

Efforts to Prevent Sexual Violence in Elementary School Children through Sexual Education and Parenting at LKSA IKATRINA Ponorogo

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ABSTRACT

Sexual violence against children remains a significant social concern, particularly among elementary school-aged children who are vulnerable due to limited understanding of personal safety and body boundaries. Preventive efforts through sexual education and parenting programs are considered important strategies to reduce these risks. This study aims to analyze the implementation of sexual violence prevention efforts through sexual education and parenting programs at LKSA IKATRINA Ponorogo and to examine their impact on children and parents. The research employed a qualitative descriptive approach using observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation techniques. Participants included institutional managers, caregivers, parents, and children involved in the programs. Data were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, supported by triangulation to ensure credibility. The findings indicate that prevention efforts were implemented through sexual and reproductive health workshops, toilet training activities, routine parent meetings, and parenting seminars. These programs improved children's awareness of personal safety, strengthened self-protection skills, and enhanced independence in maintaining personal hygiene. Additionally, parental participation increased awareness of appropriate parenting practices and improved parent-child communication. The study concludes that integrated sexual education and parenting programs contribute to strengthening child protection by promoting safer environments and supporting children's well-being.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Children represent individuals who are in a fundamental stage of human development that significantly determines their future quality of life. During childhood, the foundations of cognitive, emotional, social, and moral development are formed, making the protection and fulfillment of children's rights a shared responsibility among families, communities, and the state. Children have the right to protection, education, participation, and a safe environment that supports optimal physical, psychological, and social growth, as mandated in Law Number 35 of 2014 concerning Child Protection. Ensuring these rights is essential because early developmental experiences strongly influence children's long-term well-being and social functioning (United Nations, 1989; Papalia & Martorell, 2021). Within the context of basic education, children aged 6–12 years are in a critical developmental phase characterized by rapid improvement in logical thinking, moral reasoning, and social interaction skills, all of which require consistent guidance from parents and educational environments (Crain, 2007; Santrock, 2018).

Despite the importance of this developmental period, contemporary childhood is increasingly exposed to various social risks, one of the most alarming being sexual violence against children. Sexual violence refers to acts that cause physical and psychological harm through coercive sexual activities that are inappropriate to a child's developmental stage and capacity for consent (Wahid & Irfan, 2001). Globally and nationally, reports indicate an increasing trend in both the number of cases and the complexity of sexual violence occurring in domestic, educational, and public settings (UNICEF, 2017; WHO, 2020). The growing prevalence of such cases highlights the urgency of preventive interventions that prioritize early education and community involvement in child protection efforts.

Elementary school-aged children are considered particularly vulnerable to sexual violence due to their developmental characteristics, including limited risk awareness, dependence on adults, and trust in familiar individuals. Research indicates that perpetrators frequently originate from the child's immediate social environment, such as relatives, caregivers, or acquaintances, making detection and disclosure more difficult (Finkelhor, 2009; Kinnear, 2007). Children often lack sufficient understanding of body boundaries and are unable to interpret inappropriate behavior as abuse. This situation is further exacerbated by limited communication between parents and children regarding sexuality, body autonomy, and personal safety (Chomaria, 2012). Cultural taboos surrounding discussions of sexuality frequently prevent families from providing accurate and age-appropriate information, resulting in children's limited capacity to recognize or report harmful experiences.

In response to these challenges, sexual education from an early age has emerged as an effective preventive strategy for reducing children's vulnerability to sexual violence. Sexual education is not merely concerned with biological reproduction but encompasses broader dimensions, including understanding body ownership, recognizing personal boundaries, developing healthy interpersonal relationships, and strengthening decision-making skills related to personal safety (UNESCO, 2018; Madani, 2019). Comprehensive sexuality education helps children understand which behaviors are appropriate or inappropriate and empowers them to respond assertively when facing threatening situations (Goldman & Grimbeek, 2015; Walsh et al., 2015). Studies have demonstrated that children who receive structured sexual education are more capable of identifying risky situations and seeking help compared to those who do not receive such education (Kenny & Wurtele, 2012).

However, effective prevention cannot rely solely on child-focused education. Parental involvement plays a crucial role in reinforcing protective behaviors and creating emotionally supportive environments. Parenting programs contribute to improving communication patterns between parents and children, strengthening emotional attachment, and increasing parental awareness regarding developmental needs and child protection practices (Brooks, 2011; Wurtele & Kenny, 2010). Parents who actively engage in discussions about safety and personal boundaries help children develop trust and confidence to disclose uncomfortable experiences. Ecological theory emphasizes that child development occurs within interconnected systems, meaning that prevention efforts must involve collaboration among families, institutions, and communities (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Previous studies have shown that sexual education programs implemented in schools and families can significantly improve children's self-protection skills and awareness of dangerous situations (Pramastri et al., 2011; Davis & Gidycz, 2000). Nevertheless, most existing research focuses primarily on formal school settings, leaving limited exploration of prevention programs implemented within child social welfare institutions. Such institutions play a strategic role, particularly for children who require additional social support and structured caregiving environments. Research examining integrated approaches that combine sexual education and parenting interventions within social welfare contexts remains relatively scarce, especially in Indonesian settings.

