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Justifying Sexual Violence and Blaming Victims: A Forensic Discourse Analysis of Suspect Narratives in Indonesian Rape Examination Reports

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how rape suspects construct discursive legitimacy for their actions through justification and victim-blaming strategies in Indonesian police examination reports (Berita Acara Pemeriksaan—BAP). Using a qualitative forensic linguistic approach, the study analyzes linguistic data derived from a rape suspect's statements documented in an official BAP from Merauke Regency, Indonesia. The analysis is informed by van Leeuwen's (2008) theory of legitimation, Ryan's (1971) concept of victim blaming, and forensic discourse analysis to investigate how language is strategically employed to explain, justify, and normalize criminal behavior. Data were analyzed through identification, categorization, and interpretation of lexical choices, causal constructions, evaluative expressions, and agency representations. The findings reveal three dominant discursive strategies. First, emotional and biological justifications are employed to frame the offense as a consequence of jealousy, anger, and sexual desire rather than deliberate criminal intent. Second, victim-blaming strategies construct the victim's sexual history and social interactions as factors contributing to the assault. Third, responsibility-shifting strategies minimize perpetrator accountability by foregrounding the victim's behavior while backgrounding the suspect's agency. The study contributes theoretically by extending legitimation theory to suspect narratives in Indonesian legal discourse, a largely underexplored area in forensic linguistics. It highlights the significance of language in shaping representations of perpetrators and victims within sexual violence investigations and legal processes.

Keywords: forensic linguistics, forensic discourse analysis, legitimation, victim blaming, rape investigation, Indonesian legal discourse.

Introduction

Language plays a central role in the legal process because almost every stage of criminal justice—from police investigations and interrogations to courtroom proceedings and judicial decisions—is constructed through language. Within this context, forensic linguistics has emerged as an interdisciplinary field that examines the relationship between language and law, focusing on how linguistic evidence contributes to criminal investigations, legal interpretation, and judicial decision-making. According to Coulthard et al. (2017), forensic linguistics investigates how language functions as legal evidence and how meanings are negotiated within legal discourse. Likewise, Olsson and Luchjenbroers (2014) argue that forensic linguistic analysis is applicable throughout the legal process, including police interviews, examination reports, witness testimonies, and courtroom interactions. In Examination Reports (Berita Acara Pemeriksaan—BAP), forensic linguistic analysis enables researchers to identify linguistic patterns that reveal speakers' attitudes, motivations, ideological positions, and communicative strategies embedded in legal narratives. Recent developments in forensic linguistics have further expanded the discipline beyond authorship attribution and speech identification toward discourse-oriented analyses that examine how language constructs legal realities, identities, and power relations in criminal investigations.

In cases of sexual violence, language functions not merely as a medium for reporting events but also as a mechanism for constructing competing narratives about perpetrators, victims, and criminal responsibility. Previous studies have shown that perpetrators frequently employ linguistic strategies that reduce personal accountability while simultaneously attributing responsibility to victims. One of the most

prominent discursive mechanisms is justification, whereby offenders provide emotional, psychological, or situational explanations to present criminal behavior as understandable or inevitable. According to van Leeuwen (2008), legitimation is realized through rationalization, authorization, moral evaluation, and mythopoesis. Among these, rationalization frequently appears in criminal discourse through causal constructions that portray violence as a consequence of external circumstances rather than deliberate criminal intent. Van Dijk (1998) similarly argues that causal reasoning within discourse serves ideological purposes by legitimizing actions and reducing negative evaluations of the speaker. Consequently, justification represents an important form of identity management through which perpetrators reconstruct themselves as emotionally driven individuals rather than intentional offenders (Coulthard et al., 2017).

