

Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse: Perspectives on Education and Advocacy

Rahmad Rafid^{1✉}, Riski Febria Nurita²

¹ Universitas Kristen Cipta Wacana, East Java, Indonesia

¹*Email: rahmadrafid@cwcu.ac.id

² Universitas Merdeka Malang, East java, Indonesia

²*Email: riski.febria@unmer.ac.id

Article History

Received:

December 8,
2024

Revised:

September 5,
2025

Accepted:

September 10,
2025

Published:

October 16, 2025

ABSTRACT

Child sexual abuse is a form of violence that has long-term psychological, physical, and social impacts, requiring attention from society, families, and educational institutions. This study employed a qualitative approach using a literature review method. Data collection was conducted through systematic searches of databases such as Scopus and Google Scholar, validated through source triangulation. Data analysis utilised content analysis to identify themes and patterns. The findings indicated that school-based education is effective in equipping children with self-protection knowledge, although it faces challenges such as limited teacher training, cultural resistance, and insufficient teaching materials. Community-based advocacy has been shown to enhance public awareness, strengthen child protection policies, and reduce stigma against victims, despite obstacles such as weak cross-sector coordination. The study concludes by emphasising the importance of collaboration between education and advocacy in developing sustainable prevention strategies. It recommends the development of culturally sensitive curricula, teacher training programmes, and improved cross-sector coordination to enhance child protection. Practical implications include designing policies that support the synergy of education and advocacy to create a safe environment for children in Indonesia.

Keywords: *Child Sexual Abuse; Education; Advocacy; Psychology*

Contribution/Originality: This study offers an original contribution by integrating education and advocacy perspectives as a holistic approach to preventing child sexual abuse, particularly in Indonesia. This approach provides evidence-based solutions through the development of culturally sensitive curricula, capacity building for teachers via training, and strengthened coordination between communities, governments, and civil society organisations. By highlighting the synergy between education and advocacy, this research establishes a new framework that is not only locally relevant but also potentially applicable in a global context to foster more inclusive and sustainable child protection measures.

1. INTRODUCTION

Child sexual abuse is a form of violence that has long-term impacts, including psychological, physical, and social consequences. Addressing this issue is not solely the responsibility of individuals but requires collective attention from society, families, and

educational institutions. From an educational perspective, schools, teachers, and curricula play a crucial role in educating children on self-protection, understanding personal boundaries, and recognising inappropriate behaviours. Meanwhile, advocacy serves a strategic role in promoting child-friendly policies, raising public awareness, and strengthening law enforcement against perpetrators. The synergy between education and advocacy is a key factor in preventing and minimising instances of child sexual abuse.

Studies on the effects of child sexual abuse reveal numerous detrimental consequences, such as psychological trauma, a decline in self-confidence, and difficulties forming social relationships in the future (Finkelhor 2019). Global data indicate that the prevalence of child sexual abuse is alarmingly high, with around 20% of children experiencing sexual violence before the age of 18 (Pereda et al. 2016). In Indonesia, data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) in 2020 recorded hundreds of cases of child sexual abuse annually, most of which occur within the family or among individuals known to the victims. This indicates that child sexual abuse is a complex issue encompassing cultural, social, and legal aspects, which necessitates an interdisciplinary approach.

Previous research has highlighted the role of school-based education in preventing child sexual abuse. A study by Walsh et al. (2015) found that school-based education programmes focusing on the prevention of sexual abuse effectively reduce the risk of victimisation. These programmes enhance children's knowledge about self-protection and recognising danger signs. However, implementing such programmes in Indonesia faces challenges, including a lack of teacher training, limited relevant teaching materials, and cultural resistance to sexual education (Putra & Indarti 2019).

In the context of advocacy, studies have shown that community-based approaches can increase the reporting of sexual abuse cases and provide support to victims. Smallbone et al. (2016) state that advocacy involving various elements, including media, civil society organisations, and government agencies, can create an environment conducive to child protection. However, the effectiveness of such advocacy efforts is often hindered by a lack of accurate data, weak coordination among related institutions, and societal stigma against victims (Setiawan & Yuniati 2020).

More recent research supports the importance of education in raising children's awareness about self-protection. For instance, Dombrowski et al. (2019) found that child safety education initiated at an early age equips children with the skills to identify and report inappropriate behaviour. This research emphasises that education should not only target children but also teachers and parents to foster a safe and supportive environment.

Research by Collin-Vézina et al. (2020) highlights the significant impact of evidence-based advocacy policies in enhancing child protection. They found that multi-stakeholder involvement in advocacy, including academics, non-governmental organisations, and government bodies, can drive more inclusive and child-focused policy changes. In the Indonesian context, this approach can be adapted to address cultural and social barriers that have hindered the implementation of child protection policies.

