

Tackling Love Scams: A Review of the Role of the Police in Public Education

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*Anggraeni Angelia Isabela, Indarto, Halimah, Albertus Wahyurudhanto^{abcd}

^{11,2,3,4} Police Science College, Police Education and Training Institute, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: pelangi56172@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Cybersecurity remains a global problem that can cause major losses worldwide. Technological advances have created new motives for crimes such as love scams. Love scams are frauds that take advantage of emotional relationships to exploit victims for personal gain. The factors causing love scams include the victim's emotional vulnerability, need for attention, and lack of digital literacy. Therefore, it is important for the public to be aware of the various modes of love scams and how to overcome them. This research uses a qualitative method, with data obtained through interviews with 11 sources. Data analysis was carried out through data reduction, data presentation, and data verification. The research results show that, based on Dittipidum data from the Criminal Investigation Department of the Indonesian National Police, there are 18 identified love scam perpetrators with losses reaching 86.3 billion rupiah. Korbinmas Baharkam POLRI has an important role in conducting community development. The steps taken by POLRI include education through socialization, collaborative and community-oriented approaches, and critical intervention and support services. Education that considers the emotional aspect can effectively increase public awareness.

Keywords: *Love Scam, Prevention, Education, Awareness.*

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INTRODUCTION

Cybersecurity is a global issue that causes huge losses worldwide (Alavi et al., 2020). Cyberspace has become integrated into every aspect of our daily lives and is part of every interaction (Chiarini & Kumar, 2022). As computers become more accessible, the problem of cybercrime is also increasing. Cybercrime includes various types of criminal activities, such as ransomware attacks, malicious advertising, child pornography, cyberterrorism, cyberfraud, and others (Leemis et al., 2019; Sharmeen et al., 2020). Cybercriminal activities usually target individuals, organizations, and state assets, including critical infrastructure and government resources (Alavi et al., 2020). One type of cybercrime is the love scam.

The mode used by love scam perpetrators is to exploit victims' emotions by awakening feelings of love, romance, and strong commitment (Lee et al., 2023). The causal factors include the victim's emotional vulnerability, need for attention, and lack of digital literacy (Anesa, 2022; Chin, 2021). The impacts of love scams on victims include financial loss, emotional pressure, and psychological trauma. Love scam victims often lose substantial amounts of money; in Indonesia, losses can reach up to 500 billion rupiah per year (Niman et al., 2023). Similarly, in Malaysia, love scam victims have experienced losses of up to millions of ringgit (Alavi et al., 2020; Kamaruddin et al., 2020). Victims may experience significant emotional pressure, which can be even more critical than the financial losses they endure (Buchanan & Whitty, 2014). The combination of financial loss and emotional betrayal creates a double burden, negatively impacting victims' self-esteem and mental health (Niman et al., 2023). Victims often suffer symptoms similar to post-traumatic stress disorder, including anxiety,

depression, and suicidal thoughts (Chuang, 2021; Niman et al., 2023). Those most vulnerable to love scams are typically individuals with romanticized beliefs – such as idealization – high neuroticism, high levels of loneliness, low digital literacy, and limited awareness of cyber fraud (Saad & Norul Huda Sheikh Abdullah, 2018).

The Indonesian National Police play an important role in handling and educating the public about love scams. Korbinmas Baharkam of the Indonesian National Police has a strategic role in coaching the public in accordance with Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia National Police Number 4 of 2020. Deterrence Theory explains that crimes, including love scams, can be prevented by increasing the threat of firm punishment, certainty of law enforcement, as well as providing a deterrent effect for perpetrators (Alessa et al., 2021). The Situational Crime Prevention Theory explains that steps to reduce opportunities for crime can be taken by creating conditions that reduce the chance for perpetrators to cheat (Caviglia, 2002). Therefore, efforts to reduce the chance of love scams can be proposed by increasing digital awareness, tightening social media regulations, and providing security training (Pangestu et al., 2022). Several strategies that can be used to increase awareness and prevent love scams include socialization (Saad & Norul Huda Sheikh Abdullah, 2018; Thumboo & Mukherjee, 2024). Socialization can be carried out directly in the community or through digital media by using social media platforms to create targeted content (Wang & Topalli, 2024).

