



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST HUSBANDS: PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF LAW ON THE ELIMINATION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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Abstract

This study examines domestic violence against husbands in Desa Dahanrejo, Gresik, focusing on the psychological impact on victims and the implementation of Law No. 23 of 2004 on the Elimination of Domestic Violence. The research addresses the limited recognition of male victims in domestic violence discourse despite gender-neutral legal provisions. This study employs qualitative case study through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation, supported by interpretive analysis using Weber's verstehen and an insider research approach. The findings reveal that husbands experience physical, verbal, and psychological violence that results in decreased self-esteem, social withdrawal, rumination, and symptoms of post-traumatic stress. The study also shows that hegemonic masculinity and socio-cultural stigma hinder victims from seeking legal protection. Although Law No. 23 of 2004 formally provides gender-neutral protection, its implementation is constrained by structural and cultural barriers that limit male victims' access to justice. This research highlights the need for inclusive law enforcement practices and victim protection mechanisms that are responsive to all victims regardless of gender.

Keywords: Domestic Violence, Male Victims, Psychological Trauma, Gender-Neutral Law, Legal Protection

A. Introduction

Domestic Violence (KDRT) has long been recognized as a systemic human rights violation and a serious problem that affects social welfare, both at the global and national levels. In the past decade, academic studies and public policy have consistently given primary attention to women as the main subjects of protection, given their more vulnerable positions in patriarchal structures (World Bank, 2022). However, the dominance of these narratives indirectly forms a bias, which sees domestic violence as if it occurs only in one direction. In fact, the reality on the ground shows that power relations in the family are much more complex, and violence can occur without being limited by gender differences. In fact, men can also be victims of violence in their domestic sphere.

Based on data from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KemenPPPA), there were 6,310 male victims, although the number was less than women, but this could be empirical evidence that husbands can be victims of domestic violence (KemenPPPA, 2025). In law enforcement practice in Indonesia, the protection of male victims often does not receive equal attention.

The phenomenon of husbands as victims of domestic violence is a reality that often goes unnoticed and is understood to be "invisible violence". These social standards result in the husband who is the victim choosing to remain silent, due to social pressure in the form of ridicule or loss of dignity as the head of the family. As a result, male victims experience a double burden, namely suffering from physical and psychological violence experienced, as well as social stigma that prevents them from seeking help or reporting. The psychological impact experienced by the husband of a domestic violence victim is no less severe than that of a female victim, ranging from chronic stress, depression, to learned helplessness. From the perspective of Hans Hon Hentig's victimology, the husband's position as a victim is often in a situation of secondary victimization, which is when the social environment and law enforcement officials tend to underestimate their complaints. Focusing on this psychological dimension is very important, but it still rarely finds a place in formal legal studies, even though the mental state of the victim is the main indicator in determining the severity of the impact of crime in a domestic relationship. Normatively, the elimination of domestic violence is actually gender-neutral because it uses the phrase "everyone" as the subject of protection (Law Number 23 of 2004, 2004).

However, in perspective Progressive Law of Satjipto Rahardjo, the law should not stop at the text alone (law in books), but must be able to use conscience and morals to realize justice (Rahardjo, 2006). In practice in communities such as in Dahanrejo Village, there is a gap between legal protection and implementation in the field. Cultural factors and the understanding of the authorities at the village level often make this regulation dull when faced with the case of the husband as a victim, so that access to justice becomes difficult to obtain.

A number of previous studies have attempted to examine this phenomenon from various perspectives. Like Hakimah highlighting the role of institutions in handling domestic violence (Hakimah, Septriana, 2023), while Meutuah provides a normative juridical review of legal protection for men (Dhara Meutuah, Ummi, 2025). On the other hand, (Panjaitan & Nurhadiyanto, 2023)

begin to examine the position of women as perpetrators of violence. However, these studies tend to be partial. Until now, there have not been many integrative studies dissecting the psychological dynamics of male victims as well as evaluating the effectiveness of the implementation of the PKDRT Law in the specific context of rural communities that have strong social control. The absence of an analysis that links psychological distress due to masculinity stigma with structural barriers at the village level shows a real research gap.

