

ANALYSIS OF RISK FACTORS FOR SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

Tiqi Liana Putri¹, Neha Rizki Aprilianingrum¹, Falihatul Laila¹, Aidina Fitria Rahman¹, Dewi Ratna Sulistina^{1*}

¹State University of Malang, JL. Semarang No. 5, Malang, 65145, Indonesia

*Corresponding author, email: dewi.ratna.fk@um.ac.id

Keywords

Children, Risk factors, Sexual violence

Abstract

Sexual violence against children is a complex and growing public health issue. This study aims to analyze the risk factors associated with child sexual violence, gain an in-depth understanding of the patterns and determinants of sexual violence based on published scientific evidence, and integrate findings from various studies to provide a comprehensive overview of the risk factors for child sexual violence. The research design is a systematic review of various national and international journals between 2020 and 2025. The research findings indicate that girls under 12 years old are more vulnerable to becoming victims, with the majority of perpetrators being male and closely related to the victims. Internal risk factors include age, gender, psychological condition, the perpetrator's morals, and peer influence. External risk factors include family education and economics, parenting style, culture, exposure to pornography, and a poor legal system. A child's physical, mental, and social development is affected by sexual violence. Comprehensive prevention is needed thru sex education, family supervision, increased public awareness, and strict law enforcement to prevent sexual violence against children.

1. Introduction

Sexual violence against children is one of the most serious forms of human rights violations and has long-term impacts on the physical, psychological, and social development of victims. This case does not only occur in developing countries, but has also become a complex global problem. According to a global report from The Lancet (2025), the prevalence of sexual violence against children globally reached 18.9% in women and 14.8% in men, with most cases first occurring before the age of 18. The data shows that nearly 1 in 5 women and 1 in 7 men worldwide have been victims of sexual violence as children.

In addition, a UNICEF report (2024) revealed that more than 370 million women and girls worldwide have experienced rape or sexual abuse before the age of 18, and this figure increases to 650 million if non-contact sexual violence such as verbal abuse and exposure to pornography is included. This high prevalence illustrates that sexual violence against children is a transnational problem that requires serious attention from various sectors, including health, social, legal, and education.

In Indonesia itself, the results of the 2024 National Survey of Life Experiences of Children and Adolescents (SNPHAR) showed that the prevalence of sexual violence against boys was 8.34% and against girls 8.82%. Although the figures appear lower than the global prevalence, recorded cases are still considered an iceberg phenomenon, as many victims do not report due to social stigma and fear of environmental pressure. Data from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (Kemen PPPA) also confirms that the number of cases recorded by official institutions does not reflect the actual conditions on the ground.

Although various prevention and sexuality education efforts have been carried out, the prevalence of violence and risky sexual behaviour in children is still high and tends to increase [1]. Most previous studies have focused more on the adolescent population, while studies related to risk factors in early childhood are still limited [2]. Existing studies often only highlight single aspects such as individual factors or factors in the family environment without looking at the relationship between other factors such as social, cultural, and digital media factors. Therefore, scientific studies are needed that can collect evidence from various research to gain a deeper understanding of sexual risk factors in children. The findings of this scientific study are expected to support the development of more effective policies, education, and interventions in child protection efforts.

Previous literature has identified various risk factors influencing sexual behaviour and vulnerability in children, including individual factors such as early puberty, lack of sexual knowledge, and experiences of

childhood violence; family factors such as inadequate parenting, domestic violence, and poor communication between parents and children; and social factors such as peer pressure and exposure to pornography through digital media [3]. Some qualitative studies have focused on the subjective experiences of victims of sexual violence, while quantitative studies have highlighted the relationship between sexual education and children's knowledge and behaviour [4]. However, these findings are still isolated and have not been systematically integrated, making it difficult to draw general conclusions regarding patterns of sexual risk factors in children.

While numerous studies have explored child sexual behaviour and violence, there are still limitations in identifying multidimensional risk factors. Most previous studies have focused on a single risk domain, such as family or individual factors, without considering the interactions between social and cultural factors [5]. Furthermore, differences in research methods, definitions, and contexts make comparisons between studies difficult [2]. This study aims to analyze and synthesize risk factors associated with child sexual behaviour and vulnerability based on previous research, to provide a scientific basis for developing more effective and contextualized child protection interventions, policies, and strategies.

