



A Syntactic Analysis of Investigation Reports of Domestic Violence Victims at Bau-Bau Police Station

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: 02 June 2026	This study examines the syntactic structures found in the official Investigation Reports (BAP) of domestic violence (KDRT) victims at the Bau-Bau Police Station. The background of this research lies in the need for clarity and accuracy of language in legal documents, considering their role as formal evidence in judicial processes. Using a qualitative descriptive method, the study analyzed sentence structures from five authentic BAP documents. The findings reveal that most sentences adhere to the basic Indonesian syntactic patterns such as Subject–Predicate (S–P), Subject–Predicate–Object (S–P–O), and Subject–Predicate–Object–Adverbial (S–P–O–K). These sentences are generally complex and lengthy, marked by detailed temporal and locative adverbials. The dominant syntactic functions include subject, predicate, object, and adverbial. Notably, the reports also exhibit features such as passive constructions, agent deletion, and complex clause structures, especially in recounting chronological events. While written in formal language, some statements implicitly reflect the emotional condition of the victims. The study concludes that BAP narratives are constructed in a standardized yet narratively effective manner to support the clarity and legal validity of victim testimony. This research contributes to forensic linguistics by emphasizing the importance of syntactic competence in legal documentation and recommends linguistic training for law enforcement officers to enhance the effectiveness of written legal communication.
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1. Introduction

Language plays a pivotal role in the legal domain because the precision and interpretation of linguistic elements can influence judicial outcomes (Coulthard et al., 2017; Sofyan et al., 2022; Haryono et al., 2023; Sofyan et al., 2024; Yudistira et al., 2024; Sariono et al., 2025). One important but relatively underexplored legal text is the *Berita Acara Pemeriksaan* (BAP), or police investigation report, which records formalized accounts provided by victims or witnesses. Its syntactic patterns reflect not only linguistic structure but also the legal framing of experience, memory, and trauma (Aldridge & Luchjenbroers, 2007; Andrus, 2015; Stepnitz, 2023). In domestic violence cases, BAPs represent an interaction between victims' accounts and institutional conventions, potentially revealing patterns of agency suppression or distancing (Akingbelue, 2025; Stringer, 2014). Previous studies have also demonstrated that syntactic choices in institutional discourse may reflect asymmetrical power relations and position participants as either passive or agentive (Nababan, 2021; Pinelli & Zanchi, 2021; Startari, 2025; Statham, 2022).

Legal discourse generally employs formal and rigid structures intended to promote objectivity, yet such structures may obscure victims' personal perspectives and emotional states. Linguistic cohesion and syntactic organization can shape interpretation (Rahayuninsi et al., 2025), while syntactic choices may also signal ideology, identity, stance, alignment, and impersonality (Kusumanegara et al., 2024; Marzuki, 2023). Similar syntactic stylization occurs in educational and public discourse (Al-Jarf, 2022; Martínez et al., 2022). Moreover, syntax interacts with pragmatic functions such as stance, evidentiality, and deixis, which contribute to the interpretation of speaker roles and responsibilities (Guerra-Lyons et al., 2026; Ojea, 2024). These features are particularly important in victim testimonies because they may influence perceptions of credibility and emotional coherence.

Although linguistic studies have examined public health communication, poetic discourse, and religious or ideological framing (Judijanto et al., 2025; Wijaya, 2021), these contexts differ from police investigation reports. Existing studies have predominantly focused on sociolinguistic, sociopragmatic, socio-semantic, feminist, and discourse perspectives. For example, Tiwery et al. (2024) examined gender representation through feminism and masculinity; Muhammadijah et al. (2025) investigated the socio-semantic role of language in digital commodity advertisements; Muta'allim (2025) examined politeness strategies; Sudi et al. (2025) explored language and parental preferences; and Yudistira and Muta'allim (2023) and Yudistira et al. (2022) investigated code-mixing, political interaction, local wisdom, and interreligious harmony. Recent studies have also addressed polarized digital attitudes and post-MeToo gender discourse (Zhang & McKenzie, 2026; Zhu & Yang, 2026). Collectively, these studies demonstrate the versatility of linguistic analysis, but limited attention has been given to syntactic structures in institutional and forensic discourse, particularly police investigation reports involving domestic violence victims.