Previous research has not integrated psychological analysis of male victims with studies on law implementation at the rural community level. Therefore, the novelty of this research lies in an interdisciplinary approach that combines progressive legal perspectives and victimology psychology in the locus of Dahanrejo Village, in order to see how the law is implemented in the midst of strong social stigma pressure. This study aims to examine various forms of violence experienced by husbands, understand the psychological dynamics experienced by them, and evaluate the application of Law No. 23 of 2004 in responding to these cases in Dahanrejo Village. The results of this study are expected to enrich the study of Islamic family law and national law by presenting a more inclusive perspective. In practical terms, this study is urgent for policymakers at the local level to build protection mechanisms that are sensitive to all victims, without being trapped in traditional gender biases.

B. Method

This study uses a qualitative approach of case studies to gain a deep understanding of the husband's psychological experience as a victim of domestic violence. This approach was chosen because it is able to explore meanings, perceptions, and emotional dynamics that cannot be explained only through quantitative or statistical data (Moleong, 2017). In addition, the qualitative approach allows researchers to understand the subjective experiences of victims while examining legal aspects related to the protection of victims of domestic violence. This research was conducted in Dahanrejo Village, which was chosen as the research location because of the phenomenon of husbands experiencing domestic violence committed by wives.

The subject of the study involved 5 informants, one of which was a husband who experienced domestic violence, whose identity was disguised with the initials Mr. (H) as the victim. The research also involved additional informants, namely the victim's wife who was disguised as Mrs. (A) of the wife who committed domestic violence, as well as 2 members of the victim's family

who were disguised as (S1) and (S2) as witnesses and parties involved, as well as Bhabinkamtibmas law enforcement in Dahanrejo Village. Given that the victim is a colleague of the researcher, this research borrows Kim Knott's perspective on the insider position of "participant as observer" (Knott, 2009), this approach allows researchers to gain closer access to the informant's experience, while maintaining objectivity in the research process. In addition, the understanding of the victim's experience is carried out through an interpretive approach as stated by Max Weber through the concept *Verstehen*, i.e. an attempt to understand the subjective meaning of an individual's social action (William T, 1965). This research was conducted for 4 months, starting from September to December 2025, which included the preparation stage, data collection, data analysis, and preparation of research reports. The data collection process was carried out during the month, namely from February to March 2025, through in-depth interview techniques, observation, and documentation.

Data collection was carried out through 3 main techniques, through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews allow researchers to understand the victim's subjective experiences, including his emotional state, trauma, and perception of the household. Observations were made to strengthen the findings by directly observing the behavior of victims in daily interactions. Documentation is used as supporting data to understand the context of the event. The triangulation technique is used to ensure the validity of the data by comparing information from various informants (Dr. Sugiyono, 2012). The data analysis process is carried out through the process of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. Each data obtained is coded to identify key themes, such as forms of violence, emotional impact, family dynamics, and the process of coping victims. The results of the analysis are then presented narratively in accordance with the principles of qualitative research.

Ethically, this study applies the principle of *informed consent*. Before the interview, the researcher explained the purpose of the research, the use of data, and the informant's right to refuse or stop participating at any time without consequences. Participation is voluntary and subject to the consent of the informant. To maintain security and privacy, the identity of the informant is disguised and not included in the report. Information that has the potential to reveal identity is replaced with initials. The data obtained is only used for academic purposes. Using the following table:

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Table 1. Criteria for Research Informants

Informants	Informant Criteria	Discussion
Mr. H	Husband who was a victim of domestic violence (physical, verbal, psychological) in Dahanrejo village. Experiencing psychological impacts in the form of withdrawal tendencies	Provide information about experiences of physical, verbal, and psychological violence experienced in the household
Mrs. A	The wife of the victim as well as the perpetrator of domestic violence. Having economic jealousy motives towards husband's colleagues	Provide information about the factors of domestic conflict and the condition of family relationships.
Witness 1	Third parties who see or know directly the daily interactions of the subject's family and also know the changes in the victim's behavior after the event	Provide information about changes in the social behavior of victims after experiencing domestic violence.
Witness 2	Third parties who see or know directly the daily interactions of the subject's family and also know the changes in the victim's behavior after the event	Provide observations about the psychological condition of the victim in daily social life.
Bhabinkamtibmas	Law enforcement officers	Provide an explanation of the implementation of the PKDRT Law against male victims in the field.