Based on the explanation, handling love scams in the digital era requires a comprehensive approach that encompasses both prevention and law enforcement. In this case, the role of law enforcement officers, particularly the Criminal Investigation Department of the Police, is crucial for increasing the effectiveness of actions through mass arrests of perpetrators, implementation of the TPPU article to confiscate assets obtained from criminal activity, and media exposure to create a deterrent effect and raise public awareness. In addition, preventive efforts by Korbinmas Baharkam of the Indonesian National Police must be strengthened through digital education for the public, collaboration with technology platforms to detect suspicious activity, and the reinforcement of regulations that enable stricter monitoring of potential financial transactions used in love scams. If these steps are not yet implemented optimally, it can be concluded that law enforcement and prevention by the Police have not yet been carried out effectively or with long-term, solution-oriented strategies to combat this crime. Therefore, a more systematic and proactive strategy is needed to ensure that love scams can be both prevented and prosecuted effectively in the ever-evolving digital era. The purpose of this study is to examine the role of the Police in providing education to the public as a preventive measure against love scam cases. Accordingly, the title of this study is "Overcoming Love Scams: A Review of the Role of the Police in Public Education".

METHOD

This research was conducted using a qualitative approach to explore social phenomena through in-depth observation of the context and interactions that occur in everyday life. This approach focuses on a descriptive and interpretive understanding of the subject being studied, allowing researchers to explore deeper meanings of the behavior, values, and outlooks on life of individuals or groups in society (Hammond-Errey & Ray, 2021). The purpose of using a qualitative approach is to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon of love scams in the digital era and the role of the Indonesian National Police in handling such cases. Data sources in this research originate from interviews, observations, and case studies. The research method used is field study, with the objective of allowing data collection through direct observation of the social phenomenon at the study site.

Research data originated from in-depth interviews with key informants, while secondary data came from case reports, government policies, legislation related to cybercrime handling, and articles or publications discussing the phenomenon of love scams in the digital era. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with 11 sources, consisting of: the Director of the Cyber Criminal Investigation Unit of the Police; Head of Sub-Directorate 3, Directorate of Special Economic Crimes, Criminal Investigation Department of the Police; Head of Sub-Unit 4, Sub-Directorate 1, Ditipisdiber, Criminal Investigation Department of the

Police; Head of the Sub-Directorate of Public Order and Security, Directorate of Public Order and Security, Community Development Coordination, Baharkam Police; Head of the Student Affairs Unit, Sub-Directorate Bhabinkamtibmas, Directorate of Public Order and Security, Community Development Coordination, Baharkam Police; Head of Unit 3, Sub-Directorate 3, Directorate of Special Economic Crimes, Criminal Investigation Department of the Police; Head of Sub-Unit 4, Sub-Directorate 3, Directorate of Special Economic Crimes, Criminal Investigation Department of the Police; Investigator, Unit 1, Sub-Directorate 3, Pidexus, Criminal Investigation Department of the Police; Investigator, Criminal Investigation Unit VC; a volunteer NGO member of Smart Alert; and a victim of a love scam.

Data obtained were then analyzed through data reduction, data presentation, and data verification. Data reduction was carried out by identifying important patterns, grouping similar information, and highlighting information directly related to the modus operandi of love scams and the efforts made by the police in handling such cases. Data presentation was done by providing tables explained through narratives to facilitate understanding of the research findings. Verification, or the process of drawing conclusions, involved re-examining the collected data to ensure the consistency and validity of the findings.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The results of the research that has been done show some data as following:

Love Scam Crime

The study results documenting the criminal penalties for the 2024 Love Scam case are presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Study Results Love Scam Perpetrator Data Documentation

