

Research Article

Teachers' Perception: Self-protection in Children as a Prevention Against Sexual Violence

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The rise in child sexual violence (CSV) cases in Central Java Province worries all levels of society, specifically parents and teachers. Preventive efforts include providing child sexual education, which has been massively promoted by the governments, teachers, and parents to prevent sexual violence against children. The researchers raise the problem of the study "How do kindergarten teachers in Semarang city perceive self-protection as a prevention to CSV?" to explore kindergarten teachers' perception of self-protection as a tool to prevent CSV. This study used a qualitative method with a phenomenology approach. The participants of the study were classified based on specific criteria. The results showed that self-protection materials, as a prevention to CSV, cover an introduction to body parts in a girl and a boy, sexual relationship knowledge between man and woman, and other knowledge and skills provided to children from an early age. Besides perception, teachers conveyed sexual education materials, including toilet training activities and self-protection materials through movies, videos, songs, and dolls. Sexual education materials adjusted to culture are how to dress, how to speak, and shyness in behavior.

Keywords: self-protection, teachers' perception, child sexual violence, phenomenology

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1. Introduction

Central Java has a high number of sexual violence experienced by children. Conditions of child insecurities have been reported on SIMFONI-PPA provided by The Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection. Surprisingly, the number of sexual violence against children in Central Java was 875 cases out of a total of 1.218 cases of violence [1]. Meanwhile, The Department of Women's Empowerment, Child Protection, Population and Family Planning Board (DP3AP2KB) in Central Java recorded 190 children subjected to violence in April 2023, including 60 cases against boys and 137 against girls. In addition, 104 cases of child sexual violence were reported in April 2023 [2].

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Semarang city is in fourth place after Semarang and Banjarnegara districts, with the number of sexual violence victims in April 2023 as many as 11 people. However, the percentage of violence against children was around 46.6% (DP3AP2KB Central Java Province, 2023). The definition of child sexual violence (CSV) itself is an unwanted sexual activity involving adults and minors with the element of coercions and threats [3][4][5].

Many experts have mentioned the effects of CSV, which contain various mental, physical, and social problems such as poor interpersonal relationships, depression, and anxiety [6][7][8]. Sexual violence can cause different trauma for the victims, especially for children, because they do not understand that they became the victims of sexual violence or other traumatic problems, such as having difficulty trusting other people and even keeping their sexual violence experience to themselves [9][10][11]. Child sexual violence can cause health and social problems in adulthood, such as depression, low self-confidence, and many more [12][13][14]. On the other side, CSV victims tend to experience psychological disorders, such as depression, consuming drugs, and many more [15]. Therefore, children need protection from mistreatment that violates human rights.

Legal protection helps to protect children as a victim of sexual violence. The enactment of Law No 35 of 2014 on Child Protection guarantees and protects children and their rights so that they can live, grow, develop, and participate optimally in accordance with human dignity and receive protection from violence and discrimination [16]. A way to protect children from sexual violence is by providing sexual education [17]. Children should receive sexual education from an early age that adjusts to the child's development. However, parents feel awkward in delivering sexual education to children. In fact, sexual education is not only about genitalia but also about self-protection [11][17][18].

Discussing sexual education remains taboo in Indonesian society, family, and school. People think children could receive sexual education after they reach puberty [19]. From the family's perspective, sexual education cannot effectively run because 1) parents cannot optimally participate in providing sexual materials and development to children, 2) parents are busy with their work [20]; and 3) parents feel unable to respond to accurate answers when children ask about sexuality [21][22][23]. In addition, schools, primarily kindergarten teachers, do not have the basic knowledge and skills to convey CSV prevention materials and cannot deliver information related to CSV prevention [24]. Those conditions exist due to a lack of preparation by society, families, and schools in

fulfilling their roles in protecting children. Besides, the contents of sexual education should adjust to Indonesian culture, specifically Semarang culture.

