

## Refleta Ba Violensia Estrutural Iha Kazu Topu Honis



English version  
begins on page 3.

Dra. Li-li Chen, Dosente iha UNTL (Foto: Uma Amerika nia Facebook)

By Dra. Chen, Li-Li\*, Neon Metin, 5 Marsu 2021

Dadaun ne'e kazu Topu Honis lao iha prosesu tribunal ne'ebe alegada abuzu sexual husi eis-padre sidadaun Amerikano kontra labarik feto Timor oan ne'ebe fahe kestaun opiniaun ba atensaun publiku, hau hakarak orienta fokus luan ba estrutura generu duke suspeitu ou vitima. Violensia sexual karik halo liu husi individu, maibe ida ne'e laos responsabilidade individu deit. Enquntu, ida ne'e habitua no natural husi estrutura generu ne'ebe desigualdade iha nebee ita hotu envolve ba. Mesmo suspeitu hetan sentensa no vitima konsege hetan lialos iha julgamentu tribunal, violensia sexual sei la hotu no dala deit. Estrutura generu hanesan sei produs kazu Topu Honis seluk ho vitima, se ita mantein la Kritika ou pergunta kona-ba ida ne. Aliende, ita tenki kuitadu atu Evita partikulariza kuarker kazu, tanba feto ho labarik feto barak esperiensa asedu sexual, explotaun no violensia nafatin iha area privadu ho publiku loraun loraun. Laos hetete katak vitima sira la importante, ou suspeitu sira la prezisa lamenta ou hetan sansaun, maibe fokus ba individu deit fasil distraktu ita husi konsidera kauza estrutura ne'ebe perpetua violensia kontra feto ho minoridade no supresaun ho kontrola forma seluk nebee feto ho minoridade sempre hasoru.

Estrutura generu kompostu relasaun poder diferente haburas diferenzia poder ho desigualdade entre sexu. Maske relasaun poder depende ba fator istoriku ho kultura sira, estrutura inkлина beneficio ba mane forte balun maibe supresa feto, labarik, ho mane balun. Iha sosiedade patriarkal, mane ho feto espera atu fiar valores ruma no halo asaun liu husi dalan ruma, maibe feto nunca hanesan mane. Mane merese feto liu husi dominaun ho kontrola atu mantein sira nia poder ho estatu dadaun. Feto espera atu kumpri, oferese sex, servisu, ou hadomi hodi satisfas mane. Feto sei hetan kastigu tamba la kumpri ba mane liu husi violensia forma diferente. Maske laos mane hotu hakarak kontrola ou domina feto, estrutura generu enkoraja atu atinji poder entre mane no liu feto. Estrutura generu funsaun hodi produs ho reproduz asimetria poder entre mane ho feto, no padroniza relasaun social particularmente ne'ebe sustenta privilejiu mane nian. Mane elit sira asegura sira nia privilejiu liu husi domina ho explota feto, labarik, ho mane ne'ebe menus forte, i naturaliza sira nia meresementu ba feto nia isin. Tanba ne'e iha sosiedade patriarkal, mane barak hanoin katak la buat ida hodi obriga feto atu tuir mane hodi satisfas sira nia nesidade. Tendensia hanesan ne'e atu kontrola ho domina feto nia isin sempre demonstra liu husi violensia sexual forma diferente, hanesan asedu sexual ou violasaun kontra feto. Wainhira norma generu sai komum ho forte iha area social diferente, violensia sexual kontra feto, labarik, ho mane ruma sai normal.

Victima sira husi violensia sexual iha Topu Honis hela iha uma mahon izola nebee lokaliza iha enclave Timor-Leste, maibe mos iha rede extremi relasaun poder la hanesan iha ne'ebe suspeitu mane mutin, aman, mestri, padre, mesmo maromak iha relasaun ho minoridade Timoroan. Iha ne'ebe difisilmente ba vitima sira hodi halai husi violensia estrutura ida ne'e, ne'ebe violensia sexual ho abuzu ho explotaun sexual forma seluk akontese liu husi dala ida. Aliende, fakto ne'ebe protetor/ suspeitu viola labarik sira justifika, tanba sira considera nudar ninia propriedade ou meresementu liu husi suspeitu ho individua barak iha sosiedade iha estrutura generu. Estrutura hanesan mos prevene vitima sira atu atinji ou koalia konaba sex, wainhira mane sempre uja sex hodi demonstra sira nia poder ho dominasaun liu fetu. Konsekuensia funsaun estrutura generu katak vitima sira sei hasoru risku violensia sexual konstante maibe sira menus apoiu hodi rejaita obrigasaun sexual ou la konsentimentu, ou koalia sira nia esperiensia ho sentimentu lakomfortavel iha relasaun ho sexual.