No	Name Worker	Amount Mobile phone & Laptop	Amount Character	Number of Victims	Origin Country	Victim	Applications Used
1	Koes Henry	12 Mobile phone & 1 Laptop	Man 3 People Woman 4 Person	4 People	Argentina Türkiye Canada German	1 Person 1 Person 1 Person 1 Person	Tinder Tan Tan Bumble
2	Bi Noviandi Husada (Aliong)	6 Mobile phone & 1 Laptop	Man 2 persons Woman 3 Person	1 Person	American Texas Austin		Tinder Tan Tan Bumble
3	Septianus	6 Mobile phone & 1 Laptop	Man 3 People	4 People	Italy Brazil US	1 Person 2 Person 1 Person	Tinder Tan Tan Bumble
4	Rahul Christian	6 Mobile phone & 1 Laptop	Man 1 Person Woman 2 Person	8 People	Philippines Jordan US Thailand India Morocco	2 persons 1 Person 2 persons 1 Person 1 Person 1 Person	Tinder Tan Tan Bumble
5	Muhammad Ramadhan	4 Mobile phone & 1 Laptop	Man 2 persons Woman 1 Person	1 Victim	Brazil		Tinder Bumble
6	Abdul Hadi	7 Mobile phone & 1 Laptop	Man 3 People	2 persons	United Kingdom Person 1 Person Jersey	1 1 Person	Tinder Tan Tan Bumble
7	Kamaludin	6 Mobile phone And 1 Laptop	William Tamara Wang Zhen	50 Person	English Portugal Italy Hungary	20 People 10 People 10 Person 10 Person	Tinder Tan Tan Bumble
8	The Supianto	5 Mobile phone & 1 Laptop	Marcel Michael Alex	20 Person	Colombia Brazil United States Moldova Thailand	1 Person 2 Person 1 Person 1 Person 15 Person	Tinder Tan Tan Bumble Mepp Cmb
9	Ryan	4 Mobile	Ethan	10 Person	French	9 Person	Bumble Mepp

	phone & 1 Laptop	Sean Gabriel		Thailand 1 Person	
10 Eve	5 Mobile phone & 1 Laptop	Adelia Univer Arcenio Alexander James Timothy	6 3 Person	Hungary 20 Person Austria 20 Person Brazil 10 Person Romania 3 Person United States 10 Person	Tinder Tan Tan Bumble Mepp Cmb Okcupid
11 Hafizdullah	5 Mobile phone & 1 Laptop	Man 3 People	10 Person	Hungary 1 Person Portugal 4 Person Spanish 1 Person German 2 persons Romania 2 Person	Tinder Tan Tan Bumble
12 Saftaadderi	4 Mobile phone & 1 Laptop	Man 4 People	20 Person	Türkiye 1 Person Morocco 1 Person Africa South 5 Person Thailand 13 People	Tinder Tan Tan Bumble Mepp Cmb Okcupid
13 Kashdullah	5 Mobile phone & 5 Laptops	Man 2 persons Woman 2 Person	30 Person	Croatia 15 Person Hungary 15 Person	Tinder Tan Tan Bumble
14 The Jungle Jonah	4 Mobile phone & 1 Laptop	Man 1 Person Woman 2 Person	30 Person	Türkiye 6 Person Italy 7 Person Dubai 5 People German 5 People Hungary 5 Person Portugal 2 Person	Tinder Tan Tan Bumble Mepp
15 Sogatino	9 Mobile phone & 1 Laptop	Man 5 People Women 4 Person	± 100 People	Canada England Brazil Thailand American	Tinder Tan Tan Bumble Mepp Cmb Okcupid
16 Arbiansyah	4 Mobile phone & 1 Laptop	Man 1 Person Woman 3 Person	9 People	Vietnamese 2 persons Thailand 2 persons Hungary 3 Person Peru 2 Person	Tinder Tan Tan Bumble Mepp
17 Aldriyanti	4 Mobile phone & 1 Laptop	Man 2 persons Woman 2 Person	2 persons	Brazil 1 Person Türkiye 1 Person	Tinder Tan Tan Bumble
18 Safitri Dei (Translator language)	4 Mobile phone & 1 Laptop	Man 3 People Woman 1 Person	3 People	Hungary	Tinder Tan Tan Bumble Mepp

Source: Directorate of General Crimes, Criminal Investigation Unit of the Indonesian National Police, 2025

Based on data obtained from the 2024 Indonesian National Police Divhubinter letter database, this *Love Scam case* has a detrimental impact that can be observed in the following data:

