

The Contribution of Counselors in Building Parental Literacy Regarding Trauma Recovery in Children Victims of Sexual Violence

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Abstract

Sexual violence against children is a major crime that leaves behind traumatic events. Special handling is thus required for their trauma recovery process. As parents play a pivotal role in their children's trauma healing, building parental literacy on trauma recovery is essential. Therefore, counselors who deal with child victims of sexual violence are responsible for fostering parental involvement. Our longitudinal case study tries to scrutinize the contribution of counselors in building parental literacy regarding the recovery of children after experiencing trauma due to sexual violence. The data were gathered via in-depth interviews and observations of nine counselors at the Center for the Protection of Women and Children. The study's findings revealed that the counselors built the parents' understanding of the psychological condition of children victims of sexual violence and the purpose of counseling. In addition, they also explained trauma recovery therapy plans to parents and built their awareness of the importance of parental involvement in the trauma recovery process for child victims of sexual violence. This study helps inspire how essential it is to educate parents in appropriately handling the trauma recovery process for their children victims of sexual violence.

Keywords: *children victims of sexual violence, counselors, parental literacy, trauma recovery.*

Introduction

It is quite shocking to hear a fact from Indonesia's foremost child protection activist, Arist Merdeka Sirait, who stated that "Indonesia is in an emergency of children sexual violence." The number of reports and cases of these crimes in the past five years has been increasing. According to data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI), there are 21.6 million cases of sexual violence in Indonesia. Data taken from 33 child protection agencies in each province have shown that, from 2017 to 2020, there were 1,725 cases of pedophilia in Indonesia and 237 of the perpetrators were under 14 years old. Therefore, it is high time for sexual crimes to be categorized as "extraordinary crimes." In subsequent actions, the government has issued various rules and legal bases governing the crime (Mukhlisiana et al., 2023).

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However, what should not be forgotten is the handling after the occurrence of sexual violence against children. The Head of the Division of Fulfillment of Child Rights of the Indonesian Child Protection Agency, Reza Indragiri Amriel, in a press conference at the Indonesian Child Protection Center stated that the rehabilitation of children victims of sexual violence must be carried out for life. If the brain has changed, the reconstruction process is almost impossible. As a forensic psychologist, Reza stated that victims of sexual crimes may turn into perpetrators. From myriad studies, it has been known that victims become predators since they are not rehabilitated.

Sexual violence against children is a serious crime that leaves a trace of traumatic memories. The rehabilitation and recovery efforts require the intense involvement of family, community, and education. The lack of parental involvement in sexual education makes sexual abuse and violence against children more rampant (Andari et al., 2019). Children as victims must also undergo special treatment to help them overcome their trauma. Thus, they can return to society and do not have to lose their future. In this regard, communication has a vital role in their trauma recovery process. As communication is a social process between humans (Effendy, 2009), it is the gateway that bridges post-traumatic children and their future. Intervention and advocacy carried out by well-informed counselors regarding the children's traumatic condition will optimize the chances of achieving successful outcomes.

Trauma recovery does not mean that children are entirely free from the symptoms of psychological trauma. Instead, it means they can live well in the present without the disturbing influence of past feelings. A good trauma recovery process needs to be carried out gradually and periodically. Family, especially parents, play an important role in such a process. Parents can help their children reveal the incidents of sexual crimes. Being more sensitive to their children's suffering, they can effectively support them to return to normal life (Williamson et al., 2016). A significant relationship exists between parents' parenting behavior and children experiencing traumatic events (Williamson et al., 2017).

However, notwithstanding their important role in providing sex education to their children, parents in Asia are reluctant to discuss sexual problems with their children due to the sensitivity of the topic and lack of knowledge about sexual health (Binti Abdullah et al., 2020). Some parents still think that sexual violence experienced by children is a disgrace that must be hidden. Consequently, such an act will hinder the children's recovery process. Many parents also still believe that trauma will disappear by itself over time. Even worse, after the crime occurred, some parents think that their children are fine. Even more concerning is that there are still parents who think marriage is the best way to save their children. A victim should get married to a perpetrator of sexual violence. It is unimaginable to think of the heavy burden and deep trauma a victim feels if she must marry a perpetrator of the crime.

