
The Urgency of Crisis Communication in Responding to Sexual Harassment: Maintaining the University's Image and Trust

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Abstract

The alleged sexual harassment case at a university highlights the complexity of crisis management in higher education, especially in religious-based institutions. This crisis not only involves personal ethical violations, but also shows the weakness of effective crisis communication governance in the face of public pressure. This study aims to analyze the institutional response of the university in dealing with the sexual harassment crisis, identify the role of the public in the escalation of the crisis, and evaluate its impact on the institution's reputation. This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a conceptual study design based on literature and documentation studies. Data sources were obtained from scientific journals, government policies, online media coverage, and official documents of relevant institutions. The results of the study show that UNUGO has not implemented a transparent, empathetic, and accountable crisis communication system. The absence of public clarification, minimal institutional openness, and the dominance of symbolic administrative defenses increases pressure from internal and external publics. Media attention, pressure from civil society organizations, and moral pressure from religious institutions accelerated the damage to the institution's reputation. This study offers novelty by examining the interaction between institutional silence, weak internal crisis management, and the absence of public communication in the crisis of sexual harassment on campuses based on religious values. These findings recommend the importance of improving institutional crisis management systems, strengthening victim protection mechanisms, and developing adaptive crisis communication strategies to restore public trust in the long term.

Keywords: Crisis Management, Sexual Harassment, Campus Reputation, Public Communication

INTRODUCTION

The issue of sexual violence in higher education is not only a matter of ethical or legal violations, but also poses significant challenges in crisis communication. Every case that surfaces will inevitably have consequences for the public's image and trust in the university. In situations like this, how a university communicates becomes crucial: whether it demonstrates openness, empathy, and responsibility, or appears closed and defensive. Effective crisis communication not only serves to defuse public pressure but also serves as a means for the institution to demonstrate its commitment to protecting its academic community.

In 2020, a survey conducted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology revealed that 77% of sexual violence cases occurred in universities, but 63% of victims chose not to report them due to fear of negative stigma (Kemendikbudristek, 2020). This phenomenon indicates a serious communication barrier: victims are reluctant to self-disclosure for fear of being ostracized, blamed, or even threatened by the perpetrator or their environment. From a communication psychology perspective, self-disclosure is an individual's courage to reveal personal experiences or sensitive information to others (Derlega et al., 1993). When a sense of security is lacking, victims choose to remain silent, preventing cases from reaching formal handling mechanisms. The culture of victim blaming exacerbates this situation. Victims are blamed for the incidents, fostering a culture of silence on campus (Chaudoir & Fisher, 2010). This situation not only blocks communication opportunities for victims but also highlights the weakness of crisis communication governance in higher education. Universities that fail to provide safe and responsive communication channels risk losing public trust. National data shows a more serious escalation. As of April 2025, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KemenPPPA) recorded 5,949 cases of violence against women in Indonesia (metrotvnews.com, 2025). This figure confirms that sexual violence not only has a traumatic impact on victims but also triggers a reputational crisis for educational institutions. When cases become public, universities are judged not only by the perpetrators' actions but also by how the institution communicates in response to the crisis.

Disclosing personal experiences of sexual violence is a highly emotionally sensitive process. Victims need a sense of security, trust in the campus system, and adequate psychological support to open up. When campuses fail to demonstrate support for victims or instead tend to protect perpetrators due to considerations of position or institutional image, the space for victims to speak out is further limited. As a result, most cases of sexual violence on campus remain hidden and never reach the formal process of handling. This phenomenon causes campuses to only see a small fraction of the true extent of the problem. Officially reported cases are just the tip of the iceberg of a larger issue that remains hidden beneath the surface. Meanwhile, victims who don't report the incident must endure the psychological burden in silence without seeking justice. A safe campus environment should be one that encourages individuals to speak up and reveal their negative experiences without fear.

