

The perspective of Teachers and Parents Regarding Child Sexual Abuse Incidents in Rural Areas, in Indonesia

Perspectiva de docentes y padres sobre incidentes de abuso sexual infantil en áreas rurales, en Indonesia

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SUMMARY

Background: Child sexual abuse incidents are a highly prevalent phenomenon. About 120 million children under the age of 20 have experienced forced sexual initiation or other initiation actions. This incident is mostly performed by the closest people such as family and neighbors. The perspective of parents and teachers views attention is needed to sexual abuse incidents of children, its causes, and preventive efforts. **Purpose:** This study aimed to analyze the perspective of teachers and parents regarding the incidence, causes, and efforts to prevent sexual abuse in children. **Method:** The method used was qualitative with a case study approach. **Results:** The perspective of teachers and parents is that the sexual abuse incident towards children in Sidrap Regency is mostly experienced by children aged between 6 to 10 years. Most of the perpetrators are those who are close to them such as stepfather, grandfather, and neighbor. The incident was

revealed after it had been experienced for a long time because the child felt afraid of the perpetrator and felt ashamed because his family and society considered her a disgrace. According to the informant, the causes of child sexual abuse are poor economic factors of the family, social factors such as children with broken home conditions, parents who have died or do not live with their parents, and easy access to pornographic content because children generally have smartphones. Efforts to prevent child sexual abuse according to the informant's point of view are through instilling family, religious and social values at school as well as providing education to children, parents, teachers, and society regarding the importance of self-protection to avoid sexual abuse. Education can be in the forms of counseling activities, Socialization, use of health media, and health literacy. **Conclusion:** Teachers and parents view child sexual abuse incidents in Sidrap Regency as urgent to solve, because it has happened to young children, are perpetrated by people who know them, and only are revealed after the incident happened a long time. According to teachers and parents, child sexual abuse incident is triggered by economic and social factors and easy access to information. Therefore, it is suggested that efforts from the school should be done to involve parents in rebuilding family values, religion, and social interaction to prevent sexual abuse incidents towards children.

Keywords: Sexual abuse, perspective, teachers, parents.

RESUMEN

Antecedentes: Los incidentes de abuso sexual infantil son un fenómeno muy frecuente. Alrededor de 120 millones de niños menores de 20 años han

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experimentado iniciación sexual forzada u otras acciones de iniciación sexual. Este incidente lo realizan principalmente las personas más cercanas, como familiares y vecinos. La perspectiva de padres y docentes considera que es necesario prestar atención a los incidentes de abuso sexual infantil, sus causas y esfuerzos preventivos. **Propósito:** Este estudio tuvo como objetivo analizar la perspectiva de maestros y padres sobre la incidencia, causas y esfuerzos para prevenir el abuso sexual en niños. **Método:** El método utilizado fue cualitativo con enfoque de estudio de caso. **Resultados:** La perspectiva de docentes y padres es que el incidente de abuso sexual hacia niños en Sidrap Regency es experimentado mayoritariamente por niños de 6 a 10 años. La mayoría de los perpetradores son personas cercanas a ellos, como el padrastro, abuelo y vecino. El incidente es revelado después de haberlo vivido durante mucho tiempo porque el niño sentía miedo del perpetrador y sentía vergüenza porque su familia y la sociedad la consideraban una desgracia. Según el informante, las causas del abuso sexual a los niños se deben a factores económicos deficientes de la familia, factores sociales como hijos con condiciones de hogar desestructurado, padres que han muerto o no viven con sus padres y el fácil acceso a contenido pornográfico, porque los niños generalmente tienen teléfonos inteligentes. Los esfuerzos para prevenir el abuso sexual según el punto de vista del informante pasan por inculcar valores familiares, religiosos y sociales en la escuela, así como educar a los niños, padres, maestros y la sociedad sobre la importancia de la autoprotección para evitar el abuso sexual. Las formas de educación pueden ser en forma de actividades de asesoramiento, socialización, uso de medios de salud y alfabetización en salud. **Conclusión:** Los incidentes de abuso sexual infantil en Sidrap Regency, vistos por maestros y padres, son urgentes de resolver porque les ha sucedido a niños pequeños, perpetrados por personas cercanas a ellos y solo revelados después de que el incidente sucedía durante mucho tiempo. Según docentes y padres, el incidente de abuso sexual infantil se desencadena por razones económicas, sociales y de fácil acceso a la información. Por lo tanto, se sugiere hacer esfuerzos desde la escuela para involucrar a los padres en la reconstrucción de los valores familiares, la religión y la interacción social para prevenir incidentes de abuso sexual hacia los niños.