Apart from such situations, many parents actually have an awareness of the importance of recovery efforts for children victims of sexual violence. Thus, they then seek help at the Child Protection Center. However, not all parents are aware of their role and function in the recovery process. Many parents completely hand over this matter to the counselors at the Child Protection Center without taking on a role. However, this is not solely the responsibility of the counselors. The most effective trauma recovery efforts are at home in the family environment. How parents treat, motivate, and convince their children victims of sexual violence can speed up the trauma recovery process (Mukhlisiana et al., 2023).

Parental Literacy for Trauma Recovery in Children Victims of Sexual Violence

Parental literacy has recently been scrutinized in various research arenas (e.g. Hemmerechts, Agirdag, & Kavadias, 2016; Krijnen et al., 2020; Montgomerie & Tepe-Belfrage, 2016; Torppa et al., 2011; Zaidman, et al. 2023). For instance, a study by Hemmerechts, Agirdag, & Kavadias (2016) sought to investigate the link between parental literacy and children's reading literacy at the primary school level. Employing

multilevel analysis engaging 43,870 students, the findings of the study revealed that parental literacy involvement was a predictor of the children's reading literacy success. A more recent study on parental literacy was conducted by Krijnen et al. (2020) who probed into parental literacy beliefs concerning children's literacy development. A qualitative and quantitative scrutiny of 35 Dutch parents showed that they employed meaning-oriented and facilitative practices to develop their children's literacy. In addition, a study by Torppa et al. (2011) tried to discover the interlink between the literacy skills of parents with dyslexia and their children's literacy skills. The findings revealed that children's reading and spelling accuracy correlated with parental literacy skills, suggesting that dyslexia in children can be known through looking into the literacy skills of a parent. The studies above have indicated the pivotal role of parental literacy in the development of their children. A tight engagement between parents and children has been the key both for solving children's problems and engaging them to achieve optimal development.

In relation to the trauma recovery process for child victims of sexual violence, parents need to have information literacy skills about its special handling. Information literacy is where a person works by using the ability to recognize when information is needed and to find, evaluate, and use the required information effectively (Reitz, 2004). Parents with information literacy skills will be able to develop knowledge about the trauma recovery process so that they are also empowered to recognize potential information that exists. Thus, they can create appropriate knowledge beneficial for the child's trauma recovery process. Information literacy also allows parents to play the role of autonomous adults.

A person affected by trauma experiences internal psychological barriers to seek help. Many of these blocks are related to the effects of trauma, such as avoiding memories of the trauma, a lack of self-esteem, feelings of hopelessness and helplessness, and a lack of trust in others. Others are related to a fear of losing control over the disclosed information about the trauma they experienced and a fear that confidentiality is broken (Truss et al., 2022). Untreated childhood trauma can negatively affect children's health, well-being, and life chances. Children and their families urgently need access to trauma-informed care systems and trauma-specific interventions (Munisamy & Elze, 2020).

In fact, many parents did not understand the importance of taking a role in the trauma recovery process for children who had experienced sexual violence. Thus, awareness, understanding, and mastery of literacy are needed for the people closest to the post-traumatic child, namely the family, especially the parents. Counselors as professionals who plan and carry out the trauma recovery process for child victims of sexual violence need to be considerate to the parents' understanding of their role. Besides being responsible in dealing with child victims of sexual violence, it is essential for counselors to educate parents about post-traumatic recovery literacy due to sexual violence.