The case disclosure process in handling sexual violence in higher education demonstrates how public information transparency is a key driver in uncovering previously hidden cases. Within the university environment, unequal power relations and a culture of silence often discourage victims from making formal reports. However, in the case of alleged sexual harassment at the university, the victim's courage to report to the PPKS Task Force triggered the case's release to the public after it was reported to LLDIKTI Region XIV and subsequently captured the attention of national media.

In the UNUGO case, Media Antara (2024) reported that 12 victims, including lecturers, staff, and students, filed complaints alleging sexual harassment allegedly perpetrated by the rector himself, leading to the case ultimately being investigated by the local police (Antara, 2024). Media involvement in expanding the reach of this information increased public pressure, prompted the Nahdlatul Ulama Executive Board (PBNU) to suspend the rector, and forced the institution to expedite administrative decision-making. This phenomenon demonstrates that in crisis management at universities, public transparency often encourages widespread disclosure of cases, especially when the campus's internal systems fail to provide a safe reporting channel and protection for victims. In addition to ANTARA, media outlets such as Kompas.com and Viva.co.id also highlighted the case of alleged sexual violence at the Nahdlatul Ulama University of Gorontalo (UNUGO),

focusing on the slow legal process, the number of victims, and the rector's denial of the allegations. Their coverage reinforced the public perception that this case was not only a legal issue, but also a communications crisis that damaged the university's reputation. The public reaction to the alleged sexual harassment incident involving a university rector sparked a wide-ranging public reaction. Within days of the news' media coverage, various civil society organizations, women's activists, alumni networks, and academic communities voiced their concerns. The spotlight on this case not only demonstrates the growing public concern about the issue of sexual violence in higher education but also signals that society will no longer tolerate abuse of power within institutions that should be safe spaces.

In addition to public pressure, women's organizations such as the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan), the Indonesian Women's Coalition, and sexual violence advocacy networks have issued public statements urging the local police to expedite the legal process. Several academics and legal experts have also written opinion pieces in national media, asserting that delays in the legal process could constitute symbolic impunity for perpetrators of sexual violence in high-ranking positions. This reaction demonstrates the growing public criticism of the handling of sexual violence cases in educational settings, particularly following the issuance of Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Regulation No. 30 of 2021, which provides a stronger legal basis for victim protection.

In situations like this, the role of crisis management is crucial. Universities need to act quickly to control the situation, not only legally but also to rebuild public trust. A slow or intransparent response can exacerbate the crisis and create the impression that the institution is neglecting the protection of victims. Therefore, crisis management includes strategic steps such as establishing an independent response team, transparently disseminating information to the public, and providing security guarantees and assistance to victims. Furthermore, crisis management must consider empathetic and solution-oriented public communication, so that the institution is not merely reactive but also demonstrates a long-term commitment to justice and reform.

With the right crisis management approach, universities can not only defuse public pressure but also use this moment as a turning point to strengthen campus protection systems. Transparency, accountability, and victim-centeredness are fundamental principles that must be upheld to ensure universities emerge from this crisis stronger and more credible.

A crisis is a frequent and unexpected situation in various aspects of life, whether at the individual, organizational, or societal level. This situation requires an immediate response to prevent it from escalating into a major problem. A crisis can generate pros and cons and public debate. A crisis can also generate public opinion, reputation, and public debate. While this situation is unavoidable, its impact can be prevented (Kriyantono, 2019). Although crises are inherently difficult to avoid entirely—because they can arise suddenly or stem from external or internal factors—their negative impacts can still be managed and minimized through an effective crisis management approach. A university's preparedness to respond to a crisis quickly, openly, and responsibly will significantly influence how public perception is formed. When universities and organizations demonstrate a commitment to problem-solving and protecting ethical values, the opportunity to maintain or even strengthen their reputation remains open.

