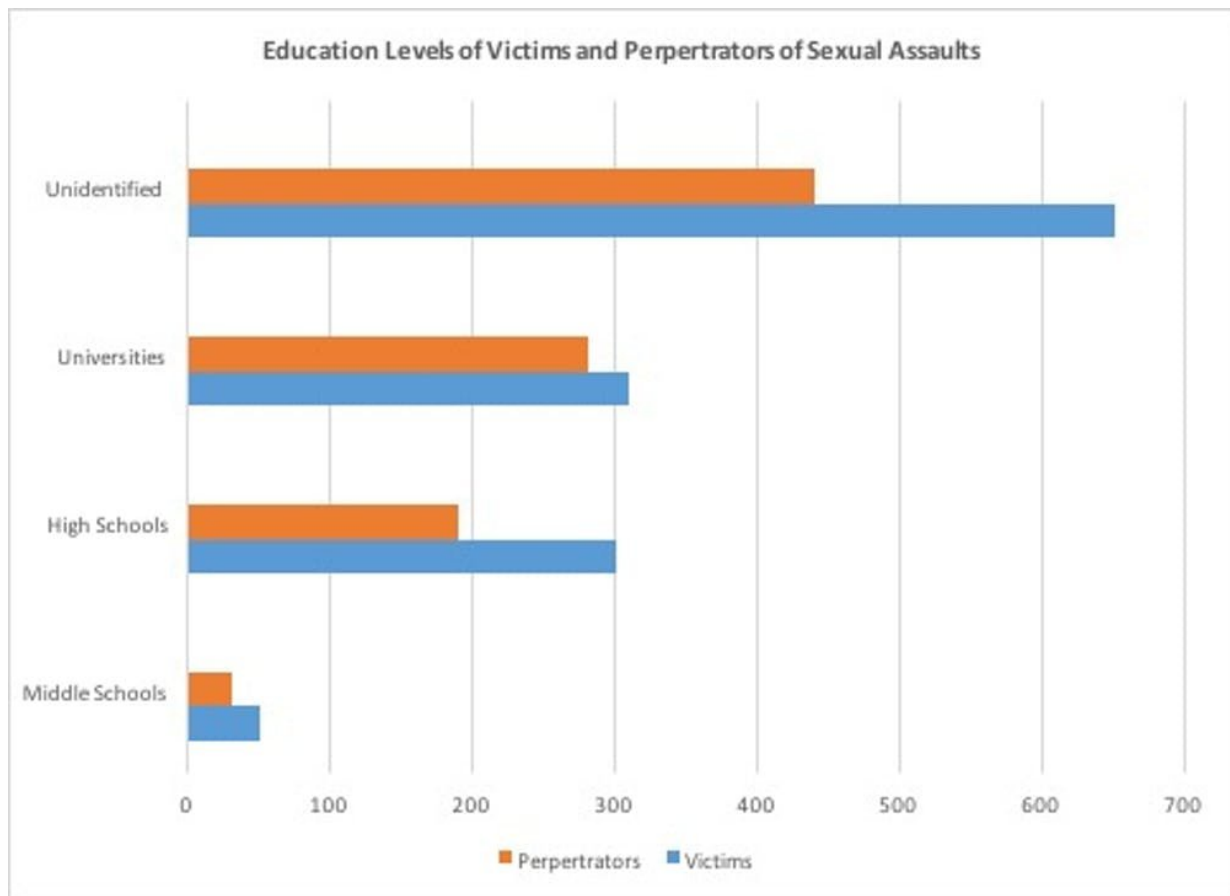


Not only in America – sexual violence on campuses is widespread in Indonesia

December 19 2018, by Nuresti Tristya Astarina



Credit: National Commission on Violence Against Women

It is sadly ironic to see the slow response from universities in handling cases of sexual violence. Campuses are supposed to be at the front line in

educating society. Instead, they seem to be soft on sexual violence perpetrators by letting them escape punishment.