Therefore, this study intends to find out the contribution of counselors in building parental literacy regarding the recovery of children after experiencing trauma due to sexual violence. This study addresses the following research questions: 1) What is the contribution of counselors in building parents' understanding of the psychological condition of children who are victims of sexual violence? 2) What is the contribution of counselors in building parents' understanding of the purpose of counseling? 3) What are counselors' efforts in explaining trauma recovery therapy plans for children victims of sexual violence to parents? and 4) What is the contribution of counselors in building awareness of the importance of parental involvement in the trauma recovery process for children victims of sexual violence?

Method

Design and Participants

Using a descriptive qualitative design, our longitudinal study was conducted for two years, from March 2021 to January 2023. The study site was at a Center for the Protection of Women and Children in the City of Bandung, Indonesia. Qualitative description was widely used to describe health care and caregiver-related phenomena (Polit & Beck, 2014). This qualitative descriptive study used real-world examples of health-themed research (Doyle et al., 2020). The aim of this qualitative descriptive study was a comprehensive summary, in everyday terms, of the specific events experienced by an individual or group of individuals (see Lambert & Lambert, 2013). We stayed close to the data to scrutinize words and events (see Sandelowski, 2000). This study produced data that described 'who, what, and where events or experiences' from a subjective perspective (see Kim et al., 2017). Intensive data collection was carried out via observations of interactions between counselors and parents. In addition, we also conducted in-depth interviews with nine counselors who handled the recovery process for children victims of sexual violence. Nine informants were selected based on the following criteria: 1) They have worked as a counselor for at least 2 years; 2) They have handled cases of sexual violence against children; and 3) They have done counseling with parents of victims of sexual violence. Of the 24 counselors working at the Center for Protection of Women and Children, nine counselors who met such criteria were selected. A list of counselors who were informants in this study can be seen in Table 1.

Instrument and Analysis

The purpose of the study was to trace all data collected from the child protection institution. Data tracking was used to validate the collected data with all its characteristics. The researcher ensured that the data collected was sufficient to be processed. The longitudinal case study (see Bell, Skalicky, & Salsbury, 2014; Wallis, Meredith, & Stanley, 2022) was used to examine the reflection of human experience. In this regard, scrutiny was done to delve deeper into the counselor's experience communicating with the parents of children who had experienced sexual violence. Evidence or data for case study purposes came from six sources: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation, and physical devices (Yin, 2013). After adjusting to the characteristics of the research design, we collected the research data gathered via interviews, observations, documentation, and library studies.

1) Interviews

The researchers conducted in-depth interviews with the nine informants. We conducted interviews with the informants directly responsible for the organizational management of the Center for the Protection of Women and Children in Bandung, then progressed to other sections and fields according to research needs. In-depth interviews were conducted to obtain relevant information from selected informants at the research location. With in-depth interviews, we could dig up data about various events. We needed that fact to determine how the case could have happened, what the process was, who started the case, and what happened behind the case. When we interviewed the informants, we recorded and took notes. The records were needed to validate data when our notes were lacking.

2) Observations

Observation activities carried out by the researchers were direct observations. We then recorded them and documented them according to the observed case. In direct observation activities, we used a checklist mapped according to the study case. Apart from being formal, we conducted direct observations less formally during the field visits, including opportunities during other evidence gathering such as interviews. Direct observations were made at the office of the Center for the Protection of Women and Children in the City of Bandung.

3) Library Studies

To support this study's data, we sought information from books, journals, and dissertations relevant to the research. We also used articles from websites whose contents were related to this research and utilized cyberspace in collecting the data needed for this research. To obtain data online, we browsed or downloaded the required data from the internet through certain websites.

