



ROLE THEORY ANALYSIS OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS, LEGAL AID INSTITUTIONS, AND SOCIETY IN THE WOMEN'S PROTECTION SYSTEM IN YOGYAKARTA

Luluk Qonita^{1*}, Wildan Baehaqi¹

¹Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

*25203011062@student.uin-suka.ac.id

Abstract

The protection of women is a crucial issue in Indonesia's legal and human rights system, given the persistently high rates of violence against women in Yogyakarta. Although regulations such as Law No. 12 of 2022 on TPKS and Law No. 23 of 2004 on PKDRT are in place, their implementation still faces a gap between the state's normative role and actual practices on the ground, thereby creating an opening for civil society intervention. This study analyzes the role of *Non-Governmental Organizations* (NGOs) including Legal Aid Institutions (LBH) and Non-Governmental Organizations (LSM) in the women's protection system in Yogyakarta through the lens of *role theory*, while also examining how the government should position itself as the primary responsible party. The study employs a qualitative method with an empirical-juridical approach, utilizing case studies, documentation, and interviews. The findings indicate that, in the cases analyzed, NGOs demonstrated more responsive *role performance* compared to state actors and even functioned as corrective actors when formal state mechanisms experienced *role failure* as illustrated by the advocacy efforts of LBH Yogyakarta in a sexual violence case at the Islamic University of Indonesia and the support provided by Rifka Annisa in a case at an Islamic boarding school. This situation reflects a pattern of the state shifting its responsibilities to civil society. This study offers recommendations for the government, including the provision of self-reliance protection services, strengthening the capacity of law enforcement officials with a victim-centered perspective, ensuring protection for human rights defenders, and strengthening the state's coordinating function through an institutionalized referral system. The study concludes that effective protection of women requires a clear and collaborative division of roles among the government, NGOs, and the public, while still placing the state as the primary responsible party.

Keywords *Role Theory, Non-Governmental Organizations, Protection of Women, Government Responsibility*

INTRODUCTION

This study was motivated by the persistently high rates of violence against women in the Special Region of Yogyakarta. According to data from the DP3AP2 of the Special Region of Yogyakarta, throughout 2023, there were 773 recorded cases of violence against adults, with violence against wives ranking highest at 415 victims, followed by physical violence (409 victims), psychological violence (397 victims), and sexual violence (318 victims). The latest data from the City of Yogyakarta in 2025 further reinforces this picture, with 124 recorded victims of violence, of whom 57 were assaulted at the perpetrator's home and 51 at the victim's own home. This indicates that the domestic sphere is the most vulnerable setting. The reality of recurring violence in this private sphere highlights serious protection issues, making it urgent to conduct a critical evaluation of the roles of protection actors including the state, civil society organizations, and the community to establish a more effective system for protecting women in Yogyakarta (Department of Women's Empowerment, Child Protection, Population Control).

The persistently high rates of violence against women in Yogyakarta have ultimately led various civil society organizations classified as *Non-Governmental Organizations* (NGOs) to become involved in addressing this issue, whether in the form of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) or Legal Aid Institutions (LBHs). In Yogyakarta, the two organizations that are the focus of this study Rifka Annisa, an NGO, and the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (YLBHI), a Legal Aid Institution have played a very active role and have consistently provided support to victims, engaged in policy advocacy, conducted legal education, and facilitated legal processes for vulnerable groups. The issue is that these roles ranging from providing temporary shelters and counseling services, to litigation support, and public education on women's rights (Rifka Annisa, 2003; Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (YLBHI), 2003)

Rifka Annisa serves as a concrete example of the role played by such NGOs, given that this organization has handled various cases of violence against women ranging from domestic violence stemming from economic inequality between partners, to violence rooted in cultural constructs and religious interpretations that require women to submit to their husbands, to violence in dating relationships (Farid, 2020). The diverse cases handled by Rifka Annisa serve as concrete evidence of how NGOs fill the void left by the state in addressing violence against women in Yogyakarta, while also underscoring that this issue is multidimensional encompassing economic, cultural, religious, and personal factors and thus requires comprehensive support, even though the primary responsibility for addressing it lies with the government.

The government, as the primary responsible party, already has laws related to the protection of women, such as Law No. 23 of 2004 on the Elimination of Domestic Violence (UU PDKRT), Law No. 35 of 2014 on the Protection of Children, Law No. 12 of 2022 on Criminal Acts of Sexual Violence, Law No. 39 of 1999 on Human Rights, Law No. 8 of 2016 on Persons with Disabilities, and Law No. 16 of 2011 on Legal Aid, which requires the state to provide free legal aid to the poor and vulnerable (Paminto & Hermawanti, 2023). Thus, the state already possesses an adequate legal basis to carry out this protective function independently. However, in practice, NGOs and Legal Aid Institutions (LBH) have been the first to respond, are more responsive, and are more trusted by victims than the state institutions that are normatively mandated to do so.