C. Results And Discussion

The husband's experience as a victim of domestic violence in Dahanrejo Village shows that violence does not occur solely as a physical act but takes place through power relations in domestic life. The psychological impact of such experiences is evident in the form of prolonged stress, rumination of "repetitive thoughts", daydreaming tendencies, and withdrawal from the social environment. In some cases, the victim shows changes in behavior that were not previously prominent, such as becoming more introverted, avoiding social interactions.

The literature reveals that male victims often face internal barriers to admitting themselves as victims (Hafis & Nelli, 2023; Janitra Hapsari, 2021). When violence is understood as a domestic destiny or considered a disgrace that must be covered. The findings further show that these psychological dynamics do not stand alone, but are strengthened by social responses and strong masculinity stigmas.

At the community level, there are cultural standards that require men to be strong, able to control the household, and not appropriate to complain, let alone admit themselves as victims, this condition shows that there is a distance between legal norms and social realities that occur in society. (Taylor et al., 2022). In this context, there seems to be a distance between legal norms and social realities that occur in society. Normatively (*Law in Text*), Law No. 23 of 2004 concerning the Elimination of Domestic Violence is formulated in a gender-neutral manner, so that legal protection is in principle intended for "everyone" within the scope of the household, including the husband as the victim. However, findings on the ground suggest that the application of the law (*Law In Action*) are often influenced by social, cultural, and institutional factors that limit the effectiveness of such protections. Male victims do not always see the legal pathway as a solution to their problems, as there is a shame to admit experiences of violence, concerns about reputation, and uncertainty about the response of the authorities and the services available as factors that hinder them from seeking justice through formal mechanisms.

In practice, problem solving is more often directed through informal channels, such as mediation within the family or through religious leaders. While this approach can sometimes defuse conflict, it also has the potential to cause recurring problems if the root causes of violence and the psychological impact of the victim are not addressed in depth. Here, Satjipto Rahardjo's progressive legal ideas become relevant: law is not judged sufficiently by the "existence or absence of rules", but by its ability to answer the reality of human life in a concrete way, including the experience of victims who are hampered by social stigma and power relations (Aryana, 2022). Thus, the effectiveness of the PKDRT Law is highly dependent on the way institutions and law enforcement understand victims and enforce protection without gender bias, this is the meaning of progressive law that places human beings, including male victims, who are often invisible as the goal of protection (Rahardjo, 2009a). Through this integrative reading, this study emphasizes that the main problem is not just the emptiness of

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norms, but the socio-psychological and institutional barriers that limit male victims' access to justice. This condition ultimately has the potential to make domestic violence continue to take place in secret.

To make it easier to understand the flow of research findings, the researcher presents the following discussion framework:



Figure 1. Domestic violence against Husband.

Based on this framework, this study shows that the husband's experience as a victim of domestic violence cannot be understood only as a matter of physical violence, but also related to power relations, masculinity stigma, and obstacles in obtaining legal protection. Therefore, the discussion of the research is focused on the factors that cause violence, the form of violence experienced by the victim, the psychological impact, and the implementation of Law No. 23 of 2004 on male victims.

1. What Is The Form Of Violence Experienced By Husbands

Domestic violence basically includes any act that causes physical, psychological, sexual, or neglect in the household, as defined in Article 1 JAS: Volume 8 Nomor 1, 2026

paragraph (1) of Law No. 23 of 2004. This action not only violates social norms, but also contradicts the provisions of the law that applies in Indonesia. One form of violence experienced by Mr. H is physical violence, which is carried out through the act of stabbing when gathering at a reunion with a large family (Mr. H, Interview, January, 2025). Further investigation through an interview with Mrs. (A) showed that the act of embezzlement was rooted in economic jealousy of Mr. H's brother who was considered to have a more established financial condition. He said, "How can I not be emotional, Mas. At that time, everyone gathered at the family reunion event, continuing to see that his siblings had succeeded in bringing all the cars and his wife was wearing all branded robes, while we left on a motorbike. I feel embarrassed, especially when my in-laws compare indirectly, but I feel it (Mrs. A, interview, 2025).