4) Documentation

The research data were explored based on written documents related to the Center for the Protection of Women and Children in the City of Bandung. The data were in the form of letters, agendas, written event reports, administrative documents, proposals, results of previous research, internet data, clippings from the press media, and internet and television news. The selected documents were relevant to the case study being studied. This data was very important for researchers because it had a historical value from the research object. We conducted a systematic search of these documents, especially during field visits. Afterward, the data in this study were analyzed using Braun & Clarke's thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Results and Discussion

Building Parental Understanding of the Purpose of Counseling

Counselors at the Center for the Protection of Women and Children in Bandung try to provide parents with an understanding of the events of sexual violence experienced by their children. Parents need to be aware of the impact of these events on their children and how the children can recover from the trauma. Parents also need to understand the importance of their involvement in handling sexual violence experienced by their children, both the legal handling and the handling of psychological recovery for children. From the beginning, the counselors confirm the purpose of counseling for parents and children.

"Therefore, the goal that appears for the first time is usually from the reporter or referrer, in this case, for example the police, for example, the aim is to handle the case so that the perpetrators, their motives and so on are revealed. So, the second is the goal of parents, parents usually hope that their children will get better and not get traumatized, now that's the goal of parents. So, of course, there will be a goal for the children later. When counseling is running, expectations usually begin to appear from the child, what the child feels, wants and needed. For example, some children wish their parents to be more accepting and do not judge them, that usually appears as a child's goal that is expected "I want to be like this, I don't want to be sad anymore". So, there are three goals. Which are the police's goal, what the parents' goals are, and then the children's goals emerge". (Interview with Informant 7, 27 August 2022).

In contrast to clients who come voluntarily to psychology bureaus, parents spend money voluntarily to get psychological help. It is because they feel that something is wrong with them. Meanwhile, most parents who bring their children to the Center for the Protection of Women and Children are due to referrals from the police, not because of their own awareness that they need counseling.

"Well, usually the goal of the parents and the children will come up later on their own. Counseling work here is indeed different from counseling in an agency. Parents or children who come to the general psychology bureau have a clear purpose, come voluntarily and are full of awareness because they really need psychological help. It's different from those who come here, many of them are referred to from the police or hospitals. For example, in this case, it seems that there was a case of harassment. The victim was asked to come to this institution. The police can also report this. Ask us to

check the child, so it's not from the victim's themselves nor the parents." (Interview with Informant 7, 27 August 2022).

In general, counseling is done to solve problems experienced by clients. This effort can be made by reducing the intensity of losses caused by these problems and eliminating the problems in question. With the counseling service, the hope is to ease the clients' burden and develop their potential. Meanwhile, another goal for clients is to understand the problems experienced comprehensively in a positive and dynamic way. The understanding is to lead to the development of perceptions and attitudes to resolve the problems experienced by clients specifically. It is a challenge to provide the understanding to parents that counseling is done for their own good.

"So indeed, the important job which is of course the main job is to make them feel more needed, it's already become homework to make them think "oh this is not for other people's interests, this is for my benefit." This includes reassuring the parents as well, right? There are still parents who come because they are ordered by the police, because of police legal procedures, right, so their intention is just to complete police procedures. Because there is a legal process like that, it becomes formal in a professional way and when you become a witness you are not held accountable, so this has very different interests, this one has to have formal tests because it is related to law, there is an intelligence test, and this one doesn't need to intelligence test, but there are intelligence tests, personality tests, and other related tests. (Interview with Informant 7, 27 August 2022).

The goal of long-term counseling is to allow clients to be more self-reliant in dealing with sustainable life situations in the future in a constructive way without constantly needing outside help. In other words, counseling aims to make clients independent and empower themselves.

"For me, I'm most happy when dealing with those who don't go through a legal process, because if we handle things without a legal process, we can focus more on child psychotherapy and just focus on observation, there's no need to run some formal tests like intelligence tests, etc. of all kinds. Moreover, in the case of children, we must also do the intervention to the parents, because whether we like it or not, the case happens due to the negligence of the parents. So parents counselling is to build parents understanding about the psychological importance of their children because sometimes there are parents who come here because of referrals from other institutions such as police or hospitals so they don't understand that the main goals is their children' recovery. The main counseling is for parents related to acceptance of the incident itself, because sometimes what is revealed by the police is only a small part when in fact it turns out to be more terrible. For example, sometimes the parents are also shocked by the incident and after reporting to the police it turns out that their child contributed. Parents sometimes only know that there was sexual violence and pregnancy, it turns out that after the child has dug it up or for example other contributions." (Interview with Informant 7, 27 August 2022).

