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Collaboration on Social Determinants of Health

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## Proceedings

## Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Social Determinants of Health

July 31-31, 2021, in Jakarta, Indonesia



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# Preventing Sexual Violence against Children: Parents' Perception in Pontianak City

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**Keywords:** Sexual Violence, Children, Parents' Perception

**Abstract:** Cases of violence against children tend to increase from year to year. One of the protective factors for children against sexual violence is parenting. Perceptions of sexual violence against children are essential, which impact prevention programs for violence against children. This study explored parents' perceptions of sexual violence against children as well as prevention practices. This study was a qualitative design, using an in-depth interview with parents who have children under 18th years old. Maximum variation sampling was used. Ten participants contribute to this study. The majority of participants in this study defined sexual violence against children as limited to sexual acts that lead to forced sexual relations. The challenges faced by the participants were taboo, lack of correct knowledge in sexuality education in children, limited skills in communicating sexuality to children, and lack of self-confidence. There are disparities in understanding the meaning of sexual violence against children, and challenges in prevention need to be discussed further.

## 1 INTRODUCTION


Children are an investment in the future of a nation, but there are still many problems that arise, one of which is violence. Violence against children has received international recognition as a violation of social and human rights. Common causes and supporting factors for violence against children are related to society's traditions, customs, and culture (Levinson, 1989). Child sexual violence is a form of violence against children that is rife recently. Sexual violence and sexual harassment are two different things. Sexual violence is a term that has a broader scope than sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is one type of sexual violence (World Health Organization, 2013).

Cases of violence against children tend to increase from year to year. Based on the 2017 Global Report, 73.7% of Indonesian children aged 1-14 years experience physical and psychological violence at home as an effort to discipline (Global Report, 2017). The number of violence against children recorded from January to June 2020 was 3,928 cases, consisting of sexual, physical, and emotional violence cases, and nearly 55% of them experienced sexual

violence (Medistiara, 2020). It was exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, which impacted various aspects, including an increase in child abuse cases during the pandemic. The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection noted a significant increase in cases during the pandemic, including 852 physical violence, 768 psychological violence, and 1,848 sexual violence. Recorded instances of violence against children show that previously before the pandemic period, there were 1,524 children, increasing to 2,367 children victims of violence during the Covid-19 pandemic (Kemen PPPA, 2020).

Child sexual violence is a severe problem that is difficult to detect (Louwers et al., 2010) (Murray et al., 2014). Sexual violence against children is any sexual activity that involves a child (less than 18 years old) getting sexual satisfaction from sexual comments or seduction to forced sexual relations (Berlo & Ploem, 2018). Sexual violence in children has a prolonged impact on their life cycle (Bellis et al., 2011).

A protective factor for sexual violence in children is parenting (Meinck et al., 2015) (Rudolph et al., 2018) (Scoglio et al., 2019) (Ligiero et al., 2019)

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(McKillop et al., 2019) (McKillop et al., 2019) al., 2021). Parenting patterns in preventing sexual violence against children require a correct understanding of sexual violence. This understanding is essential in determining parents' actions in providing parenting to children (Collins, 1996).

To our knowledge, in Indonesia, especially the city of Pontianak, there has been no research that examines the perceptions of parents who have children (<18 years) about sexual violence against children. Although this perception is very decisive in determining parenting as a protective factor for children from sexual violence, the law in Indonesia on sexual violence is still ambiguous and limited to rape cases only. The impact on the prevention of sexual violence against children is not comprehensive. The purpose of this study was to explore parents' perceptions of sexual violence against children.

## 2 MATERIAL AND METHODS

Maximum variation sampling was used with a set of criteria for recruiting participants: participants must be parents of school children as these parents may begin to consider risks outside the home when their children are at this age; participants must represent different backgrounds in terms of work, education, and economic status; and willing to discuss sexual violence against children. Ten participants from diverse demographic backgrounds were recruited to participate in this study. Participants consisted of two men (fathers) and eight women (mothers) aged 30-47<sup>th</sup>. Their sociodemographic characteristics are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Participants were recruited between April and May 2021. Individual interviews were terminated when it was challenging to find additional insights from the new data gathered. Before starting data collection, participants were informed about their rights as research subjects. They were made aware that their participation was voluntary and the information they provided would be kept confidential. Each interview lasted about 45–60 minutes.

