

# **A Woman Survivor's Quest for Justice and Healing: A Case Study of Institutional Responses to Sexual Abuse within the Catholic Church in Indonesia**

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This case study presents an in-depth examination of the author's experience as a woman survivor of sexual abuse by a Catholic priest in Indonesia. The study explores the institutional responses the author encountered when reporting the incident to the diocese, a bishop who is also an official of the Indonesian Bishops' Conference, Indonesia's Nunciature, and in a letter to Pope Francis during his visit to Indonesia in 2024 (*published as a gift book: Whisper of Hope*).

The author's story highlights the pervasive culture of silence, dismissal, and intimidation that perpetuates abuse within the Catholic Church in Indonesia. Despite the Church's commitment to reform (*based on Pope Francis' Vos Estis Lux Mundi, 2019*), the author faced significant barriers in seeking justice and healing, including lack of transparency, inadequate support systems, and a pervasive culture of clericalism. This poor response from the Church authorities makes the women survivors adopt a victim mentality rather than becoming empowered women survivors.

The main objectives of this research are:

1. To examine institutional responses to sexual abuse within the Catholic Church in Indonesia.
2. To address the root causes of clericalism.
3. To identify challenges and reflect the role of women in developing safeguarding measures and promoting gender-related aspects in safeguarding within the Church.
4. To promote accountability and transparency within the Church, which are essential for preventing abuse and ensuring just responses to allegations.
5. To highlight the importance of prioritizing survivors' needs and voices in safeguarding measures for creating a safe and supportive environment (*survivor-centered approach*).

The study reveals a complex web of institutional responses prioritizing perpetrator protection over survivor support. The findings highlight the need for survivor-centered approaches, transparency, and accountability within the Church. Therefore, the author recommends survivor-centered rather than hierarchical-centered measures in the Catholic Church in Indonesia to encourage the women victims of sexual abuse becoming the empowered woman survivors.

This case study uses a narrative approach to analyze the author's personal experience, supplemented by documentation and correspondence with Church authorities.

This presentation contributes to the conversation on systemic reform within the Church, providing insights for policymakers, practitioners, and scholars in safeguarding and gender studies.