



## Predicting College Students' Intention to Reject Sexual Violence: The Role of Self-Esteem and Religiosity

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## INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of sexual violence in higher education has emerged as a critical concern in both academic discourse and public policy across countries. Beyond violating physical integrity, sexual violence produces enduring psychological consequences, including trauma, anxiety, diminished safety, and erosion of self-identity. In Indonesia, the urgency of this issue is reflected in the increasing number of reported cases involving women. National data recorded 26,161 cases in 2023, rising to 27,658 in 2024, before declining to 21,135 cases as of October 2025. Despite this fluctuation, the majority of victims over the past four years have been female students aged 13–25, indicating that educational institutions remain structurally vulnerable spaces for young women. Furthermore, 310 campus violence reports were documented between 2021 and 2024, with 49.7% classified as sexual violence, underscoring the persistence of unequal power relations within universities. In this study, sexual violence encompasses harassment, coercion, and assault occurring within higher education settings.

Comparative studies across countries confirm that structural determinants, such as academic hierarchy, administrative authority, and unequal resource distribution, heighten students' vulnerability, particularly among women. In Nigeria, the prevalence of sexual harassment has been linked to entrenched cultures of silence and weak institutional accountability (Ogunfowokan et al., 2024). In Saudi Arabia, fear of stigma and unclear reporting procedures discourage female nursing students from disclosing harassment experiences (Almegewly et al., 2025). Similarly, in the United Kingdom, minority medical students report intersecting experiences of racial discrimination and sexual harassment that adversely affect mental health and academic performance (Sasania et al., 2023). Collectively, these findings demonstrate that campus sexual violence reflects systemic power asymmetries rather than isolated individual incidents.

At the psychological level, sexual violence significantly undermines students' mental health. Empirical evidence indicates elevated levels of depression, anxiety, academic burnout, and disengagement among victims (Zhang et al., 2025). Okunlola et al. (2021) further report that sexual harassment is associated with diminished self-esteem, impairing victims' capacity to assert interpersonal boundaries. Among young adult women, such experiences may also disrupt decision-making processes and healthy

relational development (Qinthara, 2023). These vulnerabilities intensify in institutional contexts that lack accessible social support and protective reporting mechanisms.

From a socio-cultural standpoint, sexual violence is embedded within broader systems of violence-supportive myths, hegemonic masculinity, and social dominance ideologies. Fin-Almerino et al. (2025) show that moral disengagement mechanisms normalize sexist and aggressive behaviors among male college students, particularly in digital spaces. In Iran, women employed in retail frequently remain silent due to cultural pressures and precarious work conditions (Akbari et al., 2024). Moreover, pornography consumption among male college students has been associated with reduced empathy and heightened objectification of women (Bhuptani et al., 2025). These findings suggest that cultural scripts and mediated norms contribute to the normalization of sexual aggression.

Within Indonesia, documented cases involving individuals in positions of academic authority—including lecturers—highlight how institutional power structures may silence victims. Students' awareness of formal reporting mechanisms remains critically low, with only 1.1% reporting knowledge of official campus procedures. This reflects the "iceberg phenomenon," whereby reported cases represent only a fraction of actual incidents. Consequently, prevention strategies must move beyond structural reform to address intrapersonal determinants that shape students' moral agency and intention to reject sexual violences.

Self-esteem constitutes one such psychological determinant. Low self-esteem has been associated with heightened vulnerability to manipulation and coercion. In interpersonal contexts, self-esteem relates to assertiveness, boundary-setting, and risk awareness (Wardhani & Indrawati, 2021). Higher self-esteem may therefore strengthen perceived behavioral control and empower individuals to resist exploitative situations. As such, self-esteem can be conceptualized as a psychological resource influencing intention to reject sexual violences.

Religiosity, in contrast, represents a value-based intrapersonal construct that shapes moral cognition and behavioral regulation. Research consistently associates religiosity with ethical orientation, self-regulation, and moral sensitivity (Sakellariou, 2025). Lower levels of religious engagement have been linked to increased tolerance of risky sexual behavior (Viskarini & Suharsono, 2023). In Islamic educational settings,

religious literacy has been implemented as a preventive framework against sexual violence (Ikhsan & Anam, 2024). Religiosity thus functions not merely as doctrinal adherence but as a moral schema guiding judgments about acceptable and unacceptable conduct.