In an organizational context, crises often result in a decline in reputation, public trust, and potentially significant financial losses (Nahar, 2020). Public trust built over years can be lost simply because of a single incident that is not handled transparently and responsibly. In the long term, this can impact stakeholder loyalty, operational stability, and even reduce support from strategic partners and internal resources. Organizations

need to develop anticipatory capacity through a structured crisis management system, which includes scenario planning, emergency response training, and communication strategies that adapt to changing public perceptions. In this way, the impact of a crisis can not only be minimized but also can be utilized as an opportunity for reflection and comprehensive improvement in organizational governance. Therefore, understanding crises is essential for effective mitigation and management efforts.

Kasus *revenge porn* One state university in Indonesia used Coombs' *Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)* framework. They reported using a combined strategy: justification and compensation as the primary response, and reminders as the secondary response. This strategy was effective in mitigating the short-term crisis but lacked long-term measures to ensure reputation restoration and victim protection (Nisa et al., 2024). While public awareness campaigns to prevent sexual violence in higher education are crucial, students' poor understanding of what constitutes sexual violence demonstrates a serious weakness in campus communication systems. The low number of reports stems not only from a lack of knowledge but also from the inability of universities to provide safe, open, and victim-centered communication channels. When universities fail to provide a prompt explanation to the public, delay their response, or rely solely on administrative defenses, trust in the institution declines. This situation demonstrates that poorly executed crisis communication actually increases public pressure and casts doubt on the university's commitment to protecting its academic community.

Various previous studies used as references have explored the dimensions of crisis communication and internal university management in handling cases of sexual violence or harassment, as references and comparisons in the research conducted by researchers. Citra Manurung et al. examined the analysis of Sexual Violence in the Campus Environment from a legal and community perspective and found that preventing sexual violence on campus requires effective strategies, such as the formation of a task force for the prevention and handling of sexual violence (PPKS) on campus. Cases of violence require serious attention from various community groups (Manurung et al., 2024). Muhammad Farhan & Fitri. (2025) analyzed the human crisis management of Surabaya State University in dealing with sexual harassment, and the study showed that UNESA Public Relations implemented crisis management through five stages: problem identification, preparation, response, recovery, and post-crisis learning. Then the communication strategy implemented emphasized information transparency, empathy for victims, and cross-unit coordination, especially with the PPKS task force. Research by Ersya, Akbar, & Sultan (2024) on the case of installing hidden cameras in the women's restrooms at UIN Alauddin Makassar shows that a privacy crisis can have serious psychological, social, and reputational impacts. The study emphasized the role of Public Relations in managing the crisis through reporting the perpetrators, dishonorable discharges, and the establishment of an Integrated Service Unit (ULT) to handle sexual crimes. Meanwhile, a study conducted by Landicho et al. (2023) at one of Indonesia's well-known national universities highlighted the phenomenon of *catcalling* and other forms of verbal harassment on campus. This study, a descriptive qualitative study using a qualitative phenomenological approach, illustrates the dominance of male perpetrators and the weak institutional response to these incidents, so that victims feel unable to file formal demands (Landicho et al., 2023). These findings complement the findings of Rohima et al. (2023) on minimal reporting and emphasize the importance of the role of institutions in creating a safe environment (Rohima et al., 2023).

Previous research on crises in higher education has largely used the *Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)* framework or a legal and administrative approach. For example, Rohima et al. (2023) emphasized low student awareness, resulting in limited case reporting. Landicho et al. (2023) highlighted verbal harassment such as *catcalling*

and weak institutional responses. Nisa et al. (2024) applied SCCT to a *revenge porn case* but emphasized short-term strategies. Another study by Aulia & Sumardi (2023) highlighted the delay in establishing the PPKS Task Force at the University of Mataram, while Manurung et al. (2024) emphasized the need for preventative strategies through the formation of a special task force. Ersu, Akbar, & Sultan (2024) also examined the case of hidden camera installation at UIN Alauddin Makassar, focusing on public relations strategies that were still reactive and administrative.

