

## **Strengthening the Role of Integrated Health Post Cadres in Child Protection Through Legal Psychology Education in Srigonco Village, Malang Regency**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This community service program aims to strengthen the role of Integrated Health Post (Posyandu ILP) cadres in child protection through legal psychology education in Srigonco Village, Malang Regency, Indonesia. Posyandu cadres serve as frontline community agents in monitoring child health and welfare; however, their understanding of children's rights, legal protection, and psychological assistance for child abuse victims remains limited. This condition has contributed to the low level of early detection and reporting of child abuse cases at the village level. To address these challenges, this program implemented a series of educational interventions, including legal counseling on child protection laws, workshops on early detection and handling of child abuse cases, and training on psychological approaches for assisting child victims. The activities were conducted using participatory methods such as lectures, interactive discussions, case simulations, and role-playing. The effectiveness of the program was evaluated through pre-test and post-test assessments, observation, and participant feedback. The results indicate a significant improvement in cadres' knowledge and skills regarding children's rights, legal reporting mechanisms, and appropriate psychological assistance techniques. The cadres demonstrated increased confidence in identifying signs of abuse, providing initial support to victims, and coordinating with relevant authorities. Additionally, this program contributed to strengthening community awareness through educational campaigns involving local stakeholders. Overall, this community service initiative successfully enhanced the capacity of Posyandu cadres as agents of change in promoting child protection at the grassroots level. The program also reflects the synergy between academic institutions and local communities in creating a safer and more child-friendly social environment. The main output of this program is a scientific article targeted for publication in a nationally accredited journal.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Child protection remains a critical issue in Indonesia, particularly at the community level where early detection and prevention of violence against children are often limited by inadequate legal awareness and lack of psychological understanding. According to UNICEF (2021), cases of child abuse ranging from physical violence, psychological abuse, neglect, to exploitation continue to increase, while many incidents remain unreported due to social stigma, fear, and limited public knowledge of reporting mechanisms. Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak (KPPPA, 2020) also reports that a significant proportion of child violence cases occur within domestic and community environments, highlighting the urgent need for preventive interventions at the grassroots level.

One of the most strategic community institutions in promoting child welfare in Indonesia is the Integrated Health Post (Posyandu). Posyandu cadres play a vital role as community-based volunteers who regularly interact with mothers and children in monitoring growth, health, nutrition, and development (Ministry of Health Republic of Indonesia, 2019). Beyond their health-related roles, Posyandu cadres also have strong potential to act as key agents in child protection education, early detection of abuse, and community advocacy. However, in practice, their function is often limited to basic health services without sufficient integration of legal and psychological perspectives in child protection efforts.

Legal awareness is a fundamental element in strengthening child protection. Indonesian Law Number 23 of 2002 concerning Child Protection, as amended by Law Number 35 of 2014, explicitly guarantees children's rights to protection from violence, discrimination, and neglect. However, the effectiveness of this legal framework largely depends on public understanding and participation in its implementation (KPAI, 2022). Studies show that low legal literacy at the community level significantly contributes to underreporting of child abuse cases and weak protection mechanisms (Fitriani & Prasetyo, 2021). Without adequate knowledge of legal procedures, community members including Posyandu cadres often hesitate to take action when they encounter suspected abuse.

In addition to legal knowledge, psychological competence is equally essential in handling cases of child abuse. Children who experience violence are at high risk of long-term psychological trauma, including anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and impaired social functioning (Santrock, 2019). Proper psychological assistance requires not only empathy but also specific communication techniques and trauma-informed approaches to avoid re-victimization during the assistance process (Herman, 2015). Unfortunately, many community-based volunteers are not adequately equipped with these skills, which limits the effectiveness of early intervention and recovery support for child victims.

This condition is also reflected in Srigonco Village, Malang Regency, where Posyandu ILP cadres actively carry out maternal and child health services but still face limitations in understanding children's rights, legal protection mechanisms, and psychological assistance strategies. Preliminary observations and informal interviews with several cadres indicated that most of them were unfamiliar with formal reporting procedures for child abuse cases and lacked confidence in providing psychological support to victims. This situation potentially weakens the village's capacity to prevent, detect, and respond to child protection issues in a timely and appropriate manner.

