexual violence, with the following key components:

#### 1. Whistleblower Protection Policy

- Develop a written policy that ensures anonymity and protects whistleblowers from retaliation.
- Establish an independent reporting channel outside the editorial chain of command.
- Provide access to legal and psychological support for individuals who report incidents.

#### 2. Safe Reporting Mechanism

- Create a dedicated, independent unit or sexual violence response team separate from company management.
- Offer a secure digital reporting platform with robust privacy protections.

- Ensure the reporting process is confidential and free from risks of identity exposure or data breaches.

### 3. Develop a Practical Checklist for Media Outlets

Media organizations can begin by using the following initial checklist as a foundation for building an effective reporting system:

#### **Komponen Pertanyaan**

- **Written Policy**  
Does the company have clear and explicit SOPs addressing sexual violence and whistleblower protection?
- **Safe Reporting Channels**  
Are there multiple confidential and secure channels available for reporting incidents?
- **Independent Handling Unit**  
Who is responsible for handling reports, and how is their independence from management ensured?
- **Non-Retaliation System**  
What measures or sanctions are in place for those who retaliate against whistleblowers?
- **Counseling and Recovery Support**  
Are whistleblowers provided with access to counseling, legal assistance, and recovery services?
- **Participation of Female Journalists**  
Are victims and other vulnerable groups meaningfully involved in the development of relevant policies?

### 4. Culture and Education in the Editorial Office that Support Victims

- Regular training for all editorial staff on gender equality and justice, as well as anti-sexual violence.
- Promoting institutional values that uphold the principle of victim-based justice.
- Building an editorial culture that is open to reporting and reform.

## III. Analysis of Situation

### Challenges and Obstacles for Whistleblowers

The enactment of Law No. 12 of 2022 on Sexual Violence Crimes marks significant progress in the prevention, handling, and prosecution of sexual violence in Indonesia, where cases continue to rise at an alarming rate.

According to the 2024 Year-End Report by the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan), launched on March 7, 2025, sexual violence was the most frequently reported type of abuse, comprising 26.94% of all reported cases. Psychological violence (26.94%), physical violence (26.78%), and economic violence (9.84%) were also among the most common. In total, Komnas Perempuan received 4,178 complaints in 2024—a 4.48% decrease from the previous year—averaging 16 complaints per day.

Despite the legal framework provided by the Law on Sexual Violence, victims still encounter significant barriers when attempting to report such incidents. Whistleblowers or victims often face a combination of structural, social, and cultural challenges.

Structural challenges refer to systemic obstacles rooted in institutional practices, societal norms, and power dynamics that worsen the position of victims or hinder the effective handling of sexual violence. These challenges extend beyond the actions of perpetrators.

Victims of sexual violence without adequate support often have to go through a complicated process at the police station, hospital, and court. Those who report cases are reluctant to do so because they are not physically or psychologically prepared. Most victims are depressed.

Structural barriers refer to a lack of budgetary support, experts, and facilities, which hinders the handling of cases. In addition, not everyone understands the mechanisms for reporting sexual violence and the obligation to fulfill the rights of victims.

Socio-cultural barriers in patriarchal societies (which prioritize or privilege men) cause victims of sexual violence to experience double violence. Some people do not use a victim-centered perspective, thereby perpetuating stigma and discrimination. Victims are reluctant to speak out for fear of being blamed.

Social structures dominated by sexism and traditional views of masculinity justify violence and blame victims. The long-term impact is that victims experience depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and anxiety. Victims prefer not to report cases of sexual violence against them for fear of threats and stigma.

Additionally, resource and structural barriers can hinder the enforcement of the law and the recovery of victims. Victims often feel ashamed and afraid to report incidents due to stigma, discrimination, and threats from perpetrators. The legal obstacles faced by the whistleblower, such as differing interpretations of the law and the difficulty of proving the case, prolong the resolution process. This lengthy and complex legal journey often leads to exhaustion and discourages victims from pursuing justice.

According to the SOP Guidelines for the Prevention and Handling of Sexual Violence, a whistleblower may include the victim or eyewitnesses who saw, heard, or knew about the incident. Under the Law on Sexual Violence Crimes (TPKS Law), a witness is defined as someone who can provide information about the incident—whether they saw, heard, experienced it directly, or possess relevant knowledge. Witnesses may include victims, eyewitnesses, or other informed parties.

The obstacles and challenges faced by witnesses are generally similar to those encountered by victims of sexual violence. These include:

1. First, stigma, shame, embarrassment, and lack of evidence. Many victims keep their pain to themselves for long periods, unable to report the incident due to insufficient evidence. Even when evidence exists—such as electronic documents—it may be damaged. Recovering such evidence often requires costly repairs, such as fixing a mobile phone, which victims may not be able to afford due to limited financial resources.

Witnesses who are aware of the incident often remain silent out of fear. Some are unwilling to disclose facts because of their personal relationship with the perpetrator, fearing that their testimony could harm their friendships or social standing.

In sexual violence cases, valid evidence is defined under Article 184 of the Indonesian Criminal Procedure Code (KUHAP), which includes: witness testimony, expert statements, documentary evidence, the defendant's statement, and other evidence recognized by TPKS Law. The law broadens the definition of admissible evidence to include electronic information, electronic documents, and physical objects directly linked to the criminal act, as specified in Articles 24 and 25.

The progressive development of the TPKS Law lies in its recognition that witness and victim statements can now be used as valid evidence to establish the defendant's guilt. This is permitted as long as the statement is supported by at least one other piece of admissible evidence and the judge is convinced that a crime occurred and the defendant is guilty.

2. Second, victims often fear losing their jobs, income, or positions, and may face threats of dismissal. The fear of stigma can further harm victims by damaging their reputation and hindering their careers. Victims also fear retaliation from the perpetrator and may encounter rejection or hostility in the workplace, compounded by a culture of victim blaming—where victims are disbelieved, blamed, or belittled for the incident. Their position becomes even more vulnerable when the perpetrator holds power within a media company that lacks clear SOPs for addressing sexual violence.