Unlike these studies, the study, *The Urgency of Crisis Communication in Responding to Sexual Harassment*, offers a novel approach by using Ronald Smith's framework, which emphasizes three key stages in crisis management: pre-crisis, crisis response, and post-crisis. This approach allows for a more systematic analysis of how universities should prepare before a crisis arises, respond openly and empathetically when a crisis occurs, and evaluate and improve after the crisis has passed. Furthermore, the study classifies publics into four categories—internal, external, hidden, and active—to assess how each group is affected by the crisis and how communication strategies can be tailored differently based on the characteristics of each public.

The novelty of this research lies in its repositioning of focus: campus sexual harassment is understood not merely as a legal or social issue, but as an institutional communication crisis that demands strategic planning. By emphasizing the pre-crisis, crisis response, and post-crisis stages, as well as a more comprehensive classification of publics, this research makes a new academic contribution to strengthening the study of crisis communication in university environments.

METHODS

This research uses a Qualitative Descriptive Case Study design with the units of analysis being internal university policy documents and online media news texts. According to Creswell (2014) and Ishtiaq (2019), a qualitative approach allows researchers to understand social phenomena holistically through narrative studies, context, and complex interpretations of meaning.

The data sources used in this study include secondary documents as the primary sources. These include three news articles from national media outlets (ANTARA, Kompas.com, and VIVA.co.id) reporting on alleged sexual harassment at UNUGO, as well as official government regulations regarding sexual violence in higher education (such as Permendikbudristek No. 30 of 2021 and Permendikbudristek No. 55 of 2024).

Data collection techniques were conducted through literature studies and document reviews, both from accredited national scientific journals and trusted news sites. Data analysis techniques used qualitative content analysis, which aimed to identify patterns of crisis communication strategies, institutional responses, and case representation in the media. The analysis process was conducted thematically, beginning with data categorization based on crisis management stages (*pre-crisis, crisis response, and post-crisis*).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Chronology of Events and Institutional Profile

The incident began in late March to early April 2024, when several female lecturers and education staff at the university began to share unpleasant experiences they had personally experienced with Prof. A, also known as the accused, to members of the campus's internal Sexual Violence Prevention and Handling Task Force (Satgas PPKS). The victims reported behavior that allegedly included verbal, gestural, and physical sexual harassment on various occasions such as coordination meetings, closed meetings, and even informal activities involving campus officials. This behavior was allegedly

carried out by the Rector, who at that time had been serving as the university's head of government since 2022. With a background as a senior academic in the field of Social Sciences and a long track record within the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and local education bureaucracy, the Rector was widely known among the academic community in Sulawesi. The report was then compiled by the PPKS Task Force in a Complaint Letter on April 1, 2024. In the PPKS Task Force report, it recorded 30 acts of violence and sexual harassment experienced by the victims, consisting of 6 female lecturers and 3 administrative staff. The victims came from various faculties and work units within the university structure, thus having a much weaker power relationship than the perpetrators. This reinforces the asymmetric power relationship that often triggers and hinders cases of sexual violence in higher education.

The initial internal handling steps were carried out through coordination between the PPKS Task Force at the University, the University's Organizing Body (BP2), and the local Nahdlatul Ulama Regional Board (PWNU). After an internal clarification process and initial evidence gathering, on April 16, 2024, PWNU and BP2 officially suspended Prof. Amir Halid from his position as rector to ensure an objective investigation process and protect the reporters from potential intimidation. In his statement, Prof. Amir denied all the allegations and stated that what happened was simply a "misunderstanding in communication interactions" between himself and staff.

Although the university has taken fairly firm administrative steps, the legal process has been slower. On April 23, 2024, 11 victims officially filed a report with the local police, providing a chronological account, supporting witnesses, and documents considered preliminary evidence. However, as of October 2024, progress in the case remains minimal, with no suspects identified, and no thorough investigation of the main perpetrators. This has drawn concern and sharp criticism from women's activists, civil society organizations, and academics, who believe that the system of protection for victims of sexual violence in higher education remains ineffective, especially when the perpetrators hold positions of authority.

