

Task force members' attitudinal evaluation of sexual violence policies and case handling in Indonesian universities

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how university task force members responsible for handling and preventing sexual violence in Indonesia construe attitudes when responding to policies on sexual violence and case handling. In practice, these members face a dilemma: they are expected to enforce the Minister of Education and Culture's sexual violence prevention policy while also navigating institutional sensitivities, including concerns about colleagues' reputations and the university's public image. This study uses qualitative discourse analysis informed by Systemic Functional Linguistics, particularly Appraisal Theory. Using a qualitative approach, this study draws on in-depth interviews with university task force members to document their experiences in handling and communicating sexual violence cases. The study analyzed data through the Attitude system in Martin and White's (2005) appraisal framework, focusing on patterns of Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation. The findings show that Affect and Appreciation are the most prominent attitudinal resources in task force members' accounts when evaluating actions, character, and responsibility related to reported cases. Concerns about protecting institutional image influence these judgments, safeguarding alleged perpetrators' reputations and managing competing interests that may hinder enforcement. In addition, the task force members show positive attitudes toward fulfilling their responsibilities despite institutional pressures and limited technical guidance. The study suggests that task force members are positioned as actors who strive to balance strict rule enforcement by maintaining workable social relations within the institution. The findings inform institutional policy development, training programs, and guidelines for sexual prevention in higher education contexts, and support campaigning for positive attitudes in handling and preventing sexual violence cases.

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INTRODUCTION

Sexual violence in higher education remains a widespread issue across many countries (Fedina et al., 2018; Parejo, 2023; Sivertsen et al., 2019; Steele

et al., 2024; Wellum et al., 2023). Beyond causing immediate harm, sexual violence disrupts students' rights, well-being, and ability to learn, while also harming the conditions necessary for a more

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humane, respectful, inclusive, and violence-free academic environment. In Indonesia, this obligation is both ethical and policy-supported, particularly following the issuance of Ministerial Regulation No. 30/2021, which requires universities to establish prevention and response systems. Within this policy framework, university task forces play a key role in implementation, developing survivor-centered reporting channels, managing trauma-informed cases confidentially, connecting survivors with medical, psychosocial, and legal services, and monitoring enforcement of policy commitments to ensure campus safety. However, fulfilling these responsibilities is rarely straightforward. Task force members often work in institutional settings where conflicting interests, informal pressures, and reputation concerns can hinder decision-making, communication, and case management, especially when cases involve colleagues, hierarchical relationships, or influential individuals.

Existing relevant studies emphasize the need for comprehensive institutional approaches, including effective policy design and communication strategies that promote clarity, trust, and compliance (Khadaifi et al., 2025). Some research highlights how sexual harassment and related violence often intersect with power imbalances, leading to significant consequences for campus relationships and public perceptions of universities (Maulida, 2017). In response, several studies analyze university policies and institutional communication, arguing that clear, consistent, and transparent messaging is essential for policy adherence and effectiveness (e.g., Richards et al., 2021; Rodríguez-Rodríguez & Heras-González, 2020; Pambudi et al., 2025). Further research shows that communication influences the understanding of available procedures and shapes how sexual violence is perceived, legitimized, or challenged within the campus community and beyond (Hartiana et al., 2023). Therefore, communication strategies are increasingly seen as central to institutional responses to sexual violence in higher education (see also Bivens & Hasinoff, 2021; Holland & Cortina, 2017).

However, while policies and institutional messaging have gained increasing attention, a less explored yet equally important aspect is the attitudes embedded in the discourse of those implementing policy on the ground. Task force members not only communicate policy through their evaluations of actions, responsibilities, actors, and institutional priorities but also position themselves and others in ways that can influence survivors' sense of safety, the perceived legitimacy of procedures, and the broader campus community's trust in enforcement. Attitudinal meanings are therefore essential to implementing the prevention policy, negotiating with stakeholders and victims, and identifying limitations within institutional settings. Thus, the

current study aims to examine how task force members express their attitudes when describing their experiences in handling sexual violence cases and implementing prevention policies in Indonesian higher education. Using in-depth interviews and analytical methods informed by Martin and White's (2005) appraisal framework, this study shows how evaluative language, or the language of appraisal, reveals the dilemmas task force members face, including the tension between enforcing policy and institutional sensitivities such as reputational management. By emphasizing attitudinal positioning as a communicative and institutional practice, this study provides insights into the discursive processes involved in policy implementation and discusses implications for improving guidance, training, and accountable campus responses.

The attitudinal meanings are viewed from Interpersonal meaning, as one of the three metafunctions of language in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), which is concerned with how language enacts social relationships, expresses personal attitudes, and negotiates roles between speakers and listeners, or writers and readers (Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Scholars within the SFL tradition recognized that clause-level analysis could not fully capture discourse's broader evaluative and dialogic dimensions. This notion led to the development of the Appraisal framework, a discourse-semantic extension of interpersonal meaning that systematically maps how speakers and writers express evaluation, adopt stances, and negotiate intersubjective alignments (Martin, 1992, 2000; Martin & White, 2005). The Appraisal framework comprises three interconnected subsystems: Attitude, which concerns the expression of emotional, ethical, and aesthetic evaluations; Engagement, which manages dialogic space and the negotiation of alternative viewpoints; and Graduation, which scales the intensity and sharpens or softens categorical boundaries of evaluations (Martin & White, 2005; White, 2003; Wihadi et al., 2018). Together, these three subsystems provide a comprehensive model of how language users construct interpersonal texture across entire stretches of discourse, moving beyond the clause to account for the evaluative prosodies that color texts.