Community-based capacity building through legal psychology education is therefore a strategic approach to strengthening child protection at the village level. Legal psychology integrates legal knowledge with psychological understanding to support victims more holistically, particularly vulnerable groups such as children (Gudjonsson & Haward, 2016). By equipping Posyandu cadres with both legal and psychological competencies, they can function more effectively as frontline protectors who not only monitor children's physical health but also safeguard their rights and mental well-being.

Based on these considerations, this community service program was designed to strengthen the role of Posyandu ILP cadres in child protection through legal psychology education in Srigonco Village. The program integrates legal counseling, child abuse detection workshops, and psychological assistance training using participatory methods. This initiative is expected to enhance the knowledge, skills, and confidence of cadres in implementing child protection practices while also strengthening community awareness and collaboration with relevant stakeholders.

## 2. METHODS

This community service program was designed using a participatory action-based approach, which emphasizes active engagement of community members as both beneficiaries and agents of change. This approach was selected to ensure that Posyandu ILP cadres were not only passive recipients of information but also actively involved in the learning, implementation, and evaluation processes. Participatory methods have been proven effective in community empowerment programs because they enhance ownership, sustainability, and practical impact (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2014; Chambers, 2017). The program integrated legal education and psychological assistance strategies to strengthen child protection practices at the village level. The program was implemented in Srigonco Village, Malang Regency, Indonesia. The primary participants were 20 Posyandu ILP cadres who were actively involved in maternal and child health services. These cadres were selected through coordination with village authorities and Posyandu coordinators based on their availability, activeness, and commitment to follow the entire series of activities. In addition to the cadres, village officials, health workers, and community leaders were also indirectly involved during the community awareness campaign. Posyandu cadres were chosen as the main target group due to their strategic role as frontline community volunteers who regularly interact with children and families (Ministry of Health Republic of Indonesia, 2019).

The implementation of the program was carried out through several systematic stages. The first stage was the preparation and needs assessment stage, which aimed to identify the baseline conditions and capacity of the cadres related to child protection issues. This stage involved field observations at Posyandu service locations and informal interviews with cadres and village authorities. The needs assessment focused on identifying the cadres' level of understanding of children's rights, legal protection mechanisms, and psychological assistance for child victims. The findings from this stage indicated that most cadres had limited knowledge of child protection laws and lacked confidence in handling abuse cases. These results became the basis for designing training materials and learning strategies that were contextually relevant to local conditions (Chambers, 2017). The second stage was legal education on child protection, which aimed to strengthen the cadres' understanding of children's rights and legal protection mechanisms. The legal education sessions covered the Indonesian Child Protection Law (Law No. 23 of 2002 as amended by Law No. 35 of 2014), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the legal obligations of communities in preventing and reporting child abuse. The learning process was conducted through lectures and interactive discussions to encourage participant engagement. To measure the effectiveness of this stage, a pre-test and post-test design was applied to assess changes in the cadres' legal knowledge (KPAI, 2022).

The third stage consisted of a workshop on early detection and legal handling of child abuse cases. This stage focused on improving the practical skills of cadres in recognizing signs of child abuse and responding appropriately. The training materials included identification of physical, psychological, and neglect-related indicators of abuse, procedures for documenting cases, and legal reporting

mechanisms to relevant authorities such as the police and social services. Case-based discussions and simulation activities were used to help cadres understand real-life situations and improve their problem-solving abilities. Experiential learning through case simulations is recognized as an effective method to strengthen practical competencies and decision-making skills (Kolb, 2015).

The fourth stage was psychological assistance training for child victims, which aimed to equip cadres with basic psychological skills to support children who experience violence or neglect. The training focused on effective communication techniques with traumatized children, basic trauma-informed care principles, strategies for building children's sense of safety, and methods for preventing secondary trauma and re-victimization. The training process used role-play, scenario-based exercises, and reflective discussions to enhance emotional sensitivity and empathetic responses. Psychological competence is essential in child protection because inappropriate assistance may worsen a child's emotional condition and delay recovery (Herman, 2015; Santrock, 2019).

The fifth stage was the community awareness campaign, which aimed to extend the impact of the program beyond the Posyandu cadres and strengthen community participation in child protection efforts. This campaign was conducted through village-level meetings, distribution of brochures and posters on children's rights and abuse prevention, and involvement of community and religious leaders as child protection advocates. Public awareness campaigns play a crucial role in reducing social stigma, increasing reporting of abuse cases, and strengthening collective responsibility for child protection (UNICEF Indonesia, 2021).

