



## Preventive Effectiveness of Academic and Social Sanctions Against University Students Perpetrating Sexual Violence

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received: 19 May 2025

Revised: 10 June 2025

Accepted: 11 June 2025

Published online: 05 July 2025

#### Keywords:

Sexual Violence,  
Academic Sanctions,  
Social Sanctions,  
Prevention,  
Mixed Methods

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#### Article Doi:

<https://doi.org/10.31258/jes.9.4.p.2299-2312>

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### ABSTRACT

Sexual violence in higher education remains a critical threat to student safety and institutional integrity. Yet, preventive strategies particularly academic and social sanctions have received limited empirical scrutiny from the student perspective. This study investigates students' perceptions of the effectiveness of such sanctions in preventing campus sexual violence. Utilizing a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, data were collected through closed-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews at Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar. Quantitative results reveal strong support for academic sanctions, including scholarship revocation (92.21%), suspension (88.31%), and expulsion (85.06%). Likewise, students endorse social sanctions such as public apologies, organizational exclusion, and the disclosure of perpetrators' identities, seen as morally pressuring and socially stigmatizing. Thematic analysis of qualitative data highlights that students view sanctions as part of a broader institutional protection system one that hinges on safe reporting mechanisms, transparent procedures, and gender equality education. However, concerns persist over the inconsistency of institutional enforcement. The findings suggest that effective sexual violence prevention requires a multidimensional strategy combining regulatory discipline, cultural transformation, and participatory education. Methodologically, this study contributes through its triangulated approach, and theoretically, it affirms the dual function of sanctions as both deterrent and normative instruments in fostering a safer, more accountable academic environment.

## 1. Introduction

Sexual violence in higher education has become a critical issue in global discourse concerning student rights protection and the enforcement of academic ethics. This phenomenon not only affects victims' mental and physical well-being but also undermines the integrity of educational institutions (Bai et al., 2021a; He & Lu, 2024a; Ye, 2022a). Cross-national studies have reported that tolerance toward

sexual violence frequently stems from weak sanction systems, inadequate reporting mechanisms, and a permissive campus culture (Floren et al., 2021a; Silva Guimarães, 2022a).

Institutional responses to sexual violence are often fragmented and reactive rather than preventive. Universities worldwide are increasingly urged to develop safe and accountable reporting systems, as well as to reinforce sanction mechanisms grounded in restorative justice and deterrence (Duan et al., 2023a; Jiang & Zhang, 2023a; Wu et al., 2024a). Within this context, evaluating the effectiveness of academic and social sanctions is essential as part of a comprehensive, fair, and adaptive protection design tailored to the dynamics of campus communities.

A major challenge in preventing sexual violence lies in the disconnect between formal regulations and students' perceptions of sanction effectiveness. Many policies are normative and procedural but fail to address the psychosocial dimensions inherent in gender-based violations (Johri et al., 2022a; Suardi, 2025; Suardi, Hashim, et al., 2023, 2024; Suardi, Nursalam, et al., 2023, 2024). When sanctions do not produce a deterrent effect or are not internalized as moral values by the community, protective systems become ineffective.

The literature underscores the need for a comprehensive approach, encompassing academic sanctions such as suspension and expulsion, as well as social penalties including ostracism and organizational disqualification (Cao, 2021a; Rivera et al., 2025a; Wang & Zhang, 2024a). Furthermore, student engagement in constructing the meaning of sanctions is critical to the success of value-based and norm-oriented preventive strategies (Zabolotna et al., 2021; Frank et al., 2022; Sun et al., 2021).

Scholars argue that academic sanctions serve as behavioral controls due to their direct implications for a perpetrator's academic future. Suspension, expulsion, grade annulment, and scholarship revocation are considered effective deterrents (Bai et al., 2021b; He & Lu, 2024b; Y. Liu et al., 2022). Evidence from various campus contexts shows that students respond positively to sanctions that stress the withdrawal of academic rights as a consequence of serious misconduct (Johri et al., 2022b; Suartama et al., 2024; Sun et al., 2021). In addition, social sanctions such as public apologies, disclosure of perpetrators' identities, and restricted physical access to campus spaces exert significant moral pressure. Students perceive the loss of social status as a form of psychological punishment with lasting effects (Floren et al., 2021b; Silva Guimarães, 2022b; Ye, 2022b). These findings highlight the symbolic role of sanctions in shaping collective campus norms.

