

Social Work Practice in Social Advocacy for Women Victims of Sexual Violence: Evidence from UPTD PPA Garut, Indonesia

Bambang Rustanto¹, Nahar², Tuti Kartika³, Susilawati⁴, Dwi Yuliani⁵, Tiara Tri Sofiani⁶

^{1,2,3,4,5,6}Bandung Polytechnic of Social Welfare

ABSTRACT: Sexual violence against women remains a significant social and humanitarian issue in Indonesia, particularly in regional areas with limited access to integrated support services. This study aims to analyze social work practices in providing social advocacy for women victims of sexual violence at the Integrated Service Unit for Women and Children Protection (UPTD PPA) in Garut Regency, Indonesia. The study employed a qualitative descriptive approach involving six informants consisting of professional social workers and counselors. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation studies, then analyzed using data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing techniques. The findings reveal that social workers play strategic roles as advocates, case managers, mediators, and psychosocial companions in assisting victims throughout legal and recovery processes. Social advocacy practices were implemented through crisis intervention, outreach services, legal assistance, trauma recovery, and social reintegration. The study also found that bureaucratic barriers, victim blaming, and geographical limitations remain major challenges in delivering comprehensive services. This study contributes to the development of social work advocacy theory and provides practical recommendations for strengthening integrated protection systems for women victims of sexual violence in Indonesia.

KEYWORDS: Social Work, Social Advocacy, Sexual Violence, Women Victims, UPTD PPA

INTRODUCTION

Sexual violence against women remains a serious global social issue that threatens human rights, gender equality, and social welfare. The World Health Organization (WHO) reported that millions of women worldwide experience various forms of sexual violence throughout their lives, resulting in long-term physical, psychological, social, and economic consequences. Beyond individual trauma, sexual violence also contributes to broader social problems such as social exclusion, stigma, and disruption of victims' social functioning. Therefore, comprehensive protection and recovery systems are urgently needed to ensure that victims receive adequate legal, psychosocial, and social support services.

In Indonesia, cases of sexual violence against women continue to increase annually. Data from the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan) and the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection indicate that sexual violence remains one of the most reported forms of violence against women. Despite the enactment of Law Number 12 of 2022 concerning Sexual Violence Crimes (UU TPKS), many victims still encounter barriers in accessing protection and justice. Victims frequently experience victim blaming, social stigma, bureaucratic complexity, limited access to psychosocial services, and unsupportive legal procedures. These conditions often discourage victims from reporting cases and pursuing legal processes. At the regional level, Garut Regency has experienced a concerning increase in reported cases of sexual violence handled by the Integrated Service Unit for Women and Children Protection (UPTD PPA). The geographical characteristics of Garut, which include rural and remote areas, create additional challenges in delivering integrated services for victims. In this context, the role of social workers becomes highly important in ensuring that victims receive protection, advocacy, and psychosocial recovery services. Social workers are expected not only to provide emotional support but also to advocate for victims' rights, coordinate cross-sectoral services, and facilitate social reintegration.

Within the field of social work, social advocacy is considered one of the essential professional roles in promoting social justice and protecting vulnerable populations. According to Schneider and Lester (2001), social advocacy refers to systematic efforts aimed at influencing social systems, institutions, and policies to ensure that marginalized groups receive equal access to resources and protection. In cases of sexual violence, social workers often function as advocates, mediators, brokers, and case managers who assist victims throughout legal, medical, and psychosocial processes. Advocacy practices are therefore not limited to legal accompaniment but also involve empowering victims and strengthening their social functioning.

Previous studies concerning sexual violence have primarily focused on legal protection, trauma recovery, psychological impacts,

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and institutional services for victims. However, limited studies specifically examine the integrated social advocacy practices conducted by professional social workers within regional protection service institutions in Indonesia. Existing research has not sufficiently explored how social workers implement advocacy strategies, manage systemic barriers, coordinate inter-agency services, and support victims' reintegration processes within local contexts. Therefore, this study seeks to fill the existing research gap by analyzing social work practices in social advocacy for women victims of sexual violence at UPTD PPA Garut.