Another prominent discourse strategy in sexual violence narratives is victim blaming, which shifts responsibility from perpetrators to victims. Ryan (1971) introduced this concept to explain how victims are frequently portrayed as contributing to their own victimization through their behavior, appearance, or personal characteristics. In rape cases, victim blaming often emerges through references to victims' clothing, sexual history, interpersonal relationships, or lifestyle choices. Grubb and Turner (2012) further demonstrate that victim blaming is closely associated with rape myths, which normalize sexual violence while minimizing offender responsibility. From a discourse perspective, Fairclough (2015) argues that language constructs social representations by foregrounding certain actors while backgrounding others. Likewise, Ehrlich (2001) shows that victim blaming constitutes a discursive practice through which perpetrators' responsibility is mitigated while victims are represented as partially accountable for the violence committed against them.

Recent international studies have broadened forensic and discourse-based investigations of sexual violence by examining linguistic representations across media, courtrooms, institutional policies, and legal documents. For example, recent critical discourse research has demonstrated how linguistic choices continue to reproduce unequal representations of victims and offenders in media narratives and institutional discourse, thereby influencing public perceptions of sexual violence. Similarly, Hörl and MacLeod (2026) demonstrate that euphemistic expressions in courtroom discourse frequently obscure the severity of rape by replacing direct descriptions of violence with linguistically softened alternatives, thereby affecting perceptions of offender responsibility. Computational analyses of judicial decisions have likewise revealed that subtle linguistic patterns may reinforce rape myths and shape judicial assessments of victims' credibility. These studies collectively indicate that language plays a decisive role in constructing legal understandings of sexual violence beyond merely recording factual events.

Although forensic linguistic research on sexual violence has expanded considerably, existing studies have primarily concentrated on media discourse, courtroom language, judicial reasoning, institutional policies, and victim testimonies. Comparatively little attention has been devoted to suspects' narratives contained in police Examination Reports (BAP), despite these documents representing one of the earliest and most influential forms of legal discourse in criminal investigations. Within the Indonesian legal context, BAP narratives substantially influence investigative decisions and subsequent judicial processes; however, the linguistic strategies through which suspects justify criminal behavior, shift responsibility, and construct victims remain insufficiently examined. Existing Indonesian forensic linguistic studies have investigated sexual violence discourse and legal communication (Apriyanto et al., 2020; Akbar et al., 2023), yet systematic analyses integrating legitimation theory and victim-blaming theory to examine suspect narratives in BAP documents remain scarce. This represents an important empirical and theoretical gap in forensic linguistic scholarship.

To address this gap, the present study investigates how rape suspects construct discursive legitimacy through justification, victim blaming, and responsibility-shifting strategies in Indonesian police Examination Reports. Employing van Leeuwen's (2008) theory of legitimation together with Ryan's (1971) concept of victim blaming within a forensic discourse framework, this study examines lexical choices, causal constructions, evaluative expressions, and representations of agency that shape suspect narratives. Unlike previous studies focusing primarily on victims, media texts, or courtroom discourse, this research foregrounds the suspect's own narrative as a site of discursive negotiation of criminal responsibility. Theoretically, the study extends legitimation theory to forensic discourse analysis of Indonesian legal documents by demonstrating how multiple discursive strategies interact to normalize sexual violence and reconstruct offender identity. Empirically, it contributes one of the few forensic linguistic investigations of suspect narratives in

Indonesian rape Examination Reports, thereby enriching the literature on language, law, and sexual violence while offering practical insights for forensic linguistic analysis, legal investigations, and evidence interpretation in sexual violence cases.

Research Method

This study employed a qualitative research design using a forensic discourse analysis approach to investigate how a rape suspect constructed justification, victim-blaming, and responsibility-shifting strategies within an official police Examination Report (Berita Acara Pemeriksaan—BAP). Qualitative inquiry was considered appropriate because the study sought to examine the meanings, functions, and ideological implications embedded in linguistic choices rather than to measure linguistic phenomena quantitatively. Drawing upon forensic linguistics, the analysis focused on how language was strategically used to explain criminal behavior, negotiate responsibility, and represent both the perpetrator and the victim within a legal context. The study combined insights from forensic linguistics and critical discourse analysis to uncover discursive mechanisms that may not be immediately visible in legal narratives.