The absence of strict law enforcement for perpetrators of sexual violence has resulted in a high number of cases in universities.

In 2017, the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) found [344 cases of sexual violence in 242 higher education institutions](#).

The same trend can be seen in Indonesia. The most recent [data from the National Commission for the Protection of Women and Children](#) show numbers of on-campus sexual violence cases have stayed high from year to year.

This article tries to explore why sexual violence cases are so prevalent in higher education institutions and what can be done to address them.

The iceberg of sexual violence cases

A case of [sexual abuse](#) allegedly carried out by a Gadjah Mada University (UGM) student was recently revealed. The [perpetrator](#) allegedly assaulted his own friend during a field study at Seram Island, Maluku, in June 2017. Up to now, it is not clear how the case will be resolved. From [news](#) reports, campus officials have even blamed the victim during the case proceedings.

The UGM case is merely the tip of the sexual violence iceberg in Indonesian higher education. Many cases of sexual abuse have occurred on campuses around Indonesia. Resolutions of those cases have been half-hearted at best.

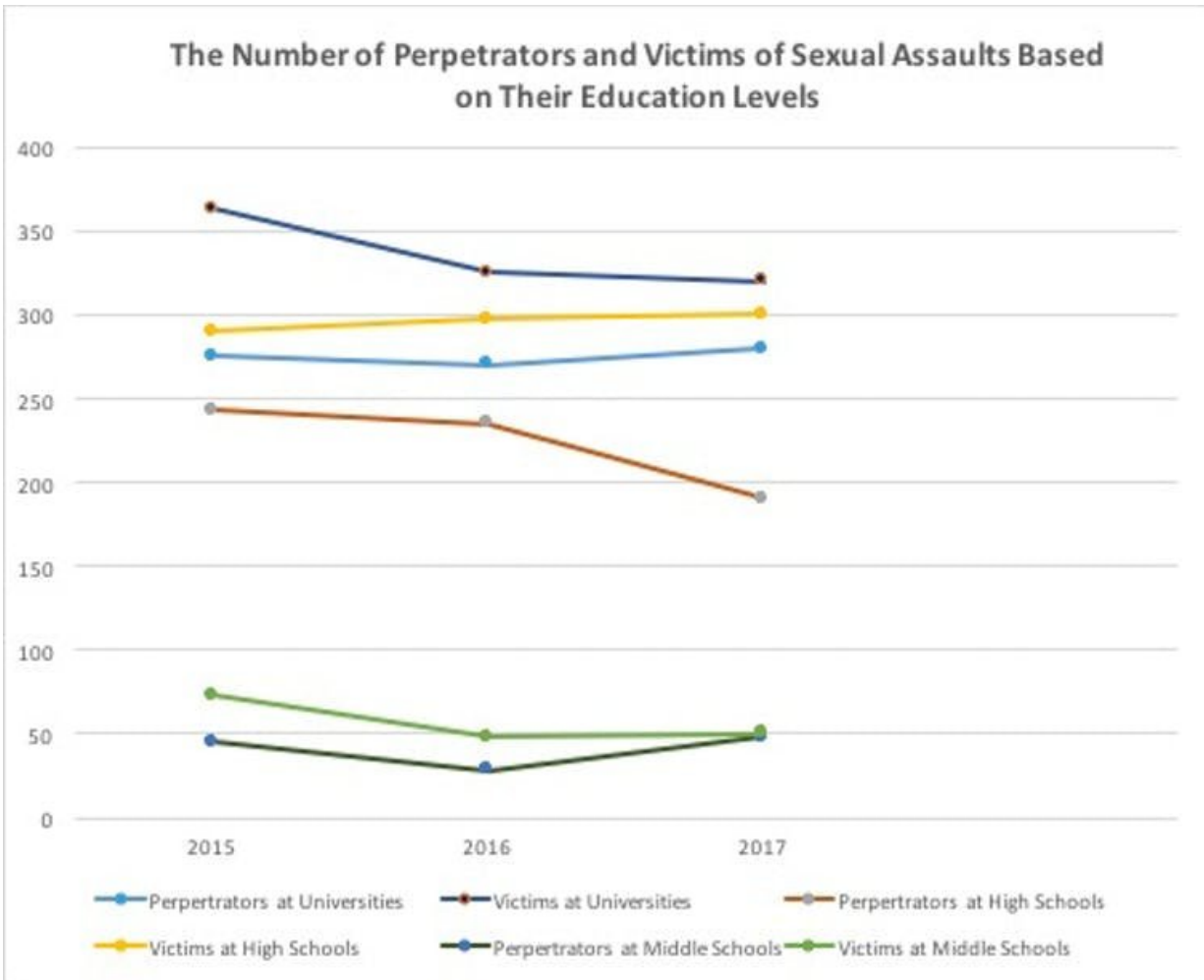
Not only UGM, but also [University of Indonesia \(UI\)](#), [Jakarta State University](#) and a campus on [Bali](#) have a dark record of violence against