Among the three subsystems, Attitude is the Appraisal framework's core evaluative component. It provides the linguistic tools speakers and writers use to interpret and convey evaluations of people, behaviors, events, objects, and states of affairs (Hunston & Thompson, 2000; Martin & White, 2005). Attitude is a key aspect of evaluative language. It provides the linguistic tools speakers and writers use to interpret evaluations of people, behaviors, events, objects, and states of affairs (Hunston & Thompson, 2000; Martin & White, 2005). Through attitudinal meanings, language users

not only express emotions such as happiness, anger, and fear but also judge human actions based on socially shared norms and values (Martin & White, 2005). Such evaluative choices serve as interpersonal functions. They enable speakers or writers to position themselves, build agreement or disagreement with audiences, and manage relationships of solidarity with readers, listeners, and other voices within discourse (Martin & White, 2005).

Evaluative meanings are understood through the Appraisal framework, which systematically explains how evaluation is expressed and managed in discourse (Martin, 1992, 1995, 1997, 2000; Martin & Rose, 2003; White, 1998, 2001). For decades, Appraisal has been widely used to analyze evaluative language in genres such as narratives and media texts, where speakers and writers often adjust emotional responses, moral judgments, and value assessments to influence readers' perspectives (Martin & Rose, 2003; White, 1998, 2001). Thornbury and Slade (2006) note that Appraisal is closely linked with gradable lexis and can be seen as representing a spectrum of evaluation from negative to positive (p. 69). More broadly, Appraisal has been understood as a way to map how a text conveys (i) which attitudes are expressed, (ii) how strongly feelings and judgments are highlighted or softened, and (iii) how voices and value positions are sourced to connect with audiences (Martin & Rose, 2007, p. 25). When using Appraisal to express evaluative language, writers and speakers draw on interpersonal resources beyond the clause, incorporating patterns of lexical choices, grammatical tools, and discourse structure. This framework is often described through three interconnected subsystems: Attitude (evaluation), Engagement (dialogic positioning), and Graduation (intensity and grading) (Lai, 2010; Martin, 1992, 2000; Oteiza, 2017; Thompson & Alba-Juez, 2014; White, 2003; Wihadi et al., 2018). As Martin and White (2005) highlight, Appraisal also considers the social distribution of feelings and values, specifically, how emotions and evaluations are shared, challenged, and normalized through linguistic choices that support or question solidarity.

Attitude serves as an evaluative framework rooted in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) introduced by Martin and White (2005) in *The Language of Evaluation*. As research has progressed, attitude as a language of evaluation has expanded considerably over the past two decades, revealing several discernible trajectories. First, at the theoretical level, the tripartite system of Attitude, comprising Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation, has been continuously refined. Martin (2017) advocates for a more topological representation of attitudinal relations grounded in lexis, while Su and Hunston (2019) demonstrate a systematic link between adjective complementation

patterns and Attitude subtypes, and Benítez-Castro and Hidalgo-Tenorio (2019) overhaul the Affect taxonomy by drawing on corpus evidence and psychological approaches to emotion. Ngo and Unsworth (2015) further refine the Attitude framework for ESL contexts, particularly in spoken discourse. Second, methodologically, the field has shifted from manual analyses of individual texts to large-scale, corpus-assisted approaches, as Bednarek (2008) pioneered in *Emotion Talk Across Corpora*, linking linguistic patterns of Attitude to register variation. Third, in terms of discourse domains, studies employing Attitude have been identified to investigate media and news discourse (such as Daniarsa & Kartika-Ningsih, 2023; Wei et al., 2015); political discourse (such as Hansson et al., 2022); and academic and pedagogical discourse (Cheng, 2023). Geographically, Attitude research increasingly encompasses multilingual and non-Anglophone contexts, including Indonesian-language discourse (Daniarsa & Kartika-Ningsih, 2023), signaling that the Appraisal System has matured into an adaptive, inclusive analytical framework that is both linguistically and culturally expansive.

With reference to the Indonesian government policy on the prevention and handling of sexual violence in higher education (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, 2021), sexual violence cases include verbal and physical acts that demean, insult, harass, and/or attack a person's body and/or reproductive function, due to unequal power relations and/or gender, which result in or may result in psychological and/or physical suffering, including harm to a person's reproductive health and the loss of the opportunity to undertake higher education safely and optimally. In 2020, sexual violence cases were reported at 79 Indonesian universities across 29 cities, and by 2021, reports indicated a total of 8,800 cases (Sanuri, 2021). The number of sexual violence cases in Indonesian universities has been rising in recent years, highlighting the influence of cultural, religious, and institutional factors in addressing sexual assaults (Arnez & Nisa, 2024). Achmad et al. (2023) examined three Indonesian state universities and found that the deeply rooted culture of shame significantly discourages victims from speaking out. Victims often remain silent due to fears of reputational harm, victim-blaming, and a lack of institutional support. Similarly, Lubis (2023) studied student responses to sexual violence at an Acehese university, revealing how patriarchal and religious norms create environments where survivors either deny their experiences or stay silent, often lacking awareness of their rights. Aisyah and Parker (2020) provide an important perspective by exploring how religious conservatism and gender norms in Muslim-majority settings further complicate sexual violence reporting. Their study

found that many victims internalize guilt and hesitate to disclose harassment due to religious expectations of modesty, silence, and obedience (Orwela, 2022; Petryshyna & Boyko, 2021; Sisneros & Rivera, 2018).