In such environments, victims are often seen as the cause of the violence, leading to isolation and mistrust from colleagues.

3. Third, victims frequently do not receive adequate support from their workplaces. In fact, Law No. 13 of 2003 on Manpower mandates the protection of workers from violence and sexual harassment in the workplace. Employers are responsible for developing prevention and response policies and must take corrective action when incidents occur.

The PR2Media and AJI Indonesia study, titled *Sexual Violence Against Female Journalists in Indonesia*, surveyed 852 female journalists across 34 provinces between September and October 2022. The research explored their

experiences with various forms of sexual violence, both online and offline, in the workplace and the field while carrying out journalistic duties.

AJI Indonesia and PR2Media submitted the findings to the Press Council on Wednesday, January 11, 2023, intending to encourage media companies to implement internal policies for the prevention and handling of sexual violence. These policies may take the form of standard operating procedures (SOPs), company regulations, or collective bargaining agreements (CBAs).

Establishing clear workplace rules for addressing sexual violence can provide a sense of security for whistleblowers, including both victims and witnesses. According to the report, the media company where the whistleblowers are employed and the affiliated organization protecting the whistleblowers are expected to take responsibility for processing and handling the case.

Currently, many provisions of the Labor Law have been replaced by the Job Creation Law. However, Law No. 13 of 2003, particularly Article 86(1) (b) and (c), still guarantees every worker the right to protection of their morals and decency, as well as treatment that upholds human dignity and religious values—implicitly including protection from violence and sexual harassment.

4. Fourth, the absence of a clear reporting mechanism leaves victims and witnesses uncertain about where or how to report incidents.
5. Fifth, most workplaces lack specific regulations that protect journalists from sexual violence. When incidents occur, there are no policies ensuring the confidentiality of whistleblowers or access to protective measures such as safe houses.
6. Sixth, there is a widespread lack of understanding among media leaders, management, staff, and journalists regarding violence against women and the concept of gender justice. Sexual violence is a manifestation of gender injustice, and this lack of awareness results in a failure to adopt a victim-centered perspective.

Regarding shame, fear, and embarrassment, victims and witnesses have often faced secondary victimization when reporting cases of violence involving fellow journalists, sources, media company leaders, or other employees. Victims are blamed. People develop the opinion that the victim initially consented to the relationship, but when the perpetrator no longer served their interests, they acted as if they were the victim.

Victims are sometimes seen as seeking sympathy or personal gain when they speak out, leading to further emotional harm and secondary victimization. As a result, many choose to remain silent and carry their pain alone, which prevents them from receiving the support and treatment they need. The stigma associated with shame also persists—victims who speak up are often bullied and become the subject of gossip.

Speaking out about sexual violence and reporting it is not shameful. It is an act of courage—a rightful effort to seek justice and uphold the truth. Filing a report is not an attempt to disgrace anyone, as is often wrongly assumed. Victims are not violating anyone’s rights or committing any crime by coming forward.

For journalists who experience sexual violence, reporting the incident to editors-in-chief or company leaders is particularly difficult due to the subordinate-superior power dynamic. This imbalance creates a risk of intimidation or threats of dismissal. Power relations in cases of sexual violence within media companies arise from an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim, which enables the occurrence of sexual violence. This factor often stems from hierarchies related to a person’s social, economic, and gender positions.

This power makes victims vulnerable and hinders their ability to resist or report the incident. The hierarchy of superiors—such as editors-in-chief, managing editors, editors, company leaders, or senior colleagues—creates an environment where power is concentrated. AJI’s case-handling experiences show that perpetrators of sexual violence are often individuals who hold more power within media companies.

Gender inequality further reinforces these power dynamics, with men occupying more dominant roles. Victims, particularly those who are economically dependent, are often reluctant to report due to fear of losing their jobs—an outcome that could affect their social and family lives. They also fear threats, as perpetrators may exploit their positions to manipulate or intimidate victims.

If victims resist, they risk losing their employment. In various AJI journalist discussion groups on gender justice, some journalists have expressed these concerns, stating that fear of dismissal discourages them from reporting and raises anxiety about future job prospects.

The core issue is that many media companies lack adequate systems and mechanisms to protect journalists. The responsibility to safeguard journalists

from sexual violence does not rest solely with media companies but with all stakeholders.

The Chairperson of AJI Indonesia for the 2021–2024 term, Sasmito, said on World Press Freedom Day, May 29, 2023, that the state shares equal responsibility with media companies in protecting journalists. He stressed the importance of a holistic national protection mechanism for journalists' work.

The problem, however, is that even when media companies have systems and mechanisms in place to protect journalists, implementation is often weak. These mechanisms are frequently treated as mere formalities, used by institutions to present an image of responsibility in preventing and handling sexual violence. Some female journalists have shared that certain media outlets view sexual violence as a private issue between the perpetrator and the victim—dismissing it as a “below-the-waist” or personal matter.

Media companies often avoid involvement, seeing such cases as less important than producing news. Many media leaders, managers, and employees lack a gender-sensitive perspective, leading them to normalize sexual violence. For example, sexist remarks, an instance of verbal sexual violence, are often dismissed as harmless.

Normalization also occurs in response to those with a history of experiencing or witnessing violence in their families or communities. They consider violence to be normal.

Victims are also afraid to report sexual violence because editors often view it as unimportant, fabricated, or a lie. When sexual violence is seen as normal, victims hesitate to report it because their experiences are dismissed as trivial, insignificant, or merely a common joke.

AJI Indonesia addresses sexual violence cases within the organization through an Ad Hoc Team. The team encountered several obstacles involving witnesses who knew of the incidents. During the investigation, multiple witnesses were unwilling to disclose the facts because the perpetrator held a leadership position at the media company where they worked.