Sexual violence prevention programs aim to enhance knowledge related to CSA and self-protection skills [25] but also help children identify and respond to harmful situations, teach children to say No, and report inappropriate requests to touch children [25]. Therefore, the material on self-protection contains behavior introductory, such as teaching private body boundaries to prevent sexual violence. Further, children learn “Good Touch, Bad Touch,” which introduce children to body parts that can or cannot be touched and people who are allowed to touch their private body [26][27][28].

The researchers interviewed teacher participants from Islam Taman Firdaus Kindergarten Semarang for the first time on 11th August 2023 to discover how far teachers could deliver self-protection materials to children. Teacher participants played the “Sentuhan Boleh, Sentuhan Tidak Boleh” song while conveying self-protection materials to introduce body parts that can and cannot be touched. In addition, teacher participants always remind children to be careful and advise them to wear clothes properly while playing outside the house with their friends. Teachers also teach children to shout for help when strangers or dangerous people approach. Those statements showed that kindergarten teacher participants understand self-protection material and the ability to deliver it to children. Besides, teachers need parents and other parties’ involvement and cooperation so children can fully understand self-protection materials.

Based on the initial interview results conducted in this study, teachers have provided self-protection material, from creating a song, reminding children to behave while playing, and looking for help when dangerous strangers approach. Therefore, the researchers need to discover other perceptions from kindergarten teachers to formulate contents that can be involved in self-protection materials as prevention of child sexual abuse. By collecting various teachers’ perception about self-protection that children can learn, the researchers can arrange the material of self-protection that can be shared to other schools. The problem the study addresses is “How do kindergarten teachers in Semarang city perceive self-protection as a prevention to CSV?”. This study aims to determine kindergarten teachers’ perceptions of self-protection materials for preventing child sexual violence.

2. Method

This study employed a qualitative method with a phenomenology approach and classified participants based on specific criteria in line with Moleong’s research method [29].

The participants were selected based on research context appropriateness so that the researchers could dig the information needed. The subject participants in the study were teachers with 9–25 years of teaching experience and aged 34–60 years with different levels of understanding and knowledge related to self-protection and sexual education. The researchers interviewed 10 participants to discuss self-protection and sexual education.

The study collected data by using semi-structured and in-depth interviews. The researchers set the interview questions as guidance to explore participants' thoughts about self-protection in sexual education. After collecting data, the researchers employed triangulation data. Then, the researchers analyzed and interpreted data using the Miles and Huberman Technique written in Sugiyono [30].

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Results

Table 1 describes the 10 kindergarten teacher participants in Semarang city who are familiar and understand about self-protection and sexual education.

TABLE 1: Description of the 10 kindergarten teacher participants in Semarang city.

No	Teacher initial	Interview code	Age	Position	Numbers of years teaching	Workplace
1	SP	WG.02.ISTF	39	Teacher	9	TK Islam Taman Firdaus Semarang
2	ES	WG.04.ITMS	49	Teacher	10	TK Islam Tunas Melati Semarang
3	ER	WG.05.TNPS	52	Teacher	10	TK Negeri Pembina Semarang
4	MB	WG.06.TNPS	59	Teacher	21	TK Negeri Pembina Semarang
5	HY	WG.07.TNPS	60	Teacher	25	TK Negeri Pembina Semarang
6	SH	WG.08.TNPS	53	Teacher	18	TK Negeri Pembina Semarang
7	TC	WG.09.PGRI	43	Teacher	11	TK PGRI 27 Semarang
8	NS	WG.13.ICI	35	Teacher	18	TK Islam Cahaya Ilmu Semarang
9	SW	WG.15.PLS	39	Teacher	18	PAUD Labschool UNNES
10	RW	WG.16.PLS	34	Teacher	14	PAUD Labschool UNNES

1. Kindergarten teachers' perception about sexual education in Semarang City

Sexual education learns about body parts of boys and girls, introductory of bad and good touch, dress etiquette, and habituation to cover 'awra at early age. Sexual education perceived as a way to teach children a skill and increase their knowledge to interact with their peers or adults. Apart from social matters, sexual education teaches children to know "Good Touch and Bad Touch", including prohibition to touch their friends' genitalia. Therefore, sexual education is a way to teach personal defense to children.

