

Hidden Threats in Words: Forensic Linguistic Patterns of Child Sexual Violence Perpetrators in Merauke

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to (1) identify the language patterns used by perpetrators of child sexual violence, (2) analyze manipulation and intimidation strategies embedded in their speech, (3) explain the role of language as a tool of psychological control, and (4) examine the influence of local socio-cultural factors on the perpetrators' discourse in Merauke. The research data were collected from Examination Minutes (BAP), recorded conversations, and supporting legal documents related to child sexual violence cases. The study applies Critical Discourse Analysis, ethnography of communication, and forensic linguistics approaches to reveal how perpetrators construct power relations, create fear and guilt, and exploit local cultural norms to dominate child victims. The findings indicate that perpetrators employed systematic linguistic patterns, including promises of gifts, deceptive expressions of affection, persuasive commands, and indirect threats to manipulate and intimidate victims. These strategies effectively influenced the victims' emotions, behavior, and decision-making processes. The manipulation was further strengthened by local communication practices that emphasized respect for elders and obedience to adult authority. The novelty of this study lies in its forensic linguistic analysis of perpetrators' language in child sexual violence cases in Merauke, South Papua. The findings demonstrate the value of linguistic evidence for legal investigations and child protection efforts.

INTRODUCTION

Merauke Regency is a district inhabited by diverse indigenous and non-indigenous ethnic groups, making it a multicultural region with complex social interactions. Behind these interactions, however, lie hidden threats that are often embedded in language. The title *Hidden Threats in Words* reflects the idea that perpetrators of child sexual violence frequently employ specific linguistic strategies—such as persuasion, manipulation, coercion, deception, and grooming—to approach, influence, and control their victims. These threats are not always expressed through physical actions but are often concealed within everyday communication, making them difficult to detect.

The urgency of examining such linguistic patterns is particularly relevant in Merauke, which is currently facing an alarming increase in cases of child sexual violence. Data from the Ha-Anim Women's Association (PPHA) indicate that there were 11 cases of sexual violence reported between 2021 and 2023, with eight cases involving children aged 3 to 17 years (JUBI, 2023). This concern is reinforced by the Head of the Women and Children Protection Unit (PPA), Yobert Taluba (personal communication, November 7, 2025), who stated that more than 90 cases of child sexual violence have been recorded since 2023. Given this situation, investigating the hidden linguistic patterns used by perpetrators is essential for understanding how offenders operate, strengthening forensic investigations, and supporting more effective child protection efforts in Merauke.

The irony is that the perpetrator is often the victim's closest person, such as the victim's biological father, neighbors, and closest people (Ferragut, *et al.* (2021)). The deeply rooted culture of silence in society exacerbates the many cases of undisclosed sexual violence (Wieberneit *et al.* (2024); Mas'udah (2022)); Suryanti (2019)). As in other areas, victims, the majority of whom are minors, are often reluctant to report because of social stigma, pressure from the environment and unbalanced power relations between perpetrators and victims (Mas'udah (2022).

Unbalanced power relations are often used by perpetrators of sexual violence against children. They use their social, economic, and authoritarian positions to intimidate and silence victims (Hidayana, (2020); Cikara *et al.* (2021)). The Witness and Victim Protection Institute (LPSK) stated that the strong relationship between victims and perpetrators, especially in the family and educational environment, is the main reason why victims are reluctant to report (ANTARA News, 2025). This is reinforced by research findings that show that the close power relationship between victims and perpetrators, as well as gender inequality in social structures, encourages perpetrators to feel they have a superior position and legitimacy to control and dominate victims (Cikara *et al.*, 2021; Hidayana, 2020; Powell & Henry, 2021). Meanwhile, victims who feel in an inferior position do not have enough courage to resist or report the acts of sexual violence they experience. In the context of gender, the patriarchal culture (men are seen as having more power than women) which is still strong in some communities also strengthens the culture of silence (Prameswari & Khoirunnisa (2020)). In Merauke, for example, according to the results of an interview with one of the traditional women leaders of Malind, Mujina Kaize (personal

communication, March 10, 2025) stated that women are considered taboo to express matters related to customs.

Perpetrators of sexual violence against children use language strategies to establish control, normalize violence, and silence victims through manipulative, intimidating, and asymmetrical power relations, especially in the context of repeated interactions and close relationships between perpetrators and victims (Black et al., 2015; Powell et al., 2021; Coulthard & Johnson, 2010). The speech – from promises of gifts and false affection to veiled threats – shows the power relations and manipulations influenced by the local socio-cultural context in South Papua (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2008; Hymes, 1974; Saville-Troike, 2003). This research has a high urgency because sexual violence against children is often carried out through manipulative and intimidating language strategies to build power relations, silence victims, and prevent reporting. The linguistic dimension as a tool of violence is still rarely studied systematically, especially in the context of handling cases of child sexual violence in South Papua. The research aims to (1) identify the perpetrator's language pattern, (2) analyze manipulation and intimidation strategies, (3) explain the function of language as a psychological control, and (4) uncover the influence of local socio-cultural factors on the perpetrator's discourse.