Recent literature also emphasizes the necessity of regulatory education and socialization. Without internalization through education, sanctions risk becoming weak legal symbols (Ha, 2022; S. Liu et al., 2021; Zabolotna et al., 2021). Therefore, effective prevention policies require integrative strategies that combine sanction systems with gender equality curricula and gender-sensitivity training for all campus stakeholders (Jiang & Zhang, 2023b; Rivera et al., 2025b).

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Despite growing evidence of the effectiveness of sanction-based approaches, few studies have systematically integrated quantitative and qualitative analyses to evaluate students' perceptions within a single research design (Johri et al., 2022b; Wu et al., 2024b). Most studies have focused on one type of sanction, neglecting a simultaneous comparison between academic and social dimensions (Cao, 2021b; He & Lu, 2024b; Sun et al., 2021).

Additionally, little attention has been given to variations in perceptions based on students' backgrounds, organizational experiences, or exposure to campus sexual violence issues (Duan et al., 2023b; Y. Liu et al., 2022; Wang & Zhang, 2024b). This gap opens an opportunity for multidimensional exploration through a mixed-methods approach that captures both quantitative patterns and the underlying meanings behind responses (Jiang & Zhang, 2023b; Suartama et al., 2024; Zabolotna et al., 2021).

This study aims to evaluate student perceptions of the effectiveness of academic and social sanctions as instruments for preventing sexual violence on the campus of Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study offers methodological novelty and contributes theoretically to the scholarship on gender-based violence prevention in higher education. Its uniqueness lies in the triangulated analysis of statistical and narrative data, enabling a holistic understanding of the relationship between formal regulations, collective norms, and individual perceptions of campus justice (Frank et al., 2022; Silva Guimarães, 2022b; Wu et al., 2024b). The scope of the research includes student perceptions of various types of sanctions, reporting mechanisms, social experiences, and expectations regarding campus protection governance. With this framework, the study is expected to provide context-specific, data-driven policy recommendations that are accountable and responsive to the real challenges faced by students in accessing safe and equitable academic spaces.

## **2. Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study adopts a convergent parallel mixed methods design, in which quantitative and qualitative methods are conducted simultaneously yet independently during data collection and analysis, followed by integration in the interpretation phase. This approach was chosen to comprehensively address the complexity of sexual violence on campus, encompassing both statistical trends and students' subjective interpretations of academic and social sanctions (Johri et al., 2022b; Suardi, Nursalam, et al., 2024; Sun et al., 2021; Ye, 2022b).

### **Quantitative Approach**

Quantitative data were collected using a closed-ended questionnaire administered to students, employing a five-point Likert scale. The instrument was developed based on indicators of perceived effectiveness of sanctions and modified from prior

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research on cognitive and affective participation in the formation of social knowledge (Y. Liu et al., 2022; Rivera et al., 2025b; Wang & Zhang, 2024b).

Descriptive statistical analysis was performed using frequency and percentage calculations. The data were processed with SPSS software to identify patterns in students' responses to various forms of sanctions. This descriptive approach enabled an initial visualization of collective opinion patterns underpinning the preventive function of sanctions (Bai et al., 2021b; Cao, 2021b; He & Lu, 2024b).

### **Qualitative Approach**

The qualitative component employed semi-structured interviews with selected students using purposive sampling. Participants were chosen based on diverse experiences and levels of awareness regarding sexual violence incidents within the campus environment. This method enriched the narrative dimension that could not be captured through surveys (Duan et al., 2023b; Jiang & Zhang, 2023b; Zabolotna et al., 2021).

An inductive thematic analysis was conducted. Interview transcripts were open-coded to extract key themes related to students' perceptions, motivations, and interpretations of sanction effectiveness. This analytical method has been utilized in previous studies examining social interaction, learning regulation, and power relations in higher education contexts (Frank et al., 2022; Silva Guimarães, 2022b; Suartama et al., 2024).

### **Data Integration: Triangulation**

Quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed in parallel and then compared to identify areas of convergence, divergence, and complementarity. This technique, known as results triangulation, is a cross-paradigmatic validation method used to enhance the validity and depth of interpretation (Ha, 2022; Johri et al., 2022b; S. Liu et al., 2021).