Table 2. Study Results Documentation Love Scam Losses

No	Source Request Information Country/Ncbinterpol/Victim	Amount	Amount of Loss
1	Albania	0	
2	American	0	
3	Andorra	1	USD 206,000
4	Argentina	1	
5	Australia	2	AUD 132,000
6	Austria	1	
7	Belgium	1	USD 668,314
8	Bulgaria	3	Rp 99,611,146.00
9	Brunei darussalam	2	BND 4,400
10	Czech	0	
11	China	1	

Discussion

Love Scam Crime

Love scam is a cybercrime where the perpetrator creates a fake romantic relationship to deceive the victim for financial or sexual gain (Alavi et al., 2020; Kamaruddin et al., 2020). This scam involves creating a fake profile, engaging in sweet talk, and ending up asking for money under various pretexts such as medical emergencies or travel expenses (Alavi et al., 2020; Kydd et al., 2024).

The results of the study show that love scams have occurred frequently in Indonesia. The data in Table 1 shows that there were 18 identified love scam perpetrators, with various backgrounds and roles in carrying out their actions. The perpetrators came from various countries, with a predominance of individuals who had access to technological devices in the form of mobile phones and laptops, where the number of devices used varied from 4 to 12 mobile phones and a minimum of 1 laptop per person. In carrying out their actions, the perpetrators used online dating applications such as Tinder, Tan-Tan, Bumble, Mepp, CMB, and OkCupid to target victims from various countries, including the United States, Brazil, England, Hungary, and Thailand. Based on this information, it can be seen that this type of crime shows how technology and dating applications can be utilized by perpetrators to defraud victims across countries. Therefore, it is necessary to raise public awareness of the existence of such threats and to strengthen regulations to prevent love scams in the digital world.

Based on the 2024 Indonesian Police Divhubinter Letter Database, table 2 shows that the types of crimes *Love Scam* This own loss the biggest originate from eye Money USD equivalent to IDR 86.3 billion, followed by EUR around IDR 3.87 billion, SGD around Rp2.18 billion, And AUD around Rp1.43 billion. Eye Money other, such as BND, MYR, NTD, and KRW, had a smaller contribution to the total loss. Besides That, loss Which Already recorded in rupiah reach Rp 334 million. If converted based on the estimated exchange rate in March 2025, the total loss will reach around Rp 94.2 billion.

Love Scam Prevention by Korbinmas Baharkam Indonesian National Police

Community Development Coordination (Baharkam) of the Indonesian National Police plays a strategic role in providing public guidance in accordance with Republic of Indonesia National Police Regulation Number 4 of 2020 concerning self-help security, as stated in Article 1, paragraph (18). The goal is to create a conducive situation of public order and security through various activities, such as the implementation of community policing (POLMAS), the management of self-help security systems, and the supervision and guidance of efforts to maintain public order. In addition, Korbinmas also establishes partnerships with the public through programs like Police RW, which aim to strengthen communication and interaction between police and citizens at the neighborhood level. This program enables police officers to accommodate complaints, suggestions, and input from the public, allowing them to respond to various issues quickly and appropriately.

Based on the data in Figure 1, several activities carried out by Korbinmas Baharkam POLRI include: (1) counseling and socialization through BINLUM lectures, mobile appeals, and counseling and coaching for Pokdarkamtibmas; (2) visits and outreach through DOS/visit activities and the implementation of the Public Order and Security Silaturahmi Forum (PODIFSK); (3) coordination and meetings through collaborative discussions with local governments and other agencies; (4) rehabilitation and social mentoring through rehabilitation of social workers and ex-convicts, and assistance with Village Funds; (5) community and security development through training of POLMAS developers, problem solving, development of Saka Bhayangkara, PKS, and Pocil, as well as women and children's empowerment programs; (6) religious and social service activities; (7) police operations such as Operation Build Kusumah, Operation Bina Alert, Operation Brush Karuna, Operation Excellent Brother, Operation Ketupat Lilin, and Operation Aman Nusantara; (8) monitoring and evaluation activities, including supervision, assistance, and implementation of BUJP

audits and recommendations; and (9) traffic regulation and security through Gatur Lalin (Traffic Regulation).