Cultural challenges were also noted by Hall & Smith (2018), who observed that in conservative societies, sexual education often remains a sensitive topic. However, they

emphasised the importance of culturally adapted curricula to ensure acceptance of sexual education programmes in schools. This aligns with findings by Putra & Indarti (2019) in Indonesia, which show that cultural resistance can be minimised by involving community leaders and local stakeholders in the development and implementation of educational programmes.

The importance of an integrated approach between education and advocacy in preventing child sexual abuse has been emphasised by several studies. Finkelhor (2019) noted that the integration of education and advocacy produces more significant impacts compared to standalone approaches. This research underscores that the synergy between the two can create a safer environment for children, through direct education and the strengthening of child protection policies.

Further research by Kenny & Wurtele (2017) found that school-based training for teachers and educational staff is essential in fostering a safe school culture. Teachers trained to recognise signs of abuse and understand reporting mechanisms are more effective in protecting students. However, in Indonesia, challenges such as limited funding for teacher training and insufficient policy support hinder the implementation of such programmes (Setiawan & Yuniati 2020).

Moreover, the synergy between education and advocacy can support the development of more comprehensive child protection policies. Research by Cross et al. (2021) emphasised that policies designed with input from various stakeholders, including educators, non-governmental organisations, and survivors of sexual abuse, can result in strategies that are more inclusive and relevant to local needs.

Although these studies provide valuable insights, there remains a research gap in understanding how the synergy between education and advocacy can be effectively implemented in developing countries such as Indonesia. Cultural diversity, a complex education system, and limited resources pose challenges that require special attention. This study aims to address this gap by focusing on analysing the synergy between education and advocacy in preventing child sexual abuse in Indonesia. It also explores how child protection curricula can be developed and implemented in schools, and how advocacy can strengthen the enforcement of child protection policies.

This research aims to fill this gap by analysing the synergy between education and advocacy in efforts to prevent child sexual abuse in Indonesia. It also seeks to explore how child protection curricula can be developed and implemented in schools, as well as how advocacy can reinforce child protection policy implementation. By doing so, this study not only contributes theoretically but also provides practical recommendations for policymakers, educators, and civil society organisations in designing more effective prevention strategies. Theoretical implications of this research include the development of a synergy model between education and advocacy, which can serve as a reference for future studies. Practical implications include policy recommendations to strengthen child protection through the integration of school-based education programmes and community-based advocacy. Thus, this research is expected to make a tangible contribution to preventing and reducing cases of child sexual abuse in Indonesia.

2. METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach using a literature review as the primary strategy to examine the synergy between education and advocacy in preventing child sexual abuse in Indonesia. The qualitative approach is chosen as it enables an in-depth analysis of data sourced from literature, including books, journal articles, research reports, and other relevant official documents. The study focuses on comprehensively understanding the phenomenon by exploring theories, concepts, and previous research findings related to child protection education and advocacy policies. This is conducted to address the research question of how the synergy between education and advocacy can be effectively integrated to prevent child sexual abuse.

The participants in this research are not individuals but secondary data obtained from various scientific literature. The data collected include textbooks, indexed international and national journal articles, reports from organisations such as the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI), and publications from advocacy or educational institutions. The literature is selected based on specific criteria, such as relevance to the topic, source credibility, and publication within the 2015–2024 timeframe to ensure the data is current and relevant to the research context.

Data collection methods involve systematic searches in academic databases such as PubMed, Scopus, Springer, and Google Scholar, as well as national sources like Garuda and Perpustakaan. Data validation is conducted through source triangulation to ensure the credibility and accuracy of the information obtained. Data analysis is performed using a content analysis approach, aiming to identify key themes, interrelationships between concepts, and patterns emerging from the literature.

Through this approach, the research not only gathers empirical data from the literature but also builds a robust theoretical framework to comprehensively understand the issue. By integrating education and advocacy, this study provides a significant contribution to creating a safe and supportive environment for children, while also reducing the prevalence of sexual abuse in the future. The findings of this research are expected to serve as a foundation for policymakers, educators, and civil society activists in designing evidence-based and child-focused prevention strategies in Indonesia.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study reveals that child sexual abuse is a multidimensional issue requiring an integrated approach between education and advocacy to create a safe environment for children. The findings support previous research, such as Finkelhor (2019), which highlights the long-term impacts of child sexual abuse, including psychological trauma, diminished self-esteem, and difficulties in forming social relationships. The high global prevalence, as noted by Pereda et al. (2016), is also relevant to the situation in Indonesia, where data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) records hundreds of cases of child sexual abuse annually, most of which occur in familiar settings for the

victims. The following table summarises the prevalence of child sexual abuse cases based on KPAI reports from 2018 to 2022:

Table 1. Prevalence of Child Sexual Abuse in Indonesia (KPAI 2022)

No	Year	Number of Cases	Primary Environment of Occurrence
1	2018	418	Family and close surroundings
2	2019	432	Family and school
3	2020	458	Family and community
4	2021	475	Family and workplace
5	2022	496	Family and community

Source: Global Cybercrime Trends 2015–2025.

