

## **Preventive Efforts of the Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Service in Addressing Cases of Sexual Violence Against Children**

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### **Abstract**

*This study aims to analyze the preventive efforts carried out by the Department of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (DP3A) of Gorontalo Regency in addressing cases of child sexual violence, as well as to identify the challenges encountered during the implementation of these programs. This research employed a qualitative approach using observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation as data collection techniques. The findings reveal that DP3A has implemented several preventive strategies, including school- and community-based sexual education programs, public awareness campaigns, and basic parental training. DP3A also performs a coordinating role in providing rehabilitative and reintegrative interventions for child perpetrators through cross-sectoral collaboration. However, significant challenges remain, including limited human resources and facilities, suboptimal inter-agency coordination, low public awareness, and insufficient involvement of supporting institutions. The study concludes that although DP3A's preventive efforts are moderately effective, they are not yet comprehensive due to institutional capacity constraints. Strengthening resources, developing an integrated coordination system, and enhancing community participation are essential to creating a safer environment for children in Gorontalo Regency.*

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

In Indonesia, cases of sexual violence show an increasing trend every year. Victims of these acts are not only adults, but also teenagers, children, and even toddlers. Sexual violence against children is an increasingly common phenomenon and has become a global problem in many countries. The number of cases of sexual violence against children continues to rise, both in terms of number and severity. Even more heartbreaking, the perpetrators of this violence often come from the victim's immediate environment, such as family, home, school, educational institutions, and the social environment where the child interacts (Kusumaningtyas, 2015).

In general, sexual violence against children can be defined as the involvement of children in various forms of sexual activity before they reach the minimum age stipulated by law in their respective countries. In this case, the perpetrator can be an adult, an older child, or an individual perceived to have greater understanding or knowledge, who then takes advantage of their position to obtain gratification or commit sexual acts against the

child. (CASAT Programm, Child Development Institute; Boy Scouts of America; Komnas PA).

Sexual violence against children violates moral and legal values and has serious physical and psychological consequences. These acts can include sodomy, rape, molestation, and even incest. According to Erlinda, Secretary General of the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI), cases of sexual violence against children can be likened to the tip of the iceberg, where one victim reporting represents many other victims, sometimes as many as six or more children who remain silent about their experiences (<http://indonesia.ucanews.com>, accessed May 20, 2014). This phenomenon reflects the shrinking safe space for children. The world of children, which should be full of joy, guidance, and good values, has instead become a frightening environment, as children are now targets of sexual abuse (Dania, 2020).

According to Ricard J. Gelles (in Hurairah, 2012), violence against children is an intentional act that can cause harm or endanger a child's physical or emotional well-being. Types of violence against children can be divided into four categories: physical violence, psychological violence, sexual violence, and social violence. Meanwhile, based on the definition of *End Child Prostitution in Asia Tourism* (ECPAT) internationally, sexual violence against children is a form of interaction or relationship between a child and an older individual, whether a stranger, family member, or parent, in which the child is used as a tool to satisfy the perpetrator's sexual desires. This act is often carried out through coercion, threats, bribery, manipulation, or psychological pressure. Sexual violence against children does not always involve direct physical contact and can take the form of rape or sexual harassment (Kusumaningtyas, 2015).

According to Islawati and Paramastri, sexual violence against children (*child sexual abuse*) Sexual abuse is an act of coercion in the form of sexual activity against a child, carried out to achieve a specific goal. This coercion is carried out unilaterally, in an inappropriate manner, and without the child's consent. Generally, sexual abuse occurs when the perpetrator persuades and forces a child to engage in sexual activity. (Dania, 2020).

Sexual violence against children can have serious psychological impacts, such as profound trauma, anxiety disorders, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Socially, victims often face stigma and rejection from their surroundings, which ultimately worsens their mental and emotional well-being. Basrowi and Utami highlight that the psychological effects of sexual violence on children can impact their ability to form social relationships in the future, including a decreased sense of trust in adults and authority figures. (Ifada, 2023)

Sexual violence against children can have profound traumatic effects, such as loss of trust in adults, sexual trauma disorder, and feelings of helplessness that manifest as excessive anxiety, nightmares, phobias, and physical and emotional pain. According to Smith and Weber in Noviana, in the long term, children who are victims of sexual violence are at risk of experiencing developmental disorders that can trigger a tendency to become perpetrators of sexual violence later in life. This is due to the formation of the view that sexual violence can be perpetrated against individuals who are weak and unable to fight back (Ifada, 2023).

Child protection is a collective responsibility that all levels of society must share. Sexual violence against children poses a serious threat to their physical and mental health and can significantly impact their future. Therefore, child protection efforts must be a primary focus in the nation's development process. Given that children's ability to reason

is still limited and difficult to distinguish between good and bad behavior, legal protection is crucial for them (Nellyda et al., 2020).

Legal protection for children from sexual violence is regulated in Law Number 35 of 2014, which is an amendment to Law Number 23 of 2002 concerning Child Protection. Article 15, letter F of the law, emphasizes that every child has the right to protection from sexual crimes. Furthermore, Articles 21 to 26 outline the roles of various parties such as the State, Government, Society, Family, and Parents or Guardians in providing protection for children. Provisions prohibiting sexual violence against children are contained in Article 76, letter D, which states that no one is permitted to commit violence or make threats against children. Meanwhile, Article 76 letter E prohibits any individual from forcing, deceiving, repeatedly lying, or persuading children to engage in immoral acts.

