

# SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN THE STUDENT OF BALI: BELIEF IN THE CONCEPT OF *KARMA PHALA* TO OVERCOME TRAUMA FROM AUGUSTE COMTE'S METAPHYSICAL PERSPECTIVE

Ni Putu Dessy Parmitha Sari, Putu Eka Febyanti

Master Student, Udayana University, Denpasar, Bali  
dessyparmitha@gmail.com

Master Student, Udayana University,  
Denpasar, Bali  
febyanti07@gmail.com

## Abstract

*Sexual violence remains a significant challenge in Indonesia. It is not new that sexual violence could happen anytime, anywhere and to anyone. Educational institutions, which should be safe environments, are not exempt from instances of sexual violence. In Bali, the case of sexual violence in educational institutions is not merely an imagination. Still fresh in our memory the case of a female student at STIKES Buleleng who was attempted to be raped by her supervisor. Fortunately, STIKES Buleleng took firm action by dismissing the perpetrator. Dismissing or punishing the perpetrator may seem like the most straightforward way to protect future victims of sexual violence in educational institutions. However, sexual violence is a deeply traumatic experience, and its impact is often difficult to trace, as many victims are unwilling to report their cases. Therefore, legal and psychological assistance institutions are available in Bali to assist the victims of sexual violence. In this study, the author will describe how belief in the concept of karma phala influences the healing process of victims of sexual violence. This paper asks three questions: (1) What is the situation of sexual violence among students in Bali?, (2) How does the concept of karma phala help victims recover from trauma? and (3) How does the metaphysical stage of Auguste Comte's Three Stages theory view this issue? This paper proposes that the concept of karma phala as an abstract concept could help the victim recover from the trauma of sexual violence they had experienced. From the perspective of Auguste Comte's Three Stages of Law theory, the belief held by victims of sexual violence in the concept of karma phala aligns with the metaphysical stage of societal development. However, the concept of karma phala cannot be applied universally to victims of violence, particularly those who are not from Hindu or related religious backgrounds. This creates an exclusive framework for addressing sexual violence, making it less appropriate for victims who may have different cultural or religious beliefs, or who may be less religious. As such, this paper proposes further analysis of how the concept of karma phala can be integrated into trauma healing for victims of violence, while also considering more inclusive approaches.*

**Keywords:** metaphysics, sexual violence, trauma, karma phala, students, education

## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is currently experiencing a crisis regarding sexual violence. According to the 2023 Annual Report of the National Commission on Violence Against Women, the dominant form of violence against women reported was sexual violence, totaling 2,228 cases throughout 2022 (Komnas Perempuan, 2023). This number has increased every year. The increased of sexual violence reporting in Indonesia might feel intimidating, but it also could be viewed as good news considering the enactment of the Law on Criminal Acts of Sexual Violence, Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Number 30 of 2021 concerning the Prevention and Handling of Sexual Violence in Educational Institutions. This law provides protection for the victims of sexual violence, especially student in education institutions in Indonesia. The existence of this law is considered to have provided a breath of fresh air for victims of sexual violence to be more courageous in reporting their cases.

The courage of victims to report their cases that have begun to arise has had a positive impact. At least this can provide clarity and better data collection regarding the situation of sexual violence in Indonesia. In Bali itself, sexual violence also occurs among students. One case that is still fresh in our memory is the attempted rape by a lecturer from Stikes Buleleng on a student he was supervising which just happened in May 2023 (cnnindonesia.com, 2023). Fortunately, the Stikes Buleleng campus took firm action to immediately fire the perpetrator.

Dismissing or punishing the perpetrator may seem like the most straightforward way to protect future victims

of sexual violence in educational institutions. However, sexual violence is a deeply traumatic experience, and its impact is often difficult to trace, as many victims are unwilling to report their cases. Therefore, legal and psychological assistance institutions are available in Bali to assist the victims of sexual violence. Sexual violence has far-reaching consequences, with one of the most significant being the trauma experienced by the victim. This trauma can persist for an extended period, often lingering long after the incident itself has occurred. In this article, we will explain how belief in the concept of *karma phala* can be one way for victims to survive after experiencing sexual violence. This article was inspired by the results of the author's previous research regarding the survival strategies of adolescent victims of sexual violence in Bali which was conducted in 2021. In the study, one of the research sources admitted to believing in the concept of *karma phala*. According to her, her belief in the concept has helped her to survive and recover from the trauma of the attempted rape she experienced.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research method, with data collected through a literature review. The sources used include reputable websites, scientific articles, and books. The data obtained from the literature are then presented descriptively, focusing on key points that support the development of the arguments. In addition to the literature review, data was also gathered from local newspapers, both in print and online formats. The local newspapers are considered a reliable source, as they offer detailed accounts of the cases, include statements from the Bali government, and objectively highlight the role of power imbalances between victims and perpetrators.