From a forensic linguistic perspective, the perpetrator's language becomes textual evidence to reveal intentions, manipulation strategies, and intimidation patterns (Coulthard & Johnson, 2017; Olsson, 2020). Several previous studies have highlighted *online* grooming strategies (Black et al., 2015), convincing and coercive language in real-time chats (Powell et al., 2021), verbal pressure in college (Akbar et al., 2025), victim BAP analysis (Hidayat, 2025), and the function of language in victim recognition. However, no one has examined the intimidating language of perpetrators against children in Merauke by integrating forensic perspectives, *discourse analysis*, and ethnography of communication, as well as considering the local socio-cultural context and legal relevance for evidence, so this study fills the gap. Forensic linguistics, communication ethnography, and critical discourse analysis are the studies of language that place language as a social practice in a real context. Forensic linguistics studies the use of language in the legal realm, either as a tool, process, or evidence, such as the analysis of legal texts, threatening messages, or trial speech for the purpose of proving and preventing crimes (Coulthard & Johnson, 2010; Gibbons, 2003). Communication ethnography examines how language is used in a speaking community based on certain cultural norms and values by emphasizing the communicative competence of its speakers (Hymes, 1972). Meanwhile, critical discourse analysis views language as a means of shaping and reproducing power and ideology, so it is used to uncover the social inequality and dominance hidden in discourse texts and practices, particularly in the media and public policy (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2008).

These perspectives are particularly relevant to the growing number of child sexual violence cases in Merauke, South Papua. While previous studies have largely focused on legal procedures, victim experiences, or the psychological aspects of sexual violence, limited attention has been given to the linguistic patterns employed by perpetrators. In many cases, offenders use

language strategically to persuade, manipulate, threaten, or control children, making language an important source of forensic evidence. Therefore, this study was conducted to identify and analyze the linguistic patterns used by child sexual violence perpetrators in Merauke. The findings are expected to contribute to forensic investigations, strengthen the evidentiary value of language in legal proceedings, and support more effective child protection and prevention efforts.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research method using a forensic linguistic approach integrated with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and the Ethnography of Communication. The forensic linguistic framework is based on the works of Coulthard and Johnson (2010) and Gibbons (2003), who emphasize the role of language as evidence in legal contexts. Critical Discourse Analysis draws on Fairclough's (1995) model of discourse and van Dijk's (2008) socio-cognitive approach to examine how language constructs and reproduces power relations, dominance, and ideology. Meanwhile, the Ethnography of Communication framework proposed by Hymes (1972) was used to understand how cultural norms and communicative competence influence language use within a speech community. The research data consisted of anonymized case documents, including conversation transcripts, text messages, investigator reports, and supporting interview notes selected based on their linguistic and legal relevance.

Data analysis was conducted in four stages. First, manipulative, intimidating, and persuasive speech patterns used by perpetrators were identified. Second, thematic coding was applied to classify linguistic strategies related to grooming, psychological control, and silencing. Third, Fairclough's (1995) and van Dijk's (2008) Critical Discourse Analysis frameworks were employed to reveal power relations, ideological constructions, and discourse practices underlying the violence. Finally, Hymes' (1972) Ethnography of Communication perspective was integrated to examine how local cultural norms, age hierarchies, and communication practices in South Papua shape the interpretation and effectiveness of perpetrators' language. The findings were then interpreted using forensic linguistic principles (Coulthard & Johnson, 2010; Gibbons, 2003) to assess the evidentiary value of language in legal investigations and child protection efforts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Language Patterns Used by Perpetrators of Sexual Violence

After conducting interviews with 5 victims of abuse and also supported by BAP data from the Merauke Resort Police, the following data was obtained.