They remained silent and viewed the relationship between the editor-in-chief and the journalist as a personal matter. Fear of losing their jobs prevented them from reporting the violence. Witnesses were reluctant to speak out, believing the issue was private and not their concern.

Some witnesses also chose not to report the violence because they owed a debt of gratitude to the perpetrator. They believed that, because the perpetrator had previously helped them, they had no reason to intervene when problems involving the perpetrator arose.

This situation makes it difficult for victims to report cases of sexual violence to their employers and the organizations that oversee them. She is unsure whether the organization she works for will process the report because she feels that the evidence in the form of witness statements is very weak.

The facts presented above align with the findings of the Women in News (WIN) survey, a program established by the World Association of News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) in collaboration with City University of London. The program promotes gender equality, diversity, and inclusivity in the media.

A total of 494 people in five countries in Southeast Asia—Indonesia, Myanmar, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam—were respondents. The findings show that one in three women media workers experience sexual violence in the workplace. Unfortunately, only a few dare to report the cases of violence they have experienced.

The survey, released on Wednesday, January 26, 2022, found that verbal abuse was the most common form of violence, with 45% of female respondents reporting it. This figure rises to 67% among non-binary individuals. Most victims choose to remain silent and are reluctant to report incidents to the office management.

Only 15% of victims dare to report their cases. One of the main factors is the fear of losing their jobs, fear of not being believed, and fear of retaliation.

The survey revealed a reluctance to report incidents due to the absence of reporting mechanisms for sexual violence within media or press organizations. This situation is exacerbated by differing understandings of sexual violence between employees and management.

Additionally, 84% of media organization executives interviewed stated that there were no threats of sexual violence in their institutions. This reflects a normalization of sexist behavior, where pornographic jokes and inappropriate physical contact, such as touching breasts and buttocks, are perceived as normal or signs of familiarity.

## **Work Culture, Editorial Structure, and Resistance to Reporting**

The mass media industry today cannot be separated from its historical roots. It has long been male-dominated, which strongly influences its work culture. In journalism—spanning daily newspapers, online platforms, and electronic media—the industry has been shaped by high professional mobility, demanding workloads, strict deadlines, and undefined working hours that can extend up to 24 hours a day.

Journalists face constant challenges in carrying out their work. This perception is part of the social construction that fosters a sexist work environment, where journalism is seen as a male-dominated field. Female journalists remain vulnerable to various forms of violence, intimidation, and other obstacles, prompting some to leave the profession.

Data from the Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) shows that about 60% of female journalists employed on a contract basis often lack workplace safety guarantees. The limited number of women in top media positions reflects the low level of female leadership within media companies.

The social constructs that have flourished in society have led to gender bias in the journalism profession. Not all media workers have a clear view of equal relations between women and men. Some people follow patriarchal ways of thinking in their journalistic work.

Women are seen as weak, with low mobility, unable to cope with the tight deadlines of today's digital age, which prioritizes speed. News must reach readers immediately, while female journalists are seen as unable to leave their husbands and children. This is a stereotype that reflects gender inequality. Women are only seen as people who are responsible for domestic affairs, caregiving, and nursing.

Regarding the media being a male-dominated industry, Senior Journalist at Kompas Daily Maria Hartiningsih stated in an interview with Jurnal Perempuan in issue 28 titled "Women and Media" that the media is a male-dominated field, a path that is inherently male-dominated. The mass media is a male-dominated world, thus relying more on male labor.

Some people overlook the contributions of Roehana Koeddoes, Herawati Diah, and Threes Nio, who have shaped Indonesian journalism. What Maria Hartiningsih described reflects the daily reality of the Indonesian media and press industry.

The results of a small group discussion among female editors-in-chief entitled “Supporting Women’s Leadership in the Media” to commemorate International Women’s Day on March 8, 2020, illustrate how a strong patriarchal culture creates a double burden for women. This double burden arises from a patriarchal cultural system that perpetuates gender inequality.

In a patriarchal culture, men dominate the public sphere, while women are confined to the domestic sphere or the home and private spaces. Additionally, many management and editorial teams are dominated by masculinity and are not gender-friendly. Pressure and working hours are common examples of gender-unfriendly practices.

Work environments that predominantly employ men often result in policies that are unfriendly to women. Gender-biased management also often assigns women to cover “soft and fragrant” topics such as lifestyle or beauty columns.

Another issue is the digital disruption affecting the future of journalism. Digital disruption has brought significant changes to long-established work patterns in editorial offices. As a result, journalists’ working hours have become longer. Additionally, the competition to be the fastest media outlet in delivering news has intensified work pressure, as journalists often race against time.

Unfortunately, these long working hours and high demands have not been matched by improvements in incentives. This has diminished the interest of young workers, including women, in joining media companies.

Additionally, there are challenges in managing young human resources (Gen Z). Management and editorial teams face difficulties in managing Gen Z workers—those born between 1995 and 2010. If the office lacks flexibility and does not adapt to the needs of these young workers, then the editorial team may have to face the consequence of losing them.

Recommendations from the focus group discussion include promoting women’s leadership in media by creating a family-friendly environment, implementing gender-neutral policies, establishing protocols governing journalist safety, and protecting female journalists from threats of physical or verbal sexual violence, as well as addressing cases of sexual violence.

Patriarchal culture sustains male dominance in editorial structures by giving men the sole opportunity to advance and occupy strategic positions in the editorial

office. Men hold key positions and serve as decision-makers. The number of female journalists in leadership roles is very small. This limits the mobility of married women in building their careers and shaping women-friendly policies, including SOPs for the prevention, handling, and prosecution of sexual violence.

A harsh, masculine culture is not free from sexual violence. Media organizations, particularly in editorial departments, have yet to establish a work culture that is free from sexual violence. Not all media organizations and editorial departments have SOPs governing the prevention, handling, and prosecution of sexual violence. Mass media companies have also not developed an egalitarian work culture that promotes equality between male and female journalists, or between leaders and subordinates.