This incident demonstrates that while regulations such as Ministerial Regulation No. 30 of 2021 provide a formal framework for preventing and addressing sexual violence on campus, its implementation still faces numerous challenges. In the context of UNUGO, although the Task Force has been functioning and has taken initial action, long-term protection for victims and the continuity of the legal process remain far from ideal. Therefore, this case study is crucial not only for understanding the dynamics of sexual violence on campus but also for assessing the capacity of university governance to create a safe, just, and victim-focused academic space.

Nahdlatul Ulama University of Gorontalo (UNUGO) is a private university under the auspices of Nahdlatul Ulama, Indonesia's largest Islamic organization. Founded with the spirit of building higher education based on Islamic, Indonesian, and national values, UNUGO has a strong moral and social mandate to protect its academic community from all forms of violence and discrimination. However, in this case, these values appear not to have been comprehensively implemented within the campus protection system, particularly regarding the mechanism for handling sexual violence. The unclear internal reporting process, the absence of press releases or public statements, and the lack of open support for victims highlight weaknesses in institutional governance that is sensitive to issues of gender-based sexual violence.

This chronology is crucial as a basis for crisis management analysis, as it demonstrates how a higher education institution handles emergency situations that impact its reputation, leadership ethics, and public trust. Furthermore, an institutional profile based on religious values and morality presents a unique irony when serious violations occur within the highest levels of leadership. The delayed response and lack of transparency

also reinforce the perception that the institution lacks a robust crisis management system, particularly in sensitive issues like sexual violence. This opens up a discussion to assess how prepared educational institutions are to face a reputational crisis that simultaneously encompasses ethical, legal, and psychological aspects.

Analysis of Institutional Responses to the Crisis

In the face of a sexual harassment crisis, the institutional response—particularly from public relations units and campus management—is crucial to minimizing reputational damage and restoring public trust. However, recent research and reports indicate that many universities in Indonesia have not been able to provide an adequate response.

However, recent research and reports indicate that many universities in Indonesia have not been able to provide an adequate response. For example, (Dewi, Putri Aisyiyah Rachma, n.d.) in their research stated that the implementation of Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 30 of 2021 concerning the Prevention and Handling of Sexual Violence in higher education institutions still faces various challenges that hinder its effectiveness. Although this regulation is a significant milestone in efforts to protect victims and prosecute perpetrators of sexual violence, its implementation on the ground has not fully addressed the complexity of the problem. Two main obstacles were identified in this research. First, a deeply rooted culture of misogyny within universities. This culture is reflected in attitudes that belittle victims' experiences, shift blame onto survivors, and normalize sexual harassment as "normal" or not serious. Second, the unequal power relations between perpetrators and victims, especially when the perpetrators are lecturers or university officials, leave victims in a weak and powerless position to report or seek justice. The victims' weak bargaining power, both structurally and socially, further reinforces the tendency for universities to cover up cases to maintain the institution's image. These two factors are major obstacles to the realization of a safe and just campus space, and they also show that policy reform alone is not enough without a change in culture and power structures that are fairer and pro-victim.

A similar case occurred at the University of Mataram (Aulia & Sumardi, 2023), where no official PPKS task force was established at the start of the crisis, resulting in slow communication and victim protection strategies. Although Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Regulation No. 30/2021 mandates the formation of a task force and standard operating procedures for prevention, implementation remains uneven. A similar situation was also found at the Muslim University of Indonesia in Makassar, where the main weaknesses lay in the lack of outreach, reporting facilities, and victims' courage to report (Irwan; Djanggih, 2022).

