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Between Pesantren Mahasiswa and the City: Social Construction of Online Gender-Based Violence among Female Santri in Surabaya

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Abstract
Female santri who live in urban Islamic boarding schools for university students (*pesantren mahasiswa*) while studying at state universities are exposed to Online Gender-Based Violence (OGBV), partly because the religious discipline of the pesantren meets the digital culture of the campus every day. This qualitative case study examines how OGBV is given meaning by female students (*mahasantriwati*) living in a *pesantren mahasiswa* in Surabaya. Drawing on Berger and Luckmann's theory of the social construction of reality, we conducted in-depth interviews with seven informants: two institutional authorities and five *mahasantriwati*. The meaning of OGBV turns out to be far from uniform. Victims see it as a clear violation, while institutional authorities read it through Sufi values that ask for patient acceptance rather than protest. These values are firmly established in worship but only loosely applied to digital conduct, so OGBV cases are handled along lines of institutional authority rooted in that spiritual tradition rather than through formal reporting. The outcome is personal resilience without collective accountability. How *mahasantriwati* recognise, judge, and respond to OGBV depends more on institutional power than on how serious the act actually was.

Keywords: *social construction; online gender-based violence; Islamic boarding schools; Sufi values*

Abstrak
Santri perempuan yang tinggal di pesantren mahasiswa perkotaan sekaligus berkuliah di universitas negeri rentan mengalami Kekerasan Berbasis Gender Online (KBGO), antara lain karena disiplin keagamaan pesantren setiap hari bertemu dengan budaya digital kampus. Studi kasus kualitatif ini mengkaji bagaimana mahasantriwati di sebuah pesantren mahasiswa di Surabaya memaknai KBGO. Dengan menggunakan teori konstruksi sosial Berger dan Luckmann (eksternalisasi, objektivasi, internalisasi), penelitian ini mewawancarai secara mendalam tujuh informan, yaitu dua otoritas kelembagaan dan lima mahasantriwati. Hasilnya, pemaknaan KBGO ternyata tidak seragam. Korban memaknainya sebagai pelanggaran yang nyata, sedangkan otoritas kelembagaan membacanya melalui nilai-nilai tasawuf, yakni *wara'*, *muraqabah*, *mahabbah*, dan *hifdz al-nafs*, yang menuntut penerimaan dan kesabaran, bukan perlawanan. Nilai-nilai tasawuf itu kuat dalam ranah ibadah dan tirakat, tetapi penerapannya dalam etika digital masih longgar dan tidak sistematis. Akibatnya, penanganan KBGO lebih mengikuti garis kebijakan dan kewenangan lembaga yang berakar pada penghayatan spiritual tersebut daripada mekanisme pelaporan formal, sehingga yang terbentuk adalah ketahanan personal tanpa akuntabilitas kolektif. Cara mahasantriwati mengenali, menilai, dan merespons KBGO pun lebih ditentukan oleh garis kekuasaan kelembagaan daripada tingkat keparahan tindakannya. Temuan ini penting bagi upaya memperkuat mekanisme perlindungan digital di pesantren perkotaan.

Kata Kunci: *konstruksi sosial; kekerasan berbasis gender online; pesantren; nilai tasawuf*

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Introduction

Rapid urbanisation in Indonesia has produced a particular social arrangement in large cities such as Surabaya. Religious boarding communities that once stood apart from city life now sit inside it, and every day they send their residents to secular state universities where digital media are everywhere. *Pesantren mahasiswa*, boarding schools for university students, show this most clearly. Their residents, the *mahasantriwati*, do more than live near the city. They have to cross it daily, moving between a closed moral community built around classical Sufi discipline and an open, digitally connected campus. This raises a question that matters sociologically but has received little empirical attention: what happens when the internal moral order of a religious enclave meets the specific risks of digital life in the city, and whose interests does that encounter end up serving?