One factor that influences the quality of communication strategies is communicators' attitudes toward the issues being discussed. By analyzing these attitudes, this study aims to contribute to the global dialogue on how attitudes, as expressed through language choices, affect the way sexual violence on campus is handled. The implications are drawn from the evidence of language use by the communicators or task force members in managing sexual violence cases. This study attempts to analyze the attitudes expressed by the task force members of the sexual violence policy by answering the following research questions:

- 1) What evaluative language is chosen to express their attitudes in handling sexual violence cases on campus?
- 2) What meanings are realized from the use of evaluative language in expressing their attitudes?

METHOD

This study used a qualitative descriptive design, including content and discourse analyses of talks, to gain a deep understanding of the institutional mechanisms, communication practices, and strategic approaches task force members use to address sexual violence in higher education. Content analysis was used as a systematic method for identifying, coding, and quantifying patterns within textual data to map recurrent themes, lexical choices, and evaluative resources (Krippendorff, 2019; Neuendorf, 2017). Using the Appraisal framework (Martin & White, 2005), content analysis classified and tallied attitudinal tokens (Affect, Judgment, Appreciation), revealing dominant evaluative patterns. Discourse analysis was used to examine how language constructs negotiation of power relations, and positions speakers and audiences within institutional contexts (Fairclough, 2013; Gee, 2014). Where content analysis asks "what is being said and how often?", discourse analysis asks "how is what is being said shaped by, and shaping, the social and institutional setting?" Both approaches were used to identify patterned evaluative choices made by the task forces as representative actors, shaped by institutional ideology and communicative strategy (Elo et al., 2014). This qualitative method was chosen because it enables a comprehensive exploration of participants' experiences, perceptions, and actions within a specific social and institutional context (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The design also helps identify emerging themes and patterns related to institutional communication, policy implementation,

and prevention efforts as reflected in the task force members' reports of sexual violence cases.

Participants

Participants were carefully selected members of a university task force dedicated to preventing and addressing sexual violence. These participants were chosen in particular because their respective institutions had officially nominated and trained them as members of task forces tasked with preventing, managing, and resolving occurrences of sexual violence. Participants were invited to participate in this research and could withdraw after reading the consent form. Using purposive sampling from our identification of task forces at two public universities and one private university, we selected participants to ensure rich, relevant insights. All participants received an information sheet and provided written informed consent before data collection. The consent process emphasized adherence to ethical standards, including the researchers' commitment to keeping participants anonymous. The researchers conducted multiple interviews with participants until no new significant themes emerged (Guest et al., 2020). The study included three task force members, two from public (state) universities and one from a private university, representing both institutional sectors to capture diverse perspectives.

Data Collection

Data were primarily collected through semi-structured interviews conducted over four weeks. Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes and was conducted in person. The semi-structured format was chosen to allow deeper exploration of specific topics while maintaining a consistent thematic structure across participants. The interview guide addressed themes such as institutional policies and communication procedures related to sexual violence prevention, challenges task force members face in engaging stakeholders, strategies for disseminating information and raising awareness among students and staff, and perceptions of the effectiveness of current institutional communication channels. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' permission and later transcribed verbatim. To ensure ethical standards, the data collection excluded victims' or perpetrators' personal information. The interviews were guided by general prompts followed by more specific questions. They were conducted in Indonesian to avoid linguistic barriers in responses. The interview prompts, as translated into English, include, for example, 1) *What have universities done to reduce the number of sexual assaults on campus?* 2) *Has the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology's regulation been implemented?* 3) *To what extent are the task force members authorized to prevent sexual assault?* 4) *To what extent are the task force members authorized*

to handle sexual assault?4) Is there any intervention in handling cases? What cases are typically intervened in? 5) What are the biggest obstacles the task force members face when handling cases? 6) If there are obstacles, who or what causes them? 7) What are the task force members' suggestions for eliminating these obstacles? 8) Have previous efforts often failed in handling sexual assault?9) What are the biggest challenges in handling sexual assault?10) In your opinion, how can these challenges be addressed? Other specific questions followed the main prompts.

Data Analysis

Data analysis adhered to the thematic analysis framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2019) to identify emerging themes. Specifically, the themes were derived from the Appraisal analytical framework rooted in Systemic Functional Linguistics. This Appraisal theory served as the primary framework for analyzing interpersonal meanings within texts. It provides a structured model for understanding how speakers or writers evaluate, align with, or distance themselves from specific stances and values. It explains how evaluative language influences social relationships, negotiates attitudes, and expresses ideological positions within the discourse of sexual violence in higher education. The analysis focused on Attitude, one of Appraisal Theory's three key components, alongside Engagement and Graduation (Martin & White, 2005).

The Attitude subsystem was used to examine how evaluative meanings are conveyed through the positioning of task force members, exploring how

language expresses feelings (affects), judgments, and appreciation. Affect refers to emotional responses or feelings expressed or evoked in discourse (e.g., "it is hard for me to handle the case"), indicating emotional resonance or desirability. Judgment assesses people's behavior, morality, and competence, often reflecting ethical or professional standards (e.g., "The actors must be responsible and polite in reporting their case"). Appreciation involves evaluating objects, events, or phenomena based on their worth, value, and importance (e.g., "the actors are threatening academic activities on campus"). This system of language evaluation encodes values and represents the moral, cultural, and social standards shared within a campus context. Judgment tends to emphasize ethical and professional values, while appreciation reflects socio-economic, cultural, and aesthetic values. These evaluative acts shape what a given discourse considers proper, beneficial, or significant.