The primary data source consisted of an official Examination Report (BAP) documenting the statement of a rape suspect in a criminal case investigated in Merauke Regency, Indonesia. The document was selected through purposive sampling because it contained rich linguistic data relevant to the study's objectives. Several criteria guided the selection process. First, the document had to involve a completed police examination process in a rape case to ensure the availability of comprehensive suspect narratives. Second, the BAP had to contain direct statements produced by the suspect rather than summaries or interpretations provided by investigators. Third, the document needed to include explanations regarding the suspect's motivations, perceptions of the victim, descriptions of the incident, and reflections on the consequences of the offense. Finally, the document had to be legally accessible for academic research purposes and available in a form that allowed detailed linguistic examination.

Following document selection, all sections of the BAP were carefully reviewed to identify linguistic units relevant to the research focus. The units of analysis included words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and extended discourse segments containing expressions of justification, victim blaming, responsibility shifting, mitigation of guilt, emotional reasoning, and representations of agency. Through an iterative reading process, fifteen discourse segments were identified as analytically significant because they explicitly or implicitly reflected the suspect's attempts to explain, legitimize, minimize, or redirect responsibility for the criminal act.

The analytical framework was informed by three complementary theoretical perspectives. First, van Leeuwen's (2008) theory of legitimation was employed to identify how the suspect attempted to justify or rationalize his actions through discourse. Particular attention was given to forms of rationalization, moral evaluation, and authorization that emerged in the narrative. Second, Ryan's (1971) concept of victim blaming and subsequent developments by Grubb and Turner (2012) were used to examine how responsibility was attributed to the victim through references to her behavior, personal characteristics, and social relationships. Third, principles of forensic discourse analysis were applied to investigate the interaction between linguistic form and legal meaning, focusing on lexical choices, evaluative expressions, causal constructions, modality, and representations of agency.

Based on these theoretical perspectives, a preliminary coding framework was developed before the analysis commenced. The framework included categories such as emotional justification, biological justification, victim blaming, responsibility shifting, error mitigation, perpetrator agency, and victim representation. These categories were treated as sensitizing concepts that guided the analytical process while remaining open to refinement as new patterns emerged from the data.

The coding process was conducted systematically in four stages. The first stage involved data familiarization, during which the researchers repeatedly read the entire document to gain a holistic understanding of the suspect's narrative and the broader communicative context. During this stage, initial notes were recorded regarding recurring themes, linguistic patterns, and potential discursive strategies.

The second stage involved open coding. All linguistic expressions related to motives, explanations, evaluations, emotional states, causal relationships, and responsibility attribution were highlighted and assigned preliminary codes. The coding was conducted line by line to ensure that subtle linguistic features were not overlooked. Particular attention was given to conjunctions, evaluative vocabulary, references to emotions, descriptions of the victim, and expressions indicating agency or responsibility.

The third stage involved axial coding, in which conceptually related codes were grouped into broader analytical categories. At this stage, the

researchers compared emerging patterns with the theoretical concepts proposed by van Leeuwen (2008), Ryan (1971), and Grubb and Turner (2012). Relationships among categories were examined to identify how justification, victim blaming, and responsibility shifting operated together within the suspect's narrative.

The final stage involved interpretive discourse analysis. Each coded segment was analyzed in relation to its linguistic structure, communicative function, and forensic significance. The analysis focused not only on what was said but also on how meanings were constructed through specific linguistic choices. This interpretive process enabled the researchers to identify broader discursive patterns underlying the suspect's attempts to construct legitimacy and reduce personal accountability.

The analytical categories were validated through a theory-driven and data-driven process. Initially, category definitions were derived deductively from established theoretical frameworks, particularly van Leeuwen's (2008) model of legitimation and Ryan's (1971) framework of victim blaming. During the coding process, these preliminary categories were continuously compared with the empirical data to ensure conceptual relevance and analytical accuracy.

