



The Criminal Hygiene Approach in Preventing Sexual Violence Crimes against Potential Victims

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Abstract: This study aims to analyse the effectiveness of the Criminal Hygiene Approach in preventing sexual abuse crimes against potential victims, particularly vulnerable groups such as children, women, and the elderly. The research focuses on crime prevention efforts through improving social and environmental conditions that are considered to have a significant influence on the emergence of sexual abuse crimes. The research method used is a normative juridical approach supported by an empirical juridical approach, conducted through literature studies, analysis of court decisions, and criminological studies relevant to the prevention of sexual crimes. The results of the study show that the application of the principles of Criminal Hygiene plays an important role in creating a safe and preventive social environment, including through strengthening education, increasing legal literacy, social awareness, and continuous environmental monitoring. Analysis of sexual abuse cases in the Tangerang and Kulon Progo areas revealed that these crimes were influenced by a closed social environment, low intensity of social interaction, weak informal social control, and limited access to protection mechanisms for vulnerable groups. In addition, this study found various obstacles in the implementation of the Criminal Hygiene Approach, such as the tendency of victims to remain silent due to fear and social stigma, weak coordination between authorised institutions, and low levels of public awareness and participation in prevention efforts. Therefore, this study emphasises that strengthening the Criminal Hygiene Approach requires continuous synergy between families, communities, and formal institutions so that protection for potential victims can be carried out effectively, comprehensively, and in an integrated manner.

Keywords: Abuse; Crime; Education; Hygiene; Sexual

Introduction

The phenomenon of sexual harassment remains a crucial issue in the dynamics of society (Okarniatif et al. 2024). The high number of cases that have emerged over time shows that sexual abuse cannot be viewed as merely an individual problem, but rather as a structural issue that demands a comprehensive response in terms of prevention and eradication (Dermawansyah 2025). This situation also emphasises that efforts to combat sexual harassment within the Indonesian legal system cannot be carried out in a piecemeal fashion, but must be pursued through a planned, systematic and sustainable approach (Aslan and Rada Arisa Murni 2023).

The diverse modus operandi in sexual abuse cases, whether occurring in public spaces, educational environments, workplaces, or domestic settings, illustrates that this crime can affect anyone regardless of age, gender, or social background. More than just a violation of norms, sexual harassment is also a form of crime that damages human dignity

and can have long-lasting psychological, social and legal consequences for victims. As in psychology, sexual harassment can also be categorised as a form of social disaster because it causes serious damage to a person's dignity, security and welfare. and well-being of an individual, such as victims who may experience post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), severe depression, and prolonged social withdrawal if the victim does not receive proper care(Hermanata, Nasution, and Saputra 2025).

The high incidence of sexual abuse also indicates that the risks and impacts of sexual abuse are often exacerbated by certain conditions of vulnerability inherent in the victims, making the existence of groups with low levels of protection an important consideration in victimology analysis and prevention policies. Behind the high rates of sexual abuse, there is a group of victims who are more vulnerable to becoming targets, often referred to as the latent victim group, which consists of children, the elderly, and women(Febra Anjar Kusuma et al. 2025). This group is in a vulnerable position due to factors such as age, dependency, ignorance, and limited access to legal protection. Latent victim groups are also often unaware of the potential dangers that lurk or find themselves in a position where it is difficult to protect themselves. This situation is further exacerbated by social stigma, fear, and threats from perpetrators, who in certain situations often exploit these weaknesses as opportunities to commit or even repeat their actions(Zul Khaidir Kadir 2025).

Meanwhile, the increasing public attention to the issue of sexual harassment reflects a growing collective awareness to address this issue more seriously (Lindra and Rahman 2024). However, this concern also highlights the urgent need to formulate a response that focuses not only on strengthening law enforcement, but also on comprehensively reforming the social environment. Therefore, a policy direction is needed that can encourage the creation of a safe space for all levels of society by strengthening values, culture, and collective awareness that rejects all forms of sexual violence(Assingkily and Putri 2025). The need for such comprehensive policies is in line with various academic findings that emphasise the importance of understanding the root causes of sexual violence in greater depth.

Similarly, research conducted by Eka Susanti in the journal 'Victimology Review of Victims of Sexual Violence Crimes in Indonesia' argues that successful efforts to prevent sexual abuse and violence must be based on criminological understanding, particularly regarding the causal factors and typology of victims. Through an analysis of court decisions examined in her research, it was found that a criminological approach can provide a clearer picture of how prevention can be designed in a targeted manner(Eka Susanti 2024).