Tabel 1. Findings of Forensic Linguistics Analysis

Categories Analysis	Data 1 (BRLS)	Data 2 (BRDT)	Data 3	Data 4	Data 5
Time Marker	"hari Minggu... jam 12.00 WIT."	Full year 2021-2024.	"25 Januari 2025... 03 Februari 2025."	Not dominant (chat).	"Senin, 10 Juni 2024 jam 23.00 WIT." The chronology is very detailed and concise. Jln Biak → Mopah → the perpetrator's house on Jl Pemuda → a friend's house. Very coherent.
Place Markers	The → hut → the house → the Police.	Houses, forests, boats, Wanam, airports.	House, kiosk, room, living room.	Chat + location of a sexual incident.	force, hit, bite, press, hold, close, mouth, undress.
Perpetrator's Action Verb	commanding, chasing, inserting knives.	hitting, slicing, coercing.	Suppressing, holding, opening, intercourse.	open, hold, pick up, threaten to record.	"Ko kalo tidak mau ikut... sa pukul... sa akan bongkar rumah." (ancaman eksplisit).
Verbal Threats (Speech Acts)	"SA POTONG KAMU."	"buka celana kalau tidak saya pukul."	"Ko diam." "layani saya."	"Ko mau buka sendiri atau sa buka?"	Beatings, bites, full body control. There were no weapons, but severe physical violence.
Non-verbal threats/weapons	Knife at the waist.	Wood, knives, machetes.	Knife on the neck.	Video recording.	Scared, crying, curling up, not daring to scream.
Psychological Response of Victims	Shocked, scared.	Fear, Not Dare to Refuse.	silent out of fear.	"SA TAKUT."	the perpetrator was drunk, the victim was alone, the threat of the house, total physical coercion.
Victim Vulnerability Conditions	direct threat.	Years of control.	The victim was drunk/unconscious.	mi minor, inferior, afraid of the elderly, nor, minder, takut orang tua.	

Narrative Coherence	Logical and Logical.	The 2021–2024 flow is stable.	very consistent.	Narrative structured chat.	Very Complicated: Invitation → threats → coercion → penetration → escape → return home. Emotional manipulation: jealousy ("sa emosi ko dekat sa punya sodara"), home threat. "saya takut," "saya menangis," long sentences without pauses → high psychological stress. luka gigitan, bruises, witnesses of the perpetrator's brothers, time & location are easily verified. Papuan dialect dominant: "ko, sa, pu, sa punya." Showing the authenticity of the perpetrator's speech. explicit threats, possessive jealousy, commands, total control. refusing, pushing, crying, trying
Grooming/ Manipulation	not dominant.	False Excuses "tangkap ikan."	using drunk victims.	False promises and gradual coercion.	
Indicator Trauma Linguistics	Repetition "tiba-tiba."	run-on sentences.	Run-on and emotional recall.	The victim continued to refuse.	
Non-linguistic evidence	report to the Police.	physical injuries + witnesses.	video evidence.	digital video.	
Local Dialect / Language	"sa, ko."	minimal dialect.	Papua: "ko diam."	Papua: "ko, sa."	
Perpetrator's Speech	command + threat.	threats + violence.	Body control + threat.	coercive directive.	
Victim Resistance	report.	Refuse, shout.	push, resist.	say "don't want to,"	

				"stop already."	to let go of the perpetrator's hand, running away from the perpetrator's house. beatings, bites, forced penetration, home threats, total physical control.
Patterns of Violence	a knife incident.	serial predator.	Violence when the victim is unconscious.	coercion + recording.	

Forensic linguistic analysis of the five victim data showed consistent language patterns of perpetrators of sexual violence against children and reflected various manipulative, intimidating, and controlling communication functions. From the *timestamping* aspect, the entire data shows a clear and detailed chronology, although the intensity of detail varies. Data 1 and Data 3 emphasize a logical timeline, so that the victim's narrative is easy to trace chronologically. Data 2 has a longer time span (2021–2024), indicating a pattern of repeated violence over a period of years. Data 4 is a shorter chat conversation with no explicit time markers, but the sequence of interactions remains in order. Data 5 shows a very detailed chronology on June 10, 2024, starting from the invitation to meet to the process of sexual coercion. From a forensic linguistic perspective, the use of these detailed timestamps helps identify the perpetrator's communication patterns, specifically how the perpetrator plans and organizes interactions with the victim, as well as demonstrates systematic temporal control to manipulate the situation.

In terms of *place markers*, the perpetrator's language patterns are often related to mobility and strategic location selection to impose dominance. Data 1 and Data 3 show the perpetrator's narratively logical movement from one location to another, while Data 2 emphasizes a broader and more varied location, showing an adaptive pattern of perpetrators seeking opportunities to commit violence. Data 4 and Data 5 show the perpetrator using locations that are familiar to the victim and himself, such as homes, local roads, and friends' houses, as a tool to build a false sense of security and at the same time maximize control. This analysis indicates that the perpetrator not only uses language directly, but also connects language to physical and spatial situations, a pattern that is important in forensic linguistic identification because it reveals coercive strategies.