As a key component of Appraisal, Attitude concerns how speakers or writers interpret feelings, judge behavior, and assign value to things, processes, and phenomena (Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & White, 2005). Martin and White (2005, p. 42) describe Attitude as "a framework for mapping feelings as they are construed in English texts" within a system of meaning. As Table 1 shows, this framework includes three semantic areas: Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation (Martin & White, 2005). While all three regions encode feelings, Affect is often seen as the primary system, whereas Judgment and Appreciation are viewed as more institutionalized forms of value (Oteíza, 2017).

Table 1
System of Attitudes

Appraisal System	Subcategory	Relation to Values	Relation to Desirability	Example
Attitude	Affect	,	Emotional pull (happiness, satisfaction, security)	<i>You will feel safe and happy.</i>
	Judgment	Ethical/professional values (capacity, propriety)	,	<i>What he said does not make sense.</i>
	Appreciation	Socio-economic, cultural values (importance, worth)	Desirability framed within the spectacular impressions	<i>They provide energy for a healthy life on campus</i>

The table represents the appraisal system's three attitudinal domains. First, Affect refers to emotional reactions that can be positive or negative, including feelings such as happiness, security, and satisfaction (Martin & White, 2005). Affect is also known as emotion, and it responds to behavior, text, process, or phenomena. The expression of Affect can vary across different grammatical structures. Affect relates to the emotional aspect of human experience, involving modifications of participants and processes, affective mental and behavioral activities, and modal adjuncts. Second, Appreciation is another expressed attitude within the broader Appraisal framework. It plays a key role in linguistically representing evaluations. The system

is triggered through various linguistic choices and patterns that speakers use to convey their Attitudes toward a phenomenon. Martin and White (2005) stated that Appreciation is used to express what things are worth and how we value them. It relates more to aesthetics. Third, Judgment pertains to people's views of others and their behaviors, essentially reflecting ethics (Martin & White, 2005). Generally, Judgments are categorized into those related to social esteem and those concerned with social sanctions. Esteem Judgments involve 'normality' (assessing how unusual someone is), 'capacity' (evaluating how capable someone is), and 'tenacity' (measuring how committed someone appears). Sanction Judgments, however, focus on

‘veracity’ (the truthfulness of someone) and ‘propriety’ (the ethical conduct of someone).

The system of attitudes is expressed in terms of desirability, indicating emotional pull such as happiness, satisfaction, and security. Judgment is not expressed through evaluative language to indicate desirability; instead, it involves values addressed to people with ethical consideration. Appreciation is expressed through evaluative language that assesses the worth or importance of subjects and may involve desirability and spectacular impressions. Attitude can be realized through two distinct modes: *inscription* and *invocation*. Inscribed Attitude refers to evaluations explicitly encoded in the text through overtly attitudinal lexis; for instance, words such as *rude*, *smart*, or *tragic* directly signal a negative or positive stance without requiring inferential work from the reader. Invoked Attitude, by contrast, operates indirectly and is less lexically transparent, but it is triggered through the selection of ideational content, metaphor, or intensification that provokes, flags, or affords an attitudinal reading (Martin & White, 2005). This inscribed–invoked continuum is analytically significant because institutional and policy texts often avoid overt attitudinal inscriptions and instead rely on invocation (Tupala, 2019). The data were analyzed using the main concept (Martin & White, 2005) and an adapted concept of Appraisal in Indonesian (Gunawan et al., 2023).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Using the Appraisal framework to understand the task force members’ attitudes, the analysis revealed that their approaches to handling sexual violence cases were primarily driven by Affect and Judgment, suggesting deliberate reactions aimed at maintaining harmonious, cohesive educational environments conducive to academic activities.

The Task Force Evaluative Language Choices

The task force evaluative language choices were drawn from semi-structured interviews conducted with task force members across the focal universities. The genre of these interviews can be characterized as a hybrid of personal narrative and institutional reporting: participants were asked to describe their own perceptions of the sexual violence problem within their campus, to recount what their task force had actually done in response, and to reflect on the strategies they had employed in handling reported cases. The interview prompts were deliberately designed to elicit not merely procedural descriptions but also evaluative stances; questions were framed to invite participants to articulate what they found effective, challenging, or insufficient in their work and in the broader policy framework governing campus sexual violence. In this sense, the interviews captured attitudes through participants’ language choices.

Focusing on the realization of the Attitudes, the analysis shows that Attitudes reflected in the interview responses are dominated by Affect and Judgments about policies and actions as the evaluated items. The findings show that the task force members show more appreciation toward what they have been doing to deal with the sexual violence on campus. The appreciation is also extended to the government policy. Despite the lack of technical guidance for implementing the policy, task force members tend to appreciate the policy more than to judge its enforcement. The use of appreciation results in more Affect being involved in describing their job and in handling cases of sexual violence. Table 2 shows that the frequency of attitudinal choices indicates a positive trend in how they describe and report their job.

