

## Counseling on Prevention of Sexual Harassment in Elementary School Children

### Penyuluhan Pencegahan Pelecehan Seksual pada Anak Sekolah Dasar

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#### Abstract:

*Child sexual abuse is a serious problem that can have a long-term impact on the psychological development of victims. This counseling aims to increase children's awareness and understanding of the dangers of sexual harassment and how to protect themselves. The activity was carried out at SD Negeri 03 Merangin Regency through an interactive socialization method with a story-telling approach, discussion, and educational games. The results of the activity showed an increase in participants' understanding of body limitations, types of inappropriate touch, and steps to take if they experience harassment. This counseling is expected to be a preventive step in preventing cases of sexual harassment in the school environment.*

#### Abstrak:

Pelecehan seksual pada anak merupakan permasalahan serius yang dapat berdampak jangka panjang terhadap perkembangan psikologis korban. Penyuluhan ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan kesadaran serta pemahaman anak-anak mengenai bahaya pelecehan seksual dan cara melindungi diri. Kegiatan dilakukan di SD Negeri 03 Kabupaten Merangin melalui metode sosialisasi interaktif dengan pendekatan story-telling, diskusi, dan permainan edukatif. Hasil kegiatan menunjukkan peningkatan pemahaman peserta mengenai batasan tubuh, jenis-jenis sentuhan yang tidak pantas, serta langkah-langkah yang harus dilakukan jika mengalami pelecehan. Penyuluhan ini diharapkan dapat menjadi langkah preventif dalam mencegah kasus pelecehan seksual di lingkungan sekolah.



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## INTRODUCTION

Sexual abuse of minors is a form of violence that has a long-term impact on children's psychological and emotional development. These cases not only occur in environments that are considered unsafe, but are also often found in places that should be safe spaces for children, such as schools, homes, and places of worship (Musa et al., 2023). The environment that is supposed to provide protection is actually a place where violations of children's rights occur.

Based on data collected as of January 1, 2023, there were 16,796 cases of sexual violence against children in Indonesia. This figure shows that sexual harassment is still a serious problem and requires more attention from various parties, both the government, the community, and families. These cases are often not reported for various reasons, such as fear, shame, or pressure from the perpetrator who usually comes from the victim's immediate environment (Napitupulu & Julio, 2023).

The majority of perpetrators of sexual violence against children come from the victim's immediate environment, such as family members, peers, teachers, or religious leaders. This closeness is often used by perpetrators to build trust before committing acts of harassment. This condition makes children more vulnerable because they tend to trust people who are known and close to them. Emotional and economic dependence are also factors that exacerbate this situation.

One of the modes that is often used in sexual abuse of children is child grooming. This mode involves a process in which the perpetrator slowly builds an emotional connection with the victim, with the goal of reducing the child's vigilance and making them feel comfortable with the perpetrator. Once a relationship of trust is established, the perpetrator begins to introduce inappropriate physical touch or manipulate the child to commit actions that violate their personal boundaries (Sutantiyo, 2023).

This grooming process is often difficult to recognize because it starts with seemingly harmless actions, such as giving more attention, rewards, or praise. However, over time, the perpetrator begins to increase the intensity of interaction in a more manipulative and detrimental way to the child. When children are already trapped in this relationship, they may find it difficult to report the abuse because they feel guilty or afraid of the consequences that may arise.

Children's lack of understanding of body limitations is one of the main factors that allow sexual abuse to occur. Children who don't get enough education about which parts of the body should not be touched by others tend to be unaware that they are being abused. This makes them more vulnerable to unwanted actions, as they do not understand the importance of maintaining the privacy of their bodies. Many children feel confused or even afraid to report the incident because they do not know that what is happening to them is an unacceptable form of abuse.

Education about body limitations in children should start from an early age. Parents and educators need to teach children about their bodies in a way that is appropriate for their age. Using terms that are easy to understand and provide a clear explanation of which part of the body should be respected, privacy is essential. For example, children need to know that private body parts, such as the genital area, must be protected and should not be touched by others without permission.

In addition, they need to be given the understanding that their bodies are their own, which means they have the right to control who is allowed to touch them.

In addition to the introduction of physical limitations, children should also be taught to identify signs of discomfort and be given an understanding of their right to say "no". When children feel uncomfortable with a certain situation, they should know that they have the right to refuse, even if the person is someone they know or trust. This helps children feel more confident to protect themselves and gives them the tools to avoid dangerous situations. In addition, children need to be encouraged to always report any inappropriate or suspicious behavior, without fear or embarrassment.