The perpetrator's verb action in all data showed the intensity and escalation of violence, ranging from simple and coercive commands (Data 1, Data 4) to direct physical violence, including beating, biting, punching, and forced penetration (Data 2, Data 3, Data 5). From a forensic linguistic perspective, these verbs not only describe physical acts, but also form language patterns that indicate dominance, aggression, and psychological control over the victim. For example, the repeated use of imperative and verbal directive words creates psychological distress and demonstrates the perpetrator's strategy to assert his authority. This pattern is consistent

across all data and is the main linguistic indicator in identifying the language characteristics of child sexual violence perpetrators in Merauke.

The verbal threats used by the perpetrators also showed a distinctive pattern. In all the data, explicit threats and verbal intimidation appeared repeatedly, both direct such as “SA POTONG KAMU” (Data 1) or “KO KALO TIDAK MAU IKUT... SA PUKUL... SA AKAN BONGKAR RUMAH” (Data 5), or more subtle ones such as false promises or jealous expressions that trigger fear (Data 5). Forensic linguistic analysis emphasizes that this pattern of verbal threat use is not just rhetoric, but part of a complex coercive control strategy. The perpetrator adapts his words to the victim's situation, often combining physical threats and emotional manipulation to reinforce power and minimize resistance.

In addition to verbal threats, perpetrators also employ non-verbal threats and physical violence as integral components of their communicative strategies. Data 1–5 reveal various forms of intimidation, including the use of knives and other sharp weapons (Data 1, Data 2, and Data 3), as well as direct physical aggression such as hitting, biting, and restraining the victim (Data 5). These actions are not merely physical acts but function as communicative resources that convey fear, dominance, and coercion. In many instances, physical intimidation accompanies verbal expressions, creating a combined message that pressures the victim into compliance and discourages resistance or disclosure. As a result, the effectiveness of the perpetrator's language is strengthened by the presence of actual or implied violence.

From a forensic linguistic perspective, these findings demonstrate that threats in child sexual violence cases operate through both linguistic and contextual mechanisms. The perpetrators' utterances gain greater illocutionary force because they are supported by visible acts of aggression, transforming ordinary speech into powerful instruments of control. This pattern reflects an unequal power relationship in which the perpetrator strategically exploits fear to silence the victim and maintain authority throughout the interaction. The findings also suggest that forensic investigations should not examine threatening expressions in isolation but should consider the broader communicative context in which verbal and non-verbal elements interact. Understanding this relationship is crucial for identifying coercive communication patterns, reconstructing the dynamics of the offense, and strengthening the evidentiary value of linguistic data in legal proceedings involving child sexual violence.

The victim's psychological response to all the data reinforces the interpretation of the perpetrator's language patterns. The victim shows signs of fear, shock, crying, and resignation, both verbally and non-verbally, which confirms the effectiveness of the perpetrator's language strategy in manipulating the victim's psychology. In Data 5, for example, the victim expresses fear in detail, tries to fight back, but remains submissive due to an explicit threat to her safety and home. Forensic linguistics emphasizes that these response patterns help identify the perpetrator's strategies, including the use of emotionally distressing language to ensure the victim's compliance.

The *narrative coherence aspect* shows the consistency of the perpetrator's language patterns across all data. In each case, the victim's narrative is coherent and logical, allowing researchers to trace the sequence of interactions, escalations of violence, and the use of language as instruments of domination. Data 5 shows high coherence, from invitations to meet to forced penetration, showing a systematic pattern of planning and word selection. This shows that perpetrators of child sexual violence in Merauke tend to use language structurally to manage situations, control victims, and reduce the chances of victims fighting or reporting incidents.

In terms of *grooming or emotional manipulation*, some data showed the perpetrator's tactics, including fraud under harmless grounds (Data 2), the use of the victim's drunken condition (Data 3), false promises (Data 4), and jealous expressions that triggered guilt or fear (Data 5). Forensic linguistic analysis confirms that the perpetrator's language serves not only to coerce, but also to form a communication pattern that prepares the victim psychologically to accept coercion, which is a typical pattern of the language of the perpetrator of child sexual violence.

Indicators of linguistic trauma in all data support the recognition of perpetrator language patterns. Run-on sentences, long sentences without pauses, repetitions, and emotional recalls delivered by the victim (e.g., "I'm scared," "I'm crying") reflect the psychological pressure generated by the perpetrator's language. This pattern confirms the function of language as an instrument of psychological control and intimidation, which is the main focus of the research objective in identifying the communication characteristics of perpetrators.