Table 2
Frequency of Attitudinal Language Choices

Attitude System	Subcategories	Positive	Negative	Percentage	Dominant Polarity
Affect	Happiness/Unhappiness	11	4	6.7%	Positive
	Security/ Insecurity	9	5	5.5%	Positive
	Satisfaction/ Dissatisfaction	16	7	9.8%	Positive
	Inclination/ Disinclination	36	8	23.1%	Positive
Subtotal Affect		72	24	43.1%	Positive
Judgement	Normality	8	4	4.9%	Positive
	Capacity	9	3	5.5%	Negative
	Tenacity	6	1	3.6%	Positive
	Veracity	3	0	2.8%	Positive
	Propriety	3	0	2.8%	Negative
Subtotal Judgement		29	8	19.6%	Positive
Appreciation	Reaction: Impact	9	4	2.7%	Positive
	Reaction: Quality	17	3	10.4%	Positive
	Composition: Balance	8	5	4.9%	Positive
	Composition: Complexity	7	5	4.3%	Positive
	Valuation	21	5	12.8%	Positive
Subtotal Appreciation		62	22	37.0%	Positive
TOTAL		163	54	100%	Positive

The analysis of Attitude realization reveals a clear hierarchical distribution across the three subsystems, with Affect emerging as the most dominant category, accounting for nearly half of all attitudinal expressions (43.1%). Within Affect, positive inclination is the most prominent subcategory (23.08%), followed by Satisfaction (9.80%), while happiness (6.7%) and Security (5.5%) are distributed in relatively balanced proportions. This pattern indicates that the discourse is shaped primarily by expressions of emotional tendencies toward fulfillment. Appreciation is the second-largest subsystem (37.03%), with all five

subcategories, Valuation, Reaction: Quality, Reaction: Impact, Composition: Balance, and Composition: Complexity, showing positive attitudes expressed more dominantly through valuation. Judgment ranks third (19.6%). Overall, positive polarity prevails across the Attitude system, reflecting a discourse fundamentally oriented toward affirmation and positive sentiment. Meanwhile, as displayed in Table 3, some expressions exemplify the attitudinal language that shows dominantly positive sentiment toward the policy on sexual violence on campus and case handling.

Table 3

Attitudinal Language Examples from the Task Force Members as Appraisers

No	Interviewees	Appraising items	Appraised items	Aff.	Jud.	App.
1.	Task force members of university 1	<i>Tidak ragu (keputusan)</i> [certain about (the decision)]	<i>Keputusan</i> [the decision]	(+ satis)		
		<i>Mungkin peluang ini (tindakan hukum)</i> [may be it is the opportunity (legal actions)]	<i>Tindakan hukum</i> [legal actions]			(+ val)
		<i>Solid (tindakan)</i> [solid (action)]	<i>Kebijakan solid</i> [solid policies]			(+ val)
		<i>Sedikit (diam)</i> [a bit (silent)]	<i>Macam-macam (jenis pelecehan)</i> [many kinds (of harassment)]			(- val)
2.	Task force members of university 2	<i>Merasakan dorongan untuk pergi dan menangani</i> [felt the urge to go and work on cases].	<i>Kita</i> (the task force members)	(+inc)		
		<i>Tidak mungkin (kasus itu)</i> [impossible (this case)]	<i>Macam-macam pelecehan</i> [kinds of sexual violence]	(+inc)		
		<i>Terpadu (tindakan)</i> [integrated (action)]	<i>Tindakan</i> [Action]			(+ val)
		<i>Bukan sebuah hukuman sosial (tindakan saya)</i> [it is not a social punishment (my action)]	<i>Tindakan saya</i> [my action] (the task force members)			(+ val)
		<i>Kami bukan ragu (keputusan)</i> [we are not doubtful about (decision)]	<i>Kami</i> [we] (the task force members)	(+inc)		
3.	Task force members of university 3	<i>Harus (intervensi)</i> [must (intervene)]	<i>Kita</i> (the task force members) [We (the task force members)]	(+inc)		
		<i>Ga berat (hukuman)</i> [not severe (punishment)]	<i>Hukuman</i> [The punishment]			(+ val)
		<i>Strategis (Tindakan/saya)</i> strategic (action/I)]	<i>Kita</i> [the task force members]	(+satis)		
		<i>Sporadis (upaya hukum diketahui dari mulut ke mulut)</i> [sporadic (legal attempts from one person's mouth to another)]	<i>Upaya hukum</i> [Legal attempts]	(-inc)		
		<i>Gak mau sama (tindakan)</i> [Don't want to do the same (action)]	<i>Kita</i> [the task force members]	(-inc)		
		<i>Terlalu indah (hukuman ringan)</i> [too beautiful (light punishment)]	<i>Hukuman</i> [the punishment]			(- val)
		<i>dasar yang baik (apa yang saya lakukan)</i> [good reasons (what I am doing)]	<i>Kita</i> [the task force members]			(+ val)
		<i>Betul (menjalin hubungan sosial)</i> [right (establishing social relations)]	<i>Kita</i> [the task force members]		(+ Prop)	

The table presents an appraisal-based analysis of interview excerpts from three university task

force members addressing sexual violence cases. It maps how “we/the task force members” evaluate

policies, actions, legal actions, and social relations. The table categorizes attitudinal meanings into Affect, Judgment, and Appreciation, showing that the appraisers are the task force members and interviewees, and that what is evaluated includes policies, types of harassment, legal attempts, and punishments. The entries reflect positive assessments, which include positive affect and inclination toward the policy and its implementation, such as “tidak ragu [undoubted]”, “solid”, “harus intervensi [should intervene]”, “merasakan dorongan untuk pergi dan bekerja [felt the urge to go and work]”. This inclination indicates a positive attitude toward working hard and solving problems, which often requires visiting faculties or other campuses. Positive appreciations unfolded in the interviews, such as “terpadu [integrated]”, “mungkin peluang ini (tindakan hukum) [may be it is the opportunity (legal acts)]”, “menjalin hubungan sosial [establishing social relations]”. Meanwhile, when handling cases, task force members prioritized social relations and, at the same time, legal enforcement, which often created a dilemma between softening actions to maintain good social relations and enforcing legal measures.