Based on the rationale of the previous study, this study then focuses on examining how the concept of Criminal Hygiene can play a role in strengthening efforts to prevent sexual abuse, particularly against victim groups that are classified as latent victim groups. To that end, this study outlines two main issues. The first is how the concept and principles of Criminal Hygiene can be applied in preventing and combating sexual abuse crimes that are prone to affect the latent victim group. The second is what factors hinder the application of this approach and what strategies are relevant to overcome these obstacles so that prevention efforts can be more effective.

This study also aims to minimise the number of sexual abuse victims by promoting awareness among vulnerable groups, particularly latent victim groups, through a criminal

hygiene approach. This approach places education as the main instrument, both in the form of increased awareness, knowledge about risks, and understanding of victims' rights, so that individuals who are potential targets are able to recognise the dangers early on and protect themselves more effectively (Al Rajab et al. 2024).

Thus, combating sexual harassment cannot be separated from efforts to build a responsive legal system, a supportive social environment, and effective protection mechanisms (Purwanti 2024). Collaboration between the government, law enforcement agencies, educational institutions, families, and the community is key to minimising the opportunities for crime and ensuring that victims receive justice and appropriate recovery (Fauzi et al. 2024).

Methodology

This study is a descriptive-analytical study that aims to describe and analyse in depth how the application of the Criminal Hygiene approach can be used in combating sexual abuse crimes against latent victim groups. The research approach used is normative juridical as the main approach, through victimology theory and relevant Criminal Hygiene concepts, supplemented by an empirical juridical approach to obtain a factual picture of the actual conditions of latent victim groups, patterns of victim vulnerability, and obstacles in combating sexual abuse. The data used is secondary data as the main source, obtained through a literature study of court decisions, scientific journals, law books, and criminology literature related to Criminal Hygiene. All data were analysed qualitatively and descriptively, namely by describing, interpreting, and connecting the data based on the legal context, theory, and empirical facts, then presented in a coherent and structured description as a basis for assessing the effectiveness of the Criminal Hygiene approach in preventing and combating sexual abuse in latent victim groups.

Result and Discussion

The Crime Prevention through Environmental Design approach is a crime prevention model that focuses on maintaining the health and safety of the social environment so that opportunities for deviance can be minimised as early as possible (Dewi et al. 2025). This concept is based on the understanding that crime does not arise spontaneously, but develops from unfavourable social conditions, weak social control, and low public awareness of the risk of victimisation. The risk of victimisation essentially refers to the level of vulnerability of an individual or group to becoming a victim of crime, which is influenced by how the community perceives the potential threats around them and the victim's ability to take preventive measures (Kamaluddin, Pangestu, and Zuhri 2024).

A limited understanding of the risk of victimisation ultimately creates a space of vulnerability that can be exploited by perpetrators of crime. When the public lacks adequate awareness of situations or conditions that increase the likelihood of crime, vulnerable groups become easier targets. Therefore, in the context of sexual violence crimes, the criminal hygiene model becomes increasingly relevant because it explains how social gaps can be exploited by perpetrators to target latent victim groups. Latent victim groups are groups with inherent vulnerabilities, consisting of children, women, and the elderly. The

relevance of the criminal hygiene model approach is also increasingly apparent when linked to the social reality that violence against vulnerable groups does not only occur once, but often repeats itself due to a permissive environment, weak supervision, low legal literacy, and the existence of stigma that makes victims reluctant to speak up.

In this context, the urgency of criminal hygiene has become increasingly important, given that latent victim groups are often unaware of the dangers that threaten them. For this reason, the criminal hygiene approach emphasises its role through prevention based on education and empowerment, including providing knowledge about victims' rights, increasing awareness, and recognising signs of violence as an initial protective measure, because this enables vulnerable groups to be better prepared to deal with situations that may potentially lead to sexual violence. This preventive approach then becomes an important basis for a more in-depth discussion of the application of criminal hygiene as an effort to prevent sexual violence occurring in latent victim groups.