The final stage was monitoring and evaluation, which was conducted to assess the effectiveness and sustainability of the program. Evaluation was carried out through post-test analysis, participant feedback questionnaires, and observation of cadres' engagement during training and community activities. The evaluation also considered changes in cadres' confidence in handling child protection issues and their ability to disseminate knowledge within the community. Monitoring outcomes were used to identify strengths, challenges, and recommendations for future community service programs in the field of legal psychology and child protection.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The community service program conducted in Srigonco Village demonstrated significant improvements in the knowledge, skills, and confidence of Posyandu ILP cadres regarding child protection from both legal and psychological perspectives. The findings were obtained from pre-test and post-test measurements, direct observation during training activities, participant feedback, and evaluation of cadre involvement in community awareness campaigns. These results indicate that integrating legal psychology education into community-based health services is an effective strategy for strengthening child protection at the grassroots level.

#### **Improvement in Legal Awareness of Child Protection**

One of the most significant findings of this program was the substantial increase in the cadres' legal understanding of children's rights and child protection mechanisms. Prior to the intervention, most cadres had limited knowledge of the Indonesian Child Protection Law and were unfamiliar with formal reporting procedures for child abuse cases. This condition is consistent with previous studies that highlight low levels of legal literacy as a major barrier to effective child protection in developing communities (Fitriani & Prasetyo, 2021; KPAI, 2022).

The post-test results showed a marked improvement in cadres' comprehension of legal norms, reporting obligations, and institutional coordination mechanisms. After participating in legal counseling sessions, the cadres were able to correctly identify the types of child abuse regulated under national law, understand the legal responsibilities of community members, and explain reporting procedures to relevant authorities. This improvement confirms that structured legal education at the community level plays a vital role in strengthening public participation in law enforcement, especially in child protection cases (UNICEF Indonesia, 2021).

From a theoretical perspective, this finding aligns with the concept of legal empowerment, which emphasizes that increased legal knowledge enhances individuals' capacity to recognize violations, claim rights, and access justice mechanisms (Chambers, 2017). When Posyandu cadres possess adequate legal understanding, they become more confident and proactive as frontline protectors of children rather than passive observers of abuse.

### **Enhanced Capacity for Early Detection and Legal Handling of Child Abuse**

Another significant outcome of the program was the increased ability of cadres to detect early signs of child abuse and respond appropriately. During the workshop sessions, cadres were trained to identify physical indicators (such as bruises and malnutrition), psychological indicators (such as withdrawal and excessive fear), and signs of neglect. Initially, many participants perceived child abuse solely as physical violence and were unaware that psychological and neglect-based abuse also constitute serious legal violations. This misconception reflects a common societal bias in understanding child abuse (KPPPA, 2020).

Following the training, cadres demonstrated improved analytical skills in identifying various forms of abuse through case simulations and scenario-based discussions. They were also able to explain the legal steps required for case documentation, victim referral, and coordination with police and social service institutions. The effectiveness of simulation-based learning observed in this program supports Kolb's (2015) experiential learning theory, which emphasizes that practical experience strengthens cognitive understanding and decision-making abilities.

The findings also suggest that equipping community volunteers with both legal and procedural knowledge reduces hesitation in reporting cases. Fear of social consequences and lack of procedural clarity are widely recognized as key factors contributing to the underreporting of child abuse cases (UNICEF Indonesia, 2021). By providing clear legal pathways and institutional coordination mechanisms, this program helped reduce these psychological and social barriers.

### **Strengthening Psychological Competence in Assisting Child Victims**

In addition to legal capacity, the program also produced positive outcomes in enhancing the psychological competence of the cadres. Prior to the intervention, most cadres relied solely on instinctive empathy when encountering vulnerable children and lacked structured communication and trauma-handling skills. This limitation posed a risk of secondary trauma or ineffective assistance.

After participating in psychological assistance training, the cadres demonstrated improved communication skills, particularly in using non-threatening language, active listening techniques, and child-centered communication strategies. They also gained a better understanding of trauma symptoms and recovery processes. This result is consistent with Santrock's (2019) explanation that children who experience violence are highly vulnerable to long-term emotional and social disturbances if not supported through appropriate psychological approaches.