This study offers novelty by examining integrated social advocacy practices implemented by professional social workers through a comprehensive approach that combines legal advocacy, psychosocial intervention, outreach services, case management, and social reintegration. Unlike previous studies that mainly focused on legal or psychological perspectives, this research highlights the central role of social workers in bridging victims with various protection systems and ensuring comprehensive recovery processes. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of social work advocacy theory and provide practical recommendations for strengthening integrated protection services for women victims of sexual violence in Indonesia.

Based on the background above, this study aims to analyze social work practices in social advocacy for women victims of sexual violence at UPTD PPA Garut, Indonesia. Specifically, the study examines the processes of case intake, multidimensional assessment, outreach strategies, legal assistance, psychosocial recovery, and social reintegration implemented by social workers in assisting victims of sexual violence.

METHODOLOGY

1. Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to explore social work practices in social advocacy for women victims of sexual violence at UPTD PPA Garut, Indonesia. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the research aimed to obtain an in-depth understanding of advocacy processes, intervention strategies, and professional experiences of social workers in assisting victims of sexual violence. The descriptive design enabled the researchers to systematically describe social advocacy practices, legal assistance, psychosocial interventions, outreach mechanisms, and social reintegration processes implemented within the institution.

2. Participants

The participants in this study were selected using purposive sampling techniques to identify individuals directly involved in advocacy and victim assistance services. A total of six informants participated in this study, consisting of four professional social workers and two counselors working at UPTD PPA Garut. The participants had different educational backgrounds and professional experiences in social work, counseling, and psychosocial services. Their direct involvement in case handling provided comprehensive information regarding multidisciplinary intervention and social advocacy practices for women victims of sexual violence.

3. Data Collection

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation studies. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore participants' experiences, perspectives, and strategies in handling cases of sexual violence. The interviews focused on case intake procedures, multidimensional assessments, legal advocacy, psychosocial recovery, and social reintegration. In addition, direct observations were conducted to understand how social workers implemented advocacy practices and interacted with victims during service delivery processes. Documentation studies were also carried out by reviewing institutional reports, case records, legal regulations, and previous research related to social work advocacy and violence against women.

4. Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted continuously throughout the research process using qualitative interactive analysis techniques. The analysis involved three major stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During data reduction, the researchers selected and categorized relevant information related to advocacy practices and intervention strategies. The reduced data were then organized into thematic narratives to facilitate interpretation and understanding of recurring patterns across participants' experiences. Finally, conclusions were drawn and verified through comparison among interview findings, observational data, and institutional documents to ensure consistency and credibility of the research findings.

5. Ethics

Considering the sensitive nature of sexual violence cases, this study strictly applied research ethics principles throughout the research process. All participants voluntarily agreed to participate and provided informed consent before data collection was conducted. The researchers ensured confidentiality and anonymity by protecting participants' identities and safeguarding sensitive information obtained during interviews and observations. Furthermore, trauma-sensitive approaches were applied during the interview process to minimize psychological discomfort and ensure participants' emotional safety. All collected data were used

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solely for academic and research purposes.

RESULTS

1. Characteristics of Informants

This study involved six informants consisting of four professional social workers and two counselors working at UPTD PPA Garut. The informants were selected because they were directly involved in handling cases of sexual violence against women, particularly in advocacy, psychosocial assistance, legal accompaniment, and community outreach services. The diversity of educational backgrounds and professional experiences among informants contributed to comprehensive perspectives regarding victim protection practices implemented within the institution.

Table 1 Characteristics of Informants

Informant	Position	Educational Background	Work Experience	Main Responsibilities
Informant 1	Social Worker	Social Work	12 years	Case management and legal advocacy
Informant 2	Social Worker	Social Work	8 years	Intake assessment and outreach
Informant 3	Counselor	Psychology	7 years	Trauma recovery and counseling
Informant 4	Social Worker	Social Welfare	5 years	Court accompaniment and advocacy
Informant 5	Counselor	Counseling	4 years	Psychosocial support
Informant 6	Social Worker	Social Work	2 years	Community outreach and referral

Source: Research Result

The findings indicate that handling sexual violence cases requires multidisciplinary collaboration involving social workers, counselors, healthcare institutions, and law enforcement agencies. Informants emphasized that victims frequently experience complex problems affecting physical health, emotional stability, legal security, and social functioning simultaneously. Therefore, integrated interventions are considered essential to ensure comprehensive protection and recovery for survivors.