The scale of Online Gender-Based Violence (OGBV) in Indonesia makes the question pressing. The National Commission on Violence Against Women recorded 1,791 OGBV reports in 2024, a 40.8% increase on 2023 (Komnas Perempuan, 2025). Surabaya, East Java's main metropolitan centre, combines high internet and social media use (APJII, 2025) with a dense concentration of *pesantren mahasiswa* (Kementerian Agama, 2023). Studies on Surabaya campuses have found that low gender literacy often goes together with traditional misconceptions and victim-blaming attitudes toward survivors of sexual harassment (Khanifah et al., 2023). Social media also continues to reproduce conventional gender norms among young Muslims in East Java (Sair, Aribowo, Kusman, & Ladiqi, 2025). Community service projects in East Java pesantren, meanwhile, point to an urgent need for digital literacy interventions so that female boarding students can recognise and deal with technology-facilitated harassment (Fiaji et al., 2022). For these reasons, the pesantren is a strategic place to study how OGBV is experienced and given meaning.

The classical sociology of pesantren places the *kyai* and a graduated scholarly tradition at the centre of santri moral formation (Dhofier, 1999). Modern pesantren, however, have long negotiated between classical Islamic learning (*turats*) and contemporary education to build character and moral resilience (Mujahid, 2021). Other studies look at how parents weigh pesantren against state schools as competing forms of symbolic and practical capital (Pratama & Wardhani, 2026), or at the teaching creativity needed to adapt religious instruction for diverse students in pesantren-based vocational schools (Sa'diyah & Dasuki, 2025).

Research on bullying rooted in senior–junior hierarchies has also identified rigid stratification, weak supervision, and a normalised culture of aggression as ongoing risks in residential communities (Ramadhani Risti Azizah & Sa'adah, 2025; Rahman et al., 2023). None of these studies, however, deals with OGBV as such. OGBV is not simply one more kind of rule-breaking within an institution. It is gendered, it is digital, and it is shaped by the moral vocabulary a religious community uses to assign blame, legitimacy, and protection. Recent work has begun to show how *santriwati* themselves deal with digital risks through community-based frameworks and ethical digital content aimed at preventing violence against women (Mutholingah et al., 2025).

Internationally, OGBV is discussed more broadly as technology-facilitated sexual violence, which includes online harassment, the sharing of non-consensual images, and gendered intimidation (Powell & Henry, 2017; Henry & Powell, 2018). Social media has also become a decentralised public sphere that opens space for digital feminist advocacy but also provokes strong resistance to claims of gender justice (Wara et al., 2026). In Indonesia, several studies show that legal protection for OGBV victims, for example under the Electronic Information and Transactions Law, is poorly implemented, from the lack of accessible reporting channels to weak sanctions against perpetrators (Widia et al., 2024). Others argue that Indonesian positive law has not yet accommodated the particular nature of OGBV as violence that is mediated by technology and crosses jurisdictions (Arsyad & Narulita, 2022).

These studies all focus on state law and policy. They say little about moral communities such as pesantren, where religious norms shape how residents make sense of OGBV and how it is handled in daily life. This gap at the level of the religious community is the focus of the present study.

The urban sociology of religion increasingly holds that religious institutions are not enclaves apart from the city but actors that shape urban space and are reshaped by it (Rüpke & Urciuoli, 2023). Earlier work on Surabaya likewise shows that residents often handle urban problems through social and cultural arrangements rather than through formal channels alone (Sa'ir et al., 2020). For *pesantren mahasiswa*, the line between "inside" and "outside" is crossed every day. Berger and Luckmann's (1966) notion of alternation, usually applied to migration or conversion, therefore helps explain how urban digital risk is read differently at each crossing between the pesantren and the campus.

We approach this gap through Berger and Luckmann's (1966) theory of the social construction of reality. In this view, social reality is not simply given; it is produced through a continuing cycle of three moments. Externalisation is the process by which individuals and institutions put their subjective understanding into the social world and create shared cultural products. Objectivation is the hardening of these products into facts that face individuals as an external, taken-for-granted order, embodied in institutions, roles, and routines.