Mass media companies do not provide trauma counseling services for journalists after covering sexual violence, domestic violence, natural disasters, traffic accidents, or demonstrations. The hegemony of masculinity in press organizations, which grants men more opportunities to occupy strategic positions, also affects the production of gender-biased news. Companies likewise lack policies that protect women from various forms of violence.

The editorial team's bias toward victims or whistleblowers in a weak position is seen as disruptive to editorial work, bringing shame and creating a negative image of the company, which leads to resistance to victim reports. Cases of sexual violence are often concealed, settled informally, or ignored and treated as non-issues.

Gender-based violence in media companies was highlighted in a study by the Indonesian Cyber Media Association (AMSI), PR2Media, and ABC International Development. This study assessed gender equality in AMSI member media companies across five dimensions: individual values, internal culture and daily practices, gender-based policies, access to resources, and sexual violence both offline and online.

The research, involving 277 respondents (editorial and non-editorial staff) from 51 media companies, showed a gender equality score of 44.3 out of a maximum of 65 for the five dimensions. This indicates a fairly good score, but serious efforts are needed across various dimensions to achieve ideal gender equality, particularly in the dimensions of gender-based policies (scoring 9 out of a maximum of 18) and internal culture and daily practices (scoring 5.45 out of a maximum of 9).

Meanwhile, based on the results of the focus group discussion, all participants stated that written regulations in their companies were still very minimal, so there

had been no efforts to promote gender equality and prevent gender-based violence. The participants also highlighted the potential problems if the perpetrators of violence are editors-in-chief and company leaders. Media companies face the challenge of developing gender equality SOPs or written commitments to ensure gender equality.

## IV. Policy Review

The results of AJI Indonesia's online discussion on Monday, March 8, 2021, showed that many mass media companies do not yet have SOPs or guidelines for the prevention of sexual violence, handling of sexual violence, and victim recovery. At the time, AJI Indonesia Secretary-General Ika Ningtyas stated that media companies had not taken progressive steps to create a safer workplace for female media workers. Female journalists face challenges when conducting journalistic activities in the field.

A study by AJI and PR2Media in September–October 2022 found that most media companies in Indonesia do not have SOPs for handling sexual violence against female journalists, despite the ongoing occurrence of sexual violence in media workplaces. The study noted that 57.2% of female journalist respondents out of 852 respondents across 34 provinces reported experiencing sexual violence.

Sexual violence against female journalists occurs both inside and outside the office, both online and offline. Despite the high number of cases, media companies have not prioritized the creation of SOPs for the prevention and handling of sexual violence. The study stated that their companies did not have SOPs for handling sexual violence against journalists.

The absence of SOPs neglects the victims' rights to receive treatment. Mass media companies have not had mechanisms in place to ensure that perpetrators are punished in order to satisfy victims' sense of justice. In fact, victims must be protected by law, and their rights must be guaranteed. Articles 68, 69, and 70 of the TPKS Law guarantee the rights of sexual violence whistleblowers, including the right to comprehensive handling, protection, and recovery, such as the right to information, legal services, psychological support, health services, and economic recovery.

Without SOPs for the prevention and handling of sexual violence, the commitment of mass media companies to creating a safe and violence-free work environment is questionable. This affects the professional image of mass media companies and the sustainability of whistleblowers' work. The absence of a protection mechanism through SOPs makes women journalists and victims vulnerable to exploitation.

Perpetrators with more authority can commit sexual violence without prevention, handling, and action within media companies. Victims of sexual violence do not dare to report because they are afraid of being fired, ashamed, and threatened. Additionally, victims do not know where to report.

The organization's weak commitment to preventing, addressing, and punishing sexual violence discourages victims from reporting incidents. As a result, victims suffer from depression and have attempted suicide multiple times. This situation highlights the importance of specific regulations to protect women from sexual violence in media company workplaces, using a feminist theory approach. This theory is relevant for protecting female journalists from sexual violence. The guidelines can be based on feminist legal theory and feminist criminology.

These theories analyze legal systems and social structures that are biased against women. In addition, they provide a legal framework and an approach that are more just and protective of victims of violence. Feminist legal theory critically examines the law from a woman's perspective, identifies gender bias in the legal system, and seeks to create laws that are fairer and more aligned with women's interests.

Its relevance to women journalists lies in its contribution to the formulation of legislation that protects women from sexual violence. An example is the TPKS Law, which aims to strengthen legal protection for victims of gender-based violence. There are also SOPs on sexual violence in the press industry that aim to protect women in the workplace.

Feminist criminology places gender as a key factor in understanding crime and the justice system. This approach expands the understanding of sexual violence by highlighting the structural and cultural aspects of law enforcement policies.

Its relevance for female journalists lies in helping to identify and address factors that contribute to the revictimization of women, including the risk of violence. This perspective promotes prevention efforts, public education, better access for victims, and improvements to a responsive and fair law enforcement system.

Feminist criminology provides a theoretical foundation for understanding the root causes of sexual violence, namely gender inequality and patriarchal culture. This theory emphasizes the importance of listening to and understanding the experiences of victims of sexual violence. Therefore, SOPs must ensure that victims' voices are heard and their needs are met, including access to legal, psychological, and social support.

Based on these two feminist theories, all stakeholders must urge media companies to establish SOPs for sexual violence. The goal is to provide a clear framework for prevention, handling, and recovery for victims. Additionally, it ensures perpetrators face consequences and supports the creation or maintenance of a positive image for media companies free from sexual violence.

### **Benefits of SOPs on preventing and handling sexual violence in media companies:**

<b>A guideline for media companies</b>	SOPs serve as guidelines for media companies to prevent and handle sexual violence in the workplace. They become reference for prevention, handling, prosecution, and victim recovery.
<b>Creating a safe and inclusive workspace</b>	Media companies ensure a safe and supportive work environment for journalists and media workers in carrying out their activities.
<b>Victim protection and legal certainty</b>	SOPs provide assurance and certainty that cases of sexual violence are taken seriously by companies, facilitating reporting mechanisms that are safe, accessible, and confidential. In addition, SOPs ensure that victims receive justice through the process of prosecution and punishment of perpetrators.
<b>Victim recovery</b>	The SOP facilitates the physical and psychological recovery of victims of sexual violence by providing safe accommodation and the necessary support.