Acts of physical violence committed in this kind of public space not only cause physical pain, but also trigger feelings of shame, loss of dignity, and psychological distress, because the victim is placed in a position of humiliation in front of his social environment. In addition to physical violence, Mr. H also experienced verbal and psychological violence which was characterized by cursing actions in public. Speech that compares himself to others and places him as a useless figure is a form of violence that attacks the victim's self-esteem and personal identity. Such verbal violence not only causes emotional wounds, but also strengthens unequal power relations. Therefore, the impact of the physical, verbal, and psychological violence experienced by Mr. H cannot be understood partially but as an interrelated experience. Violence that occurs in public spaces has a wider psychosocial impact due to the presence of others as witnesses, thereby strengthening the victim's shame and decreased self-esteem. In this context, violence not only harms physically, but also hurts the victim's social identity as an individual who should be respected in the family.

According to Mr. (H)'s statement, "Every night I have trouble sleeping, Mas. That thought kept playing when my wife yelled in front of the big family. I feel like a failed man, I don't have any self-esteem anymore. If I want to tell a friend or report it, I'm embarrassed, I'm definitely mistaken for a man who is spoiled or not good at leading the household".

Psychologically, the experience of being humiliated in public can trigger a variety of negative emotional responses, such as helplessness, social anxiety, as well as a tendency to withdraw from even more extreme social environments that can trigger serious actions such as murder (Li et al., 2024). This is in line with field

findings that show changes in Mr. H's behavior after the violent incident, such as frequent daydreaming, becoming quieter, and reducing social interaction. This condition shows the existence of psychological wounds that are hidden, but have a significant impact on the life conditions and mental health of the victim. The verbal violence experienced by Mr. H, especially in the form of swearing and compared to others, is also a form of effort to degrade the victim's position in domestic relations, considering that power relations have a big role in the formation of patterns of domestic violence (Ciciek, 1999)

2. Psychological Dynamics Of Husbands As Victims Of Domestic Violence

From a psychological perspective, domestic violence (KDRT) is not only understood as a physical event that causes visible wounds, but also a traumatic experience that can disrupt an individual's psychological integrity. Judith Herman in *Trauma and Recovery* explains that interpersonal violence, especially in intimate relationships, has the potential to damage the victim's sense of basic security, self-identity, and perception of the social world and its surroundings (Herman, 1997, p. 28). Trauma in domestic relationships has special characteristics, because the perpetrator is a party who should be a source of emotional support for the victim.

More broadly, the study of victimology explains that the psychological impact experienced by victims is not only determined by the form of violence experienced, but also by the response of the social environment to the event (Hafis et al., 2024). Arif Gosita in his book entitled "The Problem of Crime Victims" explained that victims can experience secondary victimization when the environment responds with an attitude of underestimation, blame, or distrust the experience they experienced, of course this makes the victim suffer twice (Arif, 1993). In the context of men as victims of domestic violence, the risk of secondary victimization tends to be greater because social constructions of masculinity often place men as powerful and vulnerable, so their vulnerability as victims is often not acknowledged.

According to witness 1 after being affected by domestic violence, Mr. H showed a significant change in behavior, according to him "In the past, Mr. (H) was a *srawung* (socialization) person, often participating in grafts at the post. But lately he withdrew, if he passes by it is just (stuck) bowing. I had heard the noise of a commotion from his house, but we neighbors were also wrong to intervene. The problem is that the victims are usually women, if you feel strange, you want to be helped". (Witness 1, Interview, January, 2026). The finding was not only

stated by one source, according to witness 2 also said the same thing, "he used to be a cool person when he was invited to talk (chat), but since he was often clashed with his wife, he often pondered a lot when he was invited to talk, sometimes he also didn't connect when he talked (Witness 2, Interview, January 2026)