In addition, provisions regarding sexual violence against children are also regulated in various other laws and regulations, such as the Criminal Code (KUHP), Law Number 17 of 2016 which is the ratification of the Government Regulation instead of Law Number 1 of 2016 concerning the Second Amendment to Law Number 23 of 2002 concerning Child Protection, Law Number 23 of 2004 concerning the Elimination of Domestic Violence (KDRT), and Law Number 12 of 2022 concerning Criminal Acts of Sexual Violence (TPKS). (Ifada, 2023).

Protecting and guaranteeing children's rights, including the right to be free from all forms of violence and exploitation, is both a moral and legal responsibility. Educational efforts designed to increase children's understanding of their rights and how to deal with potentially dangerous social situations are known as child protection. This protection encompasses not only the provision of information but also aims to strengthen children's capacity to protect themselves and support their peers in the face of threats of violence (Kusumaningtyas, 2015).

Child protection is not solely the responsibility of one party but requires synergy between various agencies, institutions, and the active participation of individuals in society. Only through collaborative efforts can we create a safe and supportive environment for children's holistic growth and development. Children who are victims of sexual violence need recovery services or at least special attention to mitigate the negative impact on their psychological and mental well-being. (Dania, 2020).

The low quality of child protection in Indonesia frequently draws attention and criticism from various segments of society. Yet, the government has a responsibility to ensure legal protection for children to ensure their right to survival and a decent standard of living, a fundamental human right. Children play a vital role in social and humanitarian life, yet their rights remain largely unfulfilled. In reality, many children remain victims of exploitation, both economically as child laborers and street children, and sexually. Therefore, the active role of the community and law enforcement officials is crucial in protecting children's rights (Rindana et al., 2022).

Disclosing cases of sexual violence often face obstacles because victims are often inconsistent in pursuing their rights in the legal realm. The issue of sexual violence is also often framed through a moral lens, often deeming victims' actions wrong or reckless. When sexual violence affects children, the impact is exacerbated by a culture of victim blaming, which places the victim partly to blame for the incident. This makes it difficult for victims to obtain legal justice due to the pressure and moral judgment they experience. (Franciscus Xaverius Wartoyo & Yuni Priskila Ginting, 2023).

The Department of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (DPPPA) plays a crucial role in implementing policies to prevent sexual violence against children. This role is realized through various programs such as education, awareness campaigns, and inter-

agency collaboration. In accordance with its duties and functions, DPPPA is responsible for protecting children's rights and providing preventive and rehabilitative interventions for child victims of violence. Several programs and policies implemented by DPPPA include anti-sexual violence campaigns through social media platforms and outreach activities in schools, digital literacy training for parents and children to prevent the risk of sexual violence from social media use, collaboration with law enforcement officials such as the police and prosecutors in handling sexual violence cases, provision of legal aid services for victims, and physical and psychological rehabilitation services, including provision of temporary shelters and counseling for child victims of sexual violence. (Nafilatul Ain et al., 2022).

Effort can be defined as an action taken by an individual to achieve a goal or as a strategy. In the context of a person's position, effort refers to the dynamics that arise when someone exercises their rights and obligations according to their position. Thus, effort can be understood as a structured, systematic, and planned effort aimed at maintaining or preventing the development of something from expanding or developing further (Soeharto, 2019).

Surayin stated that effort refers to actions, thoughts, or efforts made to achieve a specific goal. Every effort a person makes aims to avoid things they consider undesirable or disruptive and to find solutions to overcome them.

Preventive action is an action aimed at preventing something from happening. In the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), this term is defined as something that has a preventative nature. In social, political, and legal contexts, preventive action is used to prevent violations. This effort is carried out to ensure public compliance with applicable regulations and to understand the consequences of each action. Socially, preventive action can be defined as a form of social control aimed at preventing future problems. (I Gusti Bagus Hengki, 2021).

Preventive action is a form of control implemented before a violation or deviation occurs. In other words, preventive action is an effort to prevent behavior that conflicts with norms and values. This approach emphasizes crime prevention by identifying and reducing risk factors that can trigger crime. The primary goal is to prevent violence against children through prevention strategies that include increasing knowledge, community participation, and social support. Preventive efforts can include sex education programs, public campaigns, parent training, and rehabilitative and reintegrative approaches for perpetrators of child abuse (Novirahmayani, 2022).

Women's empowerment is an effort to open access and provide women with equal capacity to those possessed by men, enabling them to actively participate in decision-making processes and achieve gender equality (Nur, 2019).

Women's empowerment is a process aimed at strengthening women's capacity to manage and control their own lives, both economically, socially, and politically. This process is achieved by providing women with equal opportunities and access to various resources and opportunities, as do men. (Asiva Noor Rachmayani, 2015).

Protection refers to a series of efforts undertaken to protect children from threats or dangers, both physical and psychological, through direct and indirect actions. According to Wiyono, protection is a form of service that must be provided by law enforcement officers or security forces to create a sense of security for children, both physically and mentally. Meanwhile, in Law Number 35 of 2014 concerning Child Protection, child protection is defined as a series of activities aimed at guaranteeing and protecting children and their rights, so that they can grow, develop, and participate optimally in accordance

with human dignity, and are protected from all forms of violence and discrimination. (Nurul, 2023).