To strengthen category validity, the researchers employed constant comparative analysis, whereby each coded segment was systematically compared with other segments assigned to the same category. Categories that demonstrated conceptual overlap were merged, while categories lacking sufficient empirical evidence were excluded. The final coding framework was reviewed by an external scholar specializing in forensic linguistics and discourse analysis. Feedback from this review process was incorporated into the refinement of category definitions and coding criteria, thereby enhancing conceptual clarity and analytical consistency.

Several strategies were implemented to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings. Credibility was enhanced through prolonged engagement with the data and repeated readings of the document throughout the analytical process. The researchers maintained detailed analytical memos documenting coding decisions, theoretical reflections, and interpretive insights, thereby creating an audit trail that increased the transparency of the study.

Researcher triangulation was conducted to reduce interpretive bias and improve analytical reliability. Two researchers independently coded the data using the same coding framework and operational definitions. The independently coded datasets were then compared to identify areas of agreement and disagreement. Discrepancies were discussed and resolved through consensus-building procedures grounded in theoretical definitions and contextual interpretations of the data. The process resulted in a high level of coding consistency, indicating substantial agreement between coders.

The study also employed theoretical triangulation by interpreting the data through multiple theoretical lenses, including legitimation theory, victim-blaming theory, and forensic discourse analysis. The integration of these perspectives enabled a more comprehensive understanding of how linguistic strategies functioned within the suspect's narrative and reduced the likelihood of overreliance on a single interpretive framework.

Given the sensitive nature of sexual violence cases, strict ethical principles were observed throughout the study. Permission to access the document was obtained through appropriate institutional procedures. To protect the privacy and dignity of all individuals involved, all identifying information, including names, addresses, case numbers, and personal details, was removed prior to analysis. Pseudonymization procedures were applied whenever references to individuals were necessary for analytical purposes.

The study focused exclusively on linguistic and discursive patterns rather than on determining legal guilt, innocence, or judicial outcomes. The researchers recognized the ethical responsibility associated with analyzing legal documents involving sexual violence and therefore adopted a victim-sensitive approach throughout the research process. All data were stored securely, accessed only by the research team, and used solely for academic purposes. These measures ensured compliance with ethical standards concerning confidentiality, anonymity, and responsible handling of sensitive legal data.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

The analysis identified a series of linguistic patterns through which the suspect constructed explanations, justifications, and representations of the victim within the Examination Report (Berita Acara Pemeriksaan—BAP). Drawing on van Leeuwen's (2008) framework of legitimation and Ryan's (1971) concept of victim blaming, the analysis focused on how specific linguistic forms functioned as discursive strategies for rationalizing the offense, mitigating personal responsibility, and attributing blame to the victim. Each discourse segment was examined according to four analytical dimensions: (1) Data Citation, which presents the

relevant extract from the suspect's statement; (2) Linguistic Forms, which identify salient lexical, grammatical, or discourse features; (3) Analytical Category, which classifies the discourse according to the theoretical framework; and (4) Forensic Interpretation, which explains the communicative and ideological functions of the linguistic choices in constructing legitimacy, responsibility, and victim representation. The results reveal recurring patterns of emotional and biological justification, victim blaming, responsibility shifting, and agency construction that collectively contribute to the suspect's attempt to negotiate accountability for the offense. These findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Analysis of Justification and Victim Blaming Strategies in Suspect Statements