This gap is significant because police reports do not merely record events; they transform victims' experiences into institutional narratives with evidential and legal implications. Syntactic organization can determine how participants, actions, agency, responsibility, temporality, and causality are represented. As Goźdz-Roszkowski (2024) observes, the tension between personal expression and legal requirements may produce syntactic patterns that obscure agency and diminish subjectivity. Therefore, this study conducts a syntactic analysis of BAPs provided by domestic violence victims at the Bau-Bau Police Station. It examines recurring syntactic patterns and their implications for the representation of victims, perpetrators, actions, and experiences of domestic violence. The study contributes to forensic

linguistics in Indonesia by integrating syntactic analysis with discourse and legal perspectives (Amir et al., 2026; Fitria, 2024; Waljinah et al., 2026).

The study addresses the following research question: How are syntactic structures constructed to represent victims, perpetrators, actions, and experiences in domestic violence investigation reports at Bau-Bau Police Station?

This study primarily adopts Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), particularly the transitivity system of the ideational metafunction, to examine how grammatical choices construe experiences and represent participants in institutional discourse. Transitivity analysis is used to investigate participant configurations and active-passive constructions, particularly their implications for agency and responsibility (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). As a complementary framework, Radford's (2004) syntactic approach is employed to identify the formal organization of clauses and sentences, including constituent structure, clause formation, coordination, subordination, active and passive constructions, and the organization of subjects, verbs, objects, and complements. Integrating these frameworks enables the study to distinguish syntactic form from functional meaning: Radford explains how structures are formally organized, while SFL explains how those structures construe experience and organize meaning. Thus, the study moves beyond identifying syntactic patterns to examine how grammatical choices contribute to the construction of victimhood, perpetrator agency, responsibility, and experiences of domestic violence in institutional investigative discourse.

2. Method

This research adopts a qualitative descriptive method to analyze the syntactic structures found in the *Berita Acara Pemeriksaan* (BAP) of domestic violence (KDRT) victims at the Bau-Bau Police Station. The qualitative approach is selected to allow for an in-depth examination of language features in their natural legal context, emphasizing meaning construction and syntactic patterns without relying on numerical generalization (Nasrullah, 2025). Micro-syntactic analysis, which examines sentence structures, syntactic functions, and constituent patterns, and contextual/discourse interpretation, which interprets how these syntactic patterns contribute to meaning construction within the broader communicative and institutional context.

The data consist of five authentic BAP documents provided by female victims of domestic violence. These texts were selected using purposive sampling, prioritizing cases with varying narrative lengths and clear syntactic variation. The documents were obtained with proper ethical considerations and anonymized to protect the identity of the victims involved. The analytical framework draws on traditional syntactic theory, particularly clause structures (subject, predicate, object, adverbial elements), types of sentences (declarative, interrogative, imperative), and the use of active-passive voice. In addition, discourse-based syntactic features such as transitivity, mood, and thematic structure were considered, drawing insights from works such as those by (Nasrul, 2023). The research procedure involved three main stages:

1. Data Collection: BAP documents were collected from the Polres Bau-Bau archive, with the support of legal and institutional permissions. The texts were converted into digital form to facilitate analysis.
2. Data Coding and Syntactic Mapping: Each sentence and clause was categorized according to syntactic functions (e.g., subject type, verb type, complement structure). A coding scheme was developed to classify patterns of agency, modality, and object

omission or presence.

3. Interpretation and Contextual Analysis: After the mapping process, patterns were interpreted contextually by comparing them with discourse functions and examining the potential influence of institutional power on linguistic choices (Statham, 2022). The validity of the findings was supported by triangulation, involving a cross-check between the raw text, syntactic structure, and legal context. Analytical rigor was maintained by repeated readings and peer consultations with linguistic and legal experts (Djuwari, 2025). The study is designed not merely to describe linguistic forms but also to interrogate their function within legal processes. As such, the method integrates syntactic analysis with critical discourse insights to bridge micro-linguistic features and their macro-institutional effects (Gamper, 2026).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Sentence Structure Patterns in the Official Investigation Report (BAP)

The analysis of 120 sentences extracted from the *Berita Acara Pemeriksaan* (BAP) of domestic violence victim witnesses at the Bau-Bau Police Department reveals several recurring sentence structure patterns. As presented in Table 1, the most frequently occurring pattern is S-P-O-K, which accounts for 40 sentences (33.3%). This is followed by the S-P-O pattern, which occurs in 35 sentences (29.2%), and the S-P pattern, which occurs in 24 sentences (20%). The S-P-Complement pattern appears in 8 sentences (6.7%), while 13 sentences (10.8%) are categorized as other patterns.