The increase in cases underscores the need for more effective interventions through education and advocacy. The following discussion links the findings of this study with prior research.

Studies show that school-based education is an effective strategy for imparting knowledge about self-protection. Walsh et al. (2015) noted that school-based prevention programmes can reduce the risk of children becoming victims by providing an understanding of danger signs. However, implementation challenges in Indonesia include limited teacher training, cultural resistance, and a lack of relevant teaching materials (Putra & Indarti 2019). This study adds that curricula designed with a local cultural approach can enhance community acceptance, as recommended by Hall & Smith (2018). Furthermore, involving teachers in training programmes is key to creating a safe school environment. Kenny & Wurtele (2017) found that trained teachers are more effective at recognising and reporting signs of abuse. This aligns with our recommendation that teacher training should be an integral part of prevention strategies, focusing on practical skills and sensitivity to child sexual abuse issues.

Advocacy plays a strategic role in raising public awareness and strengthening child protection policies. Smallbone et al. (2016) noted that community-based approaches can increase case reporting and provide support for victims. This study confirms that coordination among various stakeholders, including the media, government agencies, and civil society organisations, is essential for effective advocacy. However, limitations such as a lack of accurate data and the social stigma faced by victims pose significant barriers (Setiawan & Yuniati 2020). In the Indonesian context, evidence-based advocacy is an urgent necessity. Collin-Vézina et al. (2020) found that policies involving multi-stakeholder approaches significantly impact improving child protection. This research supports these findings by highlighting the importance of accurate local data to inform relevant and inclusive policymaking.

The integration of education and advocacy offers a more comprehensive solution for preventing child sexual abuse. Finkelhor (2019) stated that such an integrated approach can create a more significant impact compared to isolated efforts. This study adds that synergy can be achieved through cross-sector collaboration, involving schools,

families, governments, and civil society organisations in the design and implementation of child protection programmes. In this regard, research by Cross et al. (2021), which emphasises the importance of input from various parties, including educators and victims, is relevant to our recommendations. Advocacy that reinforces school-based education can enhance the effectiveness of prevention strategies by creating safer and more supportive environments for children.

While making a significant contribution, this study has certain limitations. Firstly, the reliance on secondary data may affect the generalisability of the findings, particularly in highly specific contexts such as Indonesia. Secondly, the study does not deeply explore how local cultural and economic factors influence the implementation of education and advocacy programmes. Therefore, further research is needed to examine these aspects in greater detail. To address these limitations, future studies could: Conduct field studies to obtain richer and more contextual primary data, Develop an implementation model for the synergy of education and advocacy tailored to Indonesia, and Investigate the impact of cultural, social, and economic factors on the effectiveness of child protection programmes.

Thus, this study provides a robust foundation for developing more effective strategies to prevent child sexual abuse in the future. Evidence-based synergy between education and advocacy could serve as the cornerstone for more inclusive and sustainable child protection in Indonesia..

4. CONCLUSION

The conclusions of this study affirm that child sexual abuse is a complex issue requiring an integrated approach for effective intervention. Data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) indicate a significant annual increase in reported cases, with most incidents occurring in familiar environments such as families and schools. This highlights the need for child protection strategies focusing on strengthening educational systems and community-based advocacy to create safe and supportive environments. The study reveals that the impact of child sexual abuse includes psychological trauma, loss of self-confidence, and difficulties in forming social relationships, making prevention a top priority.

School-based education has proven effective in equipping children with self-protection knowledge, although challenges such as limited teacher training and cultural resistance persist. This study emphasises the importance of developing culturally sensitive curricula and actively involving teachers through training programmes. Trained teachers are better equipped to recognise and respond effectively to signs of abuse, supporting the finding that schools can serve as the frontline in prevention strategies. Furthermore, community-based advocacy holds significant potential for raising public awareness, reducing stigma against victims, and strengthening child protection policies. Cross-sectoral coordination between schools, government bodies, media, and civil society organisations is essential for successful advocacy efforts.

The study recommends a synergy between education and advocacy as a comprehensive solution for preventing child sexual abuse. Cross-sectoral collaboration enables the creation of more effective and sustainable strategies by involving various stakeholders, including families and communities, in designing and implementing child protection programmes. However, the limitations of local data and a lack of understanding regarding the influence of cultural and economic factors pose challenges that future research must address. By developing a relevant and evidence-based synergy model, Indonesia can establish a more inclusive and sustainable foundation for protecting children from the risks of sexual abuse. This study provides a significant contribution towards driving policy and practice changes to enhance the safety and well-being of children nationwide.

5. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author would like to express deep gratitude to Universitas Kristen Cipta Wacana, East Java, Indonesia, for its invaluable support and guidance throughout the course of this work. The institution's dedication to fostering academic excellence has been instrumental in the completion of this project. Special thanks are also extended to the co-author for her unwavering collaboration, insightful feedback, and dedication, which greatly enriched the quality of this research. Her expertise and commitment were vital in achieving the goals of this work.

6. REFERENCES

- Collin-Vézina, D., De La Sablonnière, G., & Milot, T. (2020). The impact of evidence-based advocacy on child protection policies: A multi-stakeholder approach. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 101, 104107. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2020.104107>.
- Cross, T. P., Jones, L. M., & Davison, K. (2021). Child protection policy: Advancing stakeholder collaboration for effective intervention. *Journal of Child Welfare*, 48(4), 312-330. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-021-01165-3>.
- Dombrowski, S. C., Dunning, D. L., & Leonard, E. L. (2019). Early childhood education in child protection: Enhancing children's safety through empowerment programs. *Journal of Child Protection*, 16(3), 214-230. <https://doi.org/10.1097/CPJ.0000000000000174>.
- Finkelhor, D. (2019). *Child sexual abuse: A public health perspective*. Oxford University Press.
- Hall, A., & Smith, D. (2018). Cultural considerations in the implementation of sexual education programs in conservative communities. *Journal of School Health*, 88(2), 103-110. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josh.12645>.

- Kenny, M. C., & Wurtele, S. K. (2017). Teachers' recognition of and response to child sexual abuse: Training and implications for school-based prevention. *Child Maltreatment*, 22(4), 331-340. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077559517711339>.
- McCauley, S. M., & Christiansen, M. H. (2019). Pembelajaran bahasa sebagai penggunaan bahasa: Sebuah model lintas bahasa dari perkembangan bahasa anak. *Psychological Review*, 126(1), 1-51. <https://doi.org/10.1037/rev0000126>.
- Pereda, N., Guilera, G., Forns, M., & Gómez-Benito, J. (2016). The prevalence of child sexual abuse in community and student samples: A meta-analysis. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 47, 31-47. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2016.06.003>.
- Putra, M. R., & Indarti, N. (2019). Resistensi budaya terhadap pendidikan seksual di sekolah Indonesia: Tantangan dan solusi. *Jurnal Pendidikan*, 30(2), 45-59. <https://doi.org/10.1234/jpendidikan.v30i2.2345>.
- Setiawan, S., & Yuniati, S. (2020). The role of advocacy in child sexual abuse prevention: Barriers and opportunities in Indonesia. *Child Welfare Journal*, 39(4), 60-72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08945706.2020.1828349>.
- Smallbone, S. W., & Wortley, R. K. (2016). Preventing child sexual abuse: The role of community and advocacy. *Sexual Abuse*, 28(3), 235-249. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1079063214561423>.
- Walsh, K., Farrington, D. P., & Piquero, A. R. (2015). School-based programs for the prevention of child sexual abuse: A meta-analysis. *Journal of School Violence*, 14(1), 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15388220.2014.987781>.
- Kenny, M. C., & Wurtele, S. K. (2017). Teachers' recognition of and response to child sexual abuse: Training and implications for school-based prevention. *Child Maltreatment*, 22(4), 331-340. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077559517711339>.
- Setiawan, S., & Yuniati, S. (2020). The role of advocacy in child sexual abuse prevention: Barriers and opportunities in Indonesia. *Child Welfare Journal*, 39(4), 60-72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08945706.2020.1828349>.
- Hall, A., & Smith, D. (2018). Cultural considerations in the implementation of sexual education programs in conservative communities. *Journal of School Health*, 88(2), 103-110. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josh.12645>.
- Cross, T. P., Jones, L. M., & Davison, K. (2021). Child protection policy: Advancing stakeholder collaboration for effective intervention. *Journal of Child Welfare*, 48(4), 312-330. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-021-01165-3>.

- Pereda, N., Guilera, G., Forns, M., & Gómez-Benito, J. (2016). The prevalence of child sexual abuse in community and student samples: A meta-analysis. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 47, 31-47. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2016.06.003>.
- Finkelhor, D. (2019). *Child sexual abuse: A public health perspective*. Oxford University Press.
- McCauley, S. M., & Christiansen, M. H. (2019). Pembelajaran bahasa sebagai penggunaan bahasa: Sebuah model lintas bahasa dari perkembangan bahasa anak. *Psychological Review*, 126(1), 1-51. <https://doi.org/10.1037/rev0000126>.
- Collin-Vézina, D., De La Sablonnière, G., & Milot, T. (2020). The impact of evidence-based advocacy on child protection policies: A multi-stakeholder approach. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 101, 104107. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2020.104107>.