Despite these theoretical foundations, empirical research simultaneously examining self-esteem, religiosity, and intention to reject sexual violence remains limited, particularly in Indonesian higher education. Prior studies have investigated self-esteem in relation to risky sexual behavior (Prabasari & Suprihatin, 2012) and religiosity in relation to premarital sexual conduct (Rakhmawati, 2021), yet few have integrated these constructs within the Theory of Planned Behavior. Given that intention is the most proximal predictor of behavior, examining predictors of intention to reject sexual violence is essential for preventive intervention.

Within the Theory of Planned Behavior, intention is shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Self-esteem may enhance perceived behavioral control through increased personal confidence, whereas religiosity may shape attitudes and normative beliefs through internalized moral values. Evidence suggests that participation in campus safe-space initiatives strengthens preventive intentions (Rhafidilla & Yasmin, 2024), supporting the argument that value-based interventions can cultivate anti-violent norms.

Although sexual violence in higher education has been widely examined, the simultaneous predictive roles of self-esteem and religiosity on rejection intention remain underexplored, particularly within Islamic university contexts. This study addresses this gap by integrating psychological and moral predictors into a unified analytical model. Theoretically, it contributes to the development of Islamic Guidance and Counseling scholarship. Practically, it informs the design of character-based prevention programs aimed at strengthening students' moral resilience.

In response to the identified research gap, this study investigates the simultaneous and partial effects of self-esteem and religiosity on students' intention to reject sexual violence in Indonesian higher education. By integrating psychological and moral determinants, the study advances understanding of how internal resources shape intention to reject sexual violence. The findings are expected to inform comprehensive prevention strategies that combine self-esteem development, religious value internalization, and institutional support mechanisms.

Based on the theoretical framework and empirical review, this study posits that self-esteem and religiosity function as predictors of students' intention to reject sexual violence. Accordingly, the hypotheses of the study are as follows:

H<sub>a1</sub>: There is an effect of self-esteem and religiosity on students' intention to reject sexual violence.

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no effect of self-esteem on students' intention to reject sexual violence.

H<sub>a3</sub>: Religiosity affects students' intention to reject sexual violence.

## **METHOD**

This study employed university students as the unit of analysis to capture psychosocial dynamics within the higher education context. Universities represent complex social environments in which interpersonal interaction, moral norms, and academic hierarchies intersect. Sexual violence in this setting is not solely a matter of perpetrator-victim interaction but also relates to students' cognitive and moral constructions in responding to such behavior. Students were therefore conceptualized as moral agents whose intentions may function as preventive resources. This analytical focus enabled the examination of psychological (self-esteem) and value-based (religiosity) predictors of intention to reject sexual violence.

A quantitative research design with multiple linear regression analysis was adopted to test the predictive effects of self-esteem and religiosity on intention to reject sexual violence. The quantitative approach was selected to produce statistically testable and generalizable evidence. Multiple regression was considered appropriate because it allows simultaneous estimation of the combined (H1) and partial effects (H2 and H3) of two independent variables on a single dependent variable, while controlling for shared variance between predictors.

Data were collected from 209 active undergraduate students at IAIN Parepare using purposive sampling. Inclusion criteria required participants to be actively enrolled and willing to provide informed consent. Primary data were obtained through a structured self-report questionnaire grounded in established theoretical frameworks. The self-esteem scale was developed based on Coopersmith's conceptualization, religiosity was operationalized following the Glock and Stark multidimensional model, and intention to reject sexual violence was

constructed using a conative-attitudinal framework consistent with the Theory of Planned Behavior. A four-point Likert scale was employed to reduce central tendency bias and encourage decisive responses (Kankaraš & Capecchi, 2025).

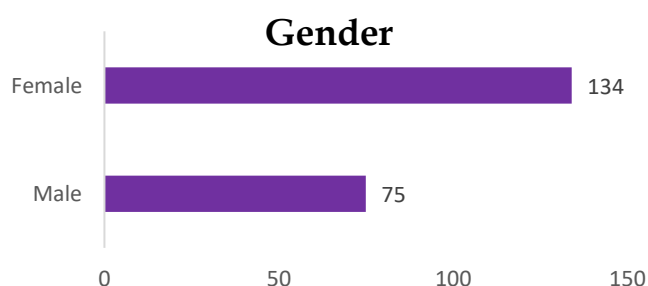
Data collection was conducted directly on campus following ethical clearance and informed consent procedures. Participants were informed about the study objectives, confidentiality safeguards, and voluntary participation. Questionnaire items were formulated using clear and unambiguous wording to minimize measurement error and enhance construct validity. Anonymity was maintained to reduce social desirability bias, particularly given the sensitivity of the research topic.