LKSA IKATRINA Ngunut Babadan Ponorogo represents one of the child social welfare institutions that actively develops sexual violence prevention programs through integrated sexual education and parenting approaches. The institution implements preventive initiatives through reproductive health workshops, toilet training activities, regular parent meetings, and parenting seminars. These programs aim to strengthen children's knowledge, attitudes, and self-protection abilities while simultaneously improving parental awareness and caregiving practices. By combining educational interventions for children and empowerment programs for parents, LKSA IKATRINA seeks to create a comprehensive child protection environment that supports children's safety and well-being.

The integration of sexual education and parenting programs is particularly important because prevention requires consistency between institutional education and family practices. When children receive similar messages about safety, boundaries, and respect across different environments, they are more likely to internalize protective behaviors and apply them in daily life (Mathews & Collin-Vézina, 2019). Moreover, participatory parenting programs encourage collaboration between caregivers and institutions, fostering shared responsibility for child protection and developmental support.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the efforts to prevent sexual violence among elementary school children through sexual education and parenting programs implemented at LKSA IKATRINA Ponorogo. Additionally, this research examines the impact of program implementation on increasing parental awareness, improving parenting practices, and strengthening children's self-protection skills. By focusing on a child social welfare institution context, this study seeks to contribute to the development of integrated prevention models that can be adapted in similar institutions to enhance child protection strategies and promote safer developmental environments for children.

2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach using a descriptive research design to explore in depth the efforts to prevent sexual violence among elementary school children through sexual education and parenting programs implemented at LKSA IKATRINA Ponorogo. A qualitative approach was selected because the study aimed to understand social phenomena, participants' experiences, and the implementation processes of prevention programs within their natural institutional context. The research was conducted in a natural setting, where the researcher functioned as the primary instrument in data collection and interpretation. Research participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in the implementation of the programs, which was subsequently expanded through snowball sampling to obtain richer and more comprehensive data. The informants consisted of the head of the LKSA, caregiving coordinators, parents, and elementary school children participating in the sexual education and parenting programs. The data sources included primary data obtained through direct interaction with participants and secondary data derived from institutional documents, program reports, and relevant organizational archives supporting the research focus.

Data collection techniques included participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation to ensure comprehensive and triangulated findings. Observation was conducted to examine directly the implementation of reproductive health workshops, toilet training activities, and parenting programs, while semi-structured interviews were used to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and perceived impacts of the programs on both children and parents. Documentation

served as supporting evidence, including activity records, photographs, and institutional administrative documents. Data analysis followed an interactive model consisting of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. During the data reduction stage, the researcher selected, focused, and simplified data relevant to the research objectives. The data were then organized and presented in descriptive narratives and thematic categories to facilitate interpretation. Conclusions were drawn continuously throughout the research process by comparing empirical findings with relevant theoretical frameworks. To ensure data trustworthiness, several validation strategies were applied, including source and method triangulation, prolonged engagement in the field, persistent observation, and peer debriefing to enhance the credibility and validity of the research findings.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Preventing sexual violence among elementary school children requires systematic, structured, and developmentally appropriate programs that address both children's knowledge and the broader caregiving environment. The findings of this study reveal that LKSA IKATRINA, as a child social welfare institution, has implemented a series of preventive programs designed to reduce children's vulnerability to sexual violence. These programs include sexual and reproductive health workshops, toilet training activities, regular parent meetings, and parenting seminars. The implementation of these programs demonstrates an integrated prevention strategy that combines child education, parental involvement, and institutional support as interconnected components of child protection.

The sexual and reproductive health workshops constitute one of the main preventive interventions conducted by LKSA IKATRINA. Through these workshops, children are introduced to age-appropriate knowledge regarding body awareness, personal boundaries, and safe social interactions. The program emphasizes recognizing inappropriate behavior, understanding private body parts, and developing the confidence to refuse uncomfortable situations. Informants reported that children who participated in the workshops showed increased awareness regarding personal safety and became more cautious when interacting with unfamiliar individuals. This indicates that knowledge-based preventive education plays an important role in strengthening children's cognitive readiness to identify potential threats.

In addition to cognitive understanding, LKSA IKATRINA focuses on shaping children's attitudes and behavioral responses. Children are encouraged not to easily trust strangers, avoid conversations containing pornographic or inappropriate content, and develop assertiveness in responding to uncomfortable situations. These preventive steps reflect a proactive approach aimed at building children's self-protection skills rather than merely responding to incidents after they occur. The findings suggest that children gradually develop the ability to recognize risky situations and express refusal more confidently. However, the study also identified an aspect that has not yet been implemented, namely training related to physical self-protection or techniques for escaping from dangerous situations. While the institution prioritizes psychological and educational prevention, the absence of practical self-defense strategies represents a potential area for future program development.