"I think, because it is for kindergartners, sexual education should teach from the basic, such as an introductory to body parts of boys and girls, its difference, the name of it, then could it be touched or not, could it be shown in public or not?" **(SP, WG.02.ISTF; 11.08.2023)**

"Sexual education, in my opinion, children are prohibited touching things such as their opposite sex's genitals, that's what I think. For example, when the boys touch their genitals, or their friends' genitals, that's based on my understanding." **(ES, WG.04.ITMS; 13.08.2023)**

"In my opinion, sexual education is a kind of skill that should be delivered as early as possible for both children or adults that contain sexual behavior so they know what to do or not to do in their interaction with peers or adults." **(ER, WG.05.TNPS; 15.08.2023)**

Participant MB added that school should provide sexual education because it belongs to character development. Sexual education learning also contain self-protection to protect children from internal and external threats.

"In fact, sexual education, based on what I got from my previous training, is about how to ensure that sexual relations between men and women run well, but sexual education that we're talking about here is covering a knowledge that children should learn so they can protect themselves from attempted sexual violence, social dangers such as bullying and others. It also includes a knowledge to protect themselves when it comes to situation if there is someone tried to come closer with bad intention such as committing sexual abuse, we provide that material." **(SW, WG.15.PLS; 21.08.2023)**

2. Materials of Self-protection in sexual education

Kindergarten teachers in Semarang City conveyed self-protection in sexual education. First, toilet training activities. In this section, teachers taught children how to clean their genitals after urinating and defecating using soap and ended with

washing their hands. Toilet training also teaches children about genitalia differences and its function with learning media in the form of human body pictures of boys and girls. Toilet training not only teaches about how to clean genitalia but also how to care for the body, specifically genitalia.

“This is what I teach to children. For example, when I teach children about toilets. I provided information that toilets for men and toilets for women are separated, so before entering the bathroom, children should look at the sign, what it’s written, how it looks, or if it is a sign for a male or female. Usually, for early kindergartners, we teach about man and woman signs. I told the children it is the symbol picture for boys, and it is for girls. These bathrooms are not general for boys and girls, so you can’t go in the wrong bathroom.” **(ES, WG.04.ITMS; 13.08.2023)**

However, sexual education material is not only toilet training. It also learns about self-protection, which you can learn through learning media, such as movies, videos, and dolls. Participant ER used movies as a learning media to teach self-protection. She wants her students to perform their roles well in the role center. Participants MB and SH added that teachers also used learning media such as videos to teach body parts and dolls to teach parts of bodies that can and cannot be touched.

“Usually, the teacher played a movie when we were in role center class. We played a role. Children should play roles based on the character they have acquired.” **(ER, WG.05.TNPS; 15.08.2023)**

“We played videos about body parts that children must protect and used dolls to introduce body parts that people cannot touch.” **(MB, WG.06.TNPS; 15.08.2023)**

Participant TC mentioned that sexual education material contains an introduction to body parts that should be covered (‘awra) and touched by people. Participant NS added that the material of sexual education should teach children about boundaries and how to dress modestly for both boys and girls.

“In Islamic school, we make it a habit for children to cover their ‘awra, separate the bathroom based on sex, girls and boys, and oblige the girls to wear (long) skirts with leggings, so they would feel comfortable when they sit.” **(NS, WG.13.ICI; 18.08.2023)**

In providing sexual education, teachers provide materials in detail of how to protect themselves from people they do not know or strangers. Participant RW added that the school has an exclusive class to teach children about self-protection material. In addition, participant SW also mentioned that self-protection contains material

to 1) identify body parts in a boy and a girl, 2) introduce boundaries, and 3) teach children to be alert to threatening situations.