Prior to hypothesis testing, data were subjected to assumption testing, including validity, reliability, normality, and linearity assessments. Internal consistency reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficients, yielding high reliability for self-esteem ( $\alpha = 0.926$ ), religiosity ( $\alpha = 0.965$ ), and intention to reject sexual violence ( $\alpha = 0.950$ ), indicating strong internal consistency. Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted using JASP statistical software to estimate the coefficient of determination (Adjusted  $R^2$ ), regression coefficients, standardized beta weights, and significance levels. This analytical procedure enabled rigorous evaluation of the simultaneous and partial predictive effects specified in the hypotheses.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Respondent Characteristics

This study involved 209 active students of IAIN Parepare aged between 17 and 23 years. Of these, 75 (35.9%) were male and 134 (64.1%) were female. Respondents represented 27 study programs across religious studies, social sciences, education, and economics. This disciplinary diversity enhanced the representativeness of the dataset and strengthened the contextual validity of the findings regarding students' intention to reject sexual violence.



The predominance of female respondents was noteworthy, given that women were statistically more vulnerable to gender-based violence. Their stronger representation may also have reflected heightened sensitivity toward issues of sexual misconduct. At the same time, the inclusion of students from multiple academic backgrounds indicated that rejection of sexual violence was not confined to a single disciplinary culture but constituted a cross-cutting moral issue within the university context. The relatively homogeneous age range further suggested comparable stages of psychosocial development among participants, reducing generational variance.

Overall, these demographic characteristics provided a credible empirical foundation for interpreting the predictive relationships examined in this study. The multidisciplinary composition and gender distribution reflected realistic campus dynamics, thereby strengthening the internal coherence of subsequent regression findings concerning psychological and moral determinants of intention to reject sexual violence.

### The Simultaneous Influence of Self-Esteem and Religiosity

The results of the coefficient of determination test indicated that the regression model used had an Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.703, which meant that 70.3% of the variation in students' intention to reject sexual violence could be explained by self-esteem and religiosity. Meanwhile, the remaining 29.7% was influenced by other factors not included in the model. This value indicated that the model had strong explanatory power. The results of the F test strengthened these findings, where the F value = 246.7 with  $p < .001$  indicated that both independent variables simultaneously had a significant effect on the dependent variable. The simultaneous test of self-esteem and religiosity is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Determination coefficient test

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	RMSE
M <sub>0</sub>	0.000	0.000	0.000	7,750
M <sub>1</sub>	0.840	0.705	0.703	4,226

Table 2. ANOVA results for the simultaneous effect of self-esteem and religiosity

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
M <sub>1</sub>	Regression	8814	2	4406.78	246.7	< .001
	Residual	3679	206	17.86		
	Total	12493	208			

The magnitude of the explanatory power indicated that internal psychological and moral factors played a central role in shaping intention to reject sexual violence within this institutional context. Rather than being driven primarily by external situational influences, students' intention to reject sexual violence appeared to be strongly anchored in intrapersonal resources. The robustness of the model aligned with the Theory of Planned Behavior, which posits that intention is shaped by internal cognitive and normative determinants.

Importantly, the simultaneous significance of both predictors suggested that moral behavior in the context of sexual violence prevention was multidimensional. While self-esteem represented a psychological dimension of self-evaluation and perceived agency, religiosity reflected a normative framework grounded in internalized ethical values. In a religious-based university environment such as IAIN Parepare, these dimensions interacted within a broader moral ecology that reinforced rejection of sexual violence as an ethical imperative.

### Partial Influence of Self-Esteem and Religiosity

Partial regression analysis revealed differentiated predictive patterns. Self-esteem did not significantly predict intention to reject sexual violence ( $\beta = 0.059$ ,  $t = 1.543$ ,  $p = .124$ ), leading to the rejection of H2. In contrast, religiosity demonstrated a strong and statistically significant positive effect ( $\beta = 0.829$ ,  $t = 21.651$ ,  $p < .001$ ), supporting H3. The regression equation ( $Y = 5.825 + 0.009X_1 + 0.645X_2$ ) further illustrated the dominant contribution of religiosity relative to self-esteem.

Table 3. Multiple linear regression coefficients

Model		Unstand ardized	Standard Error	Standar dized	t	p
M <sub>0</sub>	(Intercept)	38.713	0.536		72.216	< .001
M <sub>1</sub>	(Intercept)	5.825	1.511		3.854	< .001
	Self-Esteem (X1)	0.009	0.006	0.059	1.543	.124
	Religiosity (X2)	0.645	0.030	0.829	21.651	< .001

The standardized coefficients indicated a substantial disparity in predictive strength, with religiosity emerging as the principal determinant. This finding suggested that positive self-evaluation alone was insufficient to generate strong moral resistance toward sexual violence. While self-esteem may have enhanced perceived competence, it did not necessarily

translate into ethical commitment in the absence of a value-based normative structure.