Application of the Concept of Criminal Hygiene in Combating Abuse against Latent Victim Groups

The application of the concept of criminal hygiene in efforts to combat sexual abuse against latent victim groups requires a comprehensive understanding of how the social environment, interaction patterns, and daily life dynamics can shape certain levels of vulnerability in these groups. In the context of sexual abuse prevention, the crime hygiene approach should be understood as a framework that emphasises the importance of maintaining healthy and safe social conditions within the community, thereby minimising opportunities for deviant behaviour to emerge (Nur, Tanjung, and Yusuf 2025). The criminal hygiene perspective also views crime, including sexual abuse and violence, as not solely arising from the perpetrator's intentions, but also influenced by opportunities created by an unsupervised and unfavourable social environment. This understanding forms the basis for viewing unhealthy social dynamics as increasing the scope for perpetrators to act.

In the context of sexual crimes against latent victim groups, there are various vulnerabilities that perpetrators often exploit to commit or repeat their actions. These vulnerabilities arise due to various factors, such as the victim's reluctance to report the crime, fear of disclosing their experiences, limited access to the legal system, and a lack of attention from the surrounding community. These gaps then open up opportunities for perpetrators to continue committing sexual abuse. Therefore, the Criminal Hygiene approach is very important, as it is able to uncover the sources of these vulnerabilities and offer more comprehensive and systematically structured prevention mechanisms. The relevance of this approach is even more apparent when considering the characteristics of the environment in which latent victim groups live (Gusti, Ery, and Purna 2025).

Latent victim groups are often found in private spaces or environments that are difficult for social supervision to access, such as closed families, workplaces with strong hierarchies, or remote residential areas. It is the existence of these hidden groups that allows sexual crimes to continue for long periods of time, without supervision, without intervention, and even without the awareness of the surrounding community (Handayani

et al. 2024). It is this condition that makes the Criminal Hygiene approach pay great attention to efforts to build social cleanliness, namely an environment that is interconnected, naturally monitored, has strong social values, and is able to detect symptoms of deviance early on.

Eka Susanti's (2024) research on Tangerang District Court Decision No. 2663/Pid.B/2009/PN.Tng provides a concrete illustration of how sexual crimes can occur in latent victim groups when private spaces are not subject to monitoring mechanisms. As in this case, the perpetrator was the biological father who raped his own daughter in a closed domestic environment. An unhealthy family situation, minimal interaction with the surrounding environment, and the absence of early detection mechanisms allowed sexual violence to occur repeatedly without anyone knowing (Batian and Hartanto 2024). This study shows that vulnerability in the domestic environment is not only caused by perpetrator control, but also by the weak functioning of the family as a social unit that should provide protection. From a Criminal Hygiene perspective, these conditions indicate a failure to ensure a safe and controlled family environment. The inability to maintain the quality of the private environment makes the domestic sphere a vulnerable and potential arena for criminal acts to occur without adequate supervision or prevention mechanisms.

However, the vulnerability experienced by latent victim groups is not limited to the family sphere, but can also arise in individuals who are physically weak due to age. This can be seen in the case of the rape of a 64-year-old elderly woman in Kulon Progo, which illustrates another form of vulnerability among latent victim groups. The environmental and social structures surrounding the victim's life show how external factors contribute to this vulnerability, namely the victim living alone in a remote house surrounded by forest, far from residential areas, and with almost no regular social interaction with the surrounding community. This situation created a very large private space with minimal supervision, allowing the perpetrator to enter the victim's house, smother her, force her to drink alcohol, and rape her at gunpoint without anyone seeing or hearing. The incident was only reported after the victim left to seek help from her family, indicating that during the incident, there were no formal or informal protection mechanisms in place.

It is at this point that a strong connection between Eka Susanti's research findings and the case in Kulon Progo becomes apparent. Both reveal different forms of vulnerability but stem from the same root problem, namely the failure of the environment to provide social supervision and informal control capable of preventing sexual crimes. In the Tangerang case, weak supervision arose from a highly private domestic space, while in the Kulon Progo case, geographical isolation and social distance were factors in the loss of protection. Thus, although the spatial contexts are different, one being within a closed family and the other in a remote area, both cases show that sexual abuse of latent victim groups tends to develop when healthy social conditions are not maintained. This similarity in vulnerability patterns is the common ground for further analysis of prevention efforts.

The Criminal Hygiene Approach then links the two cases through a framework of prevention that is both social and situational. This approach emphasises not only the reorganisation of the physical environment or increased surveillance, but also the

strengthening of social relations, the internalisation of moral values, legal education, and the development of community networks capable of identifying vulnerable individuals or groups. In the context of domestic spaces, such as in the Tangerang case, prevention can be carried out through improved family communication, child protection-oriented sex education, the establishment of internal reporting mechanisms, and the active involvement of neighbours or communities in monitoring the dynamics of at-risk families. Meanwhile, in a geographical context such as Kulon Progo, prevention strategies need to be directed at improving environmental lighting, activating social patrol systems, mapping vulnerable groups such as elderly people living alone, and strengthening social networks to ensure a rapid response when indications of deviance arise.