## LITERATURES REVIEW

Sexual violence is any form of physical or psychological action that forces the victim to commit sexual acts. According to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, sexual violence can be interpreted as any act that degrades, insults, harasses, and/or attacks a person's body and/or reproductive function. Sexual violence can occur due to the imbalance of power relations between the victim and the perpetrator (merdekadarikekerasan.kemdikbud.go.id, 2023). The power imbalance between victims and perpetrators is clearly evident in sexual violence cases in Bali. This is largely due to the persistence of a patriarchal system in the region, which is strongly influenced the society. As a result, there is a deep connection between these cultural structures and the gendered power dynamics in cases of violence.

Acknowledging that imbalanced power dynamics can influence the prevalence of sexual violence, this research categorizes the cases into several types. Sexual violence can be classified into four categories based on the methods by which it is perpetrated, such as: (1) verbal, (2) non-physical, (3) physical, and (4) online or through information technology. On the website entitled "Freedom from Violence", the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of Indonesia describes examples of actions that are included in sexual violence, such as: (1) speech or behavior that describes or harasses a person's physical appearance, body, or gender identity, (2) touching someone's private areas, (3) sending pornographic content, (4) spreading the victim's personal information without permission, (5) punishment or orders with sexual nuances, (6) peeking at people getting dressed, (7) undressing someone without consent, (8) forcing or persuading the victim to perform sexual acts that were not initially agreed to by the victim, (9) attempted rape, and (10) degrading, harassing, insulting, or attacking the victim's body, reproductive function which can cause suffering to the victim. Accessed in November 2019, the website of the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (merdekadarikekerasan.kemdikbud.go.id) provides distinct materials on anti-violence initiatives within educational institutions. The Ministry recognizes that different approaches are needed to address violence at various educational stages. In Indonesia, there are four stages of education: primary education, middle school, high school (which are all considered basic education), and university, which is classified as higher or tertiary education. In response to this, the government has developed tailored materials on how to address violence, particularly sexual violence, at each educational stage. These materials include definitions of violence and examples of violent acts.

The tailored materials on violence provided by the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology represent an important first step in acknowledging that sexual violence can happen to anyone, anywhere. Students and higher education institutions have recently been in the spotlight because there have been cases of sexual violence that have begun to be revealed in recent years. Starting from the case of Agni, a pseudo name for the victim of sexual violence at UGM Yogyakarta, Indonesia to the sexual violence experienced by Udayana University students by their thesis supervisor in 2020. These cases demonstrate how even places considered "safe," such as educational institutions, are failing to protect their students from sexual violence.

In the term of Bali, According to a lawyer and sexual violence activist from LBH APIK (Some form of Legal Aid Institution focusing on anti-violence against children and women in Bali), in an interview with DetikBali (local newspaper) in 2022, many reported cases of sexual violence go unaddressed by the police. The activist noted that between 2018 and 2022, LBH APIK Bali received numerous reports of sexual violence from students at four universities. The forms of sexual violence against students varied, ranging from incidents during thesis supervision to harassment related to group assignments. (Triwidiyanti, 2022). This term highlights the urgent need for attention and support to assist the victims.

#### KARMA PHALA: A GUIDELINE AND TRAUMA HEALING

In 2021, the author has conducted a research about how the victim of sexual violence in Bali cope with the trauma of being assaulted. The victims consisted of three women in the age of 20-22 years old. The victims were student of one reputable university in Bali on that time. The number of victims included in the sample was intentionally limited in order to identify specific and in-depth patterns of sexual violence among students. One of the students is Hindu, and the author found it intriguing how she copes with the trauma of sexual violence by believing that "karma" will eventually affect the perpetrator. She is the victim of attempted rape by her peer. She claimed that the assault happened twice by different people. According to her, this belief that karma will impact the perpetrators' life provides her with a sense of solace, making the trauma more bearable.