This situation highlights a significant gap between the state's normative role and its implementation on the ground. The wider this gap becomes, the greater the space opens up for civil society intervention to fill the void in state functions. The presence of NGOs specifically civil society organizations (CSOs) and legal aid institutions (LBH) does, on the one hand, strengthen the capacity of the protection system through accompaniment, advocacy, and legal assistance, as evidenced by the high number of cases of spousal violence and domestic violence the majority of which occur in the domestic sphere, as outlined in the DP3AP2 DIY data above which demand the presence of responsive support actors for victims. On the other hand, however, this situation has the potential to create a tendency toward a "*shifting of responsibility*" that is, when functions that should be the responsibility of the state are continually shifted and placed on the shoulders of civil society actors.

Previous studies on legal protection for women victims of violence have expanded considerably, but most remain fragmented and have not comprehensively integrated the roles of the state and civil society organizations within a single analytical framework. Violence against women itself takes various forms, ranging from sexual violence in both domestic and public spheres (Juliana & Ramadhan, 2024) , to domestic violence (DV), which remains “hidden” behind the myth of the household as an ideal private space, causing victims to tend to remain in abusive relationships even though legal protections are available (Andang Sari & Haryani Putri, 2020). Another study confirms that legal protection is fundamentally non-discriminatory between men and women, so the state is required to reformulate protection models and strategies and actively disseminate them to the public (Sipahutar, 2022). Meanwhile, a normative analysis of regulations on gender-based violence indicates that although legal instruments such as the Domestic Violence Act (UU PKDRT) and the Act on the Prevention and Eradication of Sexual Violence (UU TPKS) are in place, their implementation remains hampered by low public legal awareness and patriarchal culture (Octariza, 2026).

From the perspective of state institutions, a study of the Sidoarjo Regency UPTD PPA identified four roles of the state as regulator, facilitator, executor, and coordinator but also found obstacles in the form of victims’ reluctance to come forward and limited human resources (Prasetijowati et al., 2024). A similar study of the Department of Women’s Empowerment, Child Protection, Population Control, and Family Planning (DP3APPKB) underscored the department’s strategic role in population control and family planning as a local government authority (Rahmani et al., 2023) , while another study highlights the need to optimize public services through preventive, curative, and rehabilitative approaches for victims of domestic violence (Dewi et al., 2023). Studies in the digital realm have also found that law enforcement officials tend to rely on the ITE Law and the Pornography Law when handling cases of Online Gender-Based Violence (KBGO), which in practice places victims in a vulnerable position with limited access to recovery as mandated by the TPKS Law (Muryatini, 2024).

Meanwhile, regarding the role of civil society organizations, a study of the Surakarta-based non-governmental organization (NGO) SPEK-HAM indicates that the NGO concretely carries out functions such as receiving complaints, providing legal consultations, conducting mediation, and offering legal assistance to victims of sexual violence, although it still faces obstacles in the form of a lack of a victim-centered perspective among police officers (Kartika et al., 2024). Another study focusing on women with disabilities further underscores the role of NGOs in advocating for victims who experience both structural and cultural discrimination simultaneously, given that the implementation of existing state policies is not yet fully grounded in gender justice (., 2023). From these ten previous studies, it is evident that existing research generally addresses the roles of the state and NGOs/CSOs as two distinct objects of study, without theoretically analyzing the relationship or role gaps between them, particularly in the context of Yogyakarta.

Given this research gap, this study is important for two main reasons. First, this study provides an in-depth examination of the roles played by *Non-Governmental Organizations*

(NGOs) including civil society organizations (CSOs) and legal aid institutions (LBH) within the women's protection system in Yogyakarta, analyzed through *role theory*. Second, it examines how the government should position itself as the primary entity responsible for the protection of women not merely by enacting various regulatory measures, but also by taking concrete, solution-oriented steps on the ground that can address the role imbalances that have long existed between the state and civil society. Thus, this study is expected to contribute to the discussion regarding a clear and collaborative division of roles among the government, NGOs, and the public, without undermining the state's position as the primary entity responsible for protecting women's rights.