**Maintaining  
business  
reputation of  
media companies**

Effective and fair handling of cases of sexual violence can prevent negative impacts on the business reputation of media companies. The SOP supports the sustainability and credibility of media companies.

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**Strengthening  
the system to  
produce quality  
journalism**

A good SOP contributes to the creation of a healthy and high-quality media business ecosystem, including strengthening the system for producing and distributing quality journalism.

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**Demonstrating  
the company's  
commitment**

The existence of SOPs demonstrates the company's seriousness in eradicating sexual violence and creating a workplace free from violence.

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## **Internal Protection Mechanisms for Victims of Sexual Violence in Media Companies**

Media companies play a central role in creating a safe and violence-free work environment, particularly regarding sexual violence, and in ensuring that whistleblowers feel protected when reporting cases that affect them. Clear policies within media organizations can provide victims with the assurance needed to report incidents without fear or shame.

Whistleblowers of sexual violence in press companies, like those in other workplaces, are protected by Law No. 12 of 2022 (TPKS Law), which regulates victims' rights to handling, protection, and recovery. IDN Times Editor-in-Chief Uni Lubis stated that IDN Times published SOPs on Sexual Harassment and Violence in the workplace on February 1, 2022.

The seven pillars of content at IDN Times provide guidelines on how content is produced. These seven pillars are gender equality, anti-sexual harassment, anti-bullying, unity in racial and ethnic diversity, unity in religious diversity, anti-stereotyping, and redefining the meaning of "beauty."

"The seven pillars of IDN Times content are the core of the journalistic code of ethics that applies at IDN Times," said Uni Lubis, as quoted by KBR Media at the online launch of the Module and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the Prevention and Handling of Gender-Based Violence for media companies by the Indonesian Online Media Association (AMSI) on Tuesday, July 25, 2024.

## **Review of the Press Council's SOP Guidelines for the Prevention and Handling of Sexual Violence**

The Press Council has developed SOP guidelines for the prevention of sexual violence for press companies. These SOPs are a requirement for selecting and approving media or press company registrations, helping to detect “fake” media outlets that emerge for specific or temporary interests. The problem is that awareness among media management of the need to develop SOPs remains low. Research shows that the majority of press companies have not prioritized the development of SOPs for the prevention and handling of sexual violence. This indicates that the media industry has been slow to respond to gender issues.

### **Support for SOP Development**

It is undeniable that resource constraints require media companies to seek support in developing SOPs for the prevention and handling of sexual violence. Not all media companies have sufficient resources. Some have general rules for journalist protection, but have not yet specifically addressed the prevention and handling of sexual violence.

### **Review of the SOP Development Guide**

The points offered in this SOP guide are:

1. Presenting data on the high rate of sexual violence according to research by AJI and PR2Media, which found that 82.6% of female journalists in Indonesia have experienced sexual violence. These findings demonstrate the urgent need to develop and implement appropriate SOPs. In fact, not all media companies have a safe complaint mechanism for victims of sexual violence in media companies. According to the research, 57.2% of respondents stated that their companies do not yet have specific SOPs for handling sexual violence.
2. Explaining the need for support for Indonesian media companies in developing and implementing SOPs for the prevention and handling of sexual violence. Media companies need to involve female journalists, as the most vulnerable group, in the development of SOPs.
3. Explaining the importance of evaluating media companies that already have SOPs for the prevention and handling of sexual violence to see the progress and challenges faced.
4. Explaining the importance of a legal basis or state policy on the prevention and handling of sexual violence.

5. Explaining the importance of protecting sexual violence whistleblowers, namely, victims and witnesses. This protection is regulated in the SOP for the prevention and handling of sexual violence. The SOP for the prevention and handling of sexual violence should include a safe reporting process that is victim-friendly. The rules should explain in detail the steps that victims and witnesses must take when filing a report.

For example, a system must guarantee the confidentiality of the whistleblower's identity to prevent misuse or efforts to discredit them. This system must ensure that the whistleblower's data is not disclosed, either in writing or verbally. Mass media companies must also prioritize the safety of whistleblowers from threats and intimidation. In handling sexual violence cases, press companies need a strong support system to help victims and witnesses recover from trauma, including access to psychological counseling services.

In addition, SOPs must clearly define the units or individuals specifically appointed to handle such cases, with a clear division of responsibilities. For instance, reports of sexual violence should be directed to a designated department within the media company's structure. Another important aspect is transparency in the case-handling process, especially toward victims, to ensure justice. Communicating decisions or sanctions against perpetrators is necessary for victims. Media companies must take a firm stance by imposing sanctions if the perpetrator is proven guilty.

### **Priority Protection for Whistleblowers**

It is important to encourage media companies in Indonesia to develop a safe, effective, and victim-friendly system for reporting sexual violence.

Whistleblower Protection Policy:

1. Develop a written policy that guarantees anonymity and prohibits retaliation against whistleblowers.
2. Set up an independent reporting channel outside the editorial structure.
3. Provide legal and psychological assistance to whistleblowers.

The TPKS Law No. 12 of 2022 and the Press Council Regulation No. 2 of 2024 on Guidelines for the Prevention and Handling of Sexual Violence in the Press provide the legal foundation for developing SOPs. These regulations serve as the basis

for media companies to create SOPs for the prevention and handling of sexual violence. The rights of victims and witnesses under the TPKS Law are based on their needs, safety, and comfort. Several articles in the TPKS Law regulate the rights of victims, including the right to handling, protection, and recovery.