The task force members also recognize appraisal items and evaluate them dominantly positively, such as “tindakan hukum [legal actions]”, “kebijakan [policies]”, “task force members”, and “hukuman [punishments]”. The analysis also reveals critical views of legal processes and sanctions, such as “upaya sporadic [sporadic attempts]” and “terlalu indah (too good) for light punishments.” The analysis captures the ethical, emotional, and evaluative stance of the task force members toward their work, institutional policies, and the management of sexual violence.

Further, attitudinal expressions are coupled with engagement expressions. Some Engagement expressions that support the acts of the task force members can be evidenced in the following phrases:

- a. *Dulu (lihat) (pendampingan)*
[first (see) (available academic support)]
- b. *Menurut saya (apa yang saya lakukan)*
[in my opinion (what I am doing)]
- c. *Tapi ternyata ya (tindakan pelecehan),*
[but in fact (acts)]
- d. *Tapi sebetulnya (tindakan pelecehan)*
[but actually (sexual harassment)]
- e. *Gejala pelecehan (saya kira)*
[harassment impacts (I think)]

The attitudinal expressions play a role in the operation of Engagement, enhancing the dynamic relation of the discourse semantics of the interview genre. When a speaker says, for instance, “tapi ternyata kebijakannya belum jelas [but in fact the policy was not yet clear],” the counter-expectancy marker (tapi ternyata) simultaneously contracts the dialogic space and introduces an inscribed Judgment

of the policy’s inadequacy. Similarly, when the evidential “lihat dulu [see first]” precedes an evaluation of a reported case, it flags an invoked Appreciation: the speaker is not directly praising or condemning but is inviting the listener to infer the evaluation from the evidence being summoned. These couplings demonstrate this in the recount-and-evaluate genre of the interview. Appraisal in these interviews is not a matter of isolated lexical items but of convergent choices across Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation within a field of competing perspectives on sexual violence policy.

Meanings of evaluative language in expressing attitudes

Positive Energy resulting from the Affect

As shown in Table 2, Affect was more dominantly realized in reporting how the task force members deal with sexual violence cases on campus. They often included positive emotions and feelings when handling and reporting the cases. These positive sentiments led task force members to maintain positive energy when handling or reporting cases. For example,

Interviewer

0:04:38 - 0:04:51

Ada, kan ini adalah kira kira perempuan ini tentunya laki laki juga ada yang pejabat, ada yang senior, ada mungkin yang mendekati jabatan tertentu ada kedekatan pemerintahan ada kendala tidak

[There are, right, these are approximately women, of course there are also men who are officials, there are seniors, there are perhaps those who are close to certain positions, there is closeness to the government, are there any obstacles in handling this situation?]

Speaker 2

0:04:51 - 0:04:53

Kedekatan dengan petugas

[getting close with task force members]

Speaker 1

0:04:53 - 0:04:59

Senior, dosen senior, mungkin gak perlu dihormati gitu

[senior, senior staff, that perhaps we should not respect]

Speaker 2

0:04:59 - 0:05:19

Kalau ragu ragu sih enggak, pak, kita berstrategi aja, jadi kalau misalnya kita diam dulu sedikit itu bukan ragu ragu ingin menangani, tapi ini strateginya bagaimana, ini untuk yang ini kan kita juga sedang menangani pejabat pejabat universitas

[If we are in doubt, that is wrong, no, sir, let’s just have a strategy, so if, for example, we keep quiet for a bit, it’s not a matter of hesitation about how to handle it, but this is the strategy, for this we also deal with university officials].

The expression “*Tidak ragu (Keputusan)* [certain about [the decision]]” indicates their emotions and feelings toward the decision they made. They had no hesitation or reservations and were inclined to proceed with their task. The expression suggests a positive inclination, as shown in the phrase “*sedang menangani* [still handling],” indicating that there is no delay in handling cases. Regarding the case they are handling, they show energy and willingness to work on a case involving university officials. There is no doubt they will carry out the task, even if the case involves officials in higher structural positions at their university. The expression also implies confidence in carrying out the task. Confidence is further reflected in the use of modulation such as “*harus [hadapi]/must [face]*.” For example,

Speaker 2

0:20:58 - 0:21:11

Juga bukan sebuah hukuman sosial, ya menurut saya yang harus dihadapi oleh yang bersangkutan, pelaku, dan hukuman gak berat, kan dia masih berkuliah.

[It's also not a social punishment, in my opinion, that the person concerned and the perpetrator must face, and the punishment isn't serious since he is still taking courses].

The script shows that the task force members ignored some judgmental realizations, such as “*bukan sebuah hukuman sosial [is not a social punishment]*”, but they showed no obligation to prevent them from continuing to take courses. This feeling of Affect was driven by the obligation “must,” confirming that the perpetrator should proceed with their academic activities. Even without judgment, this statement implies it was an obligation the actors needed to face. The Affect is embedded in the realization of obligation.

The realization of judgments was not dominant, but judgments appear especially in how the tasks were performed and in the actors involved. The task force members conveyed their voices, emotions, and positions when deciding cases. Their word choice shows great attention to their work and concern for others. This increased attention and care aimed to protect the images of the people involved in the cases, for example,

Speaker 2

0:10:52 - 0:11:11

Intervensi itu harus, tapi saya juga harus strategis gitu lo, jadi saya dekati, ya saya bilang yang baik baik bahwa bagaimana pun kita melindungi para perempuan ini, dari mahasiswa di situ, dia juga satu prodi. Akhirnya saya kapan gitu, udah paham pokoknya mah tindakan saya enggak mau sama

[Intervention is necessary, but I also have to be strategic, you know, I said it was good that no matter how we protected these women from the students around, they were also in the same study program. When I finally did that, I already understood the point, but I didn't want my actions to be the same.]