Palabra clave: Abuso sexual, perspectiva, docentes, padres

INTRODUCTION

Study on child sexual abuse is very important as an effort to save future generations. The United

Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) stated that around 120 million children under the age of 20 have experienced forced sexual intercourse or other forced sexual actions (1). The number of child sexual abuse cases in the United States is around 16.3 % for women and 6.7 % for men. While in Japan, the rate of Sexual abuse for girls ranged from 1.3-8.3 % and for boys around 0.5-1.3 % (2,4). In Indonesia, child sexual abuse is also a serious problem. Several studies have examined the prevalence of child sexual abuse in Indonesia it is estimated that it has reached 66 % (3).

World Health Organization (2006) defined Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) as the involvement of children in sexual activity that they do not fully understand and because of this, consent cannot be given (5). As a result, the child's development is not ready for the behavior and the behavior itself breaks the law or breaks social norms. CSA includes sexual intercourse attempt, intercourse, indecent exposure, sexual touching, exhibitionism, using a child for prostitution or pornography, and exposing a child to adult sexual activity or pornography (6). CSA cases in Indonesia increase every year and became a serious problem (7). Data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) during 2011–2016 indicate that there were 5 327 cases of CSA reported. Statistical data from the Witness and Victim Protection Agency in 2019 showed an increase in cases of Child Sexual Abuse in Indonesia from 2017 to 2019. There were 81 cases in 2017, 206 cases in 2018, and 350 cases in 2019. The results of the study by Wismayanti et al. and Solehati et al. showed that Indonesian children are at risk and became a helpless group (8,9). Children at school tend to experience CSA through peers or adults (3).

The orientation of parents in educating children is only on academic education and not mental education as well as the social condition faced by their children. Some parents only ask questions about academic education such as academic scores and grades in class. Only a few were asked about their social issues such as a hobby, problems with friends, social media status, and even about reproduction. Thus, self-disclosure about matters related to sexuality is very small. Other obstacles retards someone from reporting cases of sexual violence. Children who

become a victim of sexual violence often do not understand that they are the victim. Children find it difficult to trust other people, so they keep sexual violence incidents a secret. In addition, children who are victims tend to be afraid to report this because they think that they will experience worse consequences. For example, ashamed of the environment either within the family or society. Victims feel that the incidents of sexual violence they experienced happened because of their own mistakes which made victims feel that they could embarrass their family name (10).

Child sexual abuse is most often carried out by the closest person such as the biological father, stepfather, sibling, family, neighbor, or peer (11). Cases of sexual violence towards children often go unreported. Such case tends to be kept quiet and even rarely discussed by both perpetrator and victim. The victims feel ashamed because it is seen as a disgrace that has to be hidden tightly or the victims feel afraid of the perpetrator's threat. Meanwhile, the perpetrator feels ashamed and afraid that he will be punished if his action is known.

Sometimes the perpetrators such as teachers and parents, there is still thought that sexual abuse is taboo. It triggers the reluctance of families to report cases of sexual violence experienced by children. Therefore, it makes the cause of this case like an iceberg phenomenon. It seems that it is a small case, even though many cases have happened. Especially if the case is committed by a well-known person, public figure, or the victim's family. Therefore, it needs an effective approach or strategy to prevent children from experiencing abuse by making them aware of potential dangers that can be caused by their closest environment.