Sexual violence against children remains a serious issue that requires attention from various parties in Gorontalo, including the government, women's activists, law enforcement officials, and the wider community. According to the latest data from the Gorontalo Regency Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Office, there have been 403 cases involving women and children in the past five years. In 2024 alone, the number of cases reached 60, consisting of 46 cases of sexual violence against children, 4 cases of physical violence, and 10 cases of sexual violence against women. The number of cases from year to year is: 97 cases in 2020, 93 cases in 2021, 69 cases in 2022, and 84 cases in 2023. The total number of cases from 2020 to 2024 reached 403 cases, as shown in the following table:

**Table 1.1**  
**Number of cases of sexual violence against children from 2020-2024**  
**in Gorontalo Regency**

| NO           | YEAR | AMOUNT           |
|--------------|------|------------------|
| 1            | 2020 | 97 cases         |
| 2            | 2021 | 93 cases         |
| 3            | 2022 | 69 cases         |
| 4            | 2023 | 84 cases         |
| 5            | 2024 | 60 cases         |
| <b>Total</b> |      | <b>403 cases</b> |

*Source: Data from the DPPPA of Gorontalo Regency*

In Gorontalo Regency, approximately 403 cases of violence against women and children were recorded, 100 of which were sexual violence. These cases were largely triggered by the use of social media. Several factors contributing to this increase in violence include low public awareness of the importance of child protection, lack of parental supervision, the uncontrolled influence of digital media, and weak law enforcement against perpetrators. Furthermore, the social stigma attached to victims often prevents them or their families from reporting cases of sexual violence, resulting in many incidents remaining unrevealed.

This fact indicates that the preventive efforts undertaken by the Department of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (DPPPA) have not been fully effective in addressing sexual violence, particularly involving children. Social media plays a significant role as a trigger for sexual violence against children. The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection emphasizes the need to improve digital literacy among children and adolescents to prevent internet-driven sexual violence.

However, the main challenges faced are low community participation in literacy and education programs implemented by the DPPPA, as well as the agency's limited resources to reach all levels of society. The situation in Gorontalo Regency demonstrates the urgency of strengthening the DPPPA's preventive policies. With the rapid growth of social media use, particularly among children and adolescents, the DPPPA needs to strengthen its digital education programs and increase collaboration with schools and parents.

This study aims to examine the preventive measures taken by the Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Agency (DPPPA) of Gorontalo Regency in handling cases of sexual violence against women and children. The main focus of this study is to identify various forms of preventive efforts that have been carried out and identify the

challenges faced by DPPPA in overcoming sexual violence against children in Gorontalo Regency. Through this study, it is hoped that it can provide a useful contribution in protecting children's rights and reducing cases of sexual violence against children in the region. Based on this, the researcher is interested in conducting a study on "Preventive Efforts of the Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Agency in Overcoming Cases of Sexual Violence against Children in Gorontalo Regency."

## **2. RESEARCH METHODS**

This research was conducted using a qualitative approach to explore in-depth the various preventive efforts undertaken by the Gorontalo Regency Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Agency (DP3A) in addressing cases of sexual violence against children. The Gorontalo Regency DP3A Office was chosen as the research location because this agency plays a crucial role in the development, implementation, and evaluation of child protection programs in the region. The research lasted for a predetermined period until all required data were obtained.

A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand the phenomenon holistically and contextually, based on the experiences of informants. This research is descriptive in nature, aiming to depict the reality on the ground regarding the forms, strategies, and implementation of preventive efforts undertaken by the DP3A. Data collected included verbal information, written documents, and observations of activities relevant to the research focus.

The data sources used consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through direct observation at the research location and interviews with informants, such as DP3A employees involved in handling and preventing cases of sexual violence against children. Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained from official documents, activity reports, archives, literature, and online sources related to child protection issues (Moleong, 2021).

To collect data, researchers used three main techniques. Observation involved directly observing the situation, activities, and conditions within the DP3A environment without direct involvement. Face-to-face interviews were conducted using pre-prepared question guides to elicit in-depth information from informants. Documentation involved collecting various forms of documents, such as photographs, activity reports, and official archives, to support the observation and interview data.

The obtained data were then analyzed in three stages. The first stage is data reduction, where researchers filter and simplify the raw data to align with the research focus. Afterward, the reduced data is presented in a systematic narrative to facilitate researchers' understanding of patterns and relationships between findings. The final stage is drawing conclusions, which is the process of formulating interpretations of the analyzed data. These conclusions are continuously verified throughout the research to ensure their validity and accuracy, until valid and accountable conclusions are reached.

## **3. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This section explains the research results and provides a comprehensive discussion. Results can be presented in the form of images, graphs, tables, and other forms, making them easier for readers to understand [2, 5]. The discussion can be divided into several subchapters.

### **a. Research result**

#### **1) History of the Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Service (DP3A) of Gorontalo Regency**

The Gorontalo Regency Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Agency (DP3A) are a regional government institution established to address various issues related to women's empowerment and child protection. The agency's establishment reflects the local government's commitment to creating a safe, inclusive, and gender-sensitive environment.

The Gorontalo Regency DP3A was officially established based on Gorontalo Regent Regulation Number 49 of 2016. This regulation outlines the agency's position, organizational structure, duties, functions, and work procedures, which serve as the basis for the agency's public service delivery. Since its inception, the agency has been directed to serve as a center for coordinating and implementing policies focused on improving the welfare of women and children.