Both cases also demonstrate that the Crime Prevention through Environmental Design approach is not merely a theoretical concept, but rather an applicable framework that can be used in various contexts with the same objective, namely to reduce the likelihood of crime occurring through environmental changes and social behaviour reform. By combining the analysis of these two cases, it is clear that strategies to prevent sexual crimes against latent victim groups require a holistic approach, which does not only rely on law enforcement after the event has occurred, but also through efforts to maintain healthy and protected social conditions, including education, supervision, community support, and the creation of a safe environment for vulnerable groups.

From this, it can be seen that both the Tangerang and Kulon Progo cases are interrelated in providing and reinforcing the understanding that sexual crimes will continue to occur if the social and structural environment is not properly regulated. From a Criminal Hygiene perspective, prevention is seen as a form of social investment that must begin in the closest sphere, namely the family, the community, and the village spatial planning, which prevents latent victim groups from being in situations where victims are invisible, unprotected, and beyond the reach of the legal system.

Barriers and Strengthening Strategies for the Criminal Hygiene Approach to Abuse in the Laten Victim Group

The Criminal Hygiene Approach essentially has significant capacity to prevent sexual abuse through environmental reinforcement, increased social supervision, and the development of collective awareness (Rasiwan 2025). However, the effectiveness of this approach is often hampered when applied to latent victim groups, namely groups that are socially invisible, difficult to identify, and not easily reached by formal protection mechanisms. These conditions are the source of various obstacles, so that prevention efforts that should be effective face many limitations and gaps. One of the most visible obstacles stems from the latent characteristics of the victim group itself, which makes the prevention process even more complex.

One of the most fundamental obstacles in the criminal hygiene approach is also the inherent secrecy of victims, namely the tendency of victims, especially women, children, the elderly, and individuals in unequal power relationships, to remain silent and not report the violence they have experienced. This silence arises due to a number of factors, such as fear

of the perpetrator, economic dependence, physical or psychological threats, shame, and social stigma that often blames the victim. This silence makes early detection difficult, even though early detection is a key component in the implementation of Criminal Hygiene. Without initial information or signals from the victim or their surroundings, both the community and law enforcement agencies are unable to carry out timely and appropriate preventive interventions.

In addition to obstacles originating from individual victims, structural issues also pose significant challenges to prevention efforts. Limited capacity of social institutions, a lack of professional support, and low public understanding of victimology result in suboptimal social responses to sexual violence (Salsabilla 2024). Eka Susanti's research shows that families and communities that are closed and have weak internal supervision actually provide opportunities for perpetrators to carry out their actions. These findings confirm that the challenge of prevention is not only related to the circumstances of the victim or the behaviour of the perpetrator, but is also closely related to social structures that are not yet capable of functioning as adequate protection mechanisms.

The next obstacle is evident in the weak coordination between institutions that should be the backbone of the implementation of the Criminal Hygiene approach. This approach does not only depend on law enforcement, but requires solid collaboration between various parties, ranging from schools, village officials, psychological and health workers, social services, to community leaders. Without well-established synergy, prevention efforts will remain at the administrative level and fail to address the root of the problem. These structural obstacles indicate that protection mechanisms for vulnerable groups that are difficult to identify will not be effective if implemented separately or within a sectoral framework.

The obstacles become even clearer when linked to the case of the rape of an elderly woman in Pengasih, Kulon Progo. The victim was an elderly woman who lived alone in a remote house, in poor physical condition and without the support of family or neighbours. Her inability to ask for help made her part of a latent victim group that is extremely vulnerable. When the violence occurred, no one was aware of it because the surrounding environment did not have a surveillance system capable of detecting signs of danger. This case shows that latent victim groups are invisible and unheard, making it very difficult to implement crime prevention mechanisms based on criminal hygiene in such conditions.

The social situation in the area indicates weak informal social control within the community. In remote rural areas, the intensity of interaction between members of the community tends to be low, so that individuals tend to go about their activities without knowing the circumstances of those around them, including victims who live alone, such as the elderly (Wahyuni and Arifianti 2025). This situation is in line with Eka Susanti's findings, which state that the weakening of social structures and family support provides opportunities for perpetrators to commit offences without being easily detected. In this context, obstacles to the implementation of Criminal Hygiene arise not only because victims are unable to report incidents, but also because the community lacks the readiness or sensitivity to identify potentially dangerous situations.