Giving education in increasing knowledge of children and their awareness through counseling and socialization. Providing health literacy media in family and school environments is one of the efforts to prevent sexual abuse in children which is considered effective in giving new insights to families to protect children from sexual abuse. Teachers and parents usually have values that they believe in giving insights to their children. The perspective of teachers and parents regarding incidents of sexual abuse determines how children will behave and act toward the risk of sexual abuse incidents. A positive perspective will support the

success of education on how to protect children from the dangers and effects of sexual abuse.

This study intends to analyze the perspective of teachers and parents regarding the sexual abuse incidences towards children in Sidrap Regency. This location is one of the loci with CSA cases that are not comparable between facts and reported cases. In addition, the perspective of teachers and parents are also explored regarding the causes of child sexual abuse and efforts to prevent it.

METHOD

This research used a qualitative method with a case study design. This design is considered appropriate to reveal the perspective of teachers and parents regarding the incidence of sexual abuse because the issue of sexual abuse is sensitive. There are 6 research informants which are 3 parents who witnessed and knew about incidents of child sexual abuse in Sidrap Regency and 3 elementary school teachers in the area where child sexual abuse occurred. The research instruments were interviews, tape recorders, and researchers' human instruments. Data analysis techniques use content analysis as well as the triangulation process through source triangulation.

RESULTS

The portrayal of sexual child abuse in Sidrap regency

Child sexual abuse incidents are illustrated like an iceberg phenomenon. It looks little on the surface, but most of the events are not visible. Child sexual abuse is a criminal action that is not supposed to happen in the modern era nowadays. This incident increases every year, not only for children who live in the city but also for children in the suburban areas including Sidrap Regency.

Many children have experienced sexual abuse in this area. This does not only happen in the capital of the regency but also in remote areas. Most of the perpetrators are those who are close to the victim such as stepfather, grandfather, and neighbor. In general, this incident was

experienced by children for a long time which was only revealed after the victim reported it or parents and teachers became aware of the incident's impact. The impact is that strange behavior appears in children and complaints of pain or swelling in the vagina. Sexual abuse is experienced by children, for example, in the form of touching or being groped until an intimate relationship. The average age of children who experience this incident aged 6 to 10 years. The youngest age of the victim in the 2022 incident is 5 years old as stated by the following informants:

"There was an incident of sexual abuse in Lawawoi Village where the victim was a toddler, carried out by grandparents at a neighbor's house. It's pity that the child is only 5 years old, and this case was discovered after the child was in the 1st grade. The form of abuse experienced was touching the clitoris until an intimate relationship occurred" (ST, 48 years, teacher).

"There have been many incidents in Sidrap Regency, most of the incidents that were revealed were in Watang Pulu, Pitu Riase, and Baranti sub-district. The average age of the child who became a victim aged 6 to 10 years" (TR, 29 years, parents).

"Many recent cases which occurred 3 years ago were not reported because they were afraid of the perpetrator who was his stepfather. This was experienced at home when the opportunity came" (RM, 40 years old, parents).

"I have ever seen a case in Teteaji Village, the child had experienced it for a long time and was only found out after the parents saw swelling in their child's vagina" (ST, 48 years old, Teacher).

"I am a doctor in a public health center, I used to find a pediatric patient around the age of 3-4 years, she complained of pain and swelling in her vagina. It was carried out by a young man in his rental boarding house near where the victim's

mother sells. I asked her family to report, but they refused because they were embarrassed" (RM, 40 years old, parents).