### **Research Ethics**

The study adhered to established ethical principles in social research, including informed consent, participant anonymity, and data confidentiality. These procedures followed international standards for protecting participants involved in research on sensitive issues such as sexual violence (Floren et al., 2021b; He & Lu, 2024b; Wu et al., 2024b).

## **3. Results and Discussion**

### **Effectiveness of Academic Sanctions in Preventing Sexual Violence**

- a. **Written Warnings.** A total of 54.87% of respondents strongly agreed, and 34.09% agreed, that written warnings are a relevant preventive measure. This
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indicates that nearly 89% of respondents view this form of mild administrative sanction as an initial behavioral control mechanism. These results reflect trust in formal documentation as a corrective approach that initiates disciplinary steps.

- b. **Written Apologies.** Approximately 48.70% of respondents strongly agreed, and 32.46% agreed, that perpetrators should be required to submit a written apology. This support reflects a belief in rehabilitative and reflective approaches, which allow perpetrators to acknowledge wrongdoing in a personal yet documented format.
- c. **Postponement of Academic Participation.** Support for suspension from lectures was expressed by 43.51% (strongly agree) and 39.29% (agree), totaling 82.8%. This suggests that respondents perceive a temporary exclusion from academic activities as a meaningful psychosocial restriction and a firm academic pressure.
- d. **Scholarship Revocation.** Financial sanctions such as revocation of scholarships received the highest level of support, with 62.01% strongly agreeing and 30.20% agreeing. This demonstrates students' recognition of financial incentives as a powerful institutional control tool, reinforcing the link between academic benefits and behavioral accountability.
- e. **Grade Cancellation.** Support for canceling grades was evenly split between 39.93% agreeing and strongly agreeing, while 16.88% were neutral. The majority support implies that students perceive academic annulment as a proportionate response to serious violations such as sexual violence.
- f. **Academic Suspension.** As many as 48.05% strongly agreed and 40.26% agreed that perpetrators of sexual violence should be suspended from academic activities. This underscores the view that academic isolation serves both punitive and protective purposes within the campus environment.
- g. **Expulsion (Drop Out).** The majority of respondents endorsed expulsion as a sanction, with 54.22% strongly agreeing and 30.84% agreeing. This indicates a serious communal stance toward sexual violence as a severe ethical breach that warrants non-tolerance within the academic community.

Further details can be seen in Figure 1 below



Figure 1. Academic Sanctions

## Effectiveness of Social Sanctions in Preventing Sexual Violence

- a. **Public Apologies.** A total of 48.05% strongly agreed and 39.94% agreed that perpetrators should offer public apologies. This reflects the importance of moral and social dimensions in fostering collective awareness of campus norms.
- b. **Prohibition from Organizational Activities.** This sanction was supported by 82.79% of respondents (agree and strongly agree), suggesting that student organizations are viewed as representative spaces that must be free from perpetrators of sexual violence.
- c. **Revocation of Organizational Leadership Roles.** A total of 49.03% strongly agreed and 40.91% agreed that perpetrators should be stripped of structural positions within organizations. This indicates that students reject the presence of perpetrators not only in social interactions but also in moral and leadership spaces.
- d. **Publication of Perpetrator's Identity.** Support for community awareness of the perpetrator's identity was relatively high, with 42.21% strongly agreeing and 41.56% agreeing. This suggests that transparency is considered necessary to maintain social trust and campus safety.
- e. **Restricted Access to Campus Activities.** About 48.38% agreed and 37.34% strongly agreed that perpetrators should face restrictions on campus access. This indicates that the physical presence of perpetrators may cause trauma or discomfort for others in academic spaces.
- f. **Recommendation to Transfer to Another Campus.** Though support was more varied, 35.07% agreed and 34.42% strongly agreed with recommending perpetrators to transfer. This highlights an ethical tension between offering rehabilitation opportunities and ensuring a safe environment for the broader campus community.

Further details can be seen in Figure 2 below



Figure 2. Social Sanctions

Both academic and social sanctions are perceived by students as relevant and effective strategies for preventing sexual violence. Severe penalties such as

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expulsion and scholarship revocation received the strongest support, indicating students' endorsement of strict measures against ethical misconduct. On the social side, sanctions emphasizing shame, loss of social status, and public transparency were also considered effective in generating moral pressure. This strong support provides a compelling justification for higher education institutions to design robust, integrated, and accountable regulatory and disciplinary enforcement systems.