The implementation of sexual education at LKSA IKATRINA is aligned with stages of child sexual development. Based on developmental theory, children progress through several psychosexual stages, including the oral, anal, phallic, latency, and genital stages. Elementary school-aged children are generally positioned within the phallic stage transitioning toward the latency stage, during which curiosity about gender differences and bodily identity becomes increasingly prominent. At this developmental phase, children begin to identify their reproductive organs and ask questions related to physical differences between boys and girls. Recognizing this developmental characteristic, LKSA IKATRINA integrates sexual education into toilet training activities.

Toilet training at LKSA IKATRINA goes beyond hygiene instruction and functions as an educational medium for introducing body anatomy and privacy concepts. Through guided practice, children learn about proper self-care, personal cleanliness, and appropriate boundaries regarding their bodies. Caregivers explain which body parts are private and emphasize that no one is allowed to touch them without consent except under specific caregiving circumstances. Observations indicate that children become more aware of bodily autonomy and demonstrate improved independence in maintaining personal hygiene. This activity also helps normalize discussions about the body in a respectful and educational manner, reducing stigma and confusion often associated with sexual education topics.

Another important component of the prevention program involves parental engagement through routine meetings and parenting seminars. These activities aim to enhance parents' understanding of child development, appropriate parenting practices, and effective communication regarding sexuality and safety. Findings show that parents experienced increased awareness of the importance of open communication with children, particularly regarding personal safety and emotional well-being. Parents reported becoming more attentive to children's behavioral changes and more responsive to children's concerns. The alignment between institutional goals and parental practices strengthens the consistency of preventive messages received by children both at home and within the institution.

The integration of parenting programs also contributes to strengthening emotional bonds between parents and children. Improved communication fosters trust, making children more likely to share uncomfortable experiences or report suspicious situations. Informants indicated that children felt safer and more emotionally supported after parents became actively involved in the program. This emotional security plays an essential role in prevention, as children who feel supported are more likely to disclose harmful experiences and seek help when facing threats.

The findings further demonstrate that sexual education programs function as a protective "shield" for children. Children acquire practical knowledge about what actions are appropriate or inappropriate, enabling them to regulate their behavior and make safer decisions. Participants showed increased self-reliance in maintaining personal hygiene and demonstrated awareness of boundaries in social interactions. Children also became less susceptible to manipulation by unfamiliar individuals, indicating improved risk awareness. These outcomes reflect the broader goals of sexual education, including fostering independence, strengthening cooperation between parents and institutions, and increasing parental awareness regarding appropriate caregiving practices.

Based on empirical observations and theoretical reflections, the study concludes that integrated sexual education and parenting programs implemented at LKSA IKATRINA generate positive impacts on both children and parents. For parents, the program enhances understanding of child development stages and promotes more protective and responsive parenting styles. Parents become more conscious that appropriate caregiving contributes to children's sense of safety, comfort, and happiness. For children, the program increases awareness of personal safety, encourages cautious interaction with strangers, and strengthens the ability to maintain sexual hygiene and health.

Overall, the findings indicate that prevention efforts carried out through educational and parenting approaches can reduce children's vulnerability to sexual violence by equipping them with knowledge, attitudes, and behavioral competencies. The combination of institutional programs, developmental education, and parental collaboration creates a supportive environment that promotes child protection holistically. Nevertheless, future program development may consider incorporating practical self-protection training and continuous evaluation mechanisms to further enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of prevention efforts.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that sexual violence prevention efforts implemented at LKSA IKATRINA through sexual education and parenting-based programs contribute significantly to strengthening children's self-protection capacities. Programs such as reproductive health workshops,

toilet training, routine parent meetings, and parenting seminars indicate a comprehensive preventive approach that integrates children, caregivers, and institutional environments. This aligns with ecological perspectives on child protection which emphasize that prevention must involve multiple systems surrounding the child, including family, educational institutions, and social environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Wurtele & Kenny, 2010).

The provision of sexual and reproductive health workshops serves as an important protective factor by improving children's knowledge and awareness regarding body autonomy and personal safety. Research consistently shows that age-appropriate sexual education enhances children's ability to recognize inappropriate behavior, resist coercion, and report unsafe situations (Goldman & Grimbeek, 2015; Walsh et al., 2015). In this context, LKSA IKATRINA's initiative functions as a preventive "shield," equipping children with cognitive understanding and behavioral strategies to avoid risky interactions, particularly with unfamiliar individuals. Such outcomes support previous findings indicating that preventive education reduces vulnerability by fostering assertiveness and decision-making skills among children (Finkelhor, 2009; Kenny & Wurtele, 2012).