Dialect aspects and *local language characteristics* are also important. The use of Papuan terms such as "sa," "ko," and other variations shows the authenticity of the perpetrator's speech as well as linguistic adaptation to the local context. This is an important indicator in forensic linguistics to identify distinctive language patterns in Merauke, as well as distinguish them from child sexual violence in other regions with different dialects.

The perpetrator's speech actions in all data showed a combination of commands, verbal threats, emotional manipulation, and physical control, forming complex and coherent communication patterns. This language strategy is consistent with the forensic linguistic literature on coercive control, i.e. the use of language for domination, intimidation, and victim control. The victim's resistance that emerges, whether resisting, screaming, or fleeing, confirms the direct interaction between the perpetrator's language and the victim's response, which is empirical evidence for the research.

Finally, the pattern of violence shows that the perpetrator's language is inseparable from the context of physical and sexual violence. From a single incident with a weapon threat (Data 1) to sexual violence with total physical control (Data 5), the perpetrator's language patterns always reflect intent of domination, threats, and psychological manipulation. This is the core of the first research objective: to identify the language patterns of perpetrators of sexual violence against children in Merauke, where language functions as a systematic tool of control, threats, manipulation, and coercive control instruments.

In conclusion, all five data showed consistent perpetrator language patterns: combination of commands, explicit and implicit threats, emotional manipulation, physical control accompanied by language, and local dialect adaptation. This pattern reflects a deliberate communication strategy to intimidate, manipulate, and subjugate victims, while also demonstrating that identifying language patterns can be an important tool in the prevention and handling of sexual violence against children in Merauke. This is in line with the results of research from Naidoo (2022), Marsh-Rossney, (2024), and Halim (2023). Which states that perpetrators of sexual violence against children use language strategies to create control, normalization, and silencing.

Manipulation and Intimidation Strategies in Perpetrators' Speech

1 Manipulation through Macro Structures

At the macro level, the perpetrator displays a systematic manipulative strategy. The dominant themes identified include physical violence, verbal intimidation, sexual coercion, and situational control through video recordings. Subthemes that emerged consist of early seduction, victim isolation, explicit threats, sexual coercion, control through video, and threats of video dissemination. These findings indicate that the primary factor underlying the perpetrator's actions is the exercise of power and control over the victim through multiple forms of coercive communication. The perpetrators exploit the victim's fear, vulnerability, confusion, and limited awareness of legal protection to secure obedience and prevent disclosure.

These findings support previous studies showing that perpetrators of child sexual violence frequently use their social authority, close relationships, and unequal power positions to intimidate and silence victims (Hidayana, 2020; Cikara et al., 2021). Similar to the findings of Ferragut et al. (2021), many perpetrators occupy positions of trust or proximity to victims, enabling them to exercise control more effectively. The patterns identified in this study also reinforce the concept of a "culture of silence" described by Wieberneit et al. (2024), Mas'udah (2022), and Suryanti (2019), where victims are discouraged from reporting due to fear, stigma, and power imbalances. Furthermore, the use of imperative and repetitive threats such as "KO DIAM" and "sa potong ko" reflects the manipulative and intimidating language strategies highlighted by Black et al. (2015), Powell et al. (2021), and Coulthard and Johnson (2010). However, unlike previous studies that mainly focused on online grooming, coercive communication, or victim experiences, this study demonstrates how verbal intimidation, physical violence, and threats involving video recordings operate simultaneously within the socio-cultural context of Merauke. The findings therefore suggest that threats are not merely spontaneous reactions but constitute a structured discourse of domination designed to maintain control, suppress resistance, and prevent victims from reporting sexual violence.

In the context of the superstructure, the perpetrator's narrative is arranged chronologically: the initial orientation is in the form of an invitation to meet → complications in the form of psychological and physical distress → climax in the form of sexual coercion →

resolution with control via video. This structure exhibits manipulative strategies that utilize the flow of discourse to ensure victims have no room to refuse or report.

2 Microstructural Strategies: Lexicon, Syntax, and Semantics

a. Lexicon

The choice of words of the perpetrator is imperative, intimidating, and manipulative, for example “ikut saja”, “buka baju”, “layani lagi ka”, “diam”. These words are used to build fear and helplessness of the victim. The lexicon also contains implicit threats, such as “ini rahasia kita” atau “nanti kamu tahu akibatnya”, which contains negative presuppositions to instill guilt and fear.