The right to handling includes access to information regarding the entire process and the outcomes of the case. Article 67 guarantees the victim's right to obtain documents related to case outcomes. Article 68 outlines the right to legal services. Article 69 regulates the right to psychological support. Article 71 guarantees access to health services, including examinations, medical procedures, and treatment. Article 71 also affirms the right to services and facilities tailored to the victim's specific needs.

### **Principles for Handling Sexual Violence:**

1. Handle sexual violence using the principle of non-harm. SOPs need to regulate handling mechanisms that do not make victims feel guilty, ashamed, uncomfortable, or hurt. All services or assistance must be based on considerations of minimizing the lowest risk and danger or threats that will target victims.
2. The principle of the right to information. All witnesses and victims must be provided with information about their rights, available services, legal proceedings, case developments, company decisions, court rulings if the case is brought to court, and the provision of interpreters appropriate to their needs. Information is provided from the beginning to the final stage.

In the victim recovery process, there is a principle of support and empowerment to ensure that victims regain their self-confidence and ability to decide what is best for themselves, and subsequently become agents of change for their surrounding communities.

3. Principle of empathy. The handling of sexual violence emphasizes openness in understanding and delving into the victim's issues. Report recipients are required to validate the victim's feelings before examining the facts for evidence.
4. 4. Needs-Based Approach. This approach actively involves victims in the information-gathering process and ensures they have meaningful access to information. Victims play an active role in the assistance process, from

planning to implementation. Additionally, victims must be empowered to participate in all aspects of planning and handling.

5. Inclusivity. This principle fosters an environment in which victims feel accepted and valued throughout the assistance process, regardless of their physical or psychological condition.
6. Upholding the Ethics of Assistance. These ethical standards include:
  - Victims are treated fairly and humanely.
  - Victims are not judged.
  - Victims are not discriminated against during the handling process for any reason.
  - The victim's wishes are not followed if they pose a risk to themselves.
  - All interventions must be based on the victim's consent.
  - Information from the victim must not be hidden or exploited for personal or group interests.
  - Meetings with other parties must be conducted only with the victim's consent.
  - The accompanying person must use language that is easy for the victim to understand and refrain from using harsh words or insults.
  - The accompanying person must not impose their will on the victim.
  - The victim's privacy must be maintained, and the victim must not be exploited physically, economically, or in any other way.
  - The victim's photos, photos with the victim, or details of the victim's case must not be shared for exposure or publication in the media or on social media.
  - The accompanying person must have the victim's perspective. Repeating stories of sexual violence can be burdensome for victims. Victims' testimonies should be taken only once, for example by recording them, so that victims do not have to tell their stories repeatedly.

Criteria for Recruiting Accompanying Persons:

- A thorough understanding of the principles and ethics of accompaniment.
- Must be trained in at least basic counseling skills.
- Must demonstrate gender sensitivity and an inclusive approach.
- Must receive reports with an understanding that the victim's feelings are valid.

The SOP guidelines should take into account intersectional factors that may increase a victim's vulnerability beyond gender identity alone. The SOP must also emphasize the provision of emergency assistance and include recommendations for follow-up services. Implementation of the SOP is a long-term process that requires support from the Press Council.

The SOP guidelines should also carefully consider the use of term "survivor" and prioritize the use of "victim." The distinction lies in their relation to the harmful event: "victim" generally refers to someone who is still experiencing suffering or repeated violence, whereas "survivor" refers to someone who has endured the experience and is in the process of recovery.

## V. Case Studies on the Implementation of SOPs for Handling Sexual Violence in Media Companies and Organizations

The implementation of SOPs on sexual violence in mass media and organizations is not merely about producing formal documents. It also involves internal processes that reflect shared values, address specific needs, and demonstrate a genuine commitment to victim safety and justice. The following three case studies illustrate how SOPs can be developed and implemented as an expression of institutional responsibility, offering valuable references for media companies and other organizations aiming to establish similar systems.

### **Konde.co**

Konde.co, established on March 8, 2016, is a media outlet that champions the perspectives of women and minorities, representing Indonesia's diverse identities. Since 2022, Konde has had a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the prevention and handling of sexual violence, recognizing the importance of creating a safe space within the editorial environment. This awareness became the foundation for developing internal policies, which were implemented across all aspects of the outlet's operations. A safe editorial space is achieved through a solid support system from the entire team, with all members sharing the same understanding of the importance of preventing sexual violence. Annual evaluations and policy updates are conducted to align with current developments. The shared commitment to these values among colleagues strengthens Konde's dedication to maintaining a safe work environment. Beyond implementing internal policies, Konde frequently engages in advocacy on sexual violence issues outside the organization. These efforts have earned public recognition, including an award from the National Commission on Violence Against Women in the category "Pioneer in Building a Safe Space from Violence" during the Commission's 26th anniversary celebration.

## Project Multatuli

The development of SOPs on sexual violence at Project Multatuli began with a strong awareness of the need to create a safe and equitable workplace. The process was participatory, involving all editorial staff, including women and members of gender and sexual minority groups. By referring to national legal frameworks—such as the 1945 Constitution, the Human Rights Act, and the Act on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women—the SOP became part of the organization’s core value formation, not merely an administrative formality.

Following its ratification on March 8, 2022, significant changes emerged in how the editorial team responded to reports. A rapid response mechanism was established, including the formation of a special team within 24 hours of receiving a report. Victims are given space to express their needs and are supported through internal accompaniment. The procedure fosters trust, particularly because reports can be submitted anonymously. The SOP is dynamic, continuously evaluated and updated as needed. In practice, Project Multatuli demonstrates that structural and sustainable openness and victim-centeredness are achievable.

## IDN Times

Unlike Project Multatuli, whose SOPs emerged from an internal participatory initiative, IDN Times developed its SOPs in response to a rise in violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. The SOPs were first launched in February 2022 and later updated in March 2024 to include provisions on Online Gender-Based Violence. This revision reflects the organization’s responsiveness to evolving challenges.