Internalisation is the process by which individuals take this objectivated order back into their own consciousness, so that it comes to feel natural rather than made. Applied to OGBV, the framework lets us move beyond asking whether OGBV happens. It lets us ask how its meaning, as a violation, a joke, a misfortune, or a test of faith, is produced, disputed, and reproduced within an institutional order grounded in classical Sufi principles such as *wara'*, *muraqabah*, *mahabbah*, and *hifdz al-nafs* (Nurazizah et al., 2026; Fauzan et al., 2023; Mashuri et al., 2024; Idris & Abshor, 2024).

Institutional authorities and *mahasantriwati* stand in different places within pesantren life. The former externalise and objectivate the pesantren's values, while the latter internalise them and live by them. Our analysis therefore also looks at how institutional power shapes objectivation and internalisation, including the gap that emerged in the data between those who set meanings and those who bear their consequences. Religious authority in East Java has long been bound up with local culture and power (Sair, Aribowo, & Kusman, 2025), and the pesantren is no exception.

The study asks three questions: (1) How do *mahasantriwati* and institutional authorities construct the meaning of OGBV, and how do the pesantren's Sufi values work as an interpretive framework in that process? (2) How does the dialectic of externalisation, objectivation, and internalisation produce this construction? (3) How does the resulting construction shape the way *mahasantriwati* recognise, assess, and respond to OGBV? In answering them, the study contributes to the urban sociology of religious enclaves, treating them not as spaces cut off from the city but as places where urban risk is filtered through inherited religious categories, with consequences for who pays the cost.

Method

Research Design and Location

This is a single qualitative case study. Following Yin (2018), a single case is appropriate when it is theoretically revealing, not merely representative of a wider population. The site is a *pondok pesantren mahasiswa* in urban Surabaya, chosen purposively because it meets this criterion in two ways. First, the pesantren explicitly bases the formation of its *mahasantriwati* on classical Sufi values, yet almost all of them commute daily to a secular state university across the city. This produces a natural and sustained case of what Berger and Luckmann (1966) call alternation: the constant movement of a person between contrasting, and sometimes competing, normative worlds. Second, the pesantren combines *salaf* (classical) and modern features within one organisation. It therefore offers a clear view of how a changing religious institution deals with a phenomenon, OGBV, for which it has no ready-made doctrinal category.

Participants

Seven informants were selected through purposive sampling. Two were institutional authorities who articulate and enforce the pesantren's moral norms, and five were *mahasantriwati* who internalise these norms and navigate them in digital spaces. Although the

number of *mahasantriwati* is small, the sample is adequate in terms of information power (Malterud et al., 2016): the study aim is narrow, the theoretical framework is established, and the interviews produced rich data on OGBV experiences. Data collection stopped when further interviews yielded no new codes, themes, or insights.

Fieldwork took place between February and May 2026. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were held in private settings and lasted 60 to 90 minutes each. The first author is an insider in the pesantren community, which eased access and helped build trust with informants. To manage possible bias on sensitive gender issues, we practised active reflexivity and kept a critical distance throughout data collection and analysis. Table 1 summarises the informants' roles and their relevance to the study.

Table 1. Profile of Informants

Code	Role	Length of Residence / Spiritual Attainment	Relevance to the OGBV Theme
I-1	Pesantren caretaker (*pengasuh*)	Institutional authority	Sets institutional standards for judging how serious an OGBV case is
I-2	Deputy Director for Spiritual Discipline (*Laku Tirakat*)	Institutional authority	Oversees the curriculum; explains the gendered asymmetry in supervision
I-3	Mahasantriwati	4 years; attainment on target	Witnessed and supported a peer's OGBV case
I-4	Mahasantriwati	4 years; attainment on target	Direct victim of image-based OGBV and online fraud
I-5	Mahasantriwati	2 years; attainment below target	Admitted making OGBV-like content about a peer
I-6	Mahasantriwati	1 year; attainment above target	Most critical and reflective toward gendered institutional norms
I-7	Mahasantriwati	10 years; advanced level completed	Most layered internalisation in digital self-regulation

Source: Primary interview data and pesantren curriculum documents. Spiritual attainment is based on informants' self-reports, cross-checked against the institution's *tirakat* curriculum records.