Building Parental Understanding Regarding the Recovery Therapy Plan

Parents are also the first and main source of information for counselors to determine therapy plans. It is a fact that there are limitations for children to express what happened. Thus, parents are an important source of information for counselors in trauma recovery efforts.

"This means that handling children here will automatically counsel their parents first. At least for the anamnesa feature from the outside first, so that means to dig up information in general, the source of the information will always be related to referrer and parent information. Even though the referrer is from the police, the main information is still from the parents. So, we really need information from parents." (Interview with informant 7, 19 July 2022).

Through the stages of communication in counseling, communication was conducted by the counselors with their clients, which are children who experience sexual violence. These stages include the initial stage, the counseling stage, and the termination stage as the communication process in counseling.

The Initial Stage

This stage even begins before the counselors meet their clients, the children victims of sexual violence. The initial stage runs until the counselors finally find the clients' problems. Counselors have started working even before counseling begins. The counselors make observations. They observe and examine the clients' data including the background and events experienced by the clients.

“Actually, for preparation, as psychologists, we have been equipped with various skills. so maybe we prepare ourselves by collecting data for observation, to assist, and then as we go along when do we start the next steps to deal with psychology, so I might just be mentally preparing more to organize the systematic examination process earlier” (Interview with Informant 3, March 25, 2022).

In interpersonal communication, there is no doubt that counselors must have communication skills. In the early stages, communication skills are needed to open a conversation. The application of these skills in counseling aims to make the counselors skilled at using questions that allow for new answers and stimulate clients to speak. In the early stages of the interpersonal communication process involving counselors with children victims of sexual violence, the counselors apply these skills through (1) using good questions according to the age and background of the children and (2) using good stimuli such as expanding non-verbal aspects of good appearance behavior, for example maintaining eye contact, leaning forward as a sign of attention, reasonable body movements, adequate gestures, and nodding head, etc.

The Counselling Stage

At the counseling stage, the counselors exert their abilities in the process of helping children recover from the trauma caused by sexual violence. The counselors build rapport with the children, actively listen, and clarify to make the problems clear and bright. They also help children to introduce themselves and give appreciation to children.

“In counseling we do building rapport, so we usually chat casually first with the client so that later it will be more comfortable. because they usually come here not because of their own will, it must be because of a request from their parents or from the school, or maybe from the police, right? In contrast to adults who are aware and need counseling, so they will be open to convey their problems. Because underage children usually come without knowing the reason why they have to meet a counselor, why they have to do counseling, etc. So we usually observe first, observe then build the rapport, so we talk as usual, for example, "Who did you come here with?" so ... some light and general things that will make the children comfortable with us, we shouldn't ask sensitive things unless the child brings these things up himself but usually the children don't want to.” (Interview with Informant 3, March 25, 2022).

On the other hand, the counselors need an understanding of the clients' potential and needs in developing all of their human dimensions. The client's human dimensions that must be developed through counseling services are: (1) the individual dimension, (2) the social dimension, (3) the moral dimension, and (4) the religious dimension. The understanding of clients from different backgrounds in efforts to develop their human dimensions is very useful in achieving the ultimate goal of counseling services (Prayitno, 2004).

“We have to approach first with the child, sometimes the counselor will also take the initiative to buy snacks first or wait until they want to talk, if they don't want to talk, we'll be quiet too. Sometimes we invite them to play or do other activities; "Do you want to play this or not, let's draw, shall we?" if they don't want it, let's just let it be. That's where the art of counseling to children actually is. And we also have to be sensitive to observing every change in the expression of the child and we also try to show that we are present, and we pay attention to they need. If they're already shaking, we'll ask them whether they want to pee or not and where do they want to play outside or here?” (Interview with Informant 9, July 19, 2022).