The decision to develop SOPs aligns with the editorial team’s core values, known as the Seven Pillars of Content, which emphasize equality and anti-harassment. IDN Times further strengthened the SOPs by involving internal psychologists to support affected staff. By embedding these editorial values into its organizational structure, the SOP functions not only as a procedural guide but also as a reflection of the company’s commitment to team protection. Public recognition of these efforts reinforces IDN Times’ role as a pioneer in implementing formal policies to address sexual violence in digital media.

Aspects	Project Multatuli	IDN Times	Konde.co
Background in SOP Development	Internal initiatives based on values and the need for a safe workplace.	Response to the surge in cases during the pandemic and the value of the “Seven Pillars of Content”	Konde, as a media that focuses on raising the issue of women and marginalized groups, realizes the importance of building a safe space in the editorial environment. This awareness prompted Konde to formulate internal policies in the form of SOPs which were then implemented in all lines of media work.
Participation in SOP Development	Consultation with the entire internal team, including women and gender minorities.	The internal team compiles with editorial values in mind.	The development of SOPs involves active participation from the management level, including co-founders, as well as the entire internal team.
Time of SOP Approval	March 8, 2022.	Launched on February 1, 2022, updated on March 1, 2022 (with coverage of Gender-Based Online Violence)	May 1, 2022
SOP Coverage	All staff, contributors, partners, and sources.	Employees & non-employees	Staff, editors, and contributors in regions.
Reporting Flow	Receive anonymous reports and take action within 24 hours.	Reporting channel with comprehensive reporting procedures.	The reporting mechanism is set up via email to the person in charge and the Human Resource Development. They will handle the report quickly with the small number of Konde team members.
Special Approach	A continuously updated “living document” for internal assistance.	Internal psychologist, formal and public SOPs.	Prioritizing victim assistance, including the provision of safe houses, psychologist services, recovery support, and mitigation measures.

Aspects	Project Multatuli	IDN Times	Konde.co
Impact or Changes after SOP Implementation	Enhance internal trust, accelerate response times, and strengthen organizational values.	Become a pioneer in formal SOPs on sexual violence and gain public recognition.	Safe space in the newsroom is made possible through a solid support system from the entire team. The whole team has the same understanding of the importance of sexual violence prevention.
Evaluation and Revision	Periodic evaluation and open to revision.	Updated to include coverage of Online Gender-Based Violence, keeping pace with developments.	Evaluation or policy is carried out every year to adjust to the development of the latest conditions. The common frequency of struggle values among coworkers is the foundation that strengthens Konde's commitment to building a safe work environment.
Inspirational Function	Becoming a technical reference and benchmark for similar media	Serving as an example of editorial values and professionalism.	In addition to implementing policies internally, Konde also contributes to the assistance of sexual violence issues outside the organization. These efforts have received public recognition, including an award from Komnas Perempuan in the category of "Pioneer in Building Safe Spaces from Violence" on Komnas Perempuan's 26th anniversary.

## Essential Elements in the Internal Policy (SOP) on Handling Sexual Violence

For an internal policy to truly protect and impact, the following mandatory elements must be included:

No	Elements	Description
1	<b>Definition of Sexual Violence</b>	Use the definition of the TPKS Law and expand it to include forms of violence and power relations.
2	<b>Principle of Non-Discrimination</b>	Do not differentiate between gender, sexual orientation, working position, and employment status (contract or permanent employee).
3	<b>Open Reporting Flow</b>	Accommodate reporting by victims, witnesses, or coworkers.
4	<b>Multi-Gender Handling Team</b>	At least two people with diverse gender backgrounds and perspectives.
5	<b>Case Handling Procedure</b>	Reporting procedure - assessment - investigation -sanction recommendation
6	<b>Support for Victims</b>	Psychologist, legal counsel, and restoration of work relations.
7	<b>Types of Internal Sanctions</b>	Tiered: reprimand - suspension - termination of employment.
8	<b>Education &amp; Prevention</b>	Regular training and integrating anti-sexual violence attitudes for all staff, employees, and contributors.
9	<b>Monitoring and Evaluation</b>	Review the policy every 6 months or a year. Involve victims and communities.
10	<b>Living Document</b>	The policy can be adjusted based on evolving social dynamics and feedback from the field.

## Optional Checklist for Press Companies

No	Checklist	Yes	No
1	The newsroom has a written SOP, and it is published internally.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Reporting channels are available and easily accessible to employees and contributors.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Whistleblowers are protected from retaliation by supervisors or other workers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Victims have the option of assistance (psychologist or legal expert).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Case handling teams have gender-sensitive training.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	There are strict sanctions against perpetrators and guarantees for victims' rights.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	The company holds regular education on sexual violence for staff and editors.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Policies are revised and evaluated regularly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	The company provides space for young or freelance journalists to access the same protection.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	SOP implementers are trained not to force the victim to recount the incident.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	SOP implementers understand the trauma-impact approach for the victim.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	The victim is allowed to choose her own advocate when filing the report.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

This checklist can be used by editors to ensure that SOPs for dealing with sexual violence are fully and inclusively implemented:

This policy paper also highlights good practices from several media outlets and non-governmental organizations that have developed and implemented their own SOPs. Konde.co, Project Multatuli, and IDN Times, have created SOPs not merely as formal documents, but as living policies shaped through participatory processes. These SOPs emphasize on justice for victims and are actively implementing the SOPs into their programs and organizational culture.

### Principle of the Victim’s Perspective

Every stage of preventing, reporting, and handling sexual violence must be carried out with a victim-perspective approach.

This approach means:

- Placing the victim’s experience and needs at the center of decisions.
- Ensuring that victims do not experience verbal or non-verbal pressure, coercion, or judgment.
- Providing a psychologically and structurally safe space.
- Avoiding processes that require victims to repeat their stories and inflict traumatic impact.
- Giving the victim control over the choices of further procedures.