Furthermore, the integration of toilet training as part of sexual education reflects developmental appropriateness. Based on psychosexual development theory, elementary school-aged children transition through the phallic stage toward latency, characterized by increasing curiosity about gender differences and bodily identity (Freud, 1962; Santrock, 2018). Educational interventions during this stage are crucial because children begin forming self-concepts related to privacy, modesty, and bodily boundaries. The toilet training activities at LKSA IKATRINA not only promote hygiene independence but also introduce anatomical awareness, which is recognized as a foundational component of sexual abuse prevention education (UNESCO, 2018; WHO, 2020). When children understand their bodies and private areas, they are more capable of identifying violations and communicating discomfort.

Another significant finding concerns the role of parenting engagement through routine meetings and parenting seminars. The study shows that parental awareness and caregiving practices improved after participation in institutional programs. This finding supports family-centered prevention models asserting that parental communication, supervision, and emotional support significantly reduce children's risk of sexual victimization (Rudolph & Zimmer-Gembeck, 2018; Assini-Meytin et al., 2020). Parenting education helps align caregiving practices between families and child welfare institutions, thereby creating consistent protective messages across environments. Consistency in values and communication patterns has been identified as a key factor in strengthening children's psychological safety and resilience (Mathews & Collin-Vézina, 2019).

The findings also reveal behavioral changes among children, including increased caution toward strangers, avoidance of inappropriate conversations, and assertiveness in uncomfortable situations. These outcomes reflect the success of preventive education in developing personal safety skills. Social learning theory explains that children internalize protective behaviors through repeated instruction, modeling, and reinforcement within structured programs (Bandura, 1977). Thus, LKSA IKATRINA's programs appear to function not only as knowledge transmission but also as behavioral conditioning processes that cultivate protective habits.

However, this study also identifies a gap in preventive practice, namely the absence of training related to physical self-defense or strategies to incapacitate perpetrators. While empowerment-based self-defense programs remain debated, several studies suggest that age-appropriate assertiveness and escape strategies can enhance children's confidence and situational response capacity without promoting aggression (Hollander, 2018; McCauley et al., 2017). Therefore, integrating safe self-protection techniques—focused on escape rather than confrontation—may strengthen existing prevention programs.

Importantly, the findings confirm that sexual education contributes not only to protection against abuse but also to broader developmental outcomes, including self-care independence and emotional well-being. Children who understand bodily hygiene and boundaries demonstrate greater autonomy and self-respect, which are associated with positive psychosocial development (Papalia & Martorell,

2021). The reported outcomes—children feeling safer, more confident, and happier—indicate that preventive programs operate simultaneously as protective and developmental interventions.

From a theoretical perspective, these results reinforce preventive frameworks that position education as primary prevention against sexual violence. Prevention is most effective when implemented before risk exposure and when children are empowered with knowledge, attitudes, and skills simultaneously (CDC, 2019; Wurtele, 2017). LKSA IKATRINA's model reflects this principle by combining child education, caregiver involvement, and institutional commitment.

Overall, the discussion suggests that integrated sexual education and parenting programs represent an effective strategy for preventing sexual violence among elementary school children. The combination of developmental education, parental collaboration, and institutional support creates a protective ecosystem that reduces vulnerability while promoting children's autonomy and well-being. Future programs may enhance effectiveness by incorporating structured self-protection training and continuous evaluation to measure long-term behavioral outcomes.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that efforts to prevent sexual violence among elementary school children at LKSA IKATRINA Ponorogo have been implemented through integrated sexual education and parenting programs designed to strengthen both children's self-protection abilities and parental awareness. The prevention initiatives are realized through sexual and reproductive health workshops, toilet training activities, routine parent meetings, and parenting seminars. These programs provide children with age-appropriate knowledge regarding body awareness, personal boundaries, and safe social interactions, enabling them to develop greater caution toward unfamiliar individuals and increased confidence in responding to uncomfortable situations.

The findings indicate that sexual education activities contribute not only to children's understanding of personal safety but also to the development of independence in maintaining personal hygiene and recognizing appropriate and inappropriate behaviors. Meanwhile, parenting programs enhance parents' understanding of child development stages and promote more responsive and protective caregiving practices. Improved communication between parents and children fosters emotional closeness and creates a supportive environment that encourages children to express concerns and seek help when facing potential threats.

Overall, the integration of sexual education and parenting approaches creates a comprehensive preventive framework that supports children's safety, comfort, and well-being while reducing their vulnerability to sexual violence. These findings imply that collaboration between child welfare institutions and families is essential in strengthening child protection efforts. Future programs are recommended to incorporate continuous evaluation and additional self-protection skill training to further enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of sexual violence prevention initiatives.

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