The task force members displayed a more positive attitude, expressing a sense of obligation and appreciation for the policy being established and the tasks assigned by the institution. However, they viewed their legitimacy as task force members as their own. The institution did not specify the obligation because it lacked clear guidelines. Despite the institution's lack of explicit directives, the task force members showed their appreciation by stepping up to enforce the policy. The speaker valued her job, describing it as necessary and beneficial, and reinforced this with modal auxiliary verbs expressing obligation. The Task Force members' attitude reflects their readiness to act without hesitation to implement sexual harassment prevention policies. Many words were added to show their feelings about taking action. The lack of technical regulations to guide actions and responses to cases leads task force members to rely on their own observations and knowledge, even though they perform their duties firmly and without hesitation.

The task force members accepted this responsibility as a duty and a concern that needed to be addressed without waiting for technical guidance. Additionally, as mentioned in the interview script, they could not specify their actions further because the cases they handled varied. Their main goal was to resolve each case and to protect the campus from sexual harassment.

Less Judgment, Creating Positive Energy

The task force members see their role as a collective effort supported by the dean, lecturers, and students. On behalf of the institution, they have reviewed several cases and actions. These actions followed thorough assessments, but the goal was not punitive; rather, it was to protect individuals' and the institution's reputation. The task force members carried out their duties while maintaining good relationships with perpetrators, victims, and the campus community. Including additional comments when sharing their opinions on case handling demonstrates mediation, thoughtfulness, and reflection on their decisions. Their personal qualities influenced how they approached cases. Such situations reveal that university policies for managing and preventing sexual violence are often influenced by the emotions this issue evokes. This is shown by the frequent use of tentative language (adverbial hedges) to soften decisions, reflecting concerns about students, perpetrators, and the potential social or legal repercussions. Because specific technical guidelines for case management are lacking, the task force collaborated with campus stakeholders, including student groups, faculty, and administrative offices, to address victims' needs.

Speaker 2

0:05:29 - 0:05:34

Eggak pak kita terpadu dan kita bersatu.

[No, sir, we are integrated and we are united]

Speaker 2

0:01:47 - 0:02:08

Namanya gugus Satgas kampus. Anti kekerasan, tapi di bagian advokasinya itu langsung berurusan kasus

mendampingi dulu

[It's called the campus task force. Non-violence, but in the advocacy role, the task force members watch over the case first]

Because they are willing to work, the task force members demonstrate their commitment and make many efforts to make the policy implementable. They have organized themselves into a unit to deal with sexual violence cases, as stated by speaker 2. The interview data revealed further evaluative language about implementing the policy, predominantly positive appreciation, with few explicit negative judgments of the policy and the university's regulations. The interview data suggest a cohesive commitment to implementing the policy. Their role of working alongside victims was initiated to provide education and restore their positive energy on campus. The campus authority's policy does not adequately guide the task force members in their work. In many cases, the task force members acted without referencing the campus authority's policy, but they intended to help and to keep the campus free from any sexual violence cases.

Taken together, these patterns, dominant Affect, abundant Appreciation, and deliberately restrained Judgment, are not merely descriptive observations; they are shaped by the interview's generic character. The task force members were not asked to adjudicate guilt or to condemn individuals, but they were asked to report what they had done and to reflect on the effectiveness of their actions. This generic framing licenses the predominance of Affect and Appreciation while constraining the expression of Judgment. Affect surfaces naturally because recounting case-handling involves personal emotional investment: speakers describe what they felt as they navigated difficult situations, and this emotional transparency constructs a relatable, sincere persona. Appreciation, in turn, is the attitudinal resource most compatible with evaluating institutional mechanisms. Overall, the appraisal profile is overwhelmingly positive, as task force members foreground commitment, energy, and institutional loyalty.

DISCUSSION

The findings suggest that all task force members representing the universities indicate strong collaboration with campus stakeholders, such as student organizations, faculty, and administrative offices, as part of the community they care for. These stakeholders are considered critical components of campus communities. A

collaborative approach was designed to ensure comprehensive, coordinated efforts that address victims' needs, raise awareness among the campus community, and promote prevention. As a result, task force members expressed more appreciation than criticism. This shows that the task force members have a more positive attitude toward carrying out their duties.

The attitudes of the task force members from the three universities reveal a clear tendency to positively evaluate (appreciate) the campus-level regulations aimed at implementing the national policy on preventing and managing sexual violence in higher education. Despite the lack of detailed technical guidelines, such as terms of reference from university policymakers, the task force members exercised considerable discretion by developing their own standard operating procedures, outreach strategies, and survivor-support mechanisms rather than passively waiting for top-down directives. In evaluative terms, the predominance of appreciation over judgment in their discourse indicates that members viewed the policy framework and institutional commitments as valuable resources, while also acknowledging existing gaps and limitations. This pattern aligns with the findings of Indonesian and international research showing that task forces and campus teams often support the spirit of sexual-violence policies while simultaneously creating contextually appropriate practices to address weak institutional infrastructure and unclear operational guidance (Andrianika et al., 2022; Attala & Nurhaeni, 2024; Mabachi et al., 2020; Pambudi et al., 2025). Such locally driven initiatives, rooted in strong normative support for safe-campus ideals and collaborative problem solving, are crucial for transforming formal compliance into more meaningful, survivor-centered, and equity-focused campus environments (Bondestam & Lundqvist, 2020; Linder et al., 2020; Steele et al., 2024).