METHODS

This study is a qualitative *field research project* that employs an empirical-juridical approach to examine the division of roles and synergies among the state, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) handling cases of violence against women, legal aid institutions (LBH), and the community in the protection of women and children in Indonesia. The empirical-juridical approach is used to examine the relationship between legal provisions governing the protection of women and their implementation in practice (Efendi & Ibrahim, 2018). Data were collected through document analysis and interviews. Documentary data consisted of laws and regulations, official reports and publications from institutions, credible media reports, and case documentation from relevant online sources (Sianipar et al., 2026). In this study, Rifka Annisa and the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (YLBH) are categorized as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) based on their involvement and contributions to the protection of women. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with Solidaritas Perempuan Kinasih to gather information on the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the protection of women.

The data were analyzed qualitatively using Role Theory by identifying and classifying the roles of the state, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), legal aid institutions (LBH), and the community in handling cases of violence against women. Subsequently, *role expectations* were compared with *role performance* to assess the alignment between expected roles and their implementation in practice. The analysis then focused on forms of synergy, role gaps, *role failure*, and *role conflict* among the parties. The results revealed patterns of role distribution and synergy among the parties, which served as the basis for formulating recommendations to strengthen the protection of women.

RESULTS

The Role of NGOs and Regulations on Women's Protection

A *Non-Governmental Organization* (NGO) is a non-governmental organization established voluntarily by an individual or a group of people to provide services to the general public without the aim of deriving profit from its activities (Kaslam et al., 2023). NGOs are institutions, groups, or organizations that actively strive to implement community empowerment and development programs, particularly for marginalized communities. NGOs have several key characteristics: first, these organizations are not part of, nor owned by, the government, bureaucracy, or the state; second, in carrying out their

activities, NGOs are not profit-oriented (nonprofit); and third, the activities they undertake are intended for the broader public interest, not solely for the benefit of their own members, as is commonly found in cooperatives or other professional organizations (Annisa Qurrota A'yun, 2023).

In practice, NGOs operate independently outside government structures and aim to serve social, political, economic, health, environmental, and human rights interests, acting as program implementers, catalysts for change, and partners in development (Rindi Yuliyanti & Purbaningrum, 2022). NGOs focus more on being institutions that actively carry out programs and direct interventions. The presence of NGOs in a country plays a vital role because they provide a space for public participation, advocate for social justice, and maintain a balance of power between the government and the public. Through advocacy, education, empowerment, and direct action, NGOs help improve the quality of life for communities while strengthening democracy and good governance, making their contributions a key element in building an inclusive, just, and sustainable society (Ruhiat et al., 2019).

In addition to contributing to public education and awareness-raising, NGOs also serve as community partners while evaluating government performance, in line with the values and ideologies they uphold. Through various activities such as campaigns, advocacy, outreach, and training, NGOs not only strive to educate the public on relevant issues but also actively seek solutions to the various social challenges faced by communities; thus, their role extends beyond the purely educational realm to have a tangible impact on improving social conditions on the ground (Wardani, 2024).

This picture of the NGO's role is further reinforced by the results of an interview with Solidaritas Perempuan (SP) Kinasih. The informant explained that the NGO plays a role in providing support to victims, advocacy, public education, establishing complaint channels, and building networks with various parties, including legal aid organizations, medical personnel, psychologists, and the community. NGOs can also serve as a bridge connecting victims to the services they need. Nevertheless, the involvement of these NGOs is fundamentally supportive and complementary to existing protection mechanisms, while the primary responsibility for ensuring the protection of victims remains with the state (Sanaulaili, Chairperson of SP Kinasih, personal communication, April 6, 2026).

The active role of these NGOs does not stand alone but operates in tandem with the legal framework established by the state within Indonesia's women's protection system. The state has established two primary legal instruments that specifically regulate the protection of women who are victims of violence: Law No. 12 of 2022 on Criminal Acts of Sexual Violence (TPKS Law) and Law No. 23 of 2004 on the Elimination of Domestic Violence (UU PKDRT) (Juliana & Ramadhan, 2024; Sipahutar, 2022). The existence of these two regulations serves as a normative foundation that reaffirms that the protection of women is fundamentally the duty and responsibility of the state; therefore, the broad role of NGOs, as outlined earlier, must be understood as complementary to not a substitute for the normative obligations mandated to the state.