Based on the data above, it is known that there has been no specific love scam prevention effort and is still focused on more general security aspects. The interview results explained that this was because not all members knew about love scams in depth, but members had carried out cybercrime prevention activities in general, not just love cyber. The counseling provided was about the threat of digital crime, online fraud modes, and coordination with agencies to increase awareness of the dangers of crime in cyberspace.

Addressing love scams requires a multifaceted approach that includes effective policing strategies and comprehensive public education. By focusing on targeted messaging, collaborative efforts, and support services, law enforcement and community organizations can work together to reduce the incidence of this crime and support victims in their recovery. The prevention strategies that can be implemented by the National Police are as follows:

Public Education Campaign

Law enforcement agencies are currently increasingly conducting education and public awareness programs to reduce the number of fraud victims. These campaigns often involve distributing educational materials and implementing community outreach to inform the public about the risks and signs of fraud (Jakobsson & Gerell, 2023; Lu et al., 2020). Such as the Swedish police who conducted a campaign targeting the elderly. The campaign strategy was carried out by distributing educational postcards. However, the effectiveness of these campaigns can vary, as seen in the case of Sweden where there was no significant impact on fraud victims (Jakobsson & Gerell, 2023).

Collaborative and Community-Oriented Approach

Collaboration between the police and the community can increase public trust and improve the effectiveness of crime prevention strategies. In Colombia, community-oriented crime prevention initiatives have shown promising results in increasing trust in the police and reducing crime (Inzunza & Carlsson, 2023). Police effectiveness can be improved by focusing on problem-oriented policing (POP).

Critical Intervention and Support Services

Providing crisis intervention services and psychosocial support to victims of fraud is essential. Police should work with social workers to offer counseling and advocacy, help victims recover from trauma and raise awareness about fraud (Alavi et al., 2020).

Based on observations in the field, it is known that Korbinmas Baharkam POLRI has provided several channels for the public to report criminal cases including *Love Scams* quickly, although there is no special platform or hotline that exclusively handles crimes. This. Moment this, victim can report the case through a number of The main routes are the police call center 110, the 'POLRI Super App' application, the official police website and social media, and the nearest police station.

The Head of the Bhabinkamtibmas Sub-Directorate, Ditbintibmas Korbinmas Baharkam POLRI also explained that in encouraging the public to actively report *Love Scam cases*, they prioritize educational strategies, socialization, and strengthening communication networks with police officers at the regional level. local, specifically Which done through activity Bhabinkamtibmas, Police Da'i, RW Police and various other community development activities. These efforts done with increase awareness public about the importance of reporting, providing easy access to file reports, and ensuring a quick response from the police to reported cases.

Education as a Medium to Increase Public Awareness

Harnessing the power of law enforcement and education can significantly enhance collaborative efforts to raise awareness of love scams. Implementing emotional normalizing messages, interactive learning programs, and strategic partnerships can empower individuals to recognize and avoid scams, ultimately reducing the number of victims.

Based on the documentation study, the educational material provided to the public regarding the love scam mode and how to avoid it includes several key components. First, the introduction to the love scam mode covers the definition of a love scam and how it operates.

It outlines common characteristics of love scam perpetrators, such as posing as officials, military members, or successful foreign businessmen seeking online partners. Warning signs that someone may be targeted include perpetrators quickly establishing intense emotional connections, requesting money for various reasons (e.g., travel costs, medical emergencies, investments), and being unwilling to engage in video calls or meet in person. To avoid love scams, individuals are advised not to trust strangers met online easily, to verify identities using tools like reverse image search on Google, to avoid sharing personal or financial information (e.g., account numbers, PINs, or OTP codes), to discuss suspicious money requests with trusted people, and to use safety features on apps to report suspicious accounts.

The materials also include recommended steps for victims. Victims are advised to immediately cut off communication with the perpetrator and block all access, retain all evidence such as conversations or transaction records, report the case to the police (via 110, the POLRI SUPER APP, or Bareskrim POLRI's cyber unit), and contact their bank promptly to block any ongoing transactions. Additionally, victims should report the perpetrator's account to the digital platform to prevent further victimization. Campaign and socialization efforts involve providing counseling through seminars, webinars, and digital literacy training; launching educational campaigns on social media using infographics, videos, and victim testimonials; disseminating information via SMS and mobile banking apps in cooperation with banks and digital platforms; and engaging Police RW and Bhabinkamtibmas officers to deliver direct counseling in local communities.