The local government's commitment to this issue was evident when Gorontalo Regency won the Child-Friendly Regency (KLA) award in 2017. The award was presented by the Indonesian Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection in recognition of the local government's efforts to guarantee children's rights. On the occasion, Gorontalo Regent Nelson Pomalingo emphasized that this achievement demonstrated the local government's commitment and aimed to improve to a higher level in the coming years.

Over time, DP3A continues to develop various strategic programs, one of which is the holding of a Pre-Evaluation meeting for the Assessment of Regional Government Commitments regarding Gender Responsive Development and Child-Friendly Districts/Cities in preparation for the Parahita Ekapraya Award (APE) and the 2021 KLA evaluation. This activity involves various Regional Apparatus Organizations (OPD) and other stakeholders as a form of synergy in creating a friendly environment for women and children.

In addition, DP3A is also active in coordinating the prevention of violence against women and children, including promoting the establishment of women- and child-friendly villages in Gorontalo Regency. Through a series of ongoing initiatives, this agency strives to ensure women and children receive protection, opportunities for development, and a safe space in community life.

With the establishment of the Gorontalo Regency DP3A, it is hoped that the various complex issues facing women and children can be addressed in a more systematic, integrated, and sustainable manner. This effort is part of the local government's vision to build a more just, prosperous, and inclusive society.

## **2) Duties and Functions of the Gorontalo Regency DP3A**

The Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Agency (DP3A) of Gorontalo Regency play a strategic role in supporting the local government in realizing gender-responsive development and protecting the rights of women and children. Specifically, this agency is tasked with assisting the Regent in administering government affairs in the areas of women's empowerment and child protection, including carrying out assistance tasks assigned by the central and provincial governments. In carrying out these duties, DP3A carries out various important functions that serve as the foundation for implementing programs oriented towards improving the welfare of the community, particularly women and children.

One of the primary functions of the DP3A is to collect and compile work plans, programs, and evaluations related to women's empowerment, improving women's welfare, and child protection. This function ensures that each program implemented has a clear, measurable direction and is aligned with field needs.

Furthermore, the DP3A plays a role in the effective management of personnel, facilities, and infrastructure resources to ensure all official activities run optimally.

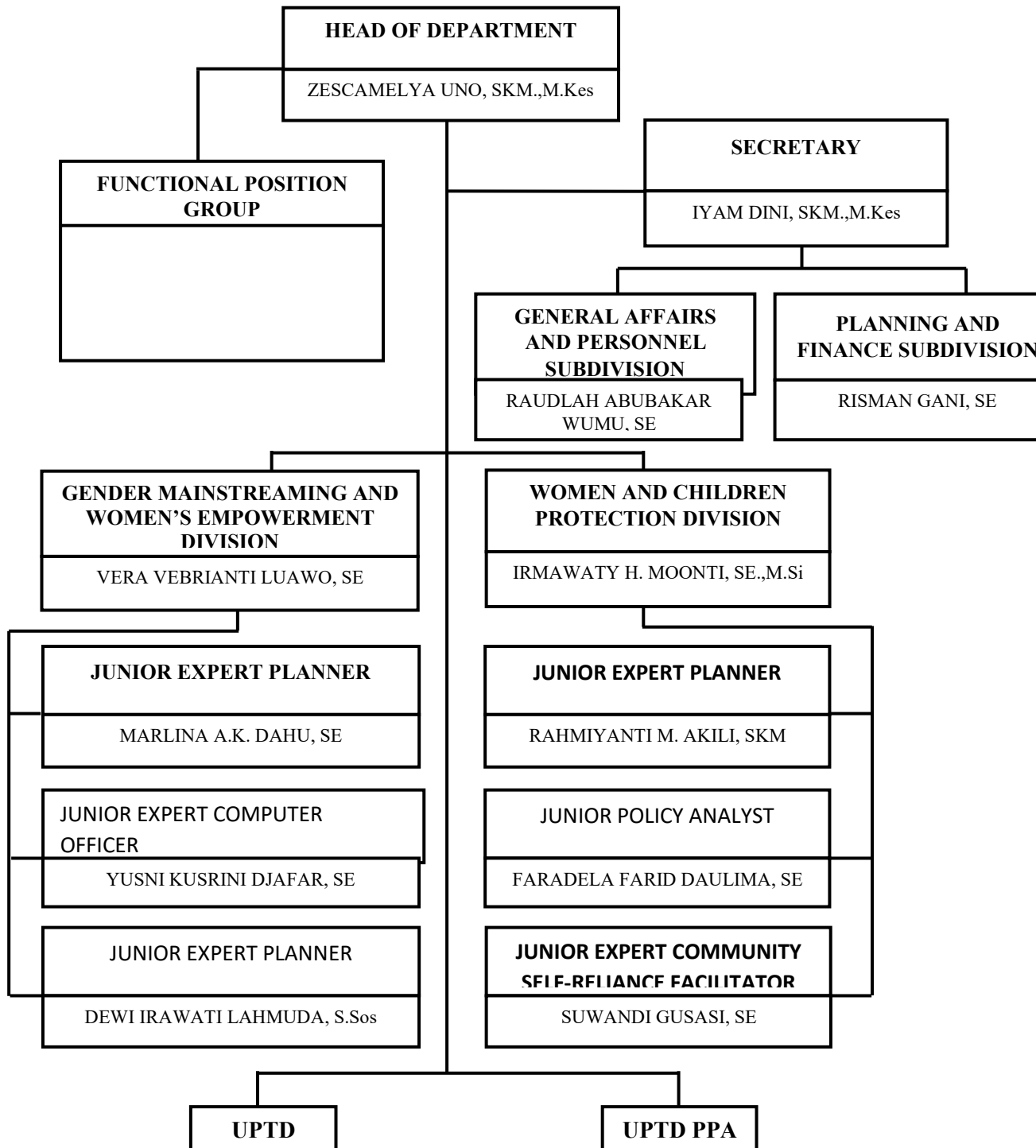
Other functions include planning, controlling, and supervising programs focused on child protection and women's empowerment. Through this function, DP3A ensures that all activities are implemented in accordance with established standards and remain aligned with local government policies. Furthermore, DP3A is responsible for fostering and establishing partnerships with various government agencies, private institutions, community organizations, and NGOs. This collaboration is crucial for creating synergy in development that involves multiple stakeholders and strengthens protection for women and children.