1. Law No. 12 of 2022 on Criminal Acts of Sexual Violence (TPKS Law)

Prior to the enactment of the UU TPKS, regulations protecting women who are victims of sexual violence were still scattered across various laws and regulations. This resulted in a failure to comprehensively address various forms of sexual violence. (Octavia & Winarto, 2025). Victims generally could only rely on criminal provisions in the Criminal Code (KUHP), which had not undergone significant updates and thus could not keep pace with evolving forms of sexual violence, including the phenomenon of *marital* rape the coercion of sexual intercourse by one party within a marital relationship without the consent of their spouse (Hutasoit, 2022). Furthermore, the KUHP has not yet defined sexual harassment or electronic-based sexual violence, meaning that threats of rape and harassment in cyberspace including *the* phenomenon of “*revenge porn*” lack a clear legal basis (Hutasoit, 2022).

Law No. 12 of 2022 on Sexual Violence Crimes (TPKS Law) serves as a legal instrument designed to provide comprehensive protection for victims of sexual violence in Indonesia. The enactment of this regulation was driven by the high number of cases that the previous legal framework had been unable to address effectively. As a result, many perpetrators have evaded proportionate legal consequences, while victims often fail to receive adequate protection or recovery (Rahmani et al., 2023). This legal gap was subsequently addressed through the enactment of the UU TPKS. As a starting point, Article 1, items 1 through 5 of the TPKS Law establish clear definitions of sexual violence offenses, individuals, corporations, victims, and the age limit for children (namely, under 18 years of age, including those still in the womb). These provisions serve as a crucial foundational conceptual framework for supporting the law enforcement process (Juliana & Ramadhan, 2024).

The forms of sexual violence crimes are detailed in Article 4 of the TPKS Law, which divides sexual violence into two categories. The first category includes non-physical sexual harassment, physical sexual harassment, forced contraception, forced sterilization, forced marriage, sexual torture, sexual exploitation, sexual slavery, and electronic-based sexual violence. The second category includes rape, indecent acts, sexual intercourse or sexual exploitation of children, acts contrary to public decency committed against the victim's will, pornography involving children or explicitly depicting sexual violence and exploitation, forced prostitution, the crime of human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, sexual violence within the household, the crime of money laundering derived from Sexual Violence Crimes, as well as other crimes explicitly defined as sexual violence in legislation (Juliana & Ramadhan, 2024).

In addition to detailing the forms of sexual violence, the TPKS Law also imposes severe penalties on perpetrators as a manifestation of the state's serious commitment to protecting victims while serving as a deterrent. These penalties include life imprisonment, the death penalty, and additional penalties such as chemical castration and the installation of electronic monitoring devices. The death penalty is reserved for perpetrators whose actions result in the victim's death, while life imprisonment is imposed for criminal acts that cause severe physical or psychological harm, particularly when the victim is a child (Utomo et al., 2024).

As for the additional penalty of chemical castration, it is specifically regulated and may only be applied to offenders who have been proven to have committed repeated sexual offenses against children, with the aim of reducing the offender's libido while also providing a stronger deterrent effect. Although its implementation remains a subject of debate in some countries, in Indonesia, chemical castration is viewed as one of the extreme measures expected to provide a long-term preventive effect. The imposition of such severe criminal penalties should ideally be balanced with strict supervision, so that offenders are not only sentenced but also receive appropriate rehabilitation, while the public also needs to be empowered to be more vigilant and courageous in reporting suspicious incidents (Utomo et al., 2024).

2. Law No. 23 of 2004 on the Elimination of Domestic Violence (UU PKDRT)

Legal protection for victims of domestic violence is one manifestation of the principle of the rule of law, in which the law serves as the primary instrument for ensuring justice while protecting human rights. Within the Indonesian legal system, the state bears the responsibility to protect every citizen from various forms of violence, including violence occurring within the family. This principle is in line with the provisions of Article 1, paragraph (3) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which affirms that Indonesia is a state governed by the rule of law. As a consequence of this principle, the state is obligated to guarantee legal protection for every citizen, so that they are shielded from actions that violate their rights or degrade their human dignity (Santoso, 2019; Wahyudani et al., 2023).

Domestic violence not only affects victims physically but can also cause psychological suffering, disrupt social relationships, and result in economic losses. These conditions necessitate a legal framework capable of providing comprehensive protection to victims. One manifestation of the state's commitment to addressing this issue is the enactment of Law No. 23 of 2004 on the Elimination of Domestic Violence, which was enacted in response to the need for specific regulations regarding the protection of domestic violence victims, given that provisions concerning violence in the domestic sphere had not previously been specifically addressed in the Criminal Code (Setiawan et al., 2004).