### **Thematic Analysis: Student Perceptions on the Effectiveness of Academic and Social Sanctions in Preventing Sexual Violence**

- a. **Academic Sanctions as Behavioral Control Instruments.** Most respondents understood academic sanctions as effective behavioral control tools. Sanctions such as suspension or expulsion were perceived to create a deterrent effect. Statements such as "strict academic sanctions discourage students from committing sexual violence due to the risk of severe consequences affecting their academic future" reflect internalized awareness of sanctions. However, critical narratives emerged, pointing to the limitations of sanctions without the presence of safe reporting systems and transparent institutional procedures. Students also highlighted the need for "education and campus cultural change" as essential supports for sanction effectiveness.
  - b. **Social Sanctions and the Dynamics of Collective Norms.** Social sanctions were recognized as mechanisms rooted in social pressure. Students noted that "social exclusion and loss of reputation" could induce shame and fear in potential perpetrators. Some respondents viewed social sanctions as "more personal and psychologically impactful" because they directly affect one's social standing within the campus community. However, concerns were raised that these sanctions would be ineffective in a permissive campus culture. One respondent stated, "even if the sanctions exist, if the environment tolerates it, perpetrators won't be afraid."
  - c. **Skepticism Toward Sanctions in Isolation.** Several students expressed doubts regarding the standalone effectiveness of either academic or social sanctions. This skepticism reflected awareness of complex perpetrator motivations and the lack of gender-power understanding within campus culture. One respondent remarked, "someone who commits sexual violence isn't thinking rationally; no sanction will matter." This underscores the need for a multidimensional preventive approach. Many respondents advocated integrating gender equality education and social boundary awareness into long-term solutions. Education and intensive socialization were emphasized as key to reinforcing the impact of sanctions.
  - d. **Need for Consistent Enforcement and Socialization.** Many respondents emphasized that the effectiveness of sanctions depends heavily on consistent, fair, and robust enforcement systems. Students highlighted the need for safe reporting channels, accountable internal investigations, and transparent case handling. Without these, sanctions risk becoming symbolic without enforcement power. Furthermore, clear communication of sanctions was deemed crucial. One respondent stated, "effectiveness depends on clear socialization, consistent enforcement, and safe reporting systems." This
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reflects a strong student awareness of the institutional ecosystem needed to support victims and prevent violence.

Further details can be seen in Figure 3 below





Characteristic	Academic Sanctions	Social Sanctions
 <b>Behavioral Control</b>	Deterrent effect due to severe consequences	Induce shame and fear through social pressure
 <b>Limitations</b>	Ineffective without safe reporting and transparency	Ineffective in a permissive campus culture
 <b>Skepticism</b>	Doubts about standalone effectiveness	Doubts about standalone effectiveness
 <b>Enforcement Needs</b>	Requires consistent, fair, and robust systems	Requires consistent, fair, and robust systems

Figure 3. Comparing Academic and Social Sanctions

Overall, students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar demonstrated an informed and supportive stance toward the implementation of academic and social sanctions as preventive strategies against sexual violence. However, they also emphasized that the efficacy of such measures depends significantly on institutional supports such as education, gender-responsive campus culture, and strong internal enforcement and reporting mechanisms. A preventive approach that is comprehensive, layered, and integrated is considered essential to ensuring student protection from sexual violence.

## Discussion

The study's findings indicate that the majority of students support the use of both academic and social sanctions as mechanisms for preventing sexual violence on campus. Quantitative responses show strong support for severe academic penalties such as scholarship revocation (92.21%), suspension (88.31%), and expulsion (85.06%). In the realm of social sanctions, public apologies (87.99%) and prohibition from organizational activities (82.79%) also received substantial backing. Qualitative data reinforce these results, revealing themes related to deterrence, social pressure, and the vital role of collective norms.

These findings are consistent with a broad range of international studies highlighting that structural sanctions can effectively function as social control mechanisms to restrict perpetrators' influence on campus (Bai et al., 2021b; He & Lu, 2024b). Some studies even assert that symbolic sanctions, such as public apologies or removal from leadership positions, can exert moral impacts

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comparable to formal academic penalties (Floren et al., 2021b; Rivera et al., 2025b; Silva Guimarães, 2022b).