Furthermore, the application of trauma-informed care principles during role-playing sessions proved effective in building emotional sensitivity and ethical awareness among cadres. Herman (2015) emphasizes that trauma recovery requires safety, trust, and empowerment—three elements that were integrated into the training process. The cadres' improved confidence in interacting with child victims indicates that even non-professional community actors can meaningfully contribute to early psychological assistance when equipped with proper guidance.

### **Increased Community Participation through Awareness Campaigns**

The community awareness campaign also contributed significantly to strengthening collective responsibility for child protection in Srigonco Village. Through village meetings, poster dissemination, and direct socialization sessions, the program succeeded in broadening public understanding of children's rights and reporting mechanisms. Community leaders and religious figures who were

involved in the campaign played a strategic role in legitimizing child protection messages within local social structures.

This finding supports UNICEF Indonesia (2021), which states that community engagement is a key factor in building sustainable protection systems for children. When child protection is framed as a shared moral and social duty, community members become more responsive and vigilant toward potential abuse cases. The increased openness of villagers during discussion sessions indicates a gradual reduction of social stigma surrounding child abuse issues.

### **Integration of Legal and Psychological Approaches in Community-Based Child Protection**

The most important contribution of this program lies in the successful integration of legal and psychological approaches within a community-based child protection framework. Traditionally, Posyandu services have focused primarily on physical health monitoring, nutrition, and immunization (Ministry of Health Republic of Indonesia, 2019). However, this program demonstrates that Posyandu cadres can also function as effective child protection agents when equipped with interdisciplinary competencies.

From a legal psychology perspective, the integration of legal norms with psychological assistance strengthens both preventive and responsive dimensions of child protection. Legal knowledge empowers cadres to act decisively within formal institutional frameworks, while psychological competence ensures that interventions prioritize the emotional well-being of child victims. This integration reflects Gudjonsson and Haward's (2016) view that legal psychology plays a crucial role in bridging legal processes with human behavioral understanding, especially in cases involving vulnerable populations.

### **Implications for Community Empowerment and Policy Development**

The findings of this program also have broader implications for community empowerment and local policy development. Strengthened cadre capacity contributes to the creation of a village-based child protection system that operates not only reactively but also preventively. The cadres' improved role as legal and psychological educators enables the diffusion of child protection values at the household and neighborhood levels.

At the policy level, this program supports the argument that community-based volunteers should be recognized as strategic partners in national child protection agendas. Formal collaboration between universities, local governments, and Posyandu organizations can serve as a sustainable model for expanding child protection services in rural areas. Without such collaboration, the legal framework alone is insufficient to ensure effective implementation at the community level (Fitriani & Prasetyo, 2021).

## **4. CONCLUSION**

This community service program demonstrates that integrating legal education and psychological assistance into Posyandu-based activities is an effective strategy for strengthening child protection at the grassroots level. The implementation of legal psychology education in Srigonco Village significantly improved the legal awareness, detection skills, psychological competence, and confidence of Posyandu ILP cadres in responding to child protection issues. The cadres' enhanced capacity enables them to function not only as health service providers but also as frontline child protection agents within their community.

The findings confirm that community-based capacity building plays a crucial role in overcoming key barriers to child protection, such as low legal literacy, limited understanding of reporting mechanisms, and inadequate psychological handling of child victims. Through participatory training methods, case simulations, and trauma-informed communication training, cadres succeeded in developing both preventive and responsive competencies in child protection practices. This result

reinforces the importance of experiential and interdisciplinary approaches in community empowerment programs.

Furthermore, the community awareness campaign strengthened collective responsibility and social sensitivity toward child protection issues in Srigonco Village. The involvement of community and religious leaders proved effective in reducing stigma surrounding child abuse and encouraging greater openness in reporting and prevention efforts. This indicates that sustainable child protection systems cannot rely solely on formal legal institutions but must be supported by strong community engagement.

In terms of broader implications, this program highlights the strategic role of Posyandu cadres as legal-psychological educators at the village level. The model implemented in this program can be replicated in other rural areas as part of an integrated child protection strategy involving universities, local governments, and community health institutions. However, the sustainability of this model requires continued institutional support, policy reinforcement, and periodic capacity-building programs.

Despite its positive outcomes, this program also has limitations, particularly in terms of the duration of intervention and the scale of participants, which may affect the long-term measurement of behavioral change. Therefore, future community service initiatives are recommended to adopt longer monitoring periods, include larger participant groups, and integrate digital-based reporting and education tools to strengthen the continuity and impact of child protection efforts at the village level.

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