Sempre fo sala ba vitima wainhira mosu violensia sexual. Ema balun akuza vitima sira tanba sira la resposta kazu ba parte relevante wainhira ida ne'e akontese ba dahuluk, ou sira bosok deit. Maibe ita tenke hanoin fali argumentus sira i koko atu hatene tanba sa vitima sira hein ho mantein nonok. Laos gratuitu ba vitima sira hodi fahe sira nia historia iha sosiedade. Iha sosiedade seluk, maske vitima sira manan kazu iha tribunal, parese sira hetan kritika barak, tratamentu ladiak, no lakon servisu ho suporta familia husi sira nia ambiente. Nune'e, importante hodi rona vitima sira nia esperensia ho istoria husi vitima sira nia perspektiva, tanba diskursu iha sosiedade karik konvensional kontra vitima sira. Iha nasaun demokratiku ne'ebe ita sei hetan ema ruma la aseita ho vitima sira, minimum ita presiza rona saida mak vitima sira hakarak hatete serake lamenta, ameasa ou silensio sira ne'ebe brani tebes hodi koalia sira nia esperiensia pesoalmente. Ita mos presiza tau atensaun besik ba trauma possivel fisikamente ho mentalidade nebee vitima sira hasoru, e buka asistensia immedicamente ba sira, tanba sira nia deenvolvimentu pesoalmente sei afeita iha dalan direita ho indireita.

Estrutura generu desiquamente bele enkoraja liu husi ita nia esforsu kontinua ho kolektivu iha empodera fetu ho labarik fetu, labarik mane ho mane ne'ebe supresa hodi koalia iha sosiedade ne'ebe mane maioria kontrola poder diskursu. Fahe ita nia istoria sempre etapa premeiru hodi rekonese opresaun ho sofre husi ne'ebe. Hodi halo hanesan ne'e, ita presiza kria ambiente nebee vitima sira konsege koalia livre sem preokupa hetan kastigu ou retaliasaun. Iha barreira barak ba vitima violensia sexual sira hodi resolve liu husi fahe sira nia istoria ho esperiensia kona-ba violensia sexual ho ema seluk. Iha adisional, iha risku katak vitima sira konsege hetan trauma fali se sira kondena ou nega husi sira nia familia, comunidade, ou suspeitu. Brani laos opsaun fasil ba ema ruma menus poder ho rekursu ne'ebe iha barak atu lakon.

Violensia sexual karik haree krimi individu ne'ebe halao liu husi ema ruma, maibe ita hotu involve iha laran liu husi funsaun ho perpetrusaun estrutura generu nian. Tanba ne'e, ema ida-ida nia responsabilidade hodi revolta norma ho regras ho konsensia iha estrutura ne'ebe haburas violensia sexual kontra fetu, labarik fetu, ho grupu seluk ne'ebe menus poder ho rekursu. Koalia konaba kazu Topu Honis karik halo ema barak senti nao komfortavel, maibe ne'e nesesario ho importante ba sosiedade tomak hodi rekonese ho diskuti kestaun difikuldade ruma. Importante liu, debate publiku presiza komesa kontra norma generu tradisional, papel ho espetasaun ne'ebe justifika fahe no kontrola ho dominasaun liu fetu maibe ita hotu hakuak ho pratika ho intensaun no la ho intensaun iha moris loron loron.

Ita hotu Topu Honis. Ita hotu vitima. Ita hotu suspeitu. La iha ema ida bele no la bele halai husi diskusaun kritika konaba violensia sexual.

**\* Dra. Li-li Chen nudar Dosente iha Universidade Nacional Timor Lorosa'e**

## Reflecting on the structural violence in the case of Topu Honis

*By Dr. Chen, Li-Li\**, Neon Metin and Timor Post, 5 March 2021

As the recent case of Topu Honis under trial brings the allegedly sexual abuse by an American ex-priest against young Timorese girls as well as the divided opinions on this issue to the public attention, I would like to reorient the focus to the broader gender structure instead of perpetrators or victims. The sexual violence might be conducted by individuals, but it is never just individual's responsibility. Instead, it is enabled and nurtured by an unequal gender structure where all of us are complicit in it. Even the perpetrator is sentenced guilty and the victims are able to find justice in the end of court trial, the sexual violence will not end once and for all. The same gender structure will keep producing other cases of Topu Honis and its victims, if we keep uncritical or unquestioning about it. Moreover, we should be careful in avoiding particularizing any single case, since many women and girls still experience sexual harassment, exploitation and even violence in private and public realms on the daily basis. It is not saying that the victims are not important, or the perpetrators should not be blamed or punished, but focusing merely on individuals easily distract us from considering the structural causes which perpetuate the violence against women and minors as well as other forms of suppression and control often faced by women and minors.