One senior social worker explained that collaboration among different professions became an important foundation in the service delivery process because victims often require various forms of support at the same time:

“Cases of sexual violence cannot be handled by one profession alone. Social workers, counselors, legal officers, and medical personnel must work together because victims need comprehensive protection.” (Informant 1)

This finding demonstrates that professional social work practices at UPTD PPA Garut are implemented through interdisciplinary approaches aimed at strengthening coordinated protection systems for women victims of sexual violence.

2. Case Intake and Initial Protection Process

The findings reveal that the intake process represented one of the most critical stages in the overall intervention process because it became the victims' first interaction with the protection institution. Most informants explained that victims commonly arrived at UPTD PPA Garut in emotionally unstable conditions characterized by fear, shame, anxiety, confusion, and severe trauma. Some victims even experienced difficulties speaking during the initial reporting process due to emotional distress and fear of being blamed by others.

To address these conditions, social workers prioritized emotional stabilization and the creation of safe spaces before conducting further assessments or legal procedures. Informants emphasized that victims should feel protected, respected, and emotionally secure during the first interaction with service providers.

Table 2 Initial Protection Strategies During Intake Process

Protection Strategy	Implementation
Safe space creation	Providing private and supportive rooms
Active listening	Allowing victims to speak without interruption
Confidentiality protection	Ensuring victims' identities remain confidential
Non-judgmental communication	Avoiding victim blaming attitudes
Emotional stabilization	Providing psychological support during reporting

Source: Research Result

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One social worker explained that emotional reactions among victims varied significantly depending on their trauma experiences and social environments. According to the informant, many victims initially hesitated to report violence because they feared negative judgments from their families or communities. The informant stated:

“Many victims come with fear and shame. Some even cry before telling their stories because they are afraid of being blamed by others.” (Informant 2)

Another counselor further explained that social workers intentionally avoided asking detailed legal questions during the early stages of interaction because victims often required emotional reassurance before discussing traumatic experiences. The participant stated:

“Our first responsibility is not immediately asking about legal evidence. We focus on making victims feel safe and emotionally calm first.” (Informant 5)

The findings indicate that trauma-informed and victim-centered approaches were consistently applied throughout the intake process. Informants emphasized that forcing victims to repeatedly explain traumatic experiences at the beginning of intervention could worsen psychological distress and retraumatization. Consequently, social workers attempted to create supportive communication environments through empathetic listening, calm interaction, and confidentiality protection.

In addition, several informants explained that the intake process also functioned as an initial assessment stage for identifying urgent needs related to safety, medical treatment, psychological support, and legal protection. Through this process, social workers were able to determine appropriate intervention priorities according to victims' conditions and vulnerabilities.

3. Multidimensional Assessment and Outreach Services

After the intake process, social workers conducted multidimensional assessments to identify victims' comprehensive needs. The findings demonstrate that assessments were not limited to legal aspects but also included medical, psychological, social, and economic conditions affecting victims' well-being and recovery processes.

Informants explained that each victim experienced different vulnerabilities and therefore required individualized intervention plans. Some victims urgently needed medical examinations and emergency protection, while others required intensive trauma recovery and social support due to family rejection or social stigma.

Table 3 Components of Multidimensional Assessment

Assessment Dimension	Main Focus
Medical	Physical injuries and health conditions
Psychological	Trauma symptoms and emotional stability
Legal	Evidence availability and legal readiness
Social	Family support and environmental safety
Economic	Financial vulnerability and dependency

Source: Research Result

One social worker described the importance of multidimensional assessments in determining intervention priorities and referral mechanisms. The informant stated:

“Every victim has different needs. Some require emergency medical treatment, while others urgently need psychological stabilization or legal protection.” (Informant 4)

The findings also reveal that geographical conditions in Garut Regency created significant challenges in service accessibility. Several victims lived in remote mountainous areas with limited transportation access, making it difficult for them to report violence directly to UPTD PPA Garut. In response to these challenges, social workers implemented outreach services to reach victims within their communities.