In the context of post-violence, repetitive daydreaming habits cannot be understood simply as ordinary behavioral changes, but rather as an internal psychological response when a person seeks to understand experiences that shake his or her sense of security and self-esteem (Novi Mayangsari & Muhammad Hafis, 2022). In this phase, the victim's mind often flashes back to the painful event, as if looking for an explanation for why it happened, what he should have done, and how he judged himself after the event. From a psychological perspective, this kind of experience is often related to the appearance of intrusion symptoms, namely memories that are suddenly present, feel disturbing, and resurface emotions during the event.

These symptoms can be concluded that Mr. H has PTSD symptoms, the definition of PTSD or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is: a psychiatric condition that can occur in people who have experienced or witnessed a traumatic event or a series of traumatic events (American Psychiatric Association, 2025).

Therefore, the impression that Mr. H seems dissolved in his own mind can be understood as an indication that the experience of violence has not been fully processed adaptively, both on a cognitive and emotional level. This condition often goes hand in hand with rumination, namely the tendency to think about negative experiences repeatedly with evaluations and the tendency to blame oneself, various studies show that this kind of rumination pattern is strongly correlated and can even predict an increase in post-traumatic stress symptoms. Systematic review shows that rumination is a transdiagnostic process that often arises in individuals with PTSD and is closely related to the severity of their symptoms (Ramadani & Rahmasari, 2023; Suherman & Hafis, 2022). Thus, Mr. H's tendency to daydream can be understood as a form of tiring mental struggle, in which the victim continues to repeat fragments of events, make repeated assessments, but has difficulty finding a calming emotional solution (closure).

While withdrawing from the social environment can also be understood as a natural psychological response in victims of relational violence. In the context of post-traumatic symptoms, the tendency to avoid things that trigger traumatic memories and mood swings and self-perception often leads individuals to limit social activities, lose interest, or keep their distance from others. In male

victims, the tendency to withdraw is often reinforced by shame and concern about society's judgment, especially since masculinity norms still often demand that men appear strong and unworthy of being victims. The literature on male victims of intimate partner violence suggests that barriers to seeking help and the tendency to hide experiences are often related to social stigma and fear of distrust (Bates, 2019)

Therefore, when Mr. H does not seem to have fully recovered from the experience, this condition is more accurately understood as an indication that his psychological recovery process is still ongoing. Traumatic memories still arise frequently, emotions are not yet stable, and the strategy chosen to survive is to limit social interactions. At this stage, Mr. H's need is not only limited to acknowledging that the violence he experienced is real and impactful, but also a safe space to process the experience so that he gradually rebuilds a sense of empowerment, security, and self-meaning that is not determined by the violence he has experienced.

3. Application Of Law On The Elimination Of Domestic Violence

Normatively, Law No. 23 of 2004 concerning the Elimination of Domestic Violence (PKDRT Law) is formulated with gender-neutral language. The protection provided is not only aimed at women, but includes every individual who is within the scope of the household. This can be seen from the definition of "victim" which includes people who experience violence or threats of domestic violence. In addition, the prohibition of acts of violence is also formulated with the phrase "everyone is prohibited from committing domestic violence" so that doctrinally the position of the husband as a victim is included in the same scope of legal protection as the female victim.

The protection framework is also emphasized through regulations regarding victims' rights and the obligations of the authorities. The PKDRT Law provides access for victims to obtain legal protection, health services, assistance, and further treatment through reporting mechanisms and law enforcement processes. Even in its general explanation, this law emphasizes the obligations of various parties ranging from law enforcement officials, health workers, to religious leaders to protect victims to be more sensitive and responsive. In terms of the "law in the text", this structure should be sufficient to ensure that male victims are not treated as anomalies but as full legal subjects (Rahardjo, 2009b).