women.

The latest data from the National Commission on Violence Against Women show that cases of sexual violence are most prevalent in higher education institutions. In fact, the higher the level of education, the higher the number of perpetrators and victims. In the past three years, cases of sexual violence at the high school level have stagnated in the 200s.

The same report has also shown that the numbers of victims and perpetrators of college sexual assaults have not changed significantly in the last three years. Starting from 363 victims and 275 perpetrators in 2015, and then 325 victims and 270 perpetrators in 2016, in 2017 there were 320 reported victims while the number of perpetrators rose to 280.

This indicates the consequences of campus authorities' reluctance to act strictly on perpetrators in such cases.



Credit: National Commission on Violence Against Women

Instead of taking firm actions, universities are more concerned about maintaining their good reputation. Administrative measures are the most frequently used means to [resolve cases of sexual assault on campus](#).

Why does this happen?

The absence of an appropriate gender perspective in resolving cases of sexual violence has contributed to the failure to reduce the high number

of sexual assaults on campus. This perspective is missing both within the academic realm of higher education and from the jurisdiction of law enforcers.

The slow handling of sexual violence on campus is proof enough. In the UGM case, the campus's lengthy and convoluted process has prevented the victim from accessing justice. A campus that is supposed to be filled with intellectuals has acted rashly by not immediately helping the sexual assault survivor to obtain justice through legal channels.

However, being able to pursue legal remedies does not necessarily solve the problem. The mentalities of law enforcers who are not gender-sensitive can actually traumatise victims. For example, when preparing initial police reports, officers often ask what the victims were wearing at the time of assault. These victim-blaming attitudes can actually weaken the victim's psyche.

Not to mention the long and arduous process of proving the allegations. With no physical evidence of penetration, it would be difficult to prosecute cases of sexual violence under Indonesia's criminal law. The aforementioned case from UGM, for example, is challenging because there is no evidence of penetration as the assault was done by inserting the hand into the vagina. Apart from that, the police are also doubtful about processing the case since more than a year has passed since the incident occurred.

What can be done

If UGM is willing to act progressively, this case should serve as a good example for handling cases of sexual assaults.

If higher education institutions continue to dwell on their good name, having a stern attitude towards sexual [assault](#), instead of stalling case

proceedings for up to one year, would actually restore their reputation.

If only UGM could firmly investigate the case, the government would also be able to follow this example and implement the proper approach for handling cases of violence against women.

In handling cases of sexual abuse, UGM can learn from the example set by the [University of New South Wales \(UNSW\)](#) in Australia. UNSW provides a specific portal to report cases of sexual violence on campus. The university authorities explain [campus](#) reporting procedures, guarantee the confidentiality of victims, ensure the university will forward their reports to the legal authorities, and provide psychological counselling for victims.

Higher education institutions should be able to provide support and construct a procedure that provides for stern actions against sexual [violence](#). If universities filled with educated individuals still do not pay full attention to resolving cases of [sexual assaults](#) that happen under their authority, then it will be difficult for the victims to achieve justice.

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