Table 4 Outreach Activities Conducted by UPTD PPA Garut

Outreach Activity	Objective
Home visits	Identifying victims' conditions directly
Emergency response	Providing immediate assistance
Community coordination	Cooperating with village authorities
Referral services	Connecting victims with healthcare and legal services
Psychosocial assistance	Supporting victims in remote areas

Source: Research Result

One participant explained that outreach activities often required substantial time, energy, and institutional coordination because of difficult geographical conditions. The informant stated:

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“Some victims live in remote areas with difficult transportation access. Sometimes we must travel several hours just to reach one victim.” (Informant 6)

Another informant added that outreach services were also important because many victims feared coming directly to institutional offices due to concerns regarding confidentiality and community stigma. The participant explained:

“Outreach is important because many victims are afraid to come directly to the office due to stigma and fear of exposure.” (Informant 2)

These findings suggest that outreach services played important roles not only in expanding access to protection services but also in strengthening institutional responsiveness toward vulnerable victims living in isolated communities.

4. Legal Assistance and Social Advocacy Practices

The findings indicate that legal advocacy constituted one of the most important dimensions of social work practice at UPTD PPA Garut. Social workers accompanied victims throughout police investigations, evidence collection procedures, prosecutor examinations, and court hearings to ensure that victims' rights and emotional safety were protected during legal processes.

Informants explained that many victims experienced fear, anxiety, and retraumatization when interacting with law enforcement institutions. Formal legal procedures were often perceived as intimidating, particularly when victims were repeatedly asked to recount traumatic experiences or directly confronted perpetrators during court proceedings.

Table 5 Forms of Legal Advocacy Conducted by Social Workers

Legal Advocacy Activity	Purpose
Police accompaniment	Ensuring victim-sensitive investigations
Legal education	Informing victims about their rights
Coordination with prosecutors	Supporting legal processes
Court accompaniment	Preventing retraumatization
Restitution advocacy	Supporting victims' economic recovery

Source: Research Result

One social worker explained that courtroom situations frequently became psychologically difficult for victims because they were required to revisit traumatic memories while facing formal legal environments. The informant stated:

“The courtroom atmosphere can be very intimidating for victims. Some become traumatized again when seeing the perpetrator directly.” (Informant 4)

Another participant emphasized that insensitive questioning and victim blaming attitudes during investigations remained major concerns requiring active advocacy from social workers. The informant explained:

“Victims are often asked insensitive questions during investigations. Social workers must ensure they are treated respectfully.” (Informant 1)

The findings further reveal that social workers attempted to minimize retraumatization by advocating for alternative examination mechanisms such as teleconference hearings. These strategies were considered effective in reducing victims' anxiety and emotional pressure during judicial processes.

One participant described these efforts as follows:

“We coordinated with judges and prosecutors so victims could testify through teleconference. This helped reduce fear and psychological pressure.” (Informant 4)

In addition to legal accompaniment, social workers also advocated for victims' restitution rights as part of economic recovery and social justice efforts. Informants emphasized that restitution represented not only financial compensation but also acknowledgment of victims' suffering and perpetrators' accountability.

One counselor explained:

“Restitution is not only about money. It represents accountability and helps victims rebuild their lives after violence.” (Informant 3)

Overall, the findings demonstrate that social advocacy practices at UPTD PPA Garut extended beyond procedural legal assistance and included broader efforts to protect victims' dignity, emotional well-being, and social rights throughout judicial processes.

5. Psychosocial Recovery and Social Reintegration

The findings demonstrate that psychosocial recovery represented a long-term intervention process aimed at restoring victims' emotional stability, confidence, and social functioning.

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Table 6 Psychosocial Recovery Interventions

Intervention	Objective
Individual counseling	Reducing trauma and anxiety
Crisis intervention	Stabilizing emotional conditions
Emotional support	Strengthening self-confidence
Family mediation	Improving family support
Social reintegration	Restoring social participation

Source: Research Result

Participants explained that recovery processes varied depending on victims' trauma conditions and social environments.

One counselor stated:

"Some victims need months before they can speak comfortably again. Trauma recovery cannot be rushed." (Informant 5)

Another participant explained:

"The biggest challenge is social stigma. Victims are sometimes blamed or isolated by their communities instead of being supported." (Informant 3)

The findings further reveal that social workers conducted community education and mediation to reduce victim blaming and discrimination.

One social worker stated:

"Recovery is not only about the victim. The environment must also change so survivors can return to society safely." (Informant 1)

Social reintegration efforts focused on helping victims resume education, employment, and social activities without discrimination or fear.