This study indicates that policy implementation in higher education is influenced by interactions between policies and local systems, which are crucial for successful execution. Additionally, the authoritative nature of policy documents and their integration into the organization's social fabric can affect implementation. Clear communication, resource allocation, and bureaucratic structure are also essential to effective policy implementation. The task force members' positive attitudes supported smooth communication. Furthermore, the ongoing discussion about policy implications and the obligation to create safer university environments for all students remains clear. The task force members' positive attitudes underscore the need to build strong partnerships within academic institutions to address this issue effectively (Watts, 2020; Mabachi et al., 2020).

To improve policy implementation, universities should strengthen positive attitudes among policy enforcers, ensure adequate resource allocation, and foster a supportive bureaucratic structure. By addressing these areas, universities can better implement national policies and achieve their educational goals. As in other studies (e.g., Macheridis, 2015), universities' roles in implementing sexual violence policies are significant given their educational responsibilities. This study shows that task forces play a crucial role in fostering positive attitudes toward that policy and in protecting individual and institutional reputations.

Task force members take on their roles as interviewees, which leads them to communicate in the genre of description and explanation. They begin by expressing appreciation for the policy, their own efforts, and the collaborative network, while reserving Judgment for moments when it can be softened, invoked, or absorbed into obligation modulations ("harus" [must] or "perlu" [need to]). This finding resonates with and extends the Appraisal literature, aligning with several findings in other studies. First, the predominance of Appreciation over Judgment aligns with Rohimajaya and Hamer's (2022) analysis of a *Jakarta Post* editorial, where Judgment and Appreciation similarly dominated over Affect, although in the present study Affect is far more prominent. Editorials argue a position, whereas interviews elicit personal emotional investment. Second, the strategic minimization of inscribed Judgment echoes Tupala's (2019) observation that institutional texts favor factual and neutral evaluative resources, embedding Judgment indirectly to preserve a sense of objectivity. However, the present data depart from Tupala's findings in one important respect: task force members frequently inscribe both Appreciation and Affect explicitly. This study thus contributes to the growing body of Appraisal research by demonstrating that the genre of institutional self-reporting shapes an appraisal profile characterized by high Appreciation, moderate Affect, and carefully managed Judgment. This configuration reflects both the interview's communicative purpose and the interpersonal demands of discussing sexual violence policy within a collegial academic environment.

CONCLUSION

This study investigates how university task force members in Indonesia discursively position themselves when implementing policies to prevent and address sexual violence. Using Appraisal Theory, especially the Attitude system, to analyze the emotional and ethical meanings in their discourse, this study found that the task force members' language was highly evaluative. This

shows how they balance institutional loyalty, concern for survivors and perpetrators, and the challenges of a relatively new regulatory framework with unclear operational guidelines. A key finding is the predominance of positive Appreciation, with few explicit negative Judgments of perpetrators or institutions. Task force members portray themselves as dedicated, proactive policy enforcers, showing strong emotional commitment and a sense of moral responsibility. Their evaluations highlight collaboration, negotiation, and problem-solving rather than moral condemnation, indicating a preference for restorative, relationship-preserving approaches over punitive measures.

This evaluation pattern reveals a double stance. On one side, task force members seem highly committed, stepping up to fill institutional gaps through personal dedication and initiatives to address a variety of cases. On the other side, the absence of clear negative judgment, the way sanctions are described, and the frequent use of hedging suggest tensions between upholding justice and safeguarding harmony, hierarchy, and institutional reputation. While focusing on education and healing is valuable, it raises questions about what is truly being taught: whether sexual violence is strictly unacceptable or if cases are quietly managed to minimize disruption and shame. The emphasis on positive and emotional meanings, with limited direct criticism of perpetrators and institutional failures, risks downplaying structural gendered power dynamics and institutional accountability. Additionally, this study indicates that universities need clearer technical guidelines and standardized procedures so that task forces don't rely primarily on personal intuition and informal negotiations.

Critically, the language-context relationship revealed in this study is mutually constitutive rather than unidirectional. Task force members' appraisal choices do not simply reflect an external institutional reality; they actively construct and sustain it. By consistently inscribing positive Appreciation while invoking = Judgment, the speakers reproduce a discursive environment in which institutional harmony, collegiality, and reputation are treated as values that can coexist with, and at times take precedence over, accountability and moral clarity (Fairclough, 2013). This study shows that combining Appraisal with a critically oriented genre analysis (Martin & Rose, 2008) is essential to move beyond description and understand how language, context, and ideology interweave in institutional talk about sexual violence.

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CONTRIBUTION OF THE AUTHORS

The first author contributed to the study's conceptualization and methodology, supervised the overall research, managed project administration, and co-wrote the original draft of the manuscript. The second author co-developed the conceptual framework, conducted the formal analysis, validated the research findings, and contributed to reviewing and editing the text. The third author was responsible for the investigation process, data curation, and data validation, and actively participated in reviewing and editing the manuscript. The fourth author carried out the investigation, performed the formal data analysis, created the visualizations, co-wrote the original draft, and led the revision of the manuscript in response to the reviewers' comments. The fifth author contributed to methodology development, provided theoretical validation, and participated in reviewing and editing the manuscript. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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