Although these legal norms are gender-neutral, implementation on the ground shows that there are structural and cultural barriers that affect the

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effectiveness of protection for male victims. One of the problems arises from the epistemology that shapes who is considered worthy of being called a victim. In Foucault's perspective, dominant social knowledge can serve as a means of domination, he normalizes the image that domestic violence is "male violence against women", so that cases with the opposite pattern tend to be considered unusual, doubtful, or even just ordinary domestic conflicts (Foucault, 1980, p. 131). In law enforcement practice, this bias can be seen starting from the receipt of reports, the evidentiary process, to the provision of protection to victims. Law enforcement officials tend to use a perspective that is still oriented towards women victims as the most vulnerable group, so the experience of violence experienced by men is often seen as a passing wind.

In addition to structural factors, barriers to protection are also influenced by cultural aspects that shape the way victims respond to the experience of violence. Social stigma against men who are victims of domestic violence often leads to shame, psychological burden, and concerns about negative judgments from the social environment. As a result, male victims tend to choose to shut themselves up, be reluctant to report the violence they experience, or even tolerate acts of violence for a long period of time. This situation shows a gap between legal norms that guarantee universal protection and social realities that still limit male victims' access to justice. In the perspective of progressive law as stated by Satjipto Rahardjo, law should not only be understood as a set of rules that are formal, but also as a means to realize substantive justice for society. This approach requires law enforcement officials to interpret the provisions of the PKDRT Law contextually by paying attention to the social realities faced by victims, including men's vulnerability in the dynamics of certain household relationships. With a more responsive approach to the needs of victims, the law is expected to be able to provide fair protection without being influenced by gender stereotypes. Therefore, optimizing the application of Law No. 23 of 2004 to male victims requires changes in the aspects of law enforcement and social awareness of the community.

Based on the results of an interview with one of the law enforcers, information was obtained that "As a rule, in the PKDRT Law, men can indeed report. But in practice in the field, men rarely want to make reports, usually they are prestige and looked down upon by the public. We also sometimes find it difficult to follow up if the physical evidence is not severe, because there is a

tendency for society to consider violence against women against men as not a serious threat." (Babinkamtibmas, Interview, February, 2026).

As a further implication, there is a need for reform efforts in law enforcement practices that place victim protection as the primary orientation without being influenced by social assumptions about gender roles. These efforts can be carried out through increasing the capacity of law enforcement officials through training that is sensitive to various forms of victim vulnerability, strengthening inclusive assistance services, and formulating policies that are more responsive to the needs of male victims. These measures are important to close the gap between legal norms and the reality of their implementation. In addition, coordination between institutions, such as the police, victim protection institutions, and health workers, also needs to be strengthened to ensure that every victim receives comprehensive protection and recovery, both from legal and psychosocial aspects.

On the other hand, public education efforts regarding equal legal protection and the elimination of stigma against male victims also have an important role in shaping a more supportive social environment. Public awareness that domestic violence is a violation of human rights that can be experienced by anyone, is expected to foster the courage of victims to seek legal protection and reduce social barriers in the reporting process. With these steps, the implementation of Law No. 23 of 2004 is not only running at the normative level, but is also able to provide real and equal protection for all victims of domestic violence, so that the principles of justice, utility, and legal certainty can be realized more substantively.

D. Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, the phenomenon of husbands as victims of domestic violence in Dahanrejo Village shows that domestic violence is not limited to a specific gender, but is a complex social reality. The victim experienced physical, verbal, and psychological violence that had an impact on decreased self-esteem, social withdrawal, and the appearance of post-traumatic stress symptoms. Violence that occurs in public spaces also strengthens the psychosocial impact because it hurts the dignity and social identity of the victim.

The findings of the study also show that the psychological response of victims cannot be separated from the constructs of masculinity and social stigma that inhibit men from acknowledging vulnerability as well as seeking help. From a juridical perspective, Law No. 23 of 2004 has normatively provided gender-

neutral protection. However, its implementation still faces cultural and structural obstacles, including bias in the perspective of law enforcement officials, so victims' access to protection is not optimal.

Thus, the main problem in protecting husbands as victims of domestic violence does not lie in the normative aspects of the law, but in social and implementing factors. Training is needed for village officials and the police on handling victim-based domestic violence without gender bias to increase access to protection for all victims.

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