Clients often feel suspicious and have excessive prejudice. They are unconfident and do not dare to convey the various upheavals they experience to the counselors. Especially when it comes to sensitive issues that they do not want other people to know. These doubts cause most clients to harbor various life problems, eventually leading to psychological and physiological problems. This condition ultimately hinders the interpersonal communication process. Thus, the counselors do a variety of ways to approach the clients. Therefore, the clients feel safe, comfortable, and trust the counselors, as the following informant did.

“Usually, we find out what their interest are, what they like. For example, there is a child who likes BTS, so I print the poster and then we color it together. We just talked about BTS all the time until she felt comfortable. In the end, she told me herself, started to talk, started to listen, and started to remember my name, even though before she didn't want to be with me at all because she didn't want many people to know about her problems. So, we will get close to her interests, continue to draw. Apart from drawing to bring us closer, it's actually a test kit ma'am.” (Interview with Informant 10, July 23, 2020).

The counselors take the time to find information regarding what the clients like or dislike. Counselors must also be able to adapt and enter into the child's world. Thus, this stage will take place properly and smoothly. Often, counselors do things that can be done together, such as drawing, coloring, or just talking about something that suits the client's interests. This is done to narrow the interpersonal distance between the counselor and the client. While doing something, it is usually easier for clients to trust the counselors so they can open up more.

The Termination Stage

At this stage, the counselors help clients conclude what they have and apply it in real life. This is the final stage of counseling. After several counseling meetings have been held, it is time for the counselor to end and close the counseling session with the clients. Children who become counselors' clients sometimes do not quite understand what has been done. In this regard, the role of parents closest to them becomes very important. They help children to implement the things suggested by the counselors.

"Counseling with children who are very quiet really takes time, so we try to provide understanding to those who accompany the child, usually their parents or closest relatives. We explain that counseling takes time, it can't come right away. For example, for building rapport only, it can be up to 3 meetings. Even so, if the child is comfortable, we always explain, if for example, at the beginning the child is silent, okay, we can't force it, "I'm sorry, today we can't get any information, there hasn't been any progress because the child is still not close to us." (Interview with Informant 8, July 19, 2020).

Unfortunately, children who have not consciously asked for help on their own depend on their parents, family or other parties to bring them counseling. Often, although the counseling sessions have not ended yet, they do not come back. Some children only come once or only a few times. Counseling has not been completed, but they are no longer present at the promised time. This of course hampers the recovery process. So, the counselors try to keep the children present until the counseling session ends.

"Sometimes it's difficult, sometimes the parents don't support the counseling process. Because most of them come here because they were ordered by the police, so actually they don't really realize the importance of counseling. They feel their child is fine. Not all, but often it is. Whereas counseling isn't enough just to come once, you have to go back and forth here many times, right? Maybe it's a hassle for parents. Recovering a child's psychology is not something easy, it's not like magic, it can be done in one meeting. Even in the first meeting, we often don't get anything. To carry out counseling according to plan was also difficult. We had to call many times via WA, on the phone. It was happened a lot when we had to pick up clients to their homes. (Interview with Informant 5, July 19, 2022).

From the interviews and observations of the communication behavior of counselors and children victims of sexual violence, we create a picture of the counselors as a communicator in the process of interpersonal communication with children who experience sexual violence. The counselors as a communicator play an active role in interpersonal communication events with clients who are children victims of sexual violence.