In addition to its planning and collaboration functions, the DP3A also manages data, conducts evaluations, and compiles reports on all women's empowerment and child protection activities. Accurate and comprehensive data management is essential to ensure evidence-based policy decisions. Furthermore, the DP3A also carries out additional functions according to public service needs and the dynamics of the agency, ensuring the agency has the flexibility to respond to various issues that arise in the community.

Overall, these functions provide a solid foundation for the Gorontalo Regency DP3A to provide effective, responsive services that prioritize the fulfillment of women's and children's rights. Through the structured implementation of its duties and functions, DP3A is able to fulfill its role as the spearhead of local government in creating a safe, just, and inclusive environment for all members of society.



### 3) Organizational Structure of DP3A Gorontalo Regency



**Figure 1: Organizational Structure of DP3A Gorontalo Regency****4) Preventive Efforts by the Gorontalo Regency DP3A in Addressing Sexual Violence against Children****a) Sexual Education Program**

Research results indicate that the sex education program is one of the primary preventive efforts of the Gorontalo Regency DP3A (Regional Child Protection Agency) in reducing the number of cases of sexual violence against children. This program is not only aimed at children but also involves teachers, parents, and village communities. Field findings revealed that the DP3A presents its materials in a simple and child-friendly manner, for example, by explaining private body parts that should not be touched, how to recognize dangerous situations, and concrete steps to take if a child experiences abuse.

The program is being implemented in areas with high vulnerability levels based on case data from the DP3A. The districts of Limboto, Telaga, Telaga Biru, and Tibawa are priority locations. Within each sub-district, activities are being carried out in sub-districts and villages previously recorded as having high levels of vulnerability.

Selecting locations based on case data is an effective strategy for optimizing limited resources. DP3A also doesn't work alone, but collaborates with the Education Office to facilitate implementation in schools, the police to provide legal perspectives, and child protection agencies to ensure support meets child protection standards.

Thus, the sexual education program carried out by DP3A is planned, data-based, and involves cross-sector collaboration so that it can have a broader impact on society, especially children who are at a vulnerable age.

**b) Public Campaign**

Field findings show that DP3A consistently holds annual public campaigns to raise public awareness. These campaigns are conducted through direct meetings and easy-to-understand educational media. The speakers explained that the campaigns target two main areas: village communities and educational institutions.

At the village level, the campaign focused on areas with high levels of vulnerability, based on internal data, such as Tabumela, Talumelito, and Ombulo villages. Meanwhile, in the school sector, the campaign targeted elementary and junior high school students, considered the most vulnerable groups.

Public campaign activities were delivered collaboratively with professionals such as child psychologists, police counselors, and representatives from partner NGOs. They provided materials on the dangers of sexual violence, signs of suspicious behavior, preventative measures, and how to report it. Educational media such as banners, leaflets, educational videos, and interactive games were used to ensure the message was easily understood by children.

The research also found the significant role of the Children's Forum as a strategic partner. The Children's Forum helps provide education, acts as a peer counselor, and acts as a reporting agency when cases are discovered. Children's

Forums have been established at the district, village, and school levels, facilitating the dissemination of information down to the grassroots level.

From these findings, it can be concluded that public campaigns are not only routine activities but have developed into collaborative movements involving many parties, even though their scope is still limited due to inadequate budgets.

**c) Parent Training**

Field findings indicate that direct training for parents has not been optimally implemented. This is primarily due to budget constraints, which require the DP3A to prioritize outreach activities for children in schools. Nevertheless, the DP3A continues to strive to reach parents through training activities conducted in villages, which are usually packaged in the form of technical guidance (Bimtek) or capacity building.

Several villages have implemented similar activities, but their reach is still limited. The materials provided focus primarily on parenting styles, positive communication, and how to recognize signs of child sexual abuse. However, the irregular nature of the training program makes its long-term impact less significant.

These findings indicate that parents, as the groups closest to their children, have not received optimal education. Yet, parental literacy significantly impacts the early detection of sexual violence within the family and community.