Law No. 23 of 2004 on the Elimination of Domestic Violence (the Domestic Violence Act) was enacted as the state's response to the high incidence of domestic violence with victims predominantly women while also providing a strong legal basis for victims to pursue legal action against perpetrators, an issue previously often regarded as a private matter in which the state should not intervene (Ramdani, 2024). To ensure this protection, the Domestic Violence Act divides protection mechanisms into two forms: temporary protection and protection based on a court order, the implementation of which involves various institutions according to their respective roles and functions.

The Law on the Elimination of Domestic Violence provides a broad definition of domestic violence. Article 5 of the law prohibits anyone from committing violence against a household member, which includes physical, psychological, and sexual violence, as well as domestic neglect indicating that the law views violence as extending beyond physical injury to include mental and social suffering for the victim. Physical violence consists of

acts that cause pain or bodily harm to the victim; psychological violence involves mental pressure through insults, threats, or intimidation; sexual violence includes forced sexual relations and sexual exploitation; while domestic neglect occurs when a person neglects their obligation to provide financial support, care, or protection to family members (Setiawan et al., 2004).

NGO Practices in Protecting Women and the Role of the State

Role theory is used to understand how a role is performed based on the social position occupied (Mardani, 2024). Every social position has a set of expectations, norms, and behavioral demands that serve as the basis for evaluating role performance. Alignment between the expected role and its actual performance indicates the sustainability of the role, whereas misalignment may indicate *role failure* or *role conflict* (Alex, 2025).

In the protection of women and children, the state serves as the primary actor responsible for ensuring the protection, assistance, and recovery of victims (Yuserlina & Ibrahim, 2022). Meanwhile, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), legal aid institutions (LBH), and the community also play a role in providing support, legal aid, advocacy, and helping victims gain access to protection (Arliman S et al., 2022). These roles are not merely defined by normative provisions but must also be tested in practice when cases of violence actually occur (M. Ariessandy Agustin, 2026). Therefore, the following analysis examines several cases of violence against women and children in Yogyakarta to observe how each actor fulfills their role in practice. Each case is first described chronologically, followed by a mapping of the involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), legal aid institutions (LBH), the community, and the government. The results of this mapping are then analyzed using *role theory* by comparing the expected roles (*role expectations*) with the actual performance of those roles (*role performance*) (Alex, 2025). Based on this framework, practices related to the protection of women can be examined through the following cases.

1. LBH Yogyakarta's Advocacy for Victims of Sexual Violence at UII

The Yogyakarta Legal Aid Institute (LBH) is a civil society organization (CSO) active in the fields of legal aid and advocacy; institutionally, it is a regional office operating under the auspices of the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (YLBHI). Over time, LBH Yogyakarta has expanded its work beyond providing legal aid in the form of case resolution to developing a structural legal aid approach aimed at defending communities facing injustice. With this stance, LBH Yogyakarta positions itself as a civil society actor that carries out legal aid, client representation, and advocacy outside the state's formal protection mechanisms (Supriyanto, 2026).

This role was evident in the handling of a sexual violence case at the Islamic University of Indonesia (UII). This case began with the legal support provided to 30 victims of sexual violence allegedly committed by IM, a former high-achieving student at the Islamic University of Indonesia (UII), starting in April 2020. The Yogyakarta Legal Aid Institute (LBH), through public defender Meila Nurul Fajriah, has been providing legal support and advocacy to the victims, both in person and online. Together with the student

movement at the Islamic University of Indonesia (UII), the Yogyakarta Legal Aid Institute (LBH) also pushed for the establishment of a complaint center as a space for victims to receive assistance and access justice. The involvement of the Legal Aid Institute (LBH) is crucial because the number of victims is expected to rise, making the handling of this issue dependent on the collaborative efforts of the civil society network (Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (YLBHI), 2024).

Furthermore, as the handling of this case progressed, the dynamics shifted when Meila and three lawyers from the Yogyakarta Legal Aid Institute (LBH) were actually reported by IM on charges of defamation for disclosing IM's identity in a press release. On June 24, 2024, Meila was named a suspect under the ITE Law, even though a prior internal investigation by the Islamic University of Indonesia (UII) had already established that she was a victim of sexual violence and had suffered psychological trauma, and the UII Rector had already revoked IM's status as a high-achieving student. These facts indicate that there was information and an institutional process that should have been a crucial part of handling the case (Indonesian Legal Aid).