6. Summary of Findings

Overall, the findings indicate that social work practices at UPTD PPA Garut implemented integrated and trauma-informed social advocacy approaches for women victims of sexual violence. Social workers performed multiple professional roles as advocates, mediators, case managers, facilitators, and psychosocial companions.

Professional Role	Main Function
Advocate	Protecting victims' rights
Mediator	Coordinating institutions and families
Case Manager	Managing integrated services
Facilitator	Connecting victims with resources
Psychosocial Companion	Providing emotional support

Source: Research Result

Despite challenges such as geographical barriers, bureaucratic limitations, and social stigma, social workers continued to strengthen victim protection systems through integrated interventions, interdisciplinary collaboration, and community-based advocacy approaches.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that social work practices at UPTD PPA Garut reflect comprehensive social advocacy approaches integrating legal assistance, psychosocial intervention, outreach services, and social reintegration. The implementation of trauma-informed and victim-centered practices aligns with contemporary social work principles emphasizing empowerment, dignity, and human rights protection for vulnerable populations.

The intake process findings indicate that creating safe spaces and empathetic communication are essential in minimizing retraumatization among victims of sexual violence. Victims frequently arrived in unstable emotional conditions due to fear, shame, and social stigma. This finding supports trauma-informed social work perspectives suggesting that emotional safety and trust-building represent foundational elements in effective intervention processes. The direct statements from informants further illustrate that victims require compassionate environments before participating in legal or psychosocial procedures.

The multidimensional assessment process reflects ecological systems perspectives within social work practice. Sexual violence affects victims physically, psychologically, socially, economically, and legally. Therefore, integrated assessments are necessary to identify complex needs and intervention priorities. The findings also reveal that outreach services were highly significant due to geographical barriers in Garut Regency. Outreach interventions demonstrated commitments toward inclusive and accessible social protection services, particularly for victims living in remote rural communities.

The findings regarding legal advocacy strengthen Schneider and Lester's social advocacy framework emphasizing systematic

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efforts to protect marginalized groups from institutional injustice. Victims often encountered victim blaming, intimidation, and insensitive treatment during legal procedures. Social workers therefore acted as advocates and mediators ensuring that judicial processes remained victim-sensitive and protective. The use of teleconference mechanisms during court hearings also demonstrates innovative trauma-reduction strategies implemented by social workers to prevent retraumatization.

Psychosocial recovery and social reintegration findings indicate that trauma recovery extends beyond individual counseling processes. Victims frequently experienced social exclusion and discrimination within their communities. Consequently, social workers conducted broader community advocacy and educational interventions to challenge victim blaming culture and promote supportive environments for survivors. These findings confirm that social work advocacy involves both individual empowerment and social transformation efforts.

Overall, the study confirms that integrated social advocacy practices are essential for strengthening protection systems for women victims of sexual violence. Effective interventions require interdisciplinary collaboration, institutional coordination, trauma-informed approaches, and community participation. The findings contribute to the development of social work advocacy literature while also providing practical recommendations for improving integrated victim protection systems in Indonesia

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that social work practices at UPTD PPA Garut have implemented comprehensive and integrated social advocacy approaches for women victims of sexual violence. Social workers performed multiple professional roles including advocates, mediators, case managers, facilitators, and psychosocial companions throughout legal and recovery processes.

The findings demonstrate that trauma-informed and victim-centered approaches were effectively applied during intake procedures, multidimensional assessments, outreach services, legal assistance, psychosocial recovery, and social reintegration. Social workers also played significant roles in minimizing retraumatization, advocating for victims' rights, and strengthening institutional coordination among healthcare providers, legal institutions, and social service agencies.

Furthermore, the study highlights that psychosocial recovery requires not only emotional healing but also supportive social environments free from stigma and victim blaming. Community advocacy and educational interventions therefore became important strategies in supporting victims' long-term reintegration and empowerment.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of social work advocacy literature by demonstrating integrated advocacy practices within regional protection institutions in Indonesia. Practically, the findings provide recommendations for strengthening trauma-informed services, expanding outreach programs, improving inter-agency coordination, and promoting victim-sensitive legal systems for women survivors of sexual violence.

Despite its contributions, this study was limited to one institutional setting and a relatively small number of participants. Future studies are recommended to involve broader institutional contexts and include direct perspectives from survivors to enrich understanding regarding effective social work interventions for victims of sexual violence.

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