The five *mahasantriwati* were chosen to vary in length of residence (one to ten years) and, more importantly, in their progress through the pesantren's graduated spiritual curriculum (*tirakat*), whose levels do not depend on how long a student has lived there. This allows us to examine internalisation as a matter of spiritual development rather than using length of residence as a stand-in for socialisation, a distinction that turns out to matter in the findings.

Interviews were conducted in Indonesian and translated for analysis and reporting. The interview guide covered three areas: (1) personal experience and interpretation of digital risk and OGBV, whether as victim, witness, or, where relevant, the person responsible for the act; (2) the perceived role of Sufi values in shaping digital behaviour and responses; and (3) views of institutional policy, supervision, and reporting related to OGBV. We also reviewed the pesantren's curriculum documents for its graduated spiritual programme to confirm the attainment levels informants reported.

Analysis followed a hybrid thematic approach that combined deductive and inductive coding, organised around Berger and Luckmann's three moments of externalisation, objectivation, and internalisation. We began with a deductive coding frame based on four classical Sufi values (*wara'*, *muraqabah*, *mahabbah*, and *hifdz al-nafs*) that were already built into the interview guide. To avoid deductive bias, we then applied open inductive coding to capture themes from the *mahasantriwati*'s experiences of OGBV that went beyond this initial frame.

Coding was done manually using structured matrices in Microsoft Excel to organise, colour-code, and compare verbatim transcripts with institutional documents. Trustworthiness was supported by source triangulation, comparing how institutional authorities and *mahasantriwati* described the

same incidents, and by repeatedly returning to the raw transcripts to make sure our categories stayed grounded in the informants' own words rather than in categories we brought in.

Ethical Considerations

This study did not go through a formal institutional ethics review. Ethical protection rested instead on the informed consent of each informant. Before the interviews, every informant was told the purpose of the study, how the data would be used, and that taking part was voluntary, and each agreed to participate. Informants were promised confidentiality through pseudonymous codes (I-1 to I-7) and were told they could withdraw at any stage. At the institution's request, the pesantren is referred to throughout as Pesantren Mahasiswa X (PMX) to protect its identity and that of its residents. Because disclosing OGBV is sensitive, informants could decline particular questions without leaving the study, and interviews about direct victimisation were scheduled flexibly according to each informant's emotional readiness.

Results and Discussion

The Meaning of Online Gender-Based Violence

As Berger and Luckmann (1966) would expect, the meaning of OGBV was negotiated among informants rather than fixed, even when the acts involved were much the same. I-4 found out that a male student had turned her photo into a digital sticker without her consent, and she had also been the victim of online financial fraud. She described both events as plain violations and spoke of anger, disappointment, and a lasting loss of trust in male students in general.

> *"I felt angry and disappointed, to the point that I no longer trusted male santri in general, because among the group members who knew about the photo, not one of them spoke up."*
>
> (I-4, mahasantriwati)

I-5, by contrast, admitted making a similar sticker from a peer's photo without permission. She described it as an ordinary joke and reasoned that, because she sent it only to the person concerned and did not share it publicly, no real harm had been done.