It is important to remember that this educational process must take place continuously and not just be done once. Education about body limits must continue to be carried out along with the development of children's age. As children get older, they must be taught to understand more complex social situations, such as how to recognize and handle verbal or digital abuse. By providing adequate knowledge, children will be better prepared to protect themselves and reduce the risk of becoming victims of sexual abuse. Therefore, collaboration between parents, schools, and the community is very important to create a safe environment for children.

Another factor that makes the situation worse is the lack of supervision from parents or guardians. Parents who are busy or less involved in a child's daily life are often unaware of the signs of possible abuse. Children who feel they don't get attention or support from their parents also tend to be more susceptible to manipulation from perpetrators who offer attention and affection.

Education about sexual harassment must start early, both in the family and school environment. Parents have an important role to play in providing children with an understanding of body limits, safe and unsafe types of touch, and how to report if they experience abuse. In addition, schools must also be safe places for children by providing educational programs about self-protection and building an environment that supports children to speak up in case of violence. In order to increase children's awareness about the dangers of sexual harassment, this counseling was carried out at SD Negeri 03 Merangin Regency. This activity is part of a prevention effort that aims to educate children about various forms of sexual abuse, how to recognize the signs of danger, and steps that can be taken if they feel threatened or abused.

The material presented in the counseling included the introduction of body parts that should not be touched by others, the types of inappropriate touching, and how to say "no" and report to a trusted adult if they experience abuse. Children are also taught to recognize modes that are often used by perpetrators, such as giving gifts or unnatural excessive attention. In addition, this counseling also provides education about the dangers of communicating with strangers through social media. In today's digital era, many children have access to the internet and social media, making them vulnerable to being targeted by online harassment or exploitation. Children are taught to be cautious in using social media, not to share personal information, and to report immediately if a stranger tries to approach them in a suspicious way.

The results of this counseling show an increase in children's understanding of sexual abuse and how to protect themselves. Children become more aware of their rights to their own bodies and are more courageous to speak up if they encounter a situation that makes them uncomfortable. Teachers and parents also show great support for these activities and recognise the importance of their role in protecting children from sexual abuse.

This counseling is expected to be the first step in creating a safer environment for children, both at school and at home. By increasing children's awareness and understanding and involving parents and teachers in prevention efforts, it is hoped that cases of sexual abuse against children can be significantly reduced. Similar programs are also expected to be implemented in other schools to expand the reach of education and protection for children.

## **METHOD**

The target of this activity is 5th grade students of SD Negeri 03 Merangin Regency. The selection of this group is based on the age of the child who has begun to experience puberty and interact with the outside environment. This age is considered critical because children begin to have high curiosity and often interact with the environment outside the family, so they are vulnerable to the risk of sexual abuse.

The activity was carried out through direct counseling with an interactive method. Delivering material in the form of stories to make it easier for children to understand. The stories presented aim to provide a real illustration of the situation that children may face, so that they can recognize the signs of abuse (Sulihayati et al., 2022). Recognition of body parts that should not be touched by others: Children are taught to understand personal body parts that should not be touched by others by using pictures and dolls as visual aids (Ningsih, 2018). This material aims to distinguish between good and bad touch, as well as how children should respond if they experience touch that makes them uncomfortable, as well as considering that many children already use social media, they are taught about the dangers of interacting with strangers online and how to protect their personal information (Susfita, 2018).

Data collection was collected using qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative method was carried out through direct observation during counseling activities to see the response and participation of children. In addition, a short interview was conducted with teachers and parents to get their perspectives on the change in children's behavior after counseling.

The quantitative method was carried out by distributing pre and post-counseling questionnaires to students. This questionnaire is designed to measure the level of children's understanding of sexual harassment before and after activities. The questions in the questionnaire include an understanding of body boundaries, types of touch, and steps to take if you experience abuse.

The implementation of counseling was carried out on November 20, 2023 in a meeting session in class 5A of SD Negeri 03 Merangin Regency. The session lasted for two hours with time division for material delivery, interactive discussions, simulations, and evaluations.