**d) Rehabilitative and Reintegrative Approaches for Perpetrators of Violence**

The research results show that in the context of handling perpetrators of sexual violence against children, the Gorontalo Regency Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Agency (DP3A) do not have direct authority to handle the rehabilitation or social reintegration of perpetrators. The DP3A's primary focus remains on fulfilling the rights, providing assistance, and protecting victims. Nevertheless, this agency continues to play a strategic role as an inter-agency coordinator, particularly in cases where the perpetrator and victim share the same social environment, potentially resulting in further psychological impacts for the victim.

In carrying out its coordinating function, DP3A collaborates with various institutions, such as the Special Child Development Institution (LPKA), the Correctional Center (BAPAS), the Social Services Agency, and rehabilitation service units that provide professional staff such as psychologists, child counselors, and social workers. Coordination is also carried out with law enforcement officials to ensure that all legal processes continue to adhere to the principle of "the best interests of the child," especially if the perpetrator is under 18 years of age.

However, research findings show that various obstacles still limit the effectiveness of rehabilitation and reintegration efforts for perpetrators. One major obstacle is the lack of specialized rehabilitation facilities for child perpetrators of sexual violence. Available facilities remain limited, both in terms of capacity and the quality of services provided. Furthermore, the availability of competent child psychologists is still severely limited, preventing comprehensive psychological assessment and rehabilitation.

Another inhibiting factor is the strong societal stigma against child perpetrators of sexual violence. This stigma complicates the social reintegration process, as some communities still view child perpetrators as threats and reject their presence in their communities. As a result, many child perpetrators face

obstacles in returning to school, participating in social activities, or establishing new social relationships. This situation demonstrates that despite efforts by the DP3A to build cross-agency coordination, the supporting infrastructure and social acceptance of the community are still inadequate to achieve effective reintegration.

## **5) DP3A's Obstacles in Implementing Preventive Efforts**

### **a) Limited Resources**

Research reveals that limited resources are the most significant obstacle for the DP3A in implementing various preventive efforts. A shortage of professional staff, such as child psychologists, counselors, and social workers, prevents many education and mentoring programs from being implemented optimally. The lack of supporting facilities, such as safe houses, prevents the handling of victims and perpetrators according to child protection service standards. Furthermore, budget constraints prevent public outreach and education programs from reaching all sub-districts, resulting in some areas still lacking educational programs on sexual violence prevention.

### **b) Weak Coordination Between Regional Apparatus Organizations**

Research findings also indicate that coordination between Regional Apparatus Organizations (OPDs) has not been optimal, even though the issue of sexual violence against children is a multidimensional issue that requires the involvement of many sectors. The absence of an integrated coordination system and the lack of regular communication forums mean that each OPD tends to work independently based on its core duties. This often results in slow, unsynchronized, or incomplete case handling. Limited human resources and budgets within each agency also contribute to the deterioration of cross-sectoral coordination.

### **c) Low Public Awareness**

Low public awareness remains a significant obstacle to preventing sexual violence against children. Interviews indicate that some communities still consider this issue taboo to discuss openly. Many families choose to remain silent or resolve cases internally for fear of social stigma, depriving victims of appropriate protection. Furthermore, children, as a vulnerable group, are often unaware of reporting mechanisms or feel ashamed and afraid to share their experiences. This leads to many cases going undetected, being handled late, or never being reported at all.

### **d) Lack of Involvement of Other Institutions**

Research findings also show that the handling of sexual violence cases remains too centralized within the DP3A. However, child protection requires a collaborative approach involving various parties, such as health institutions, educational institutions, community leaders, religious institutions, and civil society organizations. The lack of involvement from these institutions results in incomplete services for victims, particularly in terms of psychological recovery, health care, and long-term social support. DP3A emphasizes that without the active involvement of all elements of society, efforts to prevent and address sexual violence will not be effective.

## **b. Discussion**

### **1) Preventive Efforts of DP3A Gorontalo Regency**

**a) Sexual Education Program**

The sexual education program implemented by the Gorontalo Regency Child Protection Agency (DP3A) demonstrates the agency's implementation of primary prevention in child protection. Based on research data, DP3A determined the locations for outreach activities by considering the vulnerability level in each sub-district. Limboto, Telaga, Telaga Biru, and Tibawa were the primary focus areas due to the high number of sexual violence cases in these areas in recent years. This regional vulnerability-based approach demonstrates that DP3A has conducted spatial analysis of case patterns as a basis for program planning, enabling targeted and efficient interventions.

The implementation of sexual education, which includes an introduction to body parts, limits on physical interaction, and self-protection methods, aligns with the principle of "child self-protection education." DP3A involves schools, teachers, and parents because these three elements are the direct ecosystem that shapes children's behavior. The involvement of police, psychologists, and child protection services also demonstrates the application of the child protection system concept, which requires synergy between various parties. Research findings indicate that children who participate in sexual education programs become more confident in speaking up when they feel uncomfortable with the treatment of others. This is evident in the increase in reports received by schools and the community following the outreach activities.

Although the program has been running well, its reach remains limited, particularly for children in remote villages that have not yet been reached by outreach activities. Furthermore, sexual education materials have not been integrated into the school curriculum, so children only receive education when the DP3A (Regional Child Protection Agency) visits for activities. This indicates that the program's sustainability still depends on agency intervention, not the formal education system.