> *"I did admit to once making a sticker from someone else's photo... The sticker was only sent directly to the person concerned, it was not distributed to other parties."*
>
> (I-5, mahasantriwati)

This difference is not just a matter of personal opinion. It is shaped by institutional authority. I-1, the pesantren caretaker, put it this way:

> *"If someone still feels offended or harassed, that indicates they have not yet internalized the values (in this case, Sufi values) that should guide them."*
>
> (I-1, pesantren caretaker)

In other words, how serious an incident is depends largely on whether the affected person feels offended. If she does not, the matter is closed and needs no institutional response. If she does, her reaction is treated as a sign that she has not fully absorbed the pesantren's spiritual values, not as a valid claim in its own right. The moral logic is turned upside down: instead of the perpetrator answering for the act, the victim's emotional response becomes the thing under evaluation. This reading rests mainly on I-1's account, but it is consistent with the supervisory asymmetry described by I-2 and I-3.

The pattern closely resembles what Chavez and Del Prado (2023) call negligence in their analysis of gendered online humour: a collective tolerance of jokes that normalises harm not by openly endorsing it but by repeatedly failing to step in. Each time an act passes as humour, the community's threshold for what counts as OGBV shifts, so the category stays permanently contested instead of being settled by the institution. I-3 confirmed this. She said that similar acts were treated as "banter" among students even when the affected person was clearly hurt, and admitted that she was reluctant to challenge this openly for fear of becoming the next target.

Studies of mainstream social media platforms report the same thing: misogynistic and sexist content is often presented as humour or ordinary criticism and so is not recognised as violence by wider audiences (Cantika & Angeliie, 2025). What sets PMX apart is that this framing does not simply arise on its own in open digital space. Institutional authority actively

reinforces it through Sufi values. Downplaying OGBV therefore carries two sources of legitimacy at once, the wider norms of social media and the authority of local religious leaders.

Sufi Values as an Interpretive Framework

The pesantren's Sufi values are not just norms to be obeyed. In Berger and Luckmann's (1966) sense, they form an interpretive framework, a symbolic lens that decides which digital acts are noticed at all, how seriously they are taken, and which responses count as legitimate in the community's moral vocabulary. Reinterpreting classical concepts so that they fit a new medium is familiar from digital religion studies, which show religious communities renegotiating authority, ritual, and tradition when they encounter digital media (Campbell, 2012). Just as Islamic values have been used to build digital resilience and ethical awareness among female students (Mutholingah et al., 2025), the pesantren's classical Sufi values serve as inner spiritual guides for digital self-governance and moral boundaries.

In classical and contemporary Sufi writing, *wara'* means scrupulous caution: avoiding not only what is clearly forbidden (*haram*) but also what is doubtful (*syubhat*). In the digital era this becomes careful choice of online content and interactions (Nurazizah et al., 2026; Aziz & Martoyo, 2024). *Muraqabah* is a state of constant self-examination and awareness of being watched by God, which works as an inner check on harmful impulses in social and digital life (Fauzan et al., 2023). *Mahabbah* is a form of spiritual capital that encourages empathy, closeness, and selfless care in relationships within the boarding community (Mashuri et al., 2024). *Hifdz al-nafs*, the protection of life and self, is a *maqasid al-shariah* principle that calls for protecting people from physical, psychological, and digital harm such as bullying and harassment (Idris & Abshor, 2024).

Several informants reinterpreted *wara'* as a basis for digital self-governance, for example by checking who would see a post or pausing before sharing something, rather than as a ban on social media. *Muraqabah* was reinterpreted as watching the sincerity of one's own intentions when posting, which shifts attention to the poster's inner state rather than the possible effects of the content on others. *Mahabbah* had the strongest influence on how informants responded to OGBV. Those who witnessed a peer being targeted chose emotional closeness over confrontation. I-3 said she did not confront the perpetrator because she feared retaliation, and instead comforted I-4 privately and urged her to be patient.

> *"All I could do was comfort the victim to be patient, because I felt unable to stand up to the male santri who made the sticker."*
>
> (I-3, mahasantriwati)

Hifdz al-nafs was used as a basis for setting protective boundaries. I-7, for instance, switched off comments on controversial posts instead of blocking the people involved, which reduced her exposure while keeping the relationships intact.