In the case of alleged sexual harassment involving the rector of Nahdlatul Ulama University of Gorontalo (UNUGO), the institution's response was deemed minimal, opaque, and failed to meet the basic principles of transparency and accountability. For several months after the issue surfaced publicly, the university did not issue an official statement to the media, either conveying the chronology, the institution's position on the alleged ethical violations, or the steps taken to address the case. The Foundation's change of rector was only publicly announced, without directly linking it to the sexual violence incident, which only reinforced the impression of disregard for justice for victims and a cover-up of the problem.

Table 1. Analysis of University Responses to the Crisis

Response Stages	Ideal Practice	Actual Practice at Nahdlatul Ulama University, Gorontalo
Pre-Crisis	Institutions should have a crisis communications plan, a public relations team on standby, and an internal reporting system (PPKS Task Force).	UNUGO has not yet established an official communication channel and has minimal information dissemination, but the PPKS task force has been formed.
Response during crisis	Using a <i>rebuilding strategy</i> , namely a public apology, admission of mistakes, and corrective actions such as the formation of an independent task force.	UNUGO did not issue a <i>press release</i> or apology, and the rector was replaced without any public clarification regarding the allegations.
Post-crisis	Reputation Re-establishment through institutional construction and SOP evaluation	There have been no further reports regarding independent audits, victim advocacy, or open communication regarding Lessons from the case.

(Source : Processed by Researchers, 2025)

Table 1. Analysis of University Responses to the *Crisis* shows that UNUGO's response to the crisis tended to be silence and symbolic administrative measures. The limited public clarification and the slow legal process suggest that the crisis communication strategy implemented was not fully transparent and empathetic. ANTARA (2024) noted that "as many as 12 victims, consisting of lecturers, staff, and students, reported allegations of sexual harassment allegedly committed by the rector himself, until the case finally entered the investigation process at the local police." This shows that the case was handled more intensively after media attention, rather than through an open communication initiative from the university.

According to Kriyantono (2019), organizations that lack a robust crisis response mechanism tend to experience more severe and lasting reputational damage, as the public forms opinions based on a lack of information. When an institution chooses to remain silent, the narrative space is filled by external parties—including the media, civil society, and netizens—who often create negative perceptions that are difficult to control. In the context of UNUGO, the absence of public communication not only impacts short-term reputation but also creates a collective wound among students, alumni, and the academic community who feel the university's moral values have been betrayed.

Overall, the institution's response in this case demonstrates a weak application of modern crisis management principles based on transparency, accountability, and public participation. The absence of a clear communications strategy allowed the crisis to develop aimlessly, worsening public perception, and depriving the university of the

opportunity to manage the impact constructively. Moving forward, higher education institutions like UNUGO need to review their crisis management systems and develop policies based on theory and best practices to avoid repeating similar failures in dealing with ethical and moral crises.

Public Reaction and Its Impact on Institutional Reputation

Public reaction came in various forms: from statements from civil society organizations, petitions from student and alumni networks, viral social media posts, and investigative coverage by online media outlets. Concerns were directed not only at the perpetrators' actions but also at the institution's slow response, which was perceived as not siding with the victims and failing to demonstrate institutional transparency.

A negative public response to a crisis can accelerate the damage to an institution's reputation, especially when the crisis involves ethical or power violations, as in cases of sexual violence. According to the book *Strategic Planning for Public Relations* by (Smith, 2017), in handling a crisis, one of the important steps a Public Relations practitioner must take is to identify and classify the public affected by the crisis. In the context of the sexual harassment case that occurred at Nahdlatul Ulama University, Gorontalo (UNUGO), identifying the affected public is a crucial initial step so that communication and reputation recovery strategies can be implemented effectively, directed, and according to the needs of each group.

Ronald Smith (2017) divides the public in a crisis into several categories based on their level of closeness and involvement with the institution: internal, external, primary, and marginal. In the UNUGO case, the primary internal public includes students, lecturers, educational staff, and direct victims within the campus. This group is the most emotionally, psychologically, and socially impacted because they have a direct relationship with the perpetrator and the location of the incident. They require assurances of protection, transparency, and open communication from the institution.