“I gave basic understanding to children to protect themselves, to deal with strangers or people they do not know before. Those materials are in Miss WJ class.” **(RW, WG.16.PLS; 21.08.2023)**

3. Sexual education materials based on regional culture

Kindergarten teachers in Semarang city taught sexual education adjusted with regional culture. Culture influences sexual education. Sexual education in Semarang city should contain social norms, prioritizing ethical behavior and dress etiquette. That's because it represents Javanese culture, which creates a sense of shame and modesty in dressing. Those statements are following participants SP, HY, and SH answers. Moreover, participant MB added that her school's personal protective clothing etiquette requires female students to wear a skirt below the knee and a sleeved uniform.

Not only clothing etiquette, a participant with initial HY, stated that a habit inherent in Javanese culture is maintaining the cleanliness of a bathroom after using it. Therefore, teachers teach children to clean themselves after urinating and defecating with soap and ended with washing their hands. Besides discussing procedures of dressing by performing toilet activity, participant TC stated that toilet activity also implements norms and sitting rules. For instance, a girl should pay attention when they sit so their skirts won't fly open.

“Maybe the culture here influenced the dressing, so our uniform culture is wearing a skirt below the knee and does not wear a sleeveless shirt.” **(MB, WG.06.TNPS; 15.08.2023)**

“Yes. The norms exist, but we mix boys and girls in a class. Importantly, children should pay attention when they sit. For girls, they should keep their skirt close. We separate toilets for male and female children.” **(TC, WG.09.PGRI; 16.08.2023)**

The way children dress is also related to Islamic teachings in maintaining boundaries of the body parts. A participant NS stated that covering the body parts as ordered by religion (awra) while going outside is a self-protection based on Islamic culture. In addition, participant RW emphasized that female students in Semarang should wear long shirts and skirts uniform with a head covering (hijab) as well as leggings under a skirt. However, male students must wear belts to tighten their school pants and avoid sagging (Javanese: melotrok) pants.

“It’s because our school is an Islamic school, so we habituate children to wear clothes that cover ‘awra, especially for the girls. They should wear hijab when leaving the house.” **(NS, WG.13.ICI; 18.08.2023)**

“Every culture has its own identity. In my opinion, we also can implement local culture. In Semarang, female students wear covered attire with a head covering or legging under a skirt, while male students should wear a belt to prevent their pants from sagging. In addition, the girls must pay attention when they sit so their skirts won’t fly open.” **(RW, WG.16.PLS; 21.08.2023)**

A teacher participants revealed difficulty understanding and delivering self-protection based on culture. The reason is because she hasn’t received sexual education training.

“Ah! It is because of our limitations. I have never received training, so we do not know for sure what called culture-based self-protection is like. That’s why I did not understand clearly.” **(ER, WG.05.TNPS; 15.08.2023)**

3.2. Discussion

Prevention efforts for child sexual abuse have focused on developing a curriculum in self-protection skills, primarily to be aware of people who have the intention of committing sexual abuse in children’s surroundings [31]. In this study, children learned self-protection skills to identify body parts, introduce boundaries, and teach children to be alert to situations that can harm them. At three years of age, children are able to learn self-protection skills to prevent CSA [32]. On the other hand, teachers only focus on teaching and developing self-protection skills programs with few health materials on child development provided on CSA prevention materials [33].

In general, self-protection is a skill to identify potentially harmful situations and respond to verbal and non-verbal inappropriate symptoms [31]. It is known from the study that teachers perceived self-protection as prevention of child sexual abuse supported by providing materials through learning media and methods in sexual education. One of sexual education provided is toilet training. This study follows Sinclair’s study [34] that mentioned sexual education is a part of school curriculum that give children opportunities to learn their development through daily activities, such as toilet training activity.

Children also learn other sexual education materials, such as introduction to body parts in a girl and a boy, dressing etiquette, and habituation to cover their ‘awra at an early age. Sexual education covers materials such as Touching knowledge and the prohibition on touching the private parts of the opposite sex. In line with Setiani [35] and

Zubaedah [37] this study aimed to teach children to cover 'awra as a prevention to avoid adultery, maintain life in harmony with the command of Allah SWT, and teach children to dress appropriately. Furthermore, teachers also provide sexual through movies, videos, and dolls. Learning methods also support the learning media, that is, introducing parts of the body that should be covered, ordered by religion, and not touched by people. This study was in line with Tsuda et al. [37] that sexual education aimed to provide knowledge and skills in protecting children from CSA and sexual behavior.