No	Data Citation	Linguistic Forms	Category: Analisis	Forensic Interpretation
1	"karena saya gemas dan merasa emosi karena cemburu korban sering jalan dengan laki-laki lain"	Causal conjunctions "karena"	Emotional Justification	The suspect establishes a cause-and-effect relationship between jealousy and the violent act committed. Language is used to explain his actions as a result of emotions, not as a conscious decision.
2	"karena saya terbawa nafsu"	Causal Expression	Biological Justification	The perpetrator shifts the cause of action to sexual urges so that personal responsibility seems to be reduced.
3	"maksud dan tujuan saya menyetubuhi korban karena saya emosi korban jalan dengan laki-laki lain"	Cause-and-effect construction	Justifikasi Emosional	The perpetrator links the act of rape to the victim's behavior so that his actions are positioned in response to a specific situation.
4	"korban layak disetubuhi karena setahu saya korban sudah tidak perawan dengan laki-laki lain"	Negative evaluation of the victim	Victim Blaming	The perpetrator linked the victim's sexual history to the eligibility to be. The victim is positioned as a party who is considered to have contributed to the events that occurred.
5	"korban sering jalan dengan laki-laki lain"	Representation of victim behavior	Victim Blaming	The perpetrator builds a negative image of the victim to justify his actions.
6	"korban suka jalan bersama laki-laki lain"	Representation of victim behavior	Victim Blaming	The victim is placed as the cause of the perpetrator's jealousy so that the perpetrator's responsibility becomes disguised.
7	"saya tidak menikmati karena pada saat saya setubuhi korban tidak sampai menumpahkan cairan sperma saya"	Focus on self-experience	Error Mitigation	The perpetrator shifts the focus from the victim's suffering to his personal experience thereby reducing the impression of the mistake made.
8	"saya menyesali perbuatan saya tersebut dan saya tidak akan mengulanginya lagi"	Statement of regret	Reparative Strategy	The suspect tries to build a positive image through confession and remorse after the crime occurred.
9	"saya tidak tahu apa yang dialami korban"	Avoidance of consequences	Blurring the Impact of Victims	The perpetrator did not show attention to the consequences experienced by the victim and avoided discussing the impact of his actions.
10	"saya sempat memukul korban di wajah sebanyak 1 kali dan menggigit bahu korban sebanyak 1 kali"	Recognition of acts of violence	Confession of Criminal Facts	The suspect explicitly admitted to the physical violence that accompanied the act of rape.
11	"korban sempat berontak dan menangis"	Victim response representation	Indicators of Victim Disapproval	This statement shows that there is a rejection from the victim which indicates the absence of consent.
12	"AYO SUDAH"	Directing speech	Persuasion/Coercion Efforts	Imperative speech indicates the perpetrator's efforts to direct the victim's behavior according to his wishes.
13	"ADA ORANG DILUAR"	Speech of rejection	Victim Resistance	The victim's response shows objection and discomfort to the ongoing situation.
14	"saya membaringkan korban lalu membuka seluruh pakaian korban"	Active material verbs	Perpetrator Dominance	The sentence structure shows the perpetrator as the main agent who controls all actions against the victim.
15	"korban merasa kesakitan sehingga korban minta berhenti"	Representation of the suffering of the victims	Indicators of Sexual Violence	Showing the victim's physical suffering and verbal rejection during the event.

The findings presented in Table 1 reveal that the suspect's narrative is characterized by a systematic effort to construct discursive legitimacy for the rape committed. Rather than presenting the offense as a deliberate criminal act, the suspect repeatedly employed linguistic resources that

framed the event as a consequence of emotional, psychological, or situational factors. The frequent use of causal constructions, particularly those introduced by karena ("because"), demonstrates an attempt to establish a cause-and-effect relationship between the suspect's emotional state and his actions. Through such constructions, responsibility is partially transferred from the suspect's personal agency to external circumstances, creating a narrative in which the offense appears as an understandable reaction rather than a conscious violation of legal and moral norms.

A prominent pattern emerging from the data is the use of emotional and biological justifications. Statements such as "karena saya emosi" and "karena saya terbawa nafsu" indicate that the suspect attributed his actions to jealousy, anger, and sexual desire. These explanations function as forms of rationalization that seek to reduce the perception of intentionality and culpability. From a forensic discourse perspective, such linguistic choices are significant because they reconstruct the perpetrator as an individual who was overwhelmed by emotions rather than as an autonomous actor exercising control over his behavior. Consequently, the discourse serves not only as an explanation of events but also as a mechanism for negotiating a more favorable moral identity within the legal process.