**b) Public Campaign**

The public campaign conducted by DP3A is a secondary preventive measure aimed at raising awareness among vulnerable groups, particularly communities in areas at high risk of sexual violence. Field findings indicate that this campaign has been successful in increasing public knowledge about the signs of sexual violence and reporting steps. However, this campaign cannot be implemented routinely in all areas due to operational budget limitations.

DP3A also utilizes the Children's Forum as a peer counselor to expand educational reach at the community level. The involvement of the Children's Forum demonstrates the application of a participatory approach, providing children with a space to directly participate in efforts to protect their peers. Research findings reveal that the Children's Forum plays a significant role in helping identify cases that go undetected by adults. Children tend to be more comfortable confiding in their peers than in their parents or teachers.

However, research also shows that public campaigns still face serious limitations. The DP3A (Regional Disaster Management Agency) cannot print campaign materials in large quantities, preventing educational messages from being disseminated evenly. Villages far from district centers often lack access to campaigns, leading to significant variations in public awareness levels between accessible and unreachable villages. Dependence on regional budget

(APBD) funds makes the campaign's sustainability highly volatile from year to year.

**c) Parent Training**

Parental training is a crucial pillar in preventing sexual violence, given that the family is the primary place where children feel safe. However, research findings indicate that this training has not been optimally implemented by the DP3A. Budgetary constraints force the DP3A to prioritize programs that directly target children. As a result, parent training is only conducted in collaboration with village governments or partner institutions.

Research shows that low parental literacy regarding sexual violence is one of the main reasons why it is difficult to detect cases early. Many parents still consider children's withdrawal, crying easily, or anxiety to be normal. However, these behaviors are often early signs of trauma resulting from sexual violence. In this context, parent training is crucial. However, field findings indicate that training is sporadic and lacks a standardized module.

Furthermore, the majority of training activities are conducted in villages funded through village funds. This means that the sustainability of the training is highly dependent on the commitment of the respective village governments. In villages that do not specifically focus on children's issues, parent training activities are not carried out at all. This situation indicates a significant gap between the needs and the reality of program implementation.

**d) Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Offenders**

In terms of rehabilitation and reintegration of child perpetrators of sexual violence, the DP3A plays a coordinating role because technical authority rests with other institutions such as the LPKA (Child Protection and Rehabilitation Agency), the BAPAS (Child Protection Agency), or rehabilitation institutions. Field findings indicate that the DP3A actively coordinates when cases involve perpetrators and victims from the same community. Coordination is carried out to ensure that the legal process, psychological support, and social reintegration continue to respect children's rights.

However, field findings revealed a number of structural obstacles. First, rehabilitation facilities for child perpetrators are very limited. There are no specialized rehabilitation institutions for child sexual violence in Gorontalo Regency. Child perpetrators are usually referred to provincial-level institutions, which are very few in number and cannot always accommodate all cases. Second, the number of child psychologists is very limited, so assessments of perpetrators' conditions and trauma recovery are not optimal. Third, the societal stigma against child perpetrators is very strong, especially in rural areas with close social ties. This stigma complicates the social reintegration process and often leaves child perpetrators feeling marginalized.

Research shows that reintegration efforts for perpetrators will be successful only if service infrastructure and social acceptance are balanced. However, in Gorontalo Regency, both of these aspects have not been met, resulting in ineffective rehabilitation and reintegration efforts.

**2) Obstacles of DP3A Gorontalo Regency**

**a) Limited Resources**

The research results show that resource constraints are the most fundamental issue facing the Gorontalo Regency DP3A in implementing preventive and responsive efforts to cases of sexual violence against children. These limitations

relate not only to budgetary constraints but also to the availability of experts, supporting facilities, and operational resources in the field.

First, the lack of a dedicated child psychologist at the Child Protection and Child Protection Agency (DP3A) is a crucial obstacle. Addressing child sexual violence requires a thorough psychological assessment, both to determine the victim's emotional state and to identify further risks. Field findings indicate that when cases arise, the DP3A must refer cases to a limited number of third-party psychologists, often delaying treatment. This situation is exacerbated by the limited availability of professional social workers and counselors at the district level, resulting in a very high workload for DP3A staff.

Second, the lack of supporting facilities, such as safe houses or special shelters for child victims and perpetrators, prevents the DP3A from providing rapid, temporary protection when victims find themselves in at-risk situations. Based on field findings, the DP3A must collaborate with other parties or use temporary facilities that do not fully meet the standards of comfort and confidentiality. This undoubtedly impacts the quality of victims' recovery.

Third, budget constraints prevent many education and outreach programs from reaching all sub-districts, particularly rural areas located far from government centers. Research shows that only a few priority sub-districts receive routine services annually, while other areas receive outreach only occasionally. Consequently, public understanding of sexual violence prevention remains uneven.

Overall, resource limitations make it difficult for DP3A to implement programs sustainably and comprehensively. This indicates that institutional commitment is not fully supported by adequate resources, thus impacting the effectiveness of child protection in Gorontalo Regency.

#### **b) Weak Coordination Between Regional Apparatus Organizations**

Sexual violence against children is a multidimensional issue that requires collaboration across various sectors, including education, health, social services, legal services, and village government. However, research findings reveal that coordination between regional government agencies (OPD) in Gorontalo Regency is not optimal. Each OPD tends to operate based on its own specific duties and functions without a unified coordination mechanism.