This framework cuts both ways. It gives *mahasantriwati* a coherent ethical vocabulary and concrete practices for handling digital risk that many other young urban social media users do not have. Yet institutional authorities can, and do, use the same vocabulary to put patience and self-restraint ahead of accountability, as I-1's statement shows. These values are not neutral tools with fixed effects. Who uses them, and for what purpose, largely decides whether they protect the vulnerable or teach them to stay silent.

The Uneven Dialectic of Externalisation, Objectivation, and Internalisation

The first moment is externalisation, in which institutional authorities put their understanding of proper conduct into practice. At PMX this process is active but almost entirely informal. I-1 and I-2 both said they convey expectations about digital behaviour through sermons, personal warnings, and WhatsApp group messages. I-1 described this as a policy of conditional freedom. Rather than restricting the *mahasantriwati*'s social media use, which he felt would undermine the pesantren's wider educational mission, he and other leaders reinterpret concepts such as *wara'* so that they apply to digital life. I-3 noted, however, that this reinterpretation was never made explicit or systematic. The link between *wara'* and social media behaviour exists as an unspoken expectation, not as something that is formally taught.

The second moment is objectivation, in which transmitted values harden into lasting institutional structures that confront individuals

as external facts. Here the picture is very uneven. In worship and spiritual discipline, objectivation is strong. The *tirakat* curriculum is formally divided into sequential stages with semester targets, and completing it is a requirement for graduation. In digital conduct and OGBV, objectivation is weak. I-4, I-5, and I-6 each confirmed that PMX has no formal reporting mechanism for OGBV. Cases move instead through an informal chain, from a roommate to dormitory administrators and, in serious cases, to a private audience (*sowan*) with the *kyai*. Whether a case is resolved depends heavily on the initiative of the *mahasantriwati* involved and on how responsive the particular administrator happens to be. Gendered rules on space and time, such as curfews and locking the women's rooms at night, are enforced as consistently as the *tirakat* curriculum and are usually justified as protection rather than restriction. The pesantren's capacity to turn norms into enforceable structures is therefore not weak across the board. It is simply directed more effectively at controlling women's physical movement than at keeping them safe online.

The third moment is internalisation, in which individuals absorb externalised and objectivated values into their own practice. At PMX this varied according to each *mahasantriwati*'s progress in the *tirakat* curriculum rather than her length of residence. I-6 had lived at PMX for only one year, but her attainment was already above target. She used fairly sophisticated digital strategies, such as limiting her audience through close-friends features, and was critically aware of gendered double standards in the institution. I-7, who had lived there for ten years and completed the advanced level, showed the most layered internalisation. She weighed the sincerity of her intentions before posting and set boundaries that protected her while preserving relationships. I-5, whose attainment was below target after two years, was the only informant who admitted producing content resembling OGBV. Weak internalisation thus seems to go with less self-protection as a potential victim and also with a higher risk of becoming a perpetrator.

I-4's case complicates a purely cumulative reading. Her attainment was on target, yet her most systematic protective steps, blocking unknown numbers and tightening her account privacy, seem to have been prompted by the shock of being victimised rather than by gradual *tirakat* practice. Internalisation here appears to follow two paths that may complement each other: a cumulative path driven by curricular progress and a faster path triggered by direct victimisation.

Khotimah (2024) distinguishes three levels of OGBV mitigation: individual, communal, and institutional. Read through this framework, PMX reproduces on a small scale a gap Khotimah found in Indonesian national policy. Individual and communal responses, supported by internalised religious values and informal peer support, are fairly strong, while institutional mitigation, formal procedures, and reporting infrastructure lag far behind. Sufi values do provide a real, value-based channel of mitigation, but it runs alongside institutional objectivation rather than replacing it. I-4's experience is telling here. Even a *mahasantriwati* whose spiritual attainment is on target remains exposed to OGBV and dependent on an informal process of resolution that is barely institutionalised. Piety, however deep, does not close this gap on its own.