The data obtained from the questionnaire was analyzed using a descriptive method to see changes in understanding before and after counseling. Meanwhile, data from observations and interviews were analyzed using a thematic approach to identify children's behavior patterns and responses as well as teachers' and parents' perspectives on the effectiveness of counseling.

## **DISCUSSION**

The results of counseling showed a significant increase in students' understanding of sexual harassment. Prior to counseling, most students had not yet understood the limitations of the personal body and the inappropriate type of touch. After counseling, more than 80% of students were able to identify body parts that should not be touched by others and demonstrate an understanding of the importance of reporting to trusted adults.

Observations during counseling showed that interactive methods such as story-telling and simulations were very effective in capturing students' attention and helping them understand the material. Students more easily understand the concepts taught through stories and educational games. Interviews with teachers also confirmed that students became more open to discussing this sensitive topic after counseling.

This counseling has succeeded in building new awareness among students about the importance of maintaining body privacy. Before the activity, many children do not understand that some forms of touch from people they know can also fall into the category of abuse. After counseling, students demonstrated the ability to distinguish between safe and unsafe touch, as well as understanding that they had the right to say "no" even to adults if they felt uncomfortable.

In addition, the simulation session had a positive impact in strengthening the children's courage to speak. Students are given a simple scenario in which they have to practice saying "no" to suspicious situations. Many students who were initially shy became more confident to express their discomfort. This shows that a practical approach to counseling is very effective in building self-protection skills.

Education about social media also received special attention from students. Many of them claim to use apps like WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook without parental supervision. After counseling, students better understand the risks of communicating with strangers online and the importance of safeguarding personal information. Some students even shared their personal experiences regarding suspicious messages they had received, which later became the subject of interactive discussions.

The results of the pre-test and post-test showed a significant improvement in student understanding. At first, only about 40% of students could answer correctly about which parts of the body should not be touched by others. After counseling, this figure increased to 85%. In addition, students' understanding of the steps to report if they experience harassment has also increased from 30% to 80%.

Interviews with teachers revealed that after counseling, students became more open to talking about the problems they faced. Teachers reported that some students approached them to talk about experiences that made them uncomfortable, which had never happened before. This shows that counseling not

only improves understanding, but also creates a more open and supportive environment.

In terms of behavior, students show changes in daily interactions. They are more wary of touches from others and are quicker to report if they feel something is wrong. For example, one student reported that she felt uncomfortable with the treatment of a neighbor who often gave gifts and asked for hugs. This report was then followed up by the school and parents.

The positive impact of this activity is felt on parents' understanding of the importance of sexuality education from an early age. Many parents who previously felt awkward talking about this topic with their children began to realize the importance of providing the right education. Some parents even ask for additional guidance on how to discuss this issue at home. In terms of implementation, the main challenge faced is ensuring that the material is delivered in a way that is appropriate for the child's age. Using simple language and relevant examples is essential to ensure children understand the message being conveyed. In addition, keeping the atmosphere relaxed and fun helps children feel comfortable during the counseling session.

This counseling also revealed that there is a need for continuous education, both at the school and home levels. Although a single counseling session is quite effective in improving basic understanding, education about sexual harassment should be part of the character education curriculum that is taught regularly. This will ensure that children continue to be reinforced, on the importance of protecting themselves from abuse. In addition to providing education to students, training for teachers and school staff is also very important. Teachers need to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to recognize signs of harassment and how to handle reports from students. This counseling shows that the role of teachers is very crucial in creating a safe and supportive school environment.

One of the interesting findings of this counseling program is how children respond to topics that are often considered sensitive, such as sexual harassment. Many adults, including parents and educators, find it worrisome or awkward to talk about this issue with children, because they find the topic too complicated or inappropriate to talk about at an early age. However, with the right and attentive approach, children can understand these issues in a simple and age-appropriate way. This suggests that by providing good education, children can learn to recognize dangers and understand the importance of protecting themselves without feeling intimidated or embarrassed.

The approach used in this counseling has proven to be successful in eliminating children's fear and awkwardness when talking about this sensitive topic. Education that is carried out openly and honestly, using easy-to-understand language, and accompanied by relevant examples makes children feel more comfortable asking questions or talking about topics that may have previously felt taboo. In this way, they not only learn about the limitations of the body, but also feel empowered to take a stance when they feel uncomfortable with certain situations. This changes the view that topics such as sexual abuse are something that needs to be avoided to talk about with children.