Table 1. Sentence Structure Patterns in the Official Investigation Report (BAP)

No	Sentence Pattern	Frequency	Percentage
1	S-P	24	20%
2	S-P-O	35	29.2%
3	S-P-O-K	40	33.3%
4	S-P-Complement	8	6.7%
5	Others	13	10.8%
	Total	120	100%

The distribution indicates that the BAP predominantly employs relatively simple and systematic sentence constructions. The combined occurrence of the S-P-O and S-P-O-K patterns represents 62.5% of the analyzed sentences, demonstrating a strong preference for constructions that explicitly represent the relationship between the participant, the action, the affected entity, and the circumstances surrounding an event. This structural tendency is consistent with the communicative function of an official investigation report, which requires information to be presented clearly and systematically. The predominance of declarative constructions also indicates an orientation toward factual reporting rather than rhetorical or expressive language. Accordingly, sentence structure in the BAP contributes to the construction of a formal and legally accountable narrative in which events are represented through relatively explicit grammatical relationships.

3.2 Dominant Syntactic Functions

The analysis of syntactic functions shows that the subject and predicate are present in all 120 sentences, whereas objects and adverbials occur less frequently. As shown in Table 2, subjects and predicates each occur 120 times, followed by objects with 85 occurrences and

adverbials with 75 occurrences.

Table 2. Distribution of Syntactic Functions in the Official Investigation Report (BAP)

No	Syntactic Function	Frequency
1	Subject (S)	120
2	Predicate (P)	120
3	Objec (O)	85
4	Adverbial (K)	75

The universal occurrence of subjects and predicates reflects their central role in organizing the grammatical structure of the BAP. The relatively high frequency of objects indicates that many statements explicitly identify the entity affected by an action, thereby contributing to the specificity of the reported events. Meanwhile, the presence of 75 adverbial elements demonstrates the importance of contextual information in legal narratives. Adverbials provide information concerning the time, place, manner, and circumstances in which an event occurred. This function is particularly important in investigative documents because contextual details can contribute to the chronological and evidential reconstruction of an incident, as illustrated in the following sentence:

The incident occurred on Tuesday, November 3rd, 2015, at around 2:30 PM Central Indonesia Time (WITA), at Jalan Anoa..."

It contains temporal and spatial adverbials that specify when and where the incident occurred. Thus, the distribution of syntactic functions demonstrates that grammatical organization in the BAP is closely related to the communicative need to document legally relevant details with precision.

3.3 Complex and Embedded Sentences

In addition to the dominant basic sentence patterns, the BAP contains complex and embedded constructions that combine multiple clauses and syntactic functions. These constructions are commonly introduced by conjunctions such as *when*, *while*, *after*, and *because*, which establish temporal and causal relationships between events. For example:

"When I was about to fetch water in the kitchen, my husband suddenly came and slapped me."

→ Structure: Adverbial – S – P – Adverbial – S – P – O

"After being hit, I ran to my parents' house and reported the incident to the police."

→ Structure: Adverbial – S – P – Adverbial – O

The sentence "When I was about to fetch water in the kitchen, my husband suddenly came and slapped me" contains an initial adverbial clause followed by a sequence of subject, predicate, adverbial, subject, predicate, and object elements. Similarly, the sentence "After being hit, I ran to my parents' house and reported the incident to the police" begins with an adverbial element and is followed by subject, predicate, adverbial, and object components.

The use of these complex constructions indicates that the BAP does not merely record isolated actions but also represents relationships among events. Temporal conjunctions enable the respondent's experience to be organized chronologically, while causal constructions establish relationships between an action and its consequence. Such syntactic organization contributes to the coherence of the legal narrative by enabling several related events to be presented within a unified account. In this context, complex sentence structures function as an important linguistic resource for reconstructing the sequence of events and establishing

connections between circumstances, actions, and consequences.

3.4 Sentence Style and Narrative Distance

The BAP is characterized by a formal sentence style that is generally informational, structured, and relatively distant from overt emotional expression. The linguistic form tends to prioritize the reporting of events and circumstances rather than the direct expression of emotion. Nevertheless, personal and psychological experiences may still be represented within these formal structures. For example:

“As a result of the incident I experienced, I am still able to carry out my daily activities as a housewife,”

The statement contains a causal construction while simultaneously conveying information about the respondent’s personal experience and psychological condition. This finding suggests that formal legal language does not necessarily eliminate subjectivity from the narrative. Instead, personal experiences are incorporated into syntactically organized statements that conform to the institutional conventions of investigative reporting. The formal structure creates a degree of narrative distance, while the propositional content may continue to communicate the speaker’s experience. Consequently, the BAP represents a combination of institutional formality and experiential content, in which subjective accounts are transformed into linguistically structured statements suitable for legal documentation.