The same gap appears in legal scholarship. Even at state level, OGBV enforcement is held back by the lack of accessible reporting channels and of technical guidance for police to follow up victims' complaints (Widia et al., 2024; Arsyad & Narulita, 2022). If such gaps persist where formal legal instruments exist, it is not surprising that a pesantren, a non-state moral community with no legal mandate to deal with OGBV, relies on informal resolution based on personal relationships and spiritual authority rather than on clear institutional procedures. Table 2 summarises this uneven dialectic.

Table 2. Externalisation, Objectivation, and Internalisation in the Social Construction of OGBV

Dialectical Moment	Worship and Spiritual Discipline (Strong)	Digital Conduct and OGBV (Weak)
Externalisation	*Tirakat* material is taught on a set schedule and is part of the pesantren's official curriculum.	Social media ethics (*wara'*, cross-checking) are conveyed unsystematically and are not explicitly linked to social media use.
Objectivation	Graduated *tirakat* curriculum (S1→S2), measurable and compulsory before graduation.	No standard procedure or formal OGBV reporting mechanism; resolution depends entirely on the victim's initiative.
Internalisation	Depth of internalisation follows *tirakat* attainment; high attainment (I-6, I-7) goes with mature digital strategies.	Inconsistent across informants; low attainment (I-5) goes with becoming an OGBV perpetrator. Dominant pattern: avoidant coping.

Source: Primary interview data and pesantren curriculum documents.

Recognising, Assessing, and Responding to OGBV

Recognition: Personal and Episodic

This uneven construction has consistent consequences for how *mahasantriwati* deal with OGBV, starting with whether an incident is recognised as OGBV at all. Recognition remains personal and episodic rather than institutional. Without a shared institutional vocabulary for naming OGBV, the same kind of act, an unauthorised sticker made from a peer's photo, was seen as a clear violation by I-4 and as ordinary humour by I-5, and no institutional category existed to settle the difference.

Informants with stronger internalisation, especially I-6 and I-7, were also more watchful about digital risks in general, including fraud, even though neither had experienced OGBV personally.

> *"Because I'm still selective and don't yet feel comfortable sharing feelings or personal activities with people I'm not very close to."*
> (I-6, mahasantriwati)

> *"We often express those things on social media, we want it to be like journaling... If we can set the intention for dakwah, sometimes it's journaling, sometimes it's also for dakwah."*
> (I-7, mahasantriwati)

Internalisation can thus build an ability to anticipate harm, but this ability has not yet been turned into an institutional early-warning mechanism.

Assessment: Following the Line of Institutional Power

How seriously OGBV is judged follows the lines of institutional power built into the pesantren's structure, not the severity of the act. This power takes concrete form in strict administrative rules on female students' appearance, dress, and movement. Internal communications (Figure 1) show that female students must wear skirts (*rok*) during religious study (*mengaji*), even when they come straight from campus classes, with no exceptions. The pesantren's security rules (*Kamtib*) also impose a 10:00 p.m. curfew and allow male drivers to drop off or pick up female students only at designated public commercial sites.



Figure 1. Internal WhatsApp messages showing institutional rules on compulsory dress during religious study (top) and restrictions on female students' mobility (bottom).

I-2 and I-3 each described a double standard in supervision: female students' clothing and conduct are monitored and corrected more consistently than male students' behaviour, partly because there are too few male supervisors. This mirrors the asymmetry found in how OGBV is assessed. Supervision and the burden of evaluation fall mostly on those most exposed to harm rather than on the source of the risk.

This is not a coincidence unrelated to the OGBV findings. It follows the same pattern of objectivation. Institutional authority that has hardened around controlling women's movement and appearance also shapes how serious OGBV is judged to be. The logic that inspects women's clothing more strictly than men's conduct also treats a woman's distress at being victimised as a matter for her own spiritual reflection, not as grounds for sanctioning the perpetrator.