This situation indicates a *“role failure”* on the part of law enforcement officials. *The role expected* of the police is to enforce the law professionally while simultaneously providing protection to victims. This is stipulated in Article 13 of Law No. 2 of 2002. However, in this case, the authorities instead prosecuted the victim's advocate as a criminal suspect. Consequently, a role conflict arises: the law enforcement function, which should be directed toward ensuring victims' access to justice, instead has the potential to hinder the victims' advocacy process. Furthermore, the criminalization of advocates creates a *chilling effect*, as it may deter both victims and other advocates from reporting and speaking out about sexual violence (Sholikhin, 2025).

In this case, LBH Yogyakarta not only provided legal aid to the victim but also became a target in need of protection due to its advocacy role. A response to this situation then came from the civil society network. The Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (YLBHI), Rifka Annisa, Kalynamitra, the Commission for the Missing and Victims of Violence (KontraS), Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression (SAFEnet), Purple Code, Greenpeace Indonesia, and other civil society groups expressed their support for Meila and criticized the criminalization (Indonesian Legal Aid). They serve as *watchdogs*, *advocates*, and *pressure groups* monitoring the actions of law enforcement, building public pressure, and urging the state to cease the criminalization of victim advocates (Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (YLBHI), 2024).

This case illustrates a reversal of protective functions. Legal Aid Institutions (LBH) and civil society are fulfilling the roles expected of them within the victim protection system providing support, ensuring access to justice, and advocating for victims' rights while state officials, who should be the frontline defenders of protection, are instead taking actions deemed to hinder support efforts. The performance of non-state actors in this case appears more responsive than that of state officials at this stage.

Thus, the case involving 30 victims of sexual violence at the Islamic University of Indonesia (UII) demonstrates that NGOs and LBH do not merely serve as complements to the state but can act as corrective agents when state mechanisms *fail to fulfill their roles*.

In fact, when victim advocates themselves became targets of criminalization, civil society networks once again stepped in to protect the advocates while upholding the victims' access to justice. This demonstrates that the problem of protection lies not merely in the absence of regulations, but in the mismatch between the roles the state is supposed to fulfill and the actual protection provided to victims and their advocates.

2. Support for Victims of Sexual Violence in Islamic Boarding Schools by Rifka Annisa.

The Rifka Annisa *Women's Crisis Center* (WCC) is a non-governmental organization (NGO) founded on August 26, 1993, that focuses on efforts to eliminate violence against women and build a gender-equitable society. Rifka Annisa serves as the first *Women's Crisis Center* in Indonesia, addressing a range of gender-based issues. In carrying out its activities, Rifka Annisa not only conducts education and advocacy but also provides direct services to victims through counseling, legal assistance, psychosocial support, as well as referrals and safe houses tailored to the victims' needs (Rifka Annisa Women's Crisis Center, n.d.).

As an NGO dedicated to the protection of women and children, Rifka Annisa's involvement is evident in its support for victims of sexual violence within Islamic boarding schools. The case handled by the Rifka Annisa *Women's Crisis Center* (WCC) involved a 15-year-old female student who had been subjected to repeated sexual abuse since 2021 by the 59-year-old head of the boarding school. The case was reported by the victim's parents in February 2022 after the victim told her family about the abuse she had endured. The case proceeded through the legal system until a final judgment was issued in January 2023, with the perpetrator sentenced to eight years in prison and a fine of Rp. 50 million, as well as ordered to pay restitution to the victim in the amount of 16,645,000 (Rifka Annisa, 2024).

This case highlights the strong power dynamic between the perpetrator and the victim. As the head of an Islamic boarding school, the perpetrator held a position of respect and authority over the students. This position can place the victim in a vulnerable situation and deter her from reporting the incident. Rifka Annisa herself identifies power dynamics and the misuse of religious interpretations as key issues in understanding sexual violence in Islamic boarding schools (Rifka Annisa, 2024).

From a role theory perspective, Rifka Annisa's position demonstrates role performance that aligns with the role expectations of a *Non-Governmental Organization* (NGO) within the victim protection system. *Non-Governmental Organizations* (NGOs) not only provide support throughout the legal process but also ensure that victims continue to receive assistance until the case results in a verdict and restitution. The role of the *Non-Governmental Organization* (NGO) here is one of advocacy and accompaniment that is, advocating for the fulfillment of the victim's rights and accompanying the victim through the lengthy legal process (J. Pope, 2015). The process, which lasted nearly a year, demonstrates that the success of protection is determined not only by the existence of legal mechanisms but also by the presence of actors capable of accompanying the victim through the process.