Then, there are key external audiences, such as parents of students, alumni, institutional partners, local governments, and the general public, who follow developments in the case through the media. These groups influence public opinion and help determine how the university is perceived externally. If not handled effectively, they can become a source of social pressure that exacerbates the institution's reputational crisis. Furthermore, the mass media and civil society activists also fall into the category of strategic audiences that must be identified, as they have the power to shape public discourse and majority opinion amidst the crisis.

Meanwhile, marginalized audiences may consist of individuals or groups who have no direct ties to the campus but are still exposed to the issue through digital media. This group remains important to monitor, as their perceptions can morph into new pressures, especially in the absence of clarification or communication from the university.

Table 2. Public Classification and Its Impact on Institutional Reputation

Public Groups	Forms of Public Reaction	Impact on Institutional Reputation
Main Internal Public (Students, Education Lecturers, Personnel, Victims)	- Fear, anxiety, insecurity - Urging transparency in victim protection - Internal discussion of the institution/university	- Declining trust in University management - The emergence of the perception that universities are unable to protect victims

Main External Public (Parents of students, Alumni, Partners, Government, General Public)	- The Call for Openness - Parents' concerns about their children's safety - Alumni criticized it openly - Local governments are also monitoring the case	- The University's image is declining nationally - Potential decline in confidence of prospective new students
Mass Media & Society	- National media investigative coverage - Women activists provide statements of position	- The reputation crisis extends to the national space - Moral pressure on University management to act
Marginal Public (Digital Public)	- Viral on social media - Wild opinions are growing on digital platforms	- Potential for negative amplification if the crisis is not managed - Wild framing has emerged which has worsened the campus' image.

(Source: Processed by Researchers, 2025)

Based on Table 2. Public Classification and Its Impact on Institutional Reputation This demonstrates that the university's silent has a direct psychological impact on the internal public. Victims feel unprotected, students lose their sense of security, and the academic community doubts the institution's commitment.

In relation to the media, Kumparan (2024) noted that the rector even denied the allegations, calling the victim's report a "hallucination". This statement was not only a form of denial but also added to the victim's psychological burden, as their experiences were deemed unreal. As a result, the victims experienced double trauma: first, from the harassment and second, from the institution's impartial attitude.

This psychological impact also extends to other members of the academic community. Students feel the campus is no longer safe, faculty and staff have lost trust in leadership, and responsibility. Viva.co.id highlighted that the slow legal process and minimal public communication reinforce the perception that the university is more focused on administrative image than on victim protection.

Effective crisis management begins with the careful identification of affected public groups, accompanied by an understanding of their emotional conditions and expectations. Institutions are then expected to design adaptive and proactive communication strategies that align with the characteristics of each segment. Such an approach not only contributes to the restoration of institutional reputation, but also ensures justice and tangible support for victims, while simultaneously rebuilding public trust.

CONCLUSION

The alleged sexual harassment case at Nahdlatul Ulama University, Gorontalo (UNUGO) demonstrates fundamental weaknesses in the campus' institutional governance system, particularly in handling crises involving sexual violence. Although a change of leadership was implemented as an administrative response, this step was not accompanied by a *press release*, a public apology, or real protection for the victims. This gives the impression that the University is not taking the victim's side and tends to avoid transparency. The lack of official information, the absence of public involvement, and the weak handling of

the case indicate that the institution's crisis management has not been effective. However, as an institution based on religious and educational values, UNUGO should be a pioneer in creating a safe, just, and ethical academic space. This case serves as an important lesson that moral crises in higher education cannot be resolved simply through administrative means, but require a long-term commitment to building a victim protection system, improving reporting mechanisms, and providing public information. Without these steps, similar crises risk recurring and eroding public trust in higher education.

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