Moreover, this study strengthens the arguments of (Y. Liu et al., 2022) and (Sun et al., 2021), who emphasize the significance of deterrence effects in constructing a campus culture that rejects violence. The results also align with conceptual frameworks on norm internalization through both formal and informal sanction systems (Frank et al., 2022; Wang & Zhang, 2024b). In this regard, students' perceptions as a moral community underscore the importance of emotional and cognitive engagement in ethical value formation (Duan et al., 2023b; Zabolotna et al., 2021). These insights affirm the dual role of sanction systems as both repressive instruments and normative educational tools (Jiang & Zhang, 2023b; Johri et al., 2022b).

Scientifically, these findings highlight the need for integrating sanction regulations with value-based education within campus protection systems. Sanctions are effective only when they are understood and supported by the academic community through norm internalization (Ha, 2022; Liu et al., 2021).

Practically, the results suggest that higher education institutions must design disciplinary systems that are not only firm but also transparent, communicative, and participatory, involving students as cultural agents of anti-violence advocacy (Cao, 2021b; Suardi, 2025; Suardi, Nursalam, et al., 2024; Wu et al., 2024b).

Thematic analysis revealed that students perceive social sanctions as more personal and psychologically impactful, as they directly affect one's social reputation and standing. This aligns with the concept of *shame-based sanctions*, which assert that feelings of shame and social exclusion can serve as significant punitive measures within normative communities (Floren et al., 2021b; Y. Liu et al., 2022; Zabolotna et al., 2021). In this context, sanctions such as campus access restrictions and the publication of perpetrators' identities are viewed as forms of collective protection (Rivera et al., 2025b; Ye, 2022b).

The importance of reporting systems and procedural transparency in ensuring sanction effectiveness is also confirmed in the literature (Duan et al., 2023b; Frank et al., 2022). This study adds value by showing that students perceive these systems as interconnected components of a single protective framework rather than as separate entities. The findings expand our understanding of how sanction effectiveness is deeply influenced by institutional culture and the degree of support offered to victims (Jiang & Zhang, 2023b; Silva Guimarães, 2022b).

A further implication of this study is that the campus must be viewed as a site of cultural transformation, not merely an administrative educational space. This perspective emphasizes the need for simultaneous structural and cultural interventions to create a gender-responsive and safe campus ecosystem (S. Liu et al., 2021; Suartama et al., 2024; Wu et al., 2024b). Preventive strategies that focus solely on punitive measures without fostering a collective anti-violence narrative are unlikely to address the root causes effectively (Ha, 2022; Sun et al., 2021).

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#### 4. Conclusion

This study affirms the significant role of academic and social sanctions as preventive instruments against sexual violence in university settings. Quantitative data demonstrate strong student support for a range of sanctions from administrative measures such as written warnings and suspension from classes, to more severe penalties like scholarship revocation and expulsion. Social sanctions, including public apologies, organizational activity restrictions, and the publication of perpetrators' identities, were also widely endorsed as forms of moral pressure contributing to the construction of anti-violence collective norms.

Qualitative findings reinforce these results, revealing that students perceive sanctions not only as institutional protection tools but also as mechanisms for cultivating ethical awareness within the academic community. However, the effectiveness of these sanctions is not viewed solely as a product of repressive action. Rather, it is understood to rely heavily on the presence of a comprehensive support system comprising safe reporting mechanisms, transparent case-handling procedures, and sustained gender equality education.

In conclusion, preventing sexual violence in higher education requires a multidimensional strategy that integrates regulatory, educational, and cultural components. Sanction systems must be developed as part of a protection ecosystem that is at once firm and pedagogical, repressive yet transformative. Higher education institutions are thus challenged not only to enact formal regulations but also to foster a proactive campus culture committed to justice, dignity, and the protection of all community members.

#### Acknowledgement

The author would like to express his deepest gratitude to RisetMu for the financial support provided for the research and publication of this article.

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How to cite this article:

Ramlan, H., Suardi., & Hashim, S. B. (2025). Preventive Effectiveness of Academic and Social Sanctions Against University Students Perpetrating Sexual Violence. *Journal of Educational Sciences*, 9(4), 2299-2312.

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