This study has received ethical clearance no: 448/KEPK-FKM/UNIMUS/2021, University of Muhammadiyah Semarang.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted based on interview guidelines. Four critical questions about parents' perceptions of sexual violence against children include: What is the definition and type or form of sexual violence against children according to

parents? How do parents understand the risks of sexual violence against children? What do parents think about efforts to prevent sexual violence against children? Two critical questions about parental practices regarding sexual violence against children include: What will parents avoid sexual violence against children? What are parents doing to protect their children from sexual violence against children? All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Data were analyzed using the thematic analysis method (Guest et al., 2012), which organizes and categorizes the data according to each participant's main themes and responses.

## 3 RESULT

This study conducted to ten participants with indepth interview technic. The majority participants is 30-39 years old, female, senior high school and employed (see Table 1). The detail participants in Table 2.

Table 1: Social-demographic characteristics of 10 participants.

Social-demographic Characteristics	n	%
Age		
30-39	6	60
40-49	4	40
Sex		
Male	2	20
Female	8	80
Level of education		
Junior high school	1	10
Senior high school	7	70
Bachelor degree	1	10
Master degree	1	10
Occupation		
Employed	7	70
Unemployed	3	30

Table 2: Characteristics of participants.

No	Sex	Age	Occupation	Education	Children's sex/age
M1	M	38 <sup>th</sup>	Employed	Master degree	F/8 <sup>th</sup> & M/6 <sup>th</sup>
M2	M	38 <sup>th</sup>	Employed	Bachelor degree	F/10 <sup>th</sup> & F/7 <sup>th</sup>
F1	F	38 <sup>th</sup>	Employed	Senior high school	F/11 <sup>th</sup> & M/12 <sup>th</sup>
F2	F	40 <sup>th</sup>	Unemployed	Junior high school	F/12 <sup>th</sup>
F3	F	47 <sup>th</sup>	Unemployed	Senior high school	F/15 <sup>th</sup>
F4	F	42 <sup>th</sup>	Unemployed	Senior high school	F/13 <sup>th</sup>
F5	F	45 <sup>th</sup>	Unemployed	Senior high school	F/16 <sup>th</sup>
F6	F	39 <sup>th</sup>	Unemployed	Senior high school	F/14 <sup>th</sup>
F7	F	38 <sup>th</sup>	Unemployed	Senior high school	F/13 <sup>th</sup> & M/10 <sup>th</sup>
F8	F	36 <sup>th</sup>	Unemployed	Senior high school	F/14 <sup>th</sup> & M/9 <sup>th</sup>

Table 3: Definition of sexual violence against children

Definition of Sexual Violence Against Children	Number reporting	Percentage*
Rape	10	100
Other sexual activities (like kissing, petting, sensitive areas forcibly and or violence	3	30

Although all participants specifically defined physical, sexual activity with a child by force, they had different standards for the form of sexual activity performed. The participants' responses can be grouped into two groups regarding sexual violence against children, namely rape and other sexual activities, such as kissing, hugging, touching sensitive areas forcibly, and violence (see Table 3). All participants stated that the very narrow limit for determining sexual violence against children occurred to forced sexual relations with children (rape). Only 3 out of 10 participants noted that sexual violence against children could occur not only through rape (sexual intercourse) but also in the form

of other sexual activities. As the informant said below:

"... Like that... like rape by adults to children..." (M1)

"... Playing hands... and forcing sexual intercourse..." (F1)

"... That... like holding onto a child's genitals... kissing... until later on to a husband and wife relationship..." (M2)

When in-depth interviews were conducted, all participants reacted embarrassed when asked about the definition of sexual violence against children. They felt taboo to talk about sex. As the informant stated below:

"... Is that... that... yeah like that... (accompanied by a shy smile)" (F2)

"... .Hmmm... hmmm.... Yes ... how about it ... it's hard to talk about it (accompanied by scratching his head and blushing) (M1)

### 3.1 Scope and Forms of Sexual Violence against Children

The in-depth interviews showed that all participants stated that the scope of sexual violence against children was rape or sexual immorality. Only four out of ten participants said that abuse is also included in sexual violence against children, apart from rape. Harassment can take the form of kissing, hugging, holding a child's sensitive area forcibly. As the informant stated below:

"... the shape and scope are like rape ..." (F8)

"... Which includes such as a child being kissed, or being held by a sensitive organ which is done forcibly ... "(F1)