### Closing Section: Implementation Principles under Editorial Limitations

Challenges	Dangers that arise in the absence of the victim’s perspective	Solutions
Lack of Human Resources	The perpetrator could be a direct superior.	There must be a mechanism for reporting outside the organization.
No psychologist	The victim’s trauma is not validated.	There must be a list of external partners or a hotline.
Limited training	SOP team acts defensively, not empathy-based.	There must be a brief online training package for handling sexual violence.

## VI. Conclusion and Recommendation

Indonesia has enacted the TPKS Law, which should serve as a legal milestone in protecting victims of sexual violence. However, significant challenges remain in both the prevention and handling of such cases. Whistleblowers—who are often women in the media industry—face structural, social, and cultural barriers when coming forward.

Many victims are reluctant to report sexual violence due to fears of job loss, social stigma, and the lack of protection guarantees. Some worry that speaking up will be seen as bringing shame or damaging the organization's reputation. Others hesitate because they lack evidence or are unsure where to report. As a result, many choose to remain silent.

Under the TPKS Law, witnesses can also serve as whistleblowers and are entitled to protection. Unfortunately, most media companies in Indonesia still lack internal regulations that explicitly protect victims and witnesses of sexual violence. Few have standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the prevention and handling of such cases.

SOPs are crucial as they provide clear guidelines for media organizations to address sexual violence and establish protection mechanisms for whistleblowers and witnesses, such as safeguarding their identities. In addition, these guidelines ensure that victims can access psychological and legal support throughout the recovery process.

The problem is exacerbated by media companies' limited understanding of gender inequality, including sexual violence. This lack of awareness affects not only field journalists but also those in management and senior editorial roles. In several cases documented by AJI Indonesia and those based on research, victims reported feeling guilty, experiencing verbal abuse, and being blamed for bringing shame to the institution.

This stems from the highly masculine structure of the media industry. Like many other sectors in Indonesia, mass media organizations are male-dominated, with men holding authority in key decision-making roles, particularly within editorial teams. This imbalance fosters a gender-biased and hostile work culture for women. Female leadership in editorial offices remains rare, and women are often excluded from strategic policy-making, including those related to the protection of female journalists.

Compounding the issue, perpetrators of sexual violence frequently silence victims due to the absence of clear, formal mechanisms for addressing such cases. Incidents are often handled informally, dismissed, or treated as “private matters.” As a result, perpetrators remain in their positions without consequence, while victims are left with no recourse but to resign.

To address this issue, media companies must establish comprehensive Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the prevention and handling of sexual violence. SOPs are essential not only to prevent such violence but also to ensure that when it does occur, victims can access support services, recover safely, and seek justice without facing further harm. The TPKS Law explicitly mandates this in Articles 68, 69, and 70. However, without clear, victim-centered policies from media companies, these legal provisions risk remaining ineffective and unenforced.

This policy paper aims to urge media companies to develop and implement SOPs for preventing and addressing sexual violence. It draws on research by PR2Media, AJI Indonesia, and other organizations, which reveal high rates of sexual violence against female journalists and the lack of SOPs in most media institutions.

To further support the analysis, this paper incorporates several feminist theories as its theoretical framework. For instance, the feminist criminology perspective views sexual violence not only as a criminal offense but also as a tool of social control over women’s bodies. Sexual violence in the workplace reflects broader power imbalances between men and women, an issue that demands serious and systemic intervention. Therefore, it is important to design internal media company policies and regulations that are not merely administrative, but also based on social justice and a commitment to supporting victims.

The Press Council’s publication of the SOP Guidelines for the Prevention of Sexual Violence in Media Companies represents a welcome step toward improving the media industry’s work culture in addressing sexual violence. These guidelines should serve as a key benchmark in evaluating whether a press company is part of a healthy, ethical, and responsible media ecosystem.

However, the guidelines are not without shortcomings. They lack a clear explanation of the importance of transparency in handling cases, particularly through an individual, needs-based approach. Additionally, they should address ethical standards for assisting victims, outline criteria for the accompanying persons, and include safeguards to prevent the exploitation of victims. The Press Council must take a more proactive role. SOPs for the prevention and handling of sexual violence should be considered a minimum requirement for press accreditation. The effectiveness of the Press Council's guidelines also warrants periodic evaluation, and wider dissemination efforts are needed to ensure they are broadly understood and implemented.

This policy paper also highlights good practices from several media outlets and non-governmental organizations that have developed and implemented their own SOPs. Project Multatuli, IDN Times, and Gusdurian, in collaboration with YKPI, have created SOPs not merely as formal documents, but as living policies shaped through participatory processes. These SOPs emphasize on justice for victims and are actively integrated into their programs and organizational culture.

In addition, this policy paper also draws on AJI Indonesia's SOP on the Prevention and Handling of Sexual Violence, published in 2022. The author incorporates personal experience as part of an ad hoc team specifically tasked with handling cases of sexual violence involving AJI members.

The high rate of sexual violence against female journalists, as shown in research by AJI and PR2Media, underscores the urgency of this issue. Press companies must demonstrate a firm commitment to addressing the problem by recognizing that sexual violence is a serious crime that must not be tolerated.

To foster a work environment free from sexual violence, media organizations need to develop and implement comprehensive SOPs for prevention and response. These guidelines are essential to building a workplace that is healthy, equitable, violence-free, and respectful for all.

This SOP recommends that media companies prioritize the protection of whistleblowers in cases of sexual violence. Ensuring their safety is essential so they can speak up and disclose facts without fear or pressure. Under the TPKS Law, whistleblowers include both victims and witnesses.

Media companies must guarantee the confidentiality of whistleblowers' identities and protect them from retaliation, including dismissal or other forms of sanction.

They are also entitled to psychological support, legal assistance, relocation if threatened, and trauma recovery services.

To ensure impartiality in handling sexual violence cases, companies should establish an independent team free from bias or conflicts of interest. Additionally, transparency in investigation outcomes and the enforcement of strict sanctions must be upheld.

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