In this case, what is particularly noteworthy is that the victim's family served as the initial actors who activated the formal protection mechanisms by reporting the incident

after the victim found the courage to speak out. Meanwhile, Rifka Annisa strengthened this process through advocacy. Thus, a division of roles emerged: the family as the support system, *the non-governmental organization* (NGO) as the advocate and supporter, and law enforcement officials as the enforcers of the law. The criminal conviction and the award of restitution demonstrate that, ultimately, the state's formal mechanisms can function effectively when victims have access to adequate support and advocacy.

Furthermore, this case also highlights the limitations of victim protection. The victim was in an environment marked by a significant power imbalance, and the perpetrator was the head of an educational institution. This means that the mere existence of formal institutions does not automatically ensure the victim's safety or their ability to access justice. Under such circumstances, it is not enough for the state merely to provide legal frameworks and prosecute perpetrators after a case is reported; it is also required to ensure that victims can access protection, support, and justice from the very beginning. The fact that this process requires intensive NGO involvement indicates a gap between the state's expected role and its actual performance. In other words, while formal mechanisms are in place, they are not yet fully capable of addressing victims' needs without the support of civil society actors.

In this context, Rifka Annisa serves as both a liaison and a catalyst for strengthening protection mechanisms. NGO support serves as a bridge that enables victims and their families to overcome obstacles arising from power dynamics and lengthy legal processes, ultimately ensuring that the victims' rights are fulfilled. Thus, the contribution of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in this case is not merely complementary but is an essential component that enables formal protection mechanisms to function effectively.

This case demonstrates that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a crucial role in transforming victims' status from that of vulnerable parties to parties capable of accessing justice mechanisms. Within the framework of role theory, successful protection emerges when the roles of the family, *non-governmental organizations* (NGOs), and law enforcement officials work in synergy (Batubara et al., 2025). However, victims' dependence on support from *Non-Governmental Organizations* (NGOs) also indicates that the formal protection mechanisms implemented by the state are not yet fully capable of functioning effectively without the support of civil society actors. Thus, NGOs are not merely a complement to the state but function as corrective actors that fill protection gaps and ensure victims' rights remain fulfilled when the performance of formal institutions is not yet optimal.

Strengthening Synergy and the Division of Roles Between the Government and NGOs in the Protection of Women in Yogyakarta

The protection of women in Yogyakarta demonstrates that the gap between the state's normative role and its implementation actually creates an ever-widening space for civil society engagement. The two cases described earlier the handling of sexual violence at the Islamic University of Indonesia (UII) by LBH Yogyakarta and the support provided to victims of sexual violence at an Islamic boarding school by Rifka Annisa serve as empirical evidence of this pattern. In the UII case, the failure to fulfill this role stemmed

from law enforcement officials who should have been the frontline defenders of protection as mandated by Article 13 of Law No. 2 of 2002 but who, in practice, instead criminalized the victim's advocate from the Yogyakarta Legal Aid Institute (2024)). A similar pattern is evident in the Islamic boarding school case, where Rifka Annisa had to be deeply involved for nearly a year to ensure the victim could access justice, demonstrating that the state's formal mechanisms remain inaccessible to victims without the support of civil society actors (Rifka Annisa, 2024)).

The presence of NGOs whether in the form of civil society organizations or legal aid institutions in both cases, on the one hand, does indeed strengthen the capacity of the protection system through accompaniment, advocacy, and legal assistance. On the other hand, however, this situation has the potential to create a pattern of shifting responsibility, namely when functions that should be the state's responsibility are continually delegated to civil society actors. This situation underscores that the government can no longer remain passive and rely solely on regulatory measures as a fulfillment of its responsibilities; rather, it must actively fulfill the roles that have long been delegated to NGOs and the public. Given this gap in roles, the following are several proposed solutions that can be offered to the government as the primary responsible party to strengthen the women's protection system in Yogyakarta.

1. Provision of Independent Protection Services

Counseling and psychological support services for victims have so far been largely supported by NGO networks such as Rifka Annisa and LBH Yogyakarta, as illustrated in the two cases above. This situation underscores that the government's true role entails the state independently carrying out technical operational functions through the provision of direct services that are prompt, accurate, comprehensive, and free of charge (Sridowati, 1997). Within this framework of independent service provision, the government should implement internal *case management*, provide easily accessible services for victims, provide initial psychosocial and mental health support through counseling, facilitate mediation to seek fair non-litigious resolutions, and provide safe and confidential temporary shelters to help victims recover from trauma and ensure their physical and psychological safety (Putri & Tukiman, 2023). Thus, in the future, NGOs are expected to serve as a complement to, rather than a substitute for, the state's functions.