The victim's words, for example “sa takut”, “tidak bisa bergerak”, “tidak sadar”, indicates the victim's position as a passive agent. This contrast reinforces the analysis that language serves as a psychological control tool in criminal discourse.

b. Syntax

The perpetrator uses short, imperative, and repetitive sentences to assert dominance, while the victim uses a reactive chronological narrative. This difference in sentence structure creates an agent-patient asymmetry, where the perpetrator actively controls the situation and the passive victim only responds. This strategy is effective in eliminating the victim's autonomy in action decisions.

c. Semantics

Threats are often implicit and ambiguous: “later you will know the consequences” or “we will be the ones who will be affected if we tell the story”. This semantic strategy functions as fear conditioning, where silence = safe and talk = danger. This technique suggests that the perpetrator uses cognitive manipulation, not just verbal intimidation, to emphasize the victim's helplessness.

3 Pragmatics and Discourse Strategy

From a pragmatic perspective, the perpetrator combines persuasion with explicit threats. This strategy is seen through the creation of false closeness (“this is our secret”), the separation of the victim from the protective figure, and the manipulation of the victim's perception through implicit promises or threats. This approach allows the perpetrator to suppress the victim without having to resort to physical violence directly at the beginning.

The actor's discourse strategy is layered:

1. Persuade early seduction to reduce resistance.
2. Explicit verbal threats to create fear.
3. Physical violence to assert control if verbal threats are not enough.
4. Post-incident social control through video recording and threat of spread.

This layered pattern was consistent across the analyzed cases, suggesting a systematic and planned, rather than spontaneous, manipulative strategy.

4 Power Relations and Social Cognition

An analysis of power relations reveals that perpetrators take advantage of multidimensional dominance: verbal, physical, situational, and social. The perpetrator sees himself as entitled to control the victim, while the victim responds with fear, obedience, and survival strategies. The perpetrator's mental model emphasizes the right to dominance, while the victim's mental model emphasizes helplessness and obedience due to pressure.

Manipulation of the perpetrator is reinforced by the strategy of frame control: the use of inclusive words ("kita dua yang kena") instilling guilt in the victim. This strategy emphasizes psychological control through the blurring of responsibility, so that victims tend to be compliant to avoid greater threats.

5 Social and Cultural Context

The perpetrator's manipulation strategy is also mediated by cultural and social factors. Cultural norms that emphasize respect for parents, taboo talking about sex, and low legal literacy in adolescent victims reinforce the effectiveness of threats. The remote location, nighttime, and drunken condition of the perpetrator are situational contexts that are used to maximize dominance.

In addition, the dissemination of video footage expands the perpetrator's control space to the victim's social environment, resulting in additional victimization and pressure. This strategy shows that the manipulation of perpetrators is not only carried out through language, but also through the use of social norms and environmental conditions.

The findings show that the manipulation and intimidation strategies used by the perpetrators are multidimensional, covering verbal, physical, situational, and social aspects, thus creating comprehensive pressure on the victim. The strategy is also systematic, following a structured chronological pattern: it begins with persuasion to reduce the victim's resistance, followed by explicit verbal threats, then physical violence to assert dominance, and ends with psychological control through isolation or social threats, including the dissemination of recordings. Furthermore, this strategy is multi-layered, combining psychological, linguistic, and social tactics simultaneously, creating a space of control that is difficult for the victim to penetrate.

The Function of Language as a Psychological Control

An in-depth analysis of cases of sexual violence and verbal intimidation shows that the language used by the perpetrator serves as a complex and structured psychological control instrument. At the macro level, the big themes that emerge include a combination of physical violence, verbal intimidation, sexual coercion, and situational control through video recording. The perpetrator's language not only serves as a means of communication, but is strategically used to instill fear, suppress the victim's agent, and limit the victim's ability to make decisions. This pattern is consistent across all subthemes, from initial persuasion, victim isolation, explicit threats, to sexual coercion and post-incident control via video. This macro strategy shows that verbal threats and persuasive language are used systematically to create the psychological

dependence of the victim, so that the victim is more likely to be obedient for the sake of self-safety.

At the superstructure level, the perpetrator's narrative is arranged chronologically to increase the effectiveness of psychological control. Initial orientation in the form of a persuasive invitation to meet ("there is something important") serves as an initial seduction strategy, which reduces the victim's resistance. The complications and climax are structured in such a way that verbal threats and physical violence appear at the height of the tension, which creates deep fear. This strategy emphasizes that the perpetrator's language does not stand alone, but rather is combined with situational context and physical actions to create multiple layers of psychological pressure. The resolution and narrative code, including the threat of disseminating video footage, extend the control space to the victim's social environment, so that the psychological effects persist even after the physical violence has stopped.