The gender structure composed of different power relations nurtures the power differences and inequality between sex. Although the power relations are contingent on historical and cultural factors, the structure is inclined to favor a few powerful men while suppressing women, children, and some men. In patriarchal societies, men and women are expected to believe in certain values and behave in certain ways, yet women are never equal to men. Men are entitled to women through dominance and control in order to maintain their current power and status. Women are expected to obey, offer sex, services, or love to satisfy men. Women will be punished for their disobedience of men through different forms of violence. Although not all men want to control or dominate women, the gender structure encourages the pursuit of power among men and over women. The gender structure further functions to produce and reproduce power asymmetry between men and women, as well as particular patterns of social relations sustaining the privilege of men. These elite men assure their privilege through dominating and exploiting women, children, and less powerful men, and even naturalizing their entitlement to women's bodies. That is why in patriarchal societies, many men think that it is ok to request women to follow men in order to fulfill their needs. Such a tendency to control and dominate women's bodies is usually demonstrated through different forms of sexual violence, albeit sexual harassment or rape against women. When gender norms become common and binding in different social areas, sexual violence against women, children, and some men becomes normalized.

The victims of sexual violence in Topu Honis lived not only in an isolated shelter located in the enclave of Timor-Leste, but also in a web of extremely unequal power relations where the perpetrator was a white man, a father, teacher, a priest, and even God in relation to Timorese minors. There is hardly an escape for the victims from such a structural violence, where sexual violence and other forms of abuse and exploitation may happen more than one time. Moreover, the fact that the male protector/perpetrator violates these children is even justified, since they are considered as his properties or entitlements by the perpetrator and many other individuals of the society within the gender structure. The same structure also prevents the victims to pursue or talk about sex, while men often use sex to demonstrate their power and dominance over women. The consequence of the function of the gender structure is that victims are exposed to constant risks of sexual violence, but they are discouraged from rejecting unconsented or forced sex, or speaking up their experiences and uncomfortable feelings in relation to sex.

Victim blaming is often faced by the victims when sexual violence occurs. Some people accuse the victims of not reporting the case to relevant parties when it first happened, or they just lied. But we have to rethink these arguments, and try to understand why these victims have waited and maintained quiet. It is not cost-free for victims to tell their stories in societies. In other countries, even though the victims win the case, they might endure lots of criticism, unfriendly treatment, and loss of jobs and familial support from their environment. Therefore, it is important to listen to the victims' oppressed experiences and stories from the victims' perspective, since the discourses in the mainstream society might work against them. In a democratic country where you may find some people disagree with the victims, at least we have to listen to what the victims might have to say instead of blaming, threatening or silencing those who are brave enough to speak up their personal experiences. We also have to pay close attention to possible trauma physically and mentally the victims might experience, and seek immediate assistance for them, since their personal development will be affected in direct and indirect ways.

The unequal gender structure could be corrected by our continuous and collective effort in empowering the suppressed women and girls, boys and men to speak up in a society where most men control the discursive power. Telling-your-stories is always the first step to recognize where the oppression and suffering come from. In order to do so, we have to create an environment where victims can speak up freely without worrying being punished or retaliated. There are many barriers for victims of sexual violence to overcome in order to share their stories and experiences regarding sexual violence with others. In addition, there are risks that victims could be retraumatized if they are condemned or denied by families, communities, or perpetrators. Being brave is never an easy choice for some disadvantaged people who have a lot to lose.

Sexual violence may look like individual crimes conducted by a few, but all of us are complicit of it through the function and perpetuation of the gender structure. Therefore, it is everyone's responsibility to consciously resist the norms and rules within such a structure which nurtures sexual violence against women, girls, and other disadvantaged groups. Talking about the case of Topu Honis may make many people feel uncomfortable, but it is necessary and important for the whole society to acknowledge and discuss some hard issues. More importantly, the public debate needs to start challenging the traditional gender norms, roles and expectations which justify men's control and dominance over women yet are embraced and practiced by all of us intentionally and unintentionally in our everyday life.

We are Topu Honis. We are victims. We are perpetrators. No one is and should not be left out from the critical discussion of the sexual violence.

***\* Dra. Li-li Chen is a lecturer at Universidade Nacional Timor-Lorosa'e***