Messages delivered to the public in love scam prevention campaigns should consider psychological aspects to increase their effectiveness. Research shows that campaigns with emotional normalizing messages are more effective in reducing vulnerability to fraud compared to cognitively focused messages (Lu et al., 2020). Awareness programs should address factors that increase vulnerability to love scams such as emotional manipulation, social isolation, and stress to educate the public on recognizing fraudulent tactics (Alavi et al., 2020; Saad & Norul Huda Sheikh Abdullah, 2018). The rise of love scams makes it important to educate the public on safe internet usage and the importance of online identity verification. Increasing computer skills and awareness of cyber fraud can help reduce victimization (Saad & Norul Huda Sheikh Abdullah, 2018).

The main strategies for collaboration between law enforcement agencies and educational institutions can be carried out in the following ways:

Educational Campaign

Research shows that fraud prevention messages that normalize emotions are more effective than messages that focus solely on cognitive processes (Lu et al., 2020). This can be used as a reference for law enforcement to collaborate with educational institutions and develop and distribute materials that discuss the emotional aspects of love scams so that they can help the public recognize and manage their emotional responses.

Supportive Curriculum Programs

Implementing interactive and engaging education can significantly increase awareness. Implementing a cybersecurity curriculum in secondary schools that includes practical exercises, case studies, and real-world scenarios can empower students to critically analyze digital incidents and adopt responsible online behavior (Hossain et al., 2024).

Collaborative Model

Collaborative models such as co-production, where law enforcement agencies work closely with academics, can be effective. These partnerships can be responsive to the needs of both parties, ensuring that educational content is relevant and impactful (Silver et al., 2021).

Public Awareness and Education

Forming strategic partnerships between law enforcement, educational institutions, and other stakeholders can create comprehensive awareness programs. These programs can include training, advocacy, and resource provision through the media, formal school programs, and parent-teacher associations (Oloo, 2022).

Law enforcement can work with social workers and educational institutions to provide crisis intervention services, counseling, and psychosocial interventions. This support can help trauma victims and raise awareness about the risks and signs of love scams (Alavi et al., 2020).

The benefits of collaboration between law enforcement agencies and educational institutions provide significant benefits such as increasing public awareness, empowering communities, and providing support systems. Collaborative efforts can lead to more effective awareness campaigns that are tailored to the emotional and psychological aspects of love scams (Kydd et al., 2024). Educational programs can empower students and the wider community to recognize and avoid scams (Halford & Davies, 2021). Providing support services for victims can help reduce the impact of scams and offer practical advice for prevention (Alavi et al., 2020).

Challenges and solutions to this collaboration include resource constraints and outdated advice. Overcoming resource constraints can be done through strategic partnerships and shared resources can increase the effectiveness of awareness programs (Hossain et al., 2024). Outdated advice can be addressed by ensuring that awareness campaigns provide current and specific advice that can help individuals protect themselves from evolving fraud tactics (Kydd et al., 2024).

CONCLUSIONS

Love scam is a cybercrime committed to gain financial gain from the victim by exploiting emotional relationships. This love scam has a negative impact on the victim's personal, social, and economic aspects such as financial losses, emotional trauma, and damaged social relationships. Love scam crime cases must be handled, the way to handle it is through prevention and law enforcement by the Police. Korbinmas Baharkam POLRI has a strategic role in fostering the community, so it has a role in providing education to the community. The education provided is in the form of providing an understanding of the meaning of love scam, how to avoid it, and the steps taken if you experience a love scam. Education that pays attention to the emotional side is known to be able to effectively increase public awareness of the dangers of love scams. This education can be done by collaborating with educational institutions to instill understanding as a preventive measure for students. In addition, this collaboration can also significantly increase public awareness, empower communities, and provide a support system for the community. This study shows a significant influence of education on the level of public awareness. This shows the importance of implementing education in all regions in Indonesia. Further research can conduct studies on educational model strategies that are appropriate to age and existing technological advances.

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