At the microstructural level, the perpetrator's language exhibits lexical, syntactic, and semantic choices that emphasize the dominance and powerlessness of the victim. Selected lexicon, such as "KO DIAM", "ikut saja", "sa potong ko", dan "buka baju", imperative and intimidating, creating an immediate effect on the victim's psychology by instilling fear of physical or social consequences. Short, imperative, and repetitive syntax asserts the control of the perpetrator and reduces the negotiation space or resistance of the victim. Implicit semantics, e.g. the use of presuppositions in "nanti kamu tahu akibatnya" or "ini rahasia kita", instilling guilt and involvement in the victim, so that the victim feels psychologically responsible for the situation that befalls him. This strategy also creates fear conditioning, where the victim learns that silence = safe and talking = danger, so that the perpetrator's language functions as a psychological learning mechanism that suppresses the victim's agent.

From the perspective of power relations and social cognition, language plays a role as a tool to control the perception, emotions, and behavior of the victim. The perpetrator sees himself as entitled to control the victim, taking advantage of social, cultural, and age inequalities, while the victim responds with defensive obedience. A strategy of obscuring responsibility, through inclusive pronouns "kita", causing guilt in the victim and strengthening the perpetrator's dominant position. This cognitive manipulation suggests that language is used not only to intimidate, but also to influence the victim's frame of mind, so that the victim is more likely to follow the perpetrator's commands to avoid further threats.

Socio-cultural factors and environmental context also strengthen the function of language as a psychological control. Norms of respect for adults, taboos of talking about sex, and low legal literacy in adolescent victims are reinforced by situational conditions, such as remote locations and nightlife. Thus, the perpetrator's language strategy works synergistically with the social context, creating psychological pressures that are difficult for the victim to overcome. Verbal and implicit threats are combined with the use of social norms and physical isolation to control victims.

The overall findings show that the perpetrator's language is not just a communication tool, but an effective and systematic instrument of psychological domination, combining lexical, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, and multi-layered discourse manipulation. Language allows the perpetrator to suppress the victim's agent, shape emotional perceptions and responses, and maintain control in asymmetrical power relations. These findings confirm the relevance of forensic linguistics in understanding how language can function as a psychological control mechanism in cases of sexual violence, with important implications for the investigation, prevention, and protection of victims.

The Influence of Local Socio-Cultural Factors on Perpetrators' Discourse

Based on the data that has been analyzed using the Communication Ethnography framework, it can be seen that the discourse of perpetrators of sexual violence is not only influenced by personal goals (controlling the victim), but also by local socio-cultural factors inherent in the context of South Papuan society. These factors are visible in several aspects:

1 Hierarchy of Power and Local Patriarchy

In local societies, patriarchal social structures give men a superior position in certain social relationships. Perpetrators take advantage of this norm to assert their dominance, both over the victim and the victim's family. For example, threats against the victim's mother ("KO JANGAN IKUT NANTI SA POTONG KAMU") shows the perpetrator's efforts to control women who are socially considered subordinate, in accordance with the local gender hierarchy. This shows that the perpetrator's verbal and physical intimidation discourse is influenced by local understandings of male authority over women and children.

2 The Value of Kinship and Family Loyalty

In South Papuan society, family ties and kinship are very strong. The perpetrator uses this factor to create the psychological dependence of the victim. Threats such as "breaking down the house" or "not telling others" target the social shame and responsibility of the victim's family. This strategy shows how the perpetrator adapts his threat discourse to local social norms that respect family honor.

3 Social Power and Victim Isolation

The perpetrator chooses certain settings – such as a garden, a friend's house, an inn, or the end of the airport – that are far from parental or community supervision. This is in accordance with local social conditions where private spaces are relatively more flexible and access to social control over children or women is limited, so that perpetrators can execute their intimidating discourse. The selection of this place shows the perpetrator's understanding of the social structure and mobility of victims in the local community.

4 Language Strategies Tailored to Local Contexts

The language used by the perpetrator reflects the local dialect, everyday vocabulary, and communication style that is familiar to the victim. For example, the use of greetings and phrases

such as "KO" or "SA" in threats suggests that the perpetrator is adapting to local informal communication, making the threat feel more personal and effective. This shows that the perpetrator's discourse is not only universal, but also framed by local communication norms that make bullying more persuasive.

5 Utilization of Flexible Social Norms

The perpetrator exploits social and cultural weaknesses, such as victims who are considered obedient to their parents or afraid of causing family embarrassment. In some cases, victims did not report the incident because the mother was sick or afraid of social stigma. The perpetrator understands this norm and adjusts the discourse to maximize the victim's submission. This shows that the perpetrator's language and threats are the result of an interaction between personal goals and local socio-cultural conditions.