The analysis also demonstrates that victim-blaming strategies constitute a central component of the suspect's narrative. Several statements explicitly associate the victim's sexual history and social interactions with the occurrence of the rape. Expressions such as "korban layak disetubuhi" and repeated references to the victim's relationships with other men position the victim as a contributing factor to the offense. Linguistically, these statements employ evaluative and attributive constructions that assign negative social meanings to the victim while simultaneously reducing the perceived responsibility of the perpetrator. Through this discursive process, the victim is represented not merely as the recipient of violence but as a participant whose behavior allegedly triggered the event.

Closely related to victim blaming is the strategy of responsibility shifting. The findings indicate that the suspect consistently foregrounded the victim's actions while backgrounding his own agency. References to the victim's behavior as the source of jealousy and emotional distress function to construct a causal narrative in which responsibility is displaced from the perpetrator to the victim. At the same time, statements emphasizing the suspect's regret, emotional condition, or lack of satisfaction after the incident contribute to the mitigation of guilt. This combination of justification, victim blaming, and responsibility shifting creates a coherent discourse through which accountability is negotiated and partially obscured. Rather than denying the offense outright, the suspect reinterprets it through linguistic strategies that seek to minimize moral and legal culpability.

Another important finding concerns the contrasting representation of perpetrator and victim agency. While the suspect frequently minimized his own responsibility through justificatory discourse, the data simultaneously contain descriptions that reveal clear evidence of coercion and non-consent, including references to physical violence, the victim's resistance, crying, pain, and requests to stop. These linguistic elements expose a tension within the narrative: despite attempts to legitimize the offense, the discourse also contains indicators that reaffirm the victim's lack of consent and the perpetrator's dominant role in the assault. This contradiction highlights the value of forensic discourse analysis in uncovering how legal narratives simultaneously reveal and conceal aspects of criminal responsibility. The findings therefore demonstrate that suspect statements in police examination reports are not neutral accounts of events but complex discursive constructions through which perpetrators seek to justify actions, manage identities, and influence interpretations of sexual violence.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that justification strategies constitute the dominant discursive pattern in the suspect's narrative, particularly through emotional and biological rationalizations such as jealousy, anger, and sexual desire. These explanations were repeatedly constructed through causal expressions (e.g., karena saya emosi, karena saya terbawa nafsu), indicating a systematic attempt to portray the offense as a reaction to external circumstances rather than a deliberate criminal act. This finding supports van Leeuwen's (2008) notion of rationalization, whereby social actors legitimize problematic actions through seemingly logical explanations. It also aligns with international forensic linguistic research showing that offenders frequently employ causal narratives to mitigate personal responsibility and maintain a morally acceptable self-image (Coulthard et al., 2017). However, unlike previous studies that primarily examined legitimation in courtroom discourse or media representations, the present study reveals that such strategies are already embedded in the earliest stages of criminal investigation through police examination reports. This finding extends existing forensic discourse

scholarship by demonstrating that suspect narratives function as sites of discursive negotiation where legal accountability is linguistically contested before judicial proceedings begin.

A second prominent pattern concerns the prevalence of victim-blaming discourse, which emerged through repeated references to the victim's sexual history and social interactions with other men. Statements portraying the victim as "worthy" of sexual intercourse or as the cause of the suspect's jealousy illustrate how responsibility is shifted from the perpetrator to the victim. This finding is consistent with Ryan's (1971) concept of victim blaming and supports the conclusions of Grubb and Turner (2012), who argue that rape myths frequently operate by attributing causal responsibility to victims rather than offenders. More recent studies have similarly shown that sexual violence narratives often reproduce ideological assumptions that normalize male aggression while scrutinizing female behavior (Hörl & MacLeod, 2026). Rather than functioning merely as personal opinions, these linguistic constructions reflect broader socio-cultural discourses that legitimize sexual violence through the moral evaluation of victims. The findings therefore, suggest that victim blaming in legal narratives is not an isolated linguistic phenomenon but part of a wider ideological framework that reproduces gendered power relations and influences perceptions of culpability.