"At our school, more or less than 3 years ago, there was also a student who had experienced this since grade 3, but it was revealed two years later after the student was in grade 5. He said his aunt had invited her to an inn" (IM, 50 years old, teacher)

The causes of child sexual abuse in Sidrap Regency

The causes of sexual abuse towards children are multifactorial. However, most incidents are due to economic and social factors. The economic factor means that children who are the victim of sexual abuse are from families that are in the bad economic sector, so it becomes a triggering factor for children to experience repeated sexual abuse. The children ignore the condition they have experienced because they are given money by the perpetrator without realizing the consequences. While social factor, in this case, the child victim of abuse has a broken home family background, parents have died or they do not live with their parents. Not only economic and social factors, but the accessibility of media information also using a mobile phone. The following are the results of the interview obtained from informants on this matter:

"Based on the cases, students who experience sexual child abuse are generally due to low family economic condition. It is easier to be affected with money or gift promises by the perpetrator" (IM, 50 years old, teacher)

"Usually in my area in Wattang Pulu and maybe it is also the same as other areas in Sidrap, the reason is that there is a chance seen by the perpetrator, for example, the victim lives with the perpetrator because their parents died, or their parents leave to work. It could also be because the parents have divorced, the child was left with its aunt or grandmother" (TR, 29 years old, parents).

“One of the reasons is because children have already used handphones because of COVID-19, children have to study online. I have found a student where there were pornographic videos in their WhatsApp group on their handphone” (SP, 44 years old, teacher)

Preventive efforts against child sexual abuse in Sidrap regency

Efforts that can be made to prevent child sexual abuse incidences are to instill family, religious and social values at school. In addition, efforts are needed to provide education to children, parents, teachers, and society regarding the importance of self-protection to avoid sexual abuse. Educational efforts can be in the form of counseling activities, socialization, the use of health media, and health literacy. The role of teachers and parents as people who interact a lot with children is urgently needed to increase children’s knowledge, self-awareness, and self-skill in preventing sexual abuse. The following are the results of the interview obtained from informants regarding this matter:

“In my opinion, family value is important, what I have done for my child is give an example not to undress in front of my children. I hope the child feels ashamed and do not undress in front of people. I also instill values in the family so that fathers do not touch their children’s private parts and are only allowed to kiss the back of the hand and on the top of the child with permission according to religious teaching” (RM, 40 years old, parents).

“It is better not only to educate children but also to educate students’ parents so that there is supervision at home and school” (IM, 50 years old, teacher)

“There is material about part of the body in sports subject. In this section, information is usually given about which part of the body should not be touched by other people, but we feel that this is not enough, so special counseling should be given regularly” (SP, 44 years old, teacher)

“Increasing children’s awareness that their body should be cared and valued. All body parts that are covered cannot be touched” (SY, 40 years old, parents)

“School should conduct socialization and education regularly or there are literacy media that children can read at school regarding the introduction of the body part, then they should be told that there are parts that can and cannot be touched or body parts that are covered with clothes should not be touched and seen and it is also good not to show a video” (ST, 48 years old, Master).

DISCUSSION

Child sexual abuse can cause harm either for short or long-term harm including psychopathology later in life. The psychological, emotional, physical, and social impacts include depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, eating disorder, poor inferiority complex, personal identity disorder and anxiety, common psychological disorders such as somatization, neurosis, chronic pain, changes in sexual behavior, academic problems, and behavioral problems including drug abuse, self-harm, animal cruelty, adult crime, and suicide (12).

Sexual abuse can happen anywhere and conduct by anyone. Based on the results of this study, sexual abuse experienced by victims in the form of touching to intimate relationships happened to children not only in urban areas but also in regional areas which was carried out by perpetrators in their own homes, boarding houses, or lodging. According to data from the Indonesian Pediatricians Association (IDAI), sexual violence towards children in 2014 occurred at home (48.7 %), school (4.6 %), public places (6.1 %), workplace (3.0 %) and other places such as hotel, motel, and others (37.6 %) (13). The highest percentage of sexual abuse incidents and violence occurred at home. Even though the home should be the safest place for children, it becomes a location for sexual abuse and violence.