Thus, the stages of communication in interpersonal communication between counselors and children victims of sexual violence are carried out in three stages: the initial stage, the implementation stage, and the termination stage. However, not all clients complete the three stages of communication. Some clients stop at the second stage. Some stop at the initial stage. This is due to children's dependence on third parties, parents or relatives who sometimes do not realize the importance of counseling for the recovery of trauma from children who have experienced sexual violence. So, in addition to helping children recover from trauma, counselors also play a role in building awareness and understanding of parents about these stages. Thus, in the end, parents can play an active role in ensuring and encouraging children to complete all stages of counseling. It is hoped that the counseling will be successful in recovering the trauma of children victims of sexual violence.

Building Awareness Regarding the Importance of Parental Involvement in the Child Trauma Recovery Process

What is very concerning is what happens to children who do counseling at the Center for the Protection of Women and Children in the City of Bandung when the perpetrators of sexual violence are the closest people who should play a role in protecting the children, as described by the following informant:

"Some were by his own father, ma'am. Oh God, how could a father have the heart to do that to his own child. It's because her mother worked as a migrant worker overseas, he said he saw his child sleeping every night, so it was like cramps, he abused his child until she became pregnant, ma'am. Many are also harassed by their neighbors, by tutors, or even by pedicab drivers, oh my goodness, ma'am." (Interview with Informant 8, July 19, 2022).

Informant 8 in the interviews above faced several cases of sexual violence against children where the perpetrators were the closest people to the victims. Even counselors on duty every day to handle similar cases feel very apprehensive. Sexual violence is a type of abuse that is usually divided into two categories based on the perpetrator's identity, namely family abuse and extra-familial abuse (Noviana, 2015). Familial abuse is a sexual violence where the victim and perpetrator are still related by blood and are part of the nuclear family, including someone who is a substitute for parents, for example stepfathers, and caregivers who are trusted to care for children. A study on child sexual abuse stated that 70% of the perpetrators were the closest people or family. Extrafamilial abuse is violence from someone outside the victim's family, with only 40% of reported incidents (Bogorad, 1998).

“Usually, the kids are scared. When we asked a client;” why you didn't tell your mother (that you were abused by her father)?”. She replied because I am afraid. Fear of her father being imprisoned, fear of her mother not believing her, and other fears that are usually used as material for threats by perpetrators. And they can't run away either, where are they going? Normally, the house is the safest place it should be.” (Interview with Informant 13, March 13, 2022).

One of the difficulties in estimating prevalence is that so much sexual abuse goes unidentified. It is estimated that only one out of eight victims of sexual violence in the family environment is brought to the attention of law enforcement agencies. Disclosure by children rarely occurs. This is where the role of counselors as professionals and other adults is responsible for finding signs of possible sexual violence against children and then taking appropriate action. The fact that sexual violence against children occurs in the family is often kept secret. Children victims of sexual violence may fear their abuser, not wanting their abuser to get in trouble, feel that the abuse is 'their fault', and feel responsible for what will happen to their family if they tell them. These are the reasons why children keep secret the violence they experience.

The reason children did not dare to run away from the house where they were victims of sexual violence was because they felt they did not know where to go. "It's not like I have anywhere to go" was the answer when they were asked about the attempts to escape incidents of abuse (Katz et al., 2020). Children are aware of the importance of expressing what they are experiencing. However, it must be understood that, in their position, most children do not feel capable of expressing it. Additionally, many child victims do not realize they are being abused until much later, often even as adults (Bovarnick & Scott, 2016).

In addition to these factors, in Indonesia, parents tend to be oriented towards academic education compared to the social problems faced by children. Disclosure regarding matters relating to sexuality is very small (Handayani, 2017). Even considering the impact of deep and prolonged trauma, parents are the first to understand what happened to their children. Parents must recognize the signs of a child experiencing sexual violence. Whether we realize it or not, parental negligence is the main cause of sexual violence against children, in addition to the low morality and mentality of the perpetrators and economic factors (Fuadi, 2011).