### 3.2 Causes of Sexual Violence against Children

This study found that some participants stated that the cause of sexual violence against children was promiscuity. Some other participants indicated that they were influenced by friends and did not listen to their parents' advice. As the following statement:

"... the cause is due to promiscuity ..." (F4)

"... children like not listening to parents' advice ..." (F2)

"... the influence of friends too ..." (F6)

In terms of the perpetrator, the cause of sexual violence against children is the uncontrolled lust of the perpetrator. As the participants stated below:

"... Cannot control lust ... lust " (M2, and F2)

Another informant stated that another cause was that the wife could no longer serve her husband's lust,



so she did it to underage children. Several participants also noted that the current openness of social media is also the cause of sexual violence against children. The following is the participants' statement:

"... Usually it is triggered because the wife cannot be invited to have sex or often refuses ... "(F7)

"... currently the influence of social media can also be a cause ..." (F5)

### 3.3 Victims of Sexual Violence against Children

According to eight participants, this study stated that victims of sexual violence against children mainly occurred in girls (both biological and stepchildren) and granddaughters. Only two participants said that apart from girls, it can also happen to boys. The following is the informant's statement:

"..... The victims are mostly girls... biological or stepchildren.... Many granddaughters are also victims..." (M2)

"... indeed there are many victims of the female sex, but nowadays there are more and more boys who have become victims ..." (F2)

### 3.4 Perpetrators of Sexual Violence against Children

The in-depth interviews showed that all participants stated that the perpetrators of sexual violence against children were more family and neighbors (known people). In addition, outsiders (unknown) are also perpetrators of sexual violence against children now. As the informant stated below:

"... Most cases .. the perpetrators are family such as an uncle, grandfather, etc., and there are also neighbors.... People who are known or who are around the child ... "(M1)

"... if you look at the current trend of cases there are also many people who are not known ... outsiders ..." (F8)

### 3.5 Efforts to Prevent Sexual Violence against Children

Several participants stated that the attempt to prevent sexual violence against children strengthened religion by praying a lot. Several other participants said that through education on sexual violence against children from an early age, giving advice, choosing good friends to hang out with, and limiting gadgets to children. As the informant stated below:

"Strengthen religion and a lot of worship to prevent cases of sexual violence against children" (F1)

"...children should be given an education from an early age... tell private body parts, shout if someone holds them" (M1)

"Restricting children from playing gadgets" (M2)

"Choose good associates" (F8)

All participants stated that mothers are responsible for delivering education on the prevention of sexual violence against them.

"The mother closest to the child" (M1)

"Already nature of mother" (F6)

This study also shows that all participants state that schools are also responsible for educating children to prevent sexual violence against children through the sexual education curriculum. However, several participants said that even though it was included in the curriculum, the language used was not directly related to sexual education. The following is the informant's statement:

"Schools are also responsible for educating their students" (M2)

"Agree if the school includes the curriculum" (F1)

"If you can, the name should not be immediately vulgar in sexual education" (M1)

### 3.6 Challenges in Education on Prevention of Sexual Violence against Children

All participants stated that the biggest challenge in preventing sexual violence against children is still taboo and minimal knowledge about what things need to be conveyed to children to prevent sexual violence. The participants also stated that when they were little, their parents never told them either. In addition, some participants noted that it was difficult to educate children because of the limited skills and beliefs in delivering sexual education to prevent sexual violence against children. As the informant stated below:

"Awkward, taboo ... parents never taught it, and it was a taboo" (F1)

"It's hard to be confident and confused about what to say" (F2)

In addition, several participants stated that the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic caused the use of cellphones and internet access to be a challenge in itself. It is because content that contains pornographic elements appears on cellphones and when accessing the internet.



## 4 DISCUSSION

The majority of participants in this study defined sexual violence against children as limited to sexual acts that lead to forced sexual relations. The participants' responses can be grouped into two groups regarding sexual violence against children, namely rape and other sexual activities, such as kissing, hugging, forcibly touching sensitive areas, and violence. All participants assumed that mothers were responsible for delivering education on the prevention of sexual violence against children. The challenges faced by the participants were taboo, lack of correct knowledge in sexuality education in children, limited skills in communicating sexuality to children, and lack of self-confidence.