The results of the study also showed that the perpetrators of sexual abuse are people who are

close to the victim and have domination over the victim such as parents, grandparents, and neighbors. In line with our study, the experience of sexual abuse that occurred in Spain showed that abuse occurred more than once with the same perpetrator. It is more often done by an adult male who is known by the victim (14). This makes cases of sexual abuse of children difficult to find out because there is fear of victims reporting them, especially if they live with the perpetrators who are the main family and have domination over children. In addition, the family of the victim tends not to disclose and report cases of sexual abuse that occur to their children, because they feel ashamed of being considered a disgrace by society.

Childhood is spent mostly with family at home and with friends as well as teachers at school. Therefore, the role of teachers and parents is very important in preventing CSA (6). The perspective of teachers and parents in this study is very positive because they interpreted child sexual abuse incidents as harmful incidents, it can happen anywhere and conduct by anyone. This perspective is expected to be motivation for teachers and parents to increase attention and supervision of their children's social environment at home and school. It is important to be aware of which children's activities and hobbies they like, and whom they associate with, and familiarize children with being open to whatever they experience.

The perspective of teachers and parents regarding the factors that cause sexual abuse toward children was found in this study and it is mostly due to economic, social, and information accessibility factors. The condition of children who come from underprivileged families makes them tend to be repeatedly sexually abused. Similarly, Anderson et al. in their study also demonstrated that poverty and acceptance of sex transactions are risk factors for CSA in ten countries surveyed including Tanzania (15).

From the social aspect, children who grow up in a broken home, and parents who have died or do not live with their parents are also at risk of experiencing sexual abuse. The study conducted in Tanzania concluded that one of the factors which cause children's sexual abuse besides poverty is a bad parenting system. These incidents are rarely reported due to the embarrassment

faced by the child and his family because the act of abuse is carried out by someone who is trusted, has a close relationship with, and has power over the victim (16).

Information accessibility using smartphones has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. Online learning which has been implemented for a long time made children use smartphones and other electronic devices more often. This makes it easier for children to access information and connect with others through social media. In addition, children can also access videos of adult content that are inappropriate to see.

Based on the results of this study, efforts that can be made to prevent sexual abuse towards children are by instilling family, religious and social values at school and providing education to children, parents, teachers, and society. The study conducted on teachers in Guangdong Province in 2019 showed that overall elementary school teachers have a positive perspective on CSA prevention, but their knowledge and skills in the prevention of CSA are limited (17). The participation of society in working together to provide counseling, socialization, and giving literacy media at elementary schools related to the prevention of CSA support to increase children's knowledge, self-awareness, and self-skills in preventing sexual abuse. In addition, instilling religious values in children is also an effort to prevent sexual abuse which can keep children away from sexual intention, and internalize the spirit of masculinity and femininity from an early age (18).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

1. According to the perspective of teachers and parents regarding the sexual abuse incidents in Sidrap Regency, children aged 6 to 10 years' experience sexual abuse in the form of being touched in intimate relationships. The perpetrators are mostly the closest people such as family and neighbors. The incident of sexual abuse was revealed after a long time because the child felt afraid and embarrassed to report it.

2. Teachers and parents view that the causes of sexual abuse towards children are more due to economic, social, and accessible information through smartphones.
3. The perspective of teachers and parents regarding efforts that can be made to prevent the incidence of child sexual abuse is by instilling family, religious and social values through educational efforts in the form of counseling activities, socialization, use of health media, and health literacy.

Suggestions

1. Parents should instill family and religious values by giving an example of getting used not to touching private parts of their children's bodies, especially those that are covered with cloth, and encouraging children to dare to refuse and ask for help if someone wants to touch them.
2. Teachers are expected to be active in providing information, conducting education through socialization activities, routine counseling, and providing media and health literacy about the importance of preventing sexual abuse in children.

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