2. Strengthening the Capacity of Law Enforcement Officials

Strengthening the capacity of law enforcement officials by shifting their mindset and enhancing their technical competencies from a victim-centered perspective is the most urgent step that must be taken immediately. The "*role failure*" in the UII case evident in the tendency to criminalize victim advocates and the slow handling of the case calls for integrated and ongoing training on the implementation of No. 12 of 2022 on Sexual Violence Crimes (TPKS Law), techniques for handling evidence without causing secondary victimization, and the elimination of a culture of *victim-blaming* among investigators. Furthermore, operational integration and synergy between the police's Women and Children's Service Unit (PPA) and the prosecutor's office and the courts need

to be optimized, supported by strict standard operating procedures (SOPs) and independent oversight mechanisms, so that the police and judicial institutions are truly capable of fulfilling their legal mandate as protectors who prioritize victims' interests from the reporting stage onward.

3. Protection of Human Rights Defenders as a State Function

The *state* bears the primary obligation to respect, fulfill, and protect every citizen, as well as the human rights defenders who advocate for them. Protection of *human rights defenders* is an absolute responsibility of the state, explicitly recognized in both international legal instruments and national law through Law No. 39 of 1999 on Human Rights (Santoso & Liliyana, 2021). Given that the human rights defense movement is critical in nature and often confronts power dynamics and government policies, human rights defenders are in a highly vulnerable position, facing threats, violence, and even criminalization (Fitriani et al., 2021). The case of the criminalization of attorney Meila Nurul Fajriah in the handling of the UII case demonstrates that the state can, in fact, turn against civil society actors who are filling the void left by the state's failure to fulfill its functions (Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (YLBHI), 2024). Therefore, the state must not allow a reversal of the roles of law enforcement officials that places victim advocates at the center of criminalization.

4. Coordinative and Regulatory Functions

The state fundamentally has coordinating and regulatory functions within the women's protection system, namely integrating the work of various actors including NGOs and the community into a clear and institutionalized referral *system*, rather than merely acting as a passive observer while civil society has already taken the initiative to address a case (Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (YLBHI), 2024).. This coordinating function includes clearly defining who does what, when the state must take over case management, and when the role of NGOs is limited to providing support, as illustrated in the two case studies from UII and the Islamic boarding school mentioned above. In practice, the absence of a standardized referral mechanism actually places NGOs and Legal Aid Institutions (LBH) in the position of taking the initiative on their own to handle cases from start to finish, without clarity regarding the point of entry or the handover to state institutions (Ardhani et al., 2026). Therefore, the state must immediately formulate operational policies that regulate the flow of coordination across institutions including the police, the prosecutor's office, the courts, the UPTD PPA, and civil society organizations in an integrated and binding manner, so that the women's protection system no longer relies on civil society initiatives but operates as a unified system controlled by and under the primary responsibility of the state.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the protection of women in Yogyakarta is still marked by a significant gap between the state's normative role and its implementation on the ground. Through an analysis of *role* theory applied to two case studies namely, the handling of sexual violence at the Islamic University of Indonesia (UII) by the Yogyakarta Legal Aid

Institute (LBH) and the support provided to victims of sexual violence at an Islamic boarding school by Rifka Annisa it was found that *Non-Governmental Organizations* (NGOs), whether in the form of Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) or Legal Aid Institutions (LBH), have demonstrated *role performance* that is actually more responsive than that of state officials at crucial moments; they have even been able to act as corrective agents when formal state mechanisms experience *role failure*, as evidenced by the criminalization of the victim's advocate in the UII case and the victim's reliance on Rifka Annisa's support for nearly a year in the Islamic boarding school case. In fact, the state already possesses an adequate legal foundation through the TPKS Law and the PKDRT Law; thus, the primary issue does not lie in the absence of regulations, but rather in the gap between the state's *role expectations* and its actual *role performance*, which in turn creates a pattern of shifting responsibility onto NGOs and civil society.

Based on these findings, this study proposes four solutions for the government as the primary responsible party: the provision of independent protection services; strengthening the capacity of law enforcement officials with a victim-centered perspective; ensuring legal protection for human rights defenders; and strengthening the state's coordinating and regulatory functions through a clear and institutionalized *referral system*. Thus, this study contributes to the understanding that effective protection for women cannot be achieved merely by strengthening the roles of NGOs, legal aid institutions (LBH), or the public separately; rather, it requires a clear and collaborative division of roles among the government, NGOs, and the public, while maintaining the state as the primary responsible party not merely a passive entity that delegates these protective functions to civil society actors.

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Conflict of Interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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