It can be concluded that the role of parents is very important in preventing and recovering from trauma caused by sexual violence. It is important to provide sex education to children from an early age and gradually according to their development (Soedarsono et al., 2023). Thus, when children are growing up, they will not seek explanations from their surroundings that are sometimes misleading (Handayani, 2017). To start creating open communication with children, parents can discuss the followings: (1) a polite way to express opinions to parents, (2) children's study hours in one day, (3) children's time limit going out at night, (4) areas of privacy of children and parents, and (5) television shows that children can watch based on age (Alya, 2010).

Parents must carry out sexual education from an early age. Children need to know information about sexuality. With sexual education from their parents, children will not experience lack information and seek answers from other people, even friends at their age, whose truth may be doubted and the delivery method may not be appropriate. Parents can do sexual education appropriately adjusting to their children's age. Therefore, parents should play a role in providing sexual education to their children, because the first environment that has a deep influence is their own family (Herjanti, 2015).

However, many parents are reluctant to provide sex education to their children. For various reasons. It is because they still consider it taboo. This kind of parental understanding is detrimental to children. In handling cases of children experiencing

sexual violence at the Center for the Protection of Women and Children, the counselors often face obstacles that sadly come from the parents themselves.

Awareness of the important role of parents in the child's recovery process is not as expected. But slowly but surely, the Center for the Protection of Women and Children continuously educates the victims' parents. It is very important to understand that the injured parts of children due to sexual violence are not always visible, but actually they are also hurt psychologically. Thus, the role of parents also cannot be separated from the attention of the counselors. Parents and families play an important role in the prevention and recovery of trauma from sexual violence. Counseling with the counselors at the Center for the Protection of Women and Children is not enough. Parents play a very big role in helping children be ready for the gate of their post-traumatic life.

Counselors and parents must play an active role in the recovery process for child victims of sexual violence. Each of them needs to realize that their involvement determines the children's future. The interests of the children must be placed above other interests. Counselors play a role in providing parents with an understanding of their children's psychological condition. Meanwhile, parents must convey information about the children's condition so that the counselors can plan the recovery steps.

Given the social influence perspective, communication management has the ability to change a person's attitude and behavior through persuasive communication (Kaye, 1994). However, the success of persuasion depends on the credibility of the counselors as communicators who persuade parents as communicants. Two approaches that frame this concept are compliance-gaining and compliance-resisting. Counselors provide an understanding of the purpose of counseling to parents, while parents must understand and be consistent with the counseling goals. Then, the counselors explain to the parents the treatment plans that will be carried out on the children clearly and in detail. Parents consistently follow the therapy plans until the counselors say therapy is over. It is also important for counselors to educate parents about the importance of parental involvement in the trauma recovery process in children so that parents can be actively involved in the process.

Conclusion

Figure 3 illustrates the counselors' contribution to building literacy for parents of children victims of sexual violence. It revolves around the counselor's efforts to provide an understanding of the children's psychological condition and the purpose of counseling to parents. In addition, concerning the children's trauma recovery process, the counselors also need to manage communication to explain the therapy plans that will be given to the children.

Parents must understand the therapy plans so that the purpose of counseling, which is the recovery of child trauma, can be successful. Parents should also be consistent with the plans and follow the recovery plans until the counselors say therapy is completed. Afterward, the next step is to ensure that parents are aware of their pivotal role and involvement in the recovery process. Basically, the parents and closest family play a major role in the clients' recovery process. In this study, the counselors seek to manage communication so that the four communication goals can occur effectively. Therefore, the contribution of counselors in building literacy of parents of children victims of sexual violence are as follows: 1) building the parents' understanding of the psychological condition of children victims of sexual violence; 2) building the parents' understanding of the purpose of counseling; 3) explaining trauma recovery therapy plans to the parents of children victims of sexual violence; and 4) building awareness of the importance of parental involvement in the trauma recovery process for children victims of sexual

violence. For further research, it is necessary to scrutinize the policy of relevant stakeholders on parental literacy education regarding child sexual abuse and violence.

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