The findings also show how important it is to remove the stigma against sexuality education at an early age. Some people may think that the longer this topic is avoided, the better it is for children, but in reality, misunderstanding can actually open up loopholes for harmful behavior. By providing the right and appropriate education, children can be better prepared to face various situations that have the potential to harm them. They will also be more likely to recognize signs of discomfort and dare to say "no" when they feel unsafe. This is an important step in building a generation that is more aware of their rights and knows how to protect themselves from the threat of harassment.

Education about sexual abuse in a structured and understanding manner has been shown to provide better protection for children. In addition, this education opens up opportunities for parents and educators to be more open in discussing sensitive issues with children. Thus, this counseling process not only helps children to understand the dangers of sexual harassment, but also changes the social view that has been considering sexuality education as taboo and inappropriate to talk about at an early age.

In the interactive discussion, some students revealed that they felt more confident to speak if they faced an uncomfortable situation. This shows that counseling not only provides knowledge, but also empowers children to take appropriate actions. The courage to speak up is the first step in the prevention of sexual harassment.

Educational programs about sexual abuse are not only dependent on external educational institutions or counseling, but are also greatly influenced by parental involvement in this process. Parental involvement plays a very crucial role in the success of the education, because parents are the first people to interact with children and have a great influence on the formation of children's attitudes and understanding. When parents are actively involved in supporting and discussing counseling materials about sexual abuse with their children, it will strengthen children's understanding of the importance of bodily limits and their right to privacy.

Open discussions between parents and children make children feel more comfortable asking questions and expressing their feelings or concerns regarding things they may not understand. Parents can explain in a simple, age-appropriate way how to recognize unsafe situations and how to protect themselves from potential abuse. Additionally, when children know that their parents are the primary source of support, they will feel safer and more confident to report unwanted events without fear of being punished or blamed.

A safe and open home environment is the main supporting factor in building children's confidence in facing difficult situations. Parents who listen and give their children full attention will create stronger bonds. This allows children to feel valued and understood, which in turn increases their awareness of the importance of respecting personal boundaries and recognizing signs of inappropriate behavior. With the full support of parents, children will have better mental readiness to face various situations, whether at home, at school, or outside their home environment.

Through the active involvement of parents, education programs about sexual abuse can be implemented more effectively. Parents can help repeat and reinforce important messages that have been taught in school or in extension programs. In

this way, education about sexual abuse becomes more consistent and comprehensive, providing children with a deeper understanding and preventing misunderstandings. Therefore, synergy between educational institutions, the community, and parents in supporting this educational program is very important to create a safe environment for children and prevent sexual abuse.

Overall, this counseling proves that education about sexual harassment can be carried out effectively at the elementary school level. With the right methods, children can understand important concepts about self-protection and feel empowered to protect themselves. This is an important step in creating a generation that is more aware and protected from the dangers of sexual harassment.

This counseling also shows that changes in students' attitudes and behaviors can be achieved in a short time with the right approach. However, to ensure the sustainability of these changes, further efforts are needed in the form of ongoing education programs and support from the entire school community. Finally, the results of this counseling are expected to be an example for other schools to implement similar programs. With proper education and support from all parties, it is hoped that cases of sexual abuse of children can be minimized and children can grow up in a safe and supportive environment.

## **CONCLUSION**

Counseling on the prevention of sexual abuse in children at SD Negeri 03 Merangin Regency showed positive results. Children showed an increased understanding of personal bodily boundaries, inappropriate types of touch, and steps to take if they were abused. Interactive methods such as story-telling, simulations, and discussions have proven to be effective in conveying this sensitive material to children. In addition, the involvement of teachers and parents in supporting this activity strengthens children's understanding of the importance of self-protection. Results from pre- and post-counseling questionnaires showed a significant increase in children's knowledge of sexual abuse, while observations and interviews showed positive changes in children's attitudes and behaviors. It is hoped that this kind of counseling activity can continue to be carried out periodically, not only in SD Negeri 03 Merangin Regency, but also in other schools to expand its positive impact. Collaborative efforts between schools, parents, and communities are essential to create a safe environment for children and prevent sexual abuse from occurring in the future.

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Finally, we hope that this activity can provide long-term benefits for all parties involved and be the first step in creating a safer environment for children in the future.

### **CONFLICT INTEREST**

The author states that there is no conflict of interest in the implementation and writing of this article.

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