This study differs from previous studies conducted by Black et al. (2015), Powell et al. (2021), and Akbar et al. (2025). While these studies primarily focused on online grooming strategies, coercive communication in digital interactions, and verbal pressure in specific educational contexts, the present study examines the linguistic patterns of child sexual violence perpetrators in Merauke through an integrated forensic linguistic, critical discourse analysis, and ethnographic communication perspective. Unlike previous research that concentrated on particular communicative acts, this study reveals how verbal threats, emotional manipulation, physical violence, spatial control, and video-based intimidation operate simultaneously as a structured discourse of domination. The findings demonstrate that perpetrators strategically combine language, physical actions, and socio-cultural conditions to establish control, suppress resistance, and prevent victims from reporting sexual violence.

At the same time, the findings are consistent with studies by Ferragut et al. (2021), Hidayana (2020), Cikara et al. (2021), and Naidoo (2022), which emphasize the role of unequal power relations, manipulation, intimidation, and silencing strategies in child sexual violence. Similar to these studies, the present research found that perpetrators exploit victims' fear, vulnerability, and dependence to maintain dominance. The use of imperative expressions, explicit threats, emotional coercion, and psychological pressure supports previous findings that language functions as an instrument of control rather than merely a means of communication. Furthermore, the study confirms the existence of a culture of silence described by Wieberneit et al. (2024), Mas'udah (2022), and Suryanti (2019), where fear, stigma, and power imbalance discourage victims from disclosing abuse and seeking legal protection.

The novelty of this study lies in its identification of a multidimensional and culturally embedded pattern of coercive communication employed by child sexual violence perpetrators in Merauke, South Papua. Unlike previous studies, this research demonstrates that perpetrators' discourse operates through the interaction of verbal intimidation, emotional manipulation, physical violence, spatial control, and threats involving digital recordings within a specific local socio-cultural context. The study also highlights the role of local dialect features, kinship values, patriarchal norms, and community communication practices in shaping the effectiveness of

perpetrators' language strategies. By integrating forensic linguistics, critical discourse analysis, and the ethnography of communication, this research provides a more comprehensive understanding of language as evidence, as a mechanism of psychological control, and as a tool of domination in child sexual violence cases, thereby contributing to both forensic investigations and child protection efforts.

CONCLUSION

Forensic linguistic analysis of sexual violence case data in Merauke shows that:

1 Identify the perpetrator's language pattern

Forensic linguistic analysis of child sexual violence cases in Merauke identified consistent language patterns of the perpetrators, including the use of direct commands, explicit and implicit threats, emotional manipulation, and speech that accompanies physical control. The perpetrator also adjusts the choice of lexical, register, and local dialect to create a pseudo-closeness to the victim. These patterns suggest that language is used strategically and repeatedly, not as spontaneous speech, but as part of a structured pattern of violence.

2 Manipulation and intimidation strategies

These language patterns form multi-layered strategies of manipulation and intimidation, encompassing verbal, physical, situational, and social dimensions. Chronologically, this strategy follows the stages of persuasion, threats, violence, and continuous psychological control. Perpetrators combine persuasive speech, emotional pressure, and social threats to subdue the victim and prevent resistance or reporting, so that violence can take place repeatedly and covertly.

3 The function of language as a psychological control

The findings of the study confirm that the perpetrator's language functions as a psychological control instrument that shapes the victim's perception, emotions, and actions. Through intimidating and manipulative speech, the perpetrator instills fear, guilt, and dependence on the victim, which gradually weakens the victim's ability to refuse or seek help. Thus, language not only accompanies acts of violence, but is also the main mechanism in maintaining the dominance of perpetrators in asymmetrical power relations.

4 The influence of local socio-cultural factors on the discourse of perpetrators

The effectiveness of psychological control through language is strengthened by local socio-cultural factors, such as patriarchal structures, gender hierarchies, family honor values, and the flexibility of social norms in South Papuan society. Perpetrators adjust the discourse and form of threats to the social context of the victim, while utilizing family structures and social relationships to isolate the victim physically and psychologically. These findings suggest that perpetrators' discourses operate optimally within the framework of local values and norms, so forensic linguistic analysis must always take into account the local socio-cultural context.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that law enforcement officials and investigators utilize forensic linguistic analysis to identify the perpetrator's intimidating language patterns as textual evidence in cases of sexual violence against children, especially in the local context of Merauke. In addition, language and communication literacy education needs to be provided to children to recognize and protect themselves from verbal manipulation. Further research is suggested to expand the number of cases, involving victims from different ethnic groups, as well as combining interdisciplinary approaches between forensic linguistics, child psychology, and local sociology for a more comprehensive analysis. These findings can also serve as a basis for policymakers and child protection agencies to design regulations and intervention guidelines that take into account local socio-cultural factors to improve the effectiveness of preventing and handling sexual violence against children.

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