3.5 Agent Suppression and Passive Constructions

The analysis also identifies passive constructions in which the agent responsible for an action is omitted or suppressed. One example is the statement:

“I sustained a torn wound on my lower lip as a result of the kick.”

In this construction, the physical consequence experienced by the victim is foregrounded, whereas the individual responsible for the action is not explicitly expressed as an agent. Syntactically, this construction shifts attention from the perpetrator toward the condition or experience of the victim.

From a forensic linguistic perspective, agent suppression is significant because the omission of an actor may affect how responsibility and agency are represented in a legal narrative. Such omission may arise from various contextual factors, including the speaker’s perspective, fear, social pressure, or the circumstances under which the statement was produced. Therefore, passive constructions should not be interpreted solely as grammatical alternatives to active constructions; they may also contribute to the distribution of prominence and responsibility within the narrative. This finding is consistent with Puspitasari and Sukma (2022), whose forensic linguistic research identified institutional pressures in the syntactic construction of legal narratives.

3.6 Integration of Findings with Theory

The findings support Halliday and Webster’s (2014) view of thematic function and transitivity in legal texts, particularly the understanding that syntactic structures function not only as grammatical arrangements but also as resources for representing social meaning. In the BAP examined in this study, victim subjects frequently occupy the thematic position, placing the victim’s experience at the forefront of the narrative. Predicates and objects are predominantly organized in formal and informational constructions, contributing to the

institutional appearance of neutrality and objectivity.

The dominance of S-P-O-K and S-P-O patterns further demonstrates that the BAP favors syntactic structures capable of explicitly representing participants, actions, affected entities, and circumstances. At the same time, the relatively frequent use of adverbials emphasizes temporal and spatial information that is relevant to the reconstruction of events. Complex and embedded sentences further establish chronological and causal relationships, whereas agent suppression in passive constructions can shift narrative prominence away from the actor and toward the victim's experience or the consequences of an action. These findings demonstrate that syntax in the BAP is not merely a formal grammatical system but also an important linguistic mechanism for organizing experience, allocating prominence, and constructing legal meaning. Therefore, the syntactic characteristics of the BAP reflect the interaction between grammatical structure, institutional conventions, and the representation of the victim's experience within a formal legal narrative.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that the syntactic structure of the *Berita Acara Pemeriksaan* (BAP) produced by victims of domestic violence (KDRT) at the Bau-Bau Police Station predominantly follows standard Indonesian sentence patterns, especially Subject-Predicate (S-P), Subject-Predicate-Object (S-P-O), and Subject-Predicate-Object-Adverb (S-P-O-K). These syntactic forms are not merely grammatical arrangements but also serve a narrative and evidential function within the legal context. The findings demonstrate that the language of BAP is constructed to fulfill both legal and communicative functions. Sentences tend to be long, informative, and complex, often involving multiple clauses that establish chronological and causal relationships. While the style is generally formal and neutral, traces of emotional expression are detectable through selected lexical and syntactic choices, indicating the psychological state of the speaker.

Moreover, syntactic patterns such as agent deletion, passive voice constructions, and thematic fronting were identified as common features. These patterns, while preserving objectivity, may also obscure agency and affect the clarity of representation, particularly in cases involving sensitive power dynamics such as domestic violence. The study also found that sentence complexity often increases with attempts to recount detailed sequences of events, which, while linguistically rich, may challenge readability and interpretation. These findings emphasize the importance of syntactic awareness in legal documentation. The accuracy and effectiveness of BAPs depend not only on factual correctness but also on linguistic clarity. Therefore, training for law enforcement personnel in syntactic principles and forensic linguistics is recommended to enhance the quality of legal documents and ensure the fair representation of victim testimony. This study contributes to forensic linguistics by highlighting the intersection between syntax, legal authority, and victim representation. It calls for further interdisciplinary collaboration between linguists, legal practitioners, and policymakers to strengthen language use in legal procedures and improve justice delivery for vulnerable groups.

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Conflict of interest

None.

Authors' contribution

Muhammad Syafar Muhidu: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing–Original Draft, and Project Administration.

Maryam Nurlaila: Methodology, Investigation, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing–Review & Editing, and Validation.

Masri Masri: Supervision, Validation, Writing–Review & Editing, and Project Administration.

Statement of the Use of AI

The authors did not use artificial intelligence (AI) to conduct the research, generate the research findings, or develop the core concepts and arguments of the study. AI-based tools were used only as supplementary resources for reference and to assist with improving the accuracy, clarity, grammar, and academic quality of the language. All ideas, interpretations, analyses, arguments, and conclusions presented in this manuscript were developed and verified by the authors, who retain full responsibility for the content and integrity of the research.

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