Response: The Structural Logic of Emotion-Focused Coping

Responses are best understood through Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) distinction between problem-focused coping, which tries to deal with the source of a problem, and emotion-focused coping, which tries to manage one's emotional reaction without addressing the source. Problem-focused responses, such as I-6's audience screening and I-7's boundary-setting, appear mainly as preventive steps among *mahasantriwati* with strong internalisation. They are almost entirely absent once victimisation has happened. After an incident, emotion-focused coping dominates. I-4 decided not to pursue her sticker case and explained this in religious terms, saying she believed God would repay the perpetrator for what he had done. I-3 chose closeness with the victim over confrontation with the perpetrator because she feared retaliation.

This pattern should not be read as a personal lack of assertiveness. In Lazarus and Folkman's own terms, it is a structurally rational adaptation to an environment that offers no credible institutional channel for solving the problem. Where there is no formal reporting system, emotion-focused coping is the most workable option, however deeply a person has internalised protective values. Even I-6, the most critical informant on gendered double standards, did not turn her awareness into any collective demand for institutional accountability; her critique stayed at the level of personal reflection.

This finding supports the study's central argument. Individual reflexivity and internalised piety, however sincere, cannot replace institutional objectivation. Nor should the absence of collective action be mistaken for a lack of awareness among *mahasantriwati*.

The case also shows a dynamic that is distinctly urban. It supports the argument in the urban sociology of religion that religious institutions shape and are shaped by the urban space they occupy (Rüpke & Urciuoli, 2023). Berger and Luckmann's (1966) concept of alternation, usually linked to migration or conversion, here describes a routine daily commute between the pesantren's Sufi moral order and the secular digital culture of a city campus. Because of this daily movement, *mahasantriwati* do not experience OGBV as an outside urban threat from which the pesantren shields them. The risk travels with them across both worlds and is filtered at each crossing through whichever framework, religious or secular, is most relevant at that moment. The

pesantren works less like a wall that keeps urban risk out and more like a lens that changes how that risk is seen, judged, and acted on. This has implications for how we understand religious enclaves in Indonesia's fast-growing cities.

Conclusion

OGBV among *mahasantriwati* at an urban pesantren in Surabaya is not a fixed reality but a socially constructed one. It is produced through an uneven dialectic in which Sufi values are richly externalised and, for many *mahasantriwati*, deeply internalised, yet only thinly objectivated into institutional protection for digital conduct. The construction is also uneven between the parties involved. The work of recognising, judging, and justifying harm falls mainly on the *mahasantriwati* most exposed to it, while institutional authorities keep the power to redefine a victim's distress as a sign of spiritual immaturity rather than a legitimate claim that calls for an institutional response.

Theoretically, the study extends Berger and Luckmann's constructionist framework by showing that objectivation can proceed unevenly within a single moral community. It hardens in long-institutionalised domains such as ritual worship and stays soft in new domains such as digital life. Power objectivated in one domain, such as the regulation of physical mobility, can also shape how another domain, such as the assessment of OGBV, is given meaning. The study further contributes to urban sociology by showing that religious enclaves in fast-growing cities do not simply shield their residents from metropolitan risk; they mediate it, filtering digital-era harm through moral categories inherited from a pre-digital tradition.

In practical terms, better protection for *mahasantriwati* against OGBV requires formal institutional mechanisms: confidential and well-publicised reporting channels, a digital-conduct curriculum that names OGBV directly instead of relying on implicit readings of classical concepts, and a better gender balance among supervisory staff to correct the documented asymmetry in supervision. Relying on internalised piety alone, however protective it may be for individuals, leaves the institutional gap in place.

As a single case study, the findings can be generalised analytically, not statistically. Their transferability to pesantren with different Sufi traditions, organisational structures, or urban settings needs to be tested rather than assumed. Future research could compare several pesantren with different doctrinal orientations, follow *mahasantriwati* over time to trace how internalisation develops during residence, and use mixed methods to estimate how common OGBV is across *pesantren mahasiswa* more broadly.

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