Theoretically, the dominance of religiosity could be understood through its function as a moral-regulatory mechanism. Religiosity structured moral judgment, strengthened self-control, and framed sexual violence as a violation of both divine and social norms. In this sense, religiosity operated as an ethical compass guiding students' evaluative and intentional processes. These findings reinforced the argument that resistance to sexual violence was fundamentally rooted in moral value internalization rather than solely in psychological self-assessment.

Regression findings further confirmed that moral and spiritual constructs accounted for the majority of explained variance in intention. The model's capacity to explain over two-thirds of the variance underscored the centrality of normative belief systems in shaping anti-violence attitudes. This aligned with prior research suggesting that moral cognition significantly influenced judgments regarding harassment and boundary violations (Samuel et al., 2023).

Conversely, the non-significant role of self-esteem indicated that intrapersonal confidence was context-dependent and insufficient as a standalone predictor. Consistent with Rana et al. (2025), barriers to confronting or reporting sexual misconduct were often linked to structural and cultural constraints rather than merely individual psychological insecurity. Similarly, Ogunfowokan et al. (2024) emphasized that institutional distrust and stigma, rather than low self-worth, frequently inhibited resistance behaviors.

Comparatively, these findings resonated with Almegewly et al. (2025) and Akbari et al. (2024), who highlighted the dominance of normative and moral determinants in shaping responses to sexual harassment. However, divergence from Sasania et al. (2023), who identified a significant role for self-esteem among minority students, suggested that contextual moderators—such as ethnicity, marginalization, and institutional climate—may have conditioned the salience of psychological predictors. Thus, the predictive relevance of self-esteem appeared situational rather than universal.

Within the Indonesian socio-religious context, religiosity constituted a foundational element of character education and social identity formation. As such, it functioned as a powerful moral motivator in

shaping rejection attitudes toward sexual violence. This interpretation was consistent with Ugwu et al. (2025) and Akbari et al. (2024), who emphasized the role of moral value systems in countering the normalization of patriarchal practices. Nevertheless, religiosity may have become counterproductive if embedded within patriarchal interpretations that silenced victims, as cautioned by Almegewly et al. (2025) and Zhang et al. (2025). Therefore, religious education needed to be framed within principles of justice, gender equality, and victim protection.

Despite the strong predictive role of religiosity, moral intention alone did not guarantee behavioral enactment. Structural barriers, unclear procedures, and weak institutional protection could have inhibited translation of intention into action, as suggested by Rana et al. (2025). This highlighted the necessity of integrating moral development with institutional accountability mechanisms.

Accordingly, the practical implications of this study extended beyond individual-level interventions. Universities needed to integrate anti-sexual violence education with inclusive and humanistic religious discourse, reflective dialogue, and case-based ethical learning. Simultaneously, institutions needed to establish transparent reporting systems, accessible victim support services, and enforceable policies to ensure that moral intentions were supported by structural safeguards.

Overall, this study advanced a theoretically grounded understanding of sexual violence prevention by foregrounding religiosity as a central moral predictor of intention to reject sexual violence. However, reliance on a single institutional sample and self-report measures may have limited generalizability and introduced response bias. Future research should incorporate multi-site sampling, longitudinal designs, and mixed-method approaches to further elucidate the interaction between psychological resources, moral values, and institutional structures in shaping both intention and behavior.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study demonstrates that religiosity constitutes the most influential internal determinant in shaping students' *Advance online publication* sexual violence, whereas self-esteem does not exhibit a statistically significant effect. These findings indicate that students' moral commitment is more strongly anchored in the internalization of spiritual

and ethical values than in self-evaluative perceptions alone. Accordingly, the intention to reject sexual violence cannot be reduced to cognitive appraisal or affective disposition, but must be understood as grounded in a value-based moral framework that structures ethical judgment and social positioning.

From a practical standpoint, these results underscore the strategic importance of strengthening humanistic, inclusive, and justice-oriented religious and moral education as part of institutional sexual violence prevention policies, supported by transparent reporting systems and victim-centered protection mechanisms. In terms of theoretical advancement, this study extends existing literature by demonstrating the differential predictive power of psychological and value-based constructs within the Theory of Planned Behavior framework. Future research should incorporate broader institutional contexts, structural determinants, and multi-method approaches to generate a more comprehensive understanding of the interplay between moral intention, social norms, and behavioral outcomes in resisting sexual violence.

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