Sexual education that contains knowledge and skills should be concerned with culture in society. Pramono [38] added that the delivery of sexual education materials should cover the society's culture because the context of Indonesian culture, specifically Javanese culture, usually avoids vulgar/ taboo terms. It's known from the study that self-protection based on culture has some factors, including societal norms, put-forward behaviour, and how to get dressed. It is important to remember that Javanese culture emphasizes politeness and etiquette.

This study aligns with Pramono [38], who mentioned that Javanese taught their children to inculcate their sense of shame when they show their genitalia to people and habituate them to dress modestly. Kurtuncu [39] in his article, added that culture in society influences the sense of embarrassment while conveying sexual education materials. Apart from discussing shame, Halim [40] added that young children dress based on their gender-typed colours. For instance, young boys refuse to wear anything with a hint of femininity, whereas girls insist on wearing pink dresses based on gender identity.

However, this study found that a teacher who has a lack of understanding and conveying self-protection materials based on culture because she hasn't received any training related to sexual education or even self-protection. Supported by Ünlüer [41], teacher who hasn't received sexual education trainings needs to develop their knowledge in early childhood sexual education.

Another limitation was that the participants of the study were primarily females. The lack of male participants was because fathers were not active in giving education, mainly sexual education, to children, unlike mothers. Similar to this study, Dianita [42] mentioned a rare phenomenon of men becoming kindergarten teachers, creating an image that most kindergarten teachers are women. Dianita [42] added that there is a standard assumption in our society regarding the appropriateness of women as kindergarten teachers because they are more capable of teaching early childhood than male teachers.

4. Conclusion

This study described teachers' perception of self-protection as preventing child sexual abuse. Before providing self-protection, a teacher needs to have a perception of sexual education. The perception of sexual education covers introducing body parts in a girl and a boy, dress etiquette, and habituation to cover 'awra at an early age. There was a teacher who perceived sexual education as a Touching skill and knowledge and prohibition to touch private body parts (genitalia) of another person. A school should deliver sexual education because it is a part of character development and teaches knowledge to protect oneself from threats.

Besides perception, teachers provided toilet training as a self-protection material in sexual education. Toilet training is an activity to introduce and teach children to wash their genitalia with soap and clean them with warm water. Not only does it teach how to clean genitalia, but it also teaches how to care for the body, especially the private parts hygiene. Lastly, toilet training teaches sex differences and their function through the picture of the human body.

Another sexual education material is self-protection, conveyed through learning media such as movies, videos, and dolls. Besides learning media, the learning methods also support the delivery of sexual education materials, such as introductory to 'awra and parts of the body that people should not touch. Teachers give children the knowledge to protect themselves from people they do not know yet or strangers, and one school has a particular class to teach sexual education, including self-protection. In self-protection, children learn to identify body parts, learn about boundaries, and be aware of their surroundings.

Apart from discussing self-protection in general, researchers also conducted a study on culture-based self-protection. Teachers' perception of self-protection based on culture is the self-protection materials that should follow social norms and prioritize behavior and clothing etiquette. This education should reflect on Javanese characters emphasizing shyness in behavior and getting dressed. Javanese culture has its procedures for dressing and norms or rules for sitting. A teacher illustrated culture-based self-protection through art performance and how to dress. Lastly, a teacher who participated in this study had limitations in understanding and conveying self-protection from a cultural perspective because she did not receive sexual education or self-protection based on cultural training.

The study has limitations. One of them is a research participant. This study involved nine female teacher participants who were mothers and only one male teacher participant who was a father. Fathers were not involved in this study because of their lack of participation in teaching sexual education to children.

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