Another significant finding is the interaction between justification, victim blaming, and responsibility-shifting strategies, which collectively construct a coherent narrative of reduced offender accountability. The suspect repeatedly foregrounded the victim's behavior while backgrounding his own agency, creating what Fairclough (2015) describes as a discursive reconfiguration of social responsibility. Similar patterns have been identified in studies of legal and institutional discourse, where linguistic choices strategically obscure perpetrator agency and minimize the severity of sexual violence (Ehrlich, 2001; Sattar et al., 2026). The thematic dominance of emotional justification and victim blaming in the present study suggests that these strategies operate synergistically rather than independently. Instead of directly denying the offense, the suspect reframed it as an understandable response to provocation. Such discourse is particularly significant because it demonstrates how perpetrators may seek legitimacy not through factual denial but through moral and emotional rationalization. This finding contributes to forensic linguistic theory by illustrating how multiple discursive strategies intersect to construct legitimacy within suspect narratives.

The study has important implications for forensic linguistics, legal investigations, and sexual violence discourse. From a forensic linguistic perspective, the findings reinforce the importance of examining not only what suspects say but also how linguistic structures shape representations of responsibility, agency, and victimhood. For legal investigators, recognizing recurring patterns of justification and victim blaming may assist in critically evaluating suspect statements and identifying attempts to mitigate accountability. Furthermore, the findings highlight the need for greater awareness of how language can subtly reproduce harmful assumptions about victims during investigative processes. At a broader societal level, the study demonstrates that sexual violence discourse is shaped by linguistic practices that normalize offender behavior while marginalizing victims' experiences. Consequently, forensic discourse analysis can serve as a valuable analytical tool for uncovering hidden ideologies within legal narratives and promoting more victim-sensitive approaches to the investigation and interpretation of sexual violence cases.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that rape suspects may construct discursive legitimacy for their actions through interconnected strategies of justification, victim blaming, and responsibility shifting within Indonesian police Examination Reports (Berita Acara Pemeriksaan—BAP). The findings reveal that emotional and biological rationalizations, particularly references to jealousy, anger, and sexual desire, are used to portray sexual violence as a reaction to external circumstances rather than a deliberate criminal act. Simultaneously, the victim is discursively represented as a contributing factor to the offense through references to her perceived sexual history and social interactions, thereby reducing the suspect's perceived accountability. These findings highlight that suspect narratives in legal documents are not neutral representations of events but strategic constructions through which responsibility, agency, and legitimacy are negotiated. Theoretically, this study extends van Leeuwen's (2008) theory of legitimation into the analysis of suspect narratives in Indonesian legal discourse and demonstrates how forensic discourse analysis can uncover the linguistic mechanisms through which perpetrators attempt to normalize or justify sexual violence.

The study also offers important implications for forensic linguistics, legal investigations, and the interpretation of sexual violence cases. Identifying

patterns of justification and victim blaming can assist investigators, legal practitioners, and forensic linguists in critically evaluating suspect statements and recognizing discursive attempts to mitigate responsibility. However, the findings should be interpreted in light of several limitations, particularly the use of a single Examination Report from one rape case, which limits the generalizability of the results. Future research should therefore investigate larger datasets involving multiple legal cases, diverse forms of legal documentation, and different stages of the criminal justice process. Comparative studies across regions, institutions, and socio-cultural contexts would further enhance understanding of how discursive strategies shape representations of perpetrators and victims, thereby contributing to the development of a more comprehensive forensic linguistic framework for analyzing sexual violence discourse in legal settings.

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