The student who was a victim of sexual violence admitted that she did not report the attempted rape case that she experienced. She also did not try to seek help from a psychologist. She admitted that she was traumatized after the sexual violence incident. However, she managed to overcome her trauma by using the experience as a means of self-introspection. The victim also stated that she believed that the perpetrator would get the results of his actions or karma according to what he had done. This is because the victim believed that she was not the first victim of the perpetrator. Here is what she said during the interview with author:

*"...I am sure that I am not actually his first victim. So, like that, well, it (the reporting) doesn't seem to have much effect on the perpetrator. Well, I don't want to waste my energy. If it's his turn to get karma, well, he'll feel it himself, that's it." (Victim, 2021)*

The victim's belief in karma aligns with the concept of karma phala in Hindu teachings. Karma means good or bad actions or deeds, while phala means results or fruits. *Karma phala* can be interpreted as a result or "fruit" of an action (Subrata, 2019). The concept of *karma phala* is believed to be universal. In the concept of *karma phala* there is an idea that if someone does a bad deed, then bad results will be what they will reap. While if they do good, then good things will also be what they will get.

In Hinduism, there are at least three types of *karma phala*. The first type is called *Sancita Karma phala* which means the results of actions done in the past can only be enjoyed now. This is also related to the concept of reincarnation or repeated birth in Hinduism. In the concept of reincarnation, everyone is believed to have lived before so that their current life should carry karma or the results of actions from previous lives. The second type of *karma phala* is *Prarabda Karma phala*. In the *Prarabda Karma phala* type, the results of actions done in the present, the consequences are also received in the present. The third type of *karma phala* is *Kryamana Karma phala*. In the concept of *Kryamana Karma phala*, it is believed that the results of actions done now will be received in the next life.

The author found it fascinating how the concept of *karma phala* in Hinduism was used by the victim to cope with the trauma of sexual abuse. This perspective highlights the potential for collaboration between religious teachings and victim support services (such as legal aid institutions, psychologists, etc.) to improve the psychological well-being of sexual violence survivors. However, the author acknowledges that the concept of *karma phala* is specific to those who follow Hinduism and may not be applicable to victims of different religious backgrounds. Nonetheless, this finding provides valuable insight into victim support, particularly in the context of Bali, where Hinduism is the predominant religion.

#### AUGUSTE COMTE'S THREE-STAGE THEORY OF LAW: METAPHYSICS AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH KARMA PHALA AS A HEALING PROCESS

Belief in the concept of *karma phala* in student who are victims of sexual violence can be analyzed using Auguste Comte's Theory of the Three Stages. According to Auguste Comte, who is also known as the father of sociology, society is a dynamic entity. This implies that there will always be changes in the structure or systems within society. These changes occur not only in material forms but also in behaviors and social conduct. (Chabibi, 2019).

Comte was a scientist and philosopher who had a rational and futuristic view of social life. He saw the phenomenon of social change in French society when the dominance of religion could be replaced by the dominance of science as the scientific foundation of the theory of human progress and social evolutionism. Based on this background, the theory of the three intellectual stages (law of three stages) that humans have gone through throughout their history was born.

In this three-stage law, the formulation of the development of society and individuals is evolutionary. The drive of human spirit is the beginning of the power that changes human history. This drive enables humans to develop and advance beyond the limits of their minds and intelligence. This spirit also helps humans to understand reality, assume and create methods to explain the phenomena that occur around them (Chabibi, 2019). This causes the knowledge possessed by humans to change increasingly. This change then brings development to human civilization which includes changes in its social structure.

Social change progresses from simple to more complex or intricate forms. This occurs because, by nature, human life strives toward progress. According to Auguste Comte's Law of Three Stages, social change within a society follows a linear pattern. These three stages are: (1) The Theological Stage, (2) The Metaphysical Stage, and (3) The Positive or Scientific Stage.

The theological stage is the longest stage in human history. At this time, human intelligence is still considered childish. At this stage, humans believe that there are supernatural powers that appear in supernatural substances or amulets. The theological stage is divided into three stages, such as: (1) Fetishism, where humans believe that every object has a spirit, (2) Polytheism, at this second theological stage humans believe that there are powers that regulate life or natural phenomena such as gods or supernatural beings, and (3) Monotheism, at this stage the belief in the existence of many gods begins to be replaced by the belief in the existence of a single substance or God who is sovereign and has the power to control nature.