In addition, the case in Kulon Progo shows that coordination between institutions in prevention efforts is still very weak. Village officials, police, social workers and community leaders often carry out their roles separately without any mechanism for exchanging information with each other. Therefore, even if one party is aware of a potential risk, the information is not always passed on to other institutions or individuals who actually have the authority to take preventive action. This situation prevents prevention efforts from being carried out comprehensively. This situation is in line with the structural obstacles discussed earlier, where the lack of coordination makes it difficult to optimally implement the Criminal Hygiene approach.

To overcome these obstacles, the implementation of Criminal Hygiene requires a more comprehensive strengthening strategy. One important effort is to establish a reporting mechanism that is safe and easily accessible to all community groups, including residents living in remote areas (Purnawan, Agung, and Yanto 2025). This mechanism can be realised through the provision of village hotlines, application-based complaint platforms, and the establishment of community volunteer networks equipped with the ability to respond quickly to risky situations.

In addition, increasing public understanding of groups with high vulnerability levels, such as the elderly, children, and women, is a crucial step. With adequate knowledge about the characteristics of vulnerability in victims who are often targeted for sexual violence, the public can more easily identify dangerous situations and be encouraged to take preventive action. These educational efforts should not only target the general public, but also village officials, educators, health centre cadres, and local leaders, who in many cases are the first to detect signs of danger.

Strengthening social networks at the community level is also a crucial element in the prevention strategy, so that similar cases in Kulon Progo do not happen again. The community, as the main subject, also needs to build an environment-oriented surveillance system, such as conducting regular visits to elderly people living alone, mapping potentially vulnerable areas, and optimising night patrols with a more organised pattern. Although seemingly simple, these measures can have a significant impact in reducing opportunities for perpetrators to act. In addition, improved coordination between agencies is also absolutely necessary. Local governments must ensure that social services, police, health workers, and village officials have clear lines of communication and integrated risk management procedures (Fauzan 2024). With this synergy, efforts to prevent sexual violence are not only based on individual initiatives, but are also supported by social structures and well coordinated policies (Putri and Adiinto 2025).

With the implementation of these various strategies, the Criminal Hygiene Approach can be strengthened so that it has a more effective ability to provide protection for vulnerable groups that have been difficult to detect and rarely touched by formal protection mechanisms. The case in Kulon Progo clearly shows that without strong social structures, adequate family support, and good inter-agency coordination, these groups will continue to be vulnerable to violence. Therefore, prevention efforts must be designed

comprehensively and involve all elements of society so that the Criminal Hygiene Approach can truly function as an optimal protection tool for these vulnerable groups (Rasiwan 2024).

Conclusion

The Criminal Hygiene approach shows that sexual abuse against vulnerable groups occurs as a result of weak social supervision, minimal legal literacy, and unhealthy environmental conditions both in the domestic sphere and in remote areas. Cases in Tangerang and Kulon Progo prove that vulnerable groups are targeted because they are invisible, difficult to reach, and do not have adequate protection mechanisms. Therefore, prevention based on Criminal Hygiene must focus on strengthening families, increasing social cohesion, and creating a safe environment so that opportunities for abuse can be suppressed early on. This responds to the need to apply Criminal Hygiene in preventing sexual abuse against vulnerable groups. The effectiveness of these efforts is still hampered by the tendency of victims to remain hidden, their fear of reporting, weak social structures, and suboptimal coordination between institutions. The Kulon Progo case shows that when social networks do not function and communication mechanisms between institutions do not work, vulnerable groups remain at high risk. Therefore, strengthening Criminal Hygiene requires an accessible reporting system, increased public awareness of the vulnerability of certain groups, strengthening of community social networks, and integrated coordination between village officials, legal institutions, health workers, and social services. With these reinforcements, the Criminal Hygiene approach can function effectively as a protection tool for latent victim groups. As a recommendation for future research and practice, further in depth studies are needed on the effectiveness of Criminal Hygiene implementation in various social contexts and regions, including evaluations of reporting mechanisms, the role of local actors, and patterns of inter-agency coordination, so that this approach is not only normative but also capable of being implemented consistently and sustainably within the vulnerable group protection system.

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