The participants' limited understanding of sexual violence against children is only in the form of sexual acts that lead to forced sexual intercourse, affecting providing sexual prevention education to children because there is a process before sexual intercourse. Limitations regarding the notion of sexual violence have also been reported in several previous studies (Mathoma et al., 2006) (Ige & Fawole, 2011) (Jayapalan et al., 2018) (Baldwin-White, 2021). This misunderstanding also occurred with police officers who handled cases of sexual violence against children (Ricciardelli et al., 2021) and the doctors who dealt with the patients (Andrea & Roland, 2017) (Adams, 2020). WHO defines sexual violence against children as all sexual acts to get sexual satisfaction, both verbal (erotic/sexual comments/seductions) or physical (kissing, hugging, penetration, etc.) that lead to sexuality (World Health Organization, 2013). Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides a specific definition, namely sexual acts as forced penetration with intentional touch, or without penetration, and sexual harassment without contact, such as exposing a child to sexual activity, taking sexual photos or videos of a child, prostitution or child trafficking (Leeb et al., 2008). This understanding is fundamental in leading to better programs and strategies for preventing sexual violence against children (Sarno & Wurtele, 1997) (World Health Organization, 2012) (Murray et al., 2014) (Rudolph et al., 2018). Education from families is crucial for preventing cases of sexual violence (Hackman et al., 2017).

The majority of participants stated that most of the perpetrators of sexual violence against children were family members. Contrast with previous research, which says that most sexual violence against children, including sexual abuse, is a recurring chronic event caused by family members (Andrea & Roland, 2017) even though the family should protect children from

crimes, including sexual violence (Rahimi, 2020) (Rudolph et al., 2018). Adults, including parents, act as supervisors to create a safe (conducive) environment for children to prevent crime, including sexual crimes against children (Leclerc et al., 2015; Leclerc et al., 2011). Lastly, parents as gatekeepers of children have an essential impact on the risk of sexual violence, including sexual harassment (Meschke & Peter, 2014) (Mendelson & Letourneau, 2015) (Fideyah et al., 2020).

All participants in this study stated that the mother is the most responsible person in delivering education about sexuality to children. Several studies have shown that mothers psychologically have a close relationship with their children so that sexuality communication is more effective (Muhwezi et al., 2015) (Nurachmah et al., 2018) (Faudzi et al., 2020). Supported by other studies that children are more open with mothers than fathers, making it easier to establish communication and discussion about sexuality (Wang et al., 2016) (Shams et al., 2017). However, sexuality education in children is a shared responsibility between the mother and father (Nasution et al., 2019).

The myths circulating about sexual violence are still problems and challenges to be faced (Zatkin et al., 2021). The in-depth interviews' findings were related to the difficulties faced to prevent sexual violence against children. All participants stated that they still felt awkward (taboo) in conveying sexuality to prevent sexual violence against children. Supported by previous research also shows that there are still many parents who are taboo in delivering sexual education (Grusec, 2011) (Manivasakan & Sankaran, 2014) (Suwarni et al., 2015) (Amaliyah & Nuqul, 2017) (Shams et al., 2017). Limited knowledge about sexuality, inadequate skills in sexuality communication (Shams et al., 2017). Other qualitative study findings revealed that cultural resistance more effectively limits the nature and content of sexual health education than religious prohibition (Onwuezobe & Ekanem, 2009). Parents feel they have limited knowledge about the content of sexuality and do not have the skills and self-confidence to discuss sexual topics (social taboos). This social taboo that can hinder sexual education has also been found in other studies in Asia, Africa, and other countries in the Western Pacific (UNESCO, 2015).

Participants (parents) agreed that sexual education was school-based by integrating school curricula and religious lessons. Religious education is essential in preventing sexual violence against children (Ganji et al., 2017) (Moghadam & Ganji, 2019). This study also shows that parents' self-confidence and skills are

still low in delivering sexuality education to prevent sexual violence against children. One of the factors causing the lack of self-confidence and skills in providing sexuality education is the limited knowledge of parents about the material. Previous research supports parents who still have minimal knowledge and understanding of sexual and reproductive health (Shams et al., 2017) (Ram et al., 2020).

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

Our findings indicate that parents' perceptions of sexual violence against children are still narrow and limited. Challenges in preventing sexual violence in the family environment include taboo in talking about sexuality, lack of correct knowledge in sexuality education for children, little skills in communicating sexuality to children, and self-confidence. The recommendations of this study are based on the findings that have been stated, namely that a comprehensive intervention is needed for parents so that they can provide proper education to prevent sexual violence against children. Apart from knowledge interventions, interventions are also required to increase the self-confidence and skills of parents in delivering sexual education to their children.

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