Interviews revealed that the lack of an integrated reporting system is a major contributing factor to weak collaboration. When a case occurs, information often reaches the DP3A late because reports are submitted through informal channels or are not even recorded in the system. Furthermore, the lack of a regular communication forum hinders cross-agency information exchange. Coordination often occurs only after a case has already occurred and requires immediate action.

Furthermore, limited human resources and budgets experienced by some regional government agencies (OPDs) prevent them from contributing optimally to collaboration. In some cases, schools or community health centers located in vulnerable areas lack specialized personnel or adequate training to detect signs of sexual violence.

This often results in treatment being carried out sectorally rather than holistically. Consequently, many cases are not fully addressed, for example, only being resolved at the medical stage without psychological support, or only through legal proceedings without social intervention for the family. This weak

coordination between regional government agencies directly impacts the ineffectiveness of preventive and curative efforts.

**c) Low Public Awareness**

Field findings show that low public awareness remains a major obstacle to preventing sexual violence against children in Gorontalo Regency. Many cases go unreported because families view the issue as a shame that must be covered up. A culture of shame and fear of public scrutiny deprives victims of opportunities for protection and recovery.

Research also found that some people still don't understand the concept of sexual violence, both physical and non-physical, such as grooming, verbal harassment, and digital exploitation. This situation results in many cases going unnoticed or being considered "normal" behavior in everyday life.

Low legal literacy also means that parents do not understand reporting procedures. Children who experience violence are often told to keep quiet or advised to "forget" the incident. This results in the child's trauma becoming deeper and, in some cases, causing the victim to be reluctant to socialize or experience anxiety disorders.

Furthermore, patriarchal cultural norms also influence how society views this issue. Many people still believe that discussions about sexuality should be avoided, resulting in parents being less open about providing self-protection education to their children.

These findings indicate that community-based education must be strengthened and carried out continuously so that the community has sufficient knowledge to prevent, detect, and report sexual violence against children.

**d) Lack of Involvement of Other Institutions**

Research results show that the DP3A remains the most dominant agency in addressing sexual violence against children, even though this issue requires multi-agency collaboration. The minimal involvement of health, education, religious institutions, community leaders, and community organizations prevents a holistic response.

Health institutions, for example, often only provide medical treatment without linking cases to the DP3A unless there is a formal request. Schools also tend to cover up cases to protect the institution's reputation, depriving child victims of the necessary protection. Community leaders and religious institutions, which should be moral agents, are not all active in encouraging case reporting or providing public education.

This minimal involvement demonstrates that the child protection system in Gorontalo Regency remains fragmented. Without strengthening the roles of various parties, DP3A's efforts will remain limited and unable to achieve comprehensive child protection as mandated by various national regulations.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

**a. Preventive Efforts Undertaken by DP3A in Addressing Cases of Sexual Violence Against Children in Gorontalo Regency**

The Sexual Education Program run by the Women and Children Protection Agency, specifically in the Women and Children Protection (PPA) sector, focuses on two main areas: prevention and case management. Case management is carried out



directly by the PPA Technical Implementation Unit (UPTD PPA), while prevention efforts are implemented through outreach activities targeting various levels of society.

The public campaign conducted by the Gorontalo Regency Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Agency aims to prevent various forms of violence against children and women, not just sexual violence. This strategy is implemented through outreach activities at the village level and strengthening the role of Children's Forums as pioneers and reporters in their respective communities.

**Parent Training** It is known that the implementation of the socialization program carried out by the Women and Children Protection Service of Gorontalo Regency is still not optimal in reaching parents directly. Due to budget constraints, activities are focused primarily on children in schools. However, efforts to reach parents are still being made through village-level training, packaged in the form of technical guidance or capacity building. This strategy provides an alternative solution for conveying information related to child protection and preventing domestic violence.

**Rehabilitative and Reintegrative Approaches for Child Abuse Perpetrators.** This approach is based on the principle that every child, even if they are a perpetrator, still has rights that must be protected. The type of sanctions imposed is tailored to the severity of the violation, ranging from repatriation to parents to the implementation of social sanctions or rehabilitation programs, depending on the severity of the violation.

**b. Inhibiting Factors or Obstacles Faced by the Gorontalo Regency DP3A in Implementing These Preventive Efforts**

**Lack of Resources:** The response to sexual violence against children in Gorontalo Regency is related to limited resources. These limitations include a shortage of professionals, such as psychologists and social workers, as well as the unequal availability of supporting facilities such as safe houses. Furthermore, budgetary constraints also hamper the implementation of preventive activities that should cover the entire region.

Due to the lack of coordination between Regional Apparatus Organizations (OPD) and government agencies, coordination between agencies is needed to ensure that all agencies involved in child protection efforts can operate within a unified and effective system. This will allow for faster case resolution and optimized services for victims, eliminating overlapping gaps.

Due to the low level of public awareness of the issue of sexual violence against children, more intensive efforts are needed to increase public awareness through education, socialization, and active community involvement so that the issue of sexual violence against children is no longer considered taboo and can be handled early.

The lack of involvement of other institutions in handling cases of sexual violence against children requires strengthening cross-sector collaboration in the form of active coordination forums, clear workflows, and effective communication systems between institutions. This step is crucial to ensure that the handling of sexual violence cases is not sectoral, but rather comprehensive, integrated, and sustainable, so that child protection can be optimally implemented.

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