The Metaphysical Stage is a transitional phase between the Theological Stage and the Positive Stage. This stage is characterized by a belief in abstract laws. These abstract laws are represented by philosophical, abstract, and universal forms of thought. The main characteristic of this stage is the shift from belief in gods, who are seen as supernatural agents, to belief in abstract forces or laws.

The third stage is the positive or scientific stage. At this stage the human mind no longer seeks original absolute ideas and determines the universe as the cause of phenomena. Humans began to look for laws that determine phenomena or find a series of relationships that do not change and have similarities. At this stage, humans begin to recognize empirical data as the final source of knowledge, but its nature is temporary and not rigid. At this stage, there is a social analysis that allows humans to formulate uniform laws. The existence of these laws can advance and develop the knowledge that humans already possess. From the perspective of Auguste Comte's Three Stages of Law theory, the belief held by victim of sexual violence in the concept of karma phala aligns with the metaphysical stage of societal development.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The increasing number of sexual violence cases in Bali certainly means that many victims also experience trauma after sexual violence. According to research conducted by researchers in 2021, there was a unique idea from one of the Hindu students who was a victim of sexual violence in Bali. The student admitted to having experienced two attempted rapes. She admitted to experiencing trauma after the incident. One of the ways she healed herself from trauma was by believing in the concept of *karma phala*.

Belief in the concept of *karma phala* among students who are victims of sexual violence in Bali is considered interesting. This can provide the idea that strengthening the content of religion and local beliefs can help someone to escape from trauma. Especially trauma from sexual violence. This can provide potential for a picture of mitigation for victims of sexual violence. In the future, if the concept of *karma phala* or other religious ideas can be included in handling sexual violence, then the involvement of meditation and religious practitioners can be used as one of the contents in trauma healing therapy for victims of sexual violence.

In students who are victims of sexual violence in Bali, belief in the concept of *karma phala* to help the healing process of this trauma can be considered a novelty. This is because there is still very little literature discussing the relationship between the concept of *karma phala* and the healing process of victims of sexual violence. When connected to the theory of the five stages of grief from Kubler-Rose (1969), belief in the concept of *karma phala* can help victims reach the fifth stage in responding to grief and trauma after sexual violence, which is acceptance.

Belief in the concept of *karma phala* is related to the second stage of Auguste Comte's theory, namely the metaphysical stage. The metaphysical stage is characterized by the concept of abstract, speculative-philosophical and metaphysical-critical ideas. This can be seen in the victim's belief in the concept of *karma*

*phala* in the process of healing her trauma. The victim believes that there will be an abstract power that will give punishment according to the unpleasant experience given to her by the perpetrator. The victim also believes that considering that the perpetrator has committed continuous evil acts in the form of sexual violence in the form of attempted rape, there will be an abstract power that will punish the perpetrator.

This has implications for victim who decided not to report her case to advocacy institutions even though her case is considered serious. Victim also decided not to look for friends or family to talk to after the sexual violence she experienced. Victim believed that if she talks, she was not certain that her friends or family she talks to will understand what happened to her. In the end, victim also does not contact any psychological service institutions. In fact, contacting psychological service institutions is highly recommended for victims of sexual violence.

The victim's belief in the abstract and philosophical concept of *karma phala* helped the victim to heal from her trauma. The victim, who initially could not accept why the sexual violence happened to her and had to grapple with disgust for the perpetrator and herself every day, managed to slowly recover with the belief that the perpetrator would get his revenge one day.

## CONCLUSION

Sexual violence is an issue that has been heard frequently lately. The world of education, which should be a safe place, has not escaped a series of cases of sexual violence that have slowly been revealed. Higher education institutions that are famous for their intellectuals have also begun to reveal cases of sexual violence committed by various elements within their organizations. Belief in the concept of *karma phala* among students who were victims of violence in Bali has the potential to be a way to free themselves from the trauma they have experienced. According to Auguste Comte's Three-Stage Law theory, belief in the concept of *karma phala* is at a metaphysical stage. At this stage, humans believe in the existence of abstract and philosophical thoughts. *Karma phala* is a philosophy in Hinduism that states that every human being will get the results of what they do.

Referring to his Three-Stage Law theory, humans always try to achieve progress by relying on science. This science is not rigid, but always demands scientific proof. The phenomenon of sexual violence victims' belief in the concept of *karma phala* that can help them heal is proof that old philosophies in human life are not obsolete. In fact, it has the potential to be applied in medical science and counseling, especially for Hindu students who are victims of sexual violence in Bali.

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