2. Method

This study uses a systematic review approach to analyze various risk factors associated with sexual violence against children based on published scientific evidence. This approach aims to gain a deeper understanding of the patterns and determinants of child sexual abuse (CSA) by integrating the results from various relevant studies. The literature search focused on scientific articles published between 2020 and 2025, from both national and international journals, to ensure the data used was current and relevant to the latest conditions. The search was conducted using the keywords "sexual violence," "risk factors," and "children" through the Google Scholar, PubMed, Science Direct, dan Publish or Perish databases. The initial search yielded 92 articles, but after screening based on topic relevance and data completeness, only 3 articles met the criteria for further analysis. The collected data was analyzed descriptively and thematically by reviewing the research objectives, methods, respondent characteristics, and identified risk factors. The analysis results are presented in narrative form and summary tables to strengthen the validity of the findings and provide a comprehensive overview of risk factors for sexual violence against children.

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1. Journal Search Results

Author and Year	Title	Method	Respondent	Result
Yanuar Firdaus Sukardi, Mamlukah Mamlukah, Lely Wahyuniar, Dwi Nastiti Iswarawanti (2025)	Factors related to incidents of sexual violence against children	Quantitative	34 victims of child sexual violence	Parental age, parental occupation, parental education, parental economic status, peer influence, and living conditions are related to incidents of sexual violence against children.
Muhammad Fadhil, Radhiah Zakaria, Meutia Zahara, Asnawi Abdullah, Marthoenis (2025)	Determinants of Child Violence in Bener Meriah Regency	Quantitativ	78 children (aged 6-18 years)	Child's gender: girls are 3.8 times more likely to experience violence than boys Venue: more common at school than at home Parenting style: permissive and authoritarian Age: children over 12 years old are at lower risk Perpetrator's occupation: unemployed Perpetrator's gender: mostly male
Kayus Kayowuan Lewoleba, Muhammad Helmi Fakhrozi (2020)	STUDY OF FACTORS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN	Descriptive qualitative	Sources (number not mentioned) + secondary data	Internal Factors: Psychological (e.g., abnormal sexual desire) Biological (sexual needs) Morals Revenge & past trauma (victims tend to become perpetrators in the future) External Factors: Culture (power) Economic (poverty, neglected children)

Lack of collective awareness of child protection in educational settings
Exposure to child pornography and adult pornography that victimizes children
Weak law enforcement and relatively light penalties
Disharmony between laws and regulations related to children's issues
Children in disaster and emergency situations, Impact of tourism industry development (destinations become places of exploitation)

Sexual violence against children is a very serious and complex problem, involving numerous interconnected risk factors between the individual, family, social environment, and culture. According to the WHO (2022), sexual violence is not only caused by the perpetrator's behavior, but also by weak systems of protection, supervision, and education regarding bodily boundaries for children. The risk of sexual violence against children increases if they do not have sufficient understanding about self-protection, the importance of family supervision, and choosing a safe environment that does not allow dangerous things.

The initial search yielded 92 articles, but after screening based on topic relevance and data completeness, only 3 articles met the criteria for further analysis. Based on the three journals above, we can conclude that the key points regarding the risk factors for sexual violence against children can be divided into two main categories: Internal Factors and External Factors.

3.1 Internal Factors

Are conditions or circumstances originating from within the individual and seen in the individual that are related to acts of sexual violence. According to Sukardi et al. (2025), Fadhil et al. (2025), and Kayowuan and Fakhrozi (2020), internal factors include [6][7] [8]:

a. Childhood

Children under 12 years of age are at a higher risk of sexual violence than children over 12 years of age. This is because children of their age (children under 12 years of age) are not yet able to distinguish between inappropriate behavior and are unable to protect themselves from threats from adults [7].

b. Gender

Research indicates that female children are at greater risk of becoming victims of sexual violence than male children. This is related to the tendency for sexual violence to be perpetrated by males against females.

c. Psychological and Moral Condition of the Perpetrator

Psychological factors such as uncontrolled sexual urges can lead perpetrators to rape child victims without realizing their own condition. A perpetrator's low morale and the trauma of being a victim of previous rape increase the likelihood of a past victim becoming a perpetrator of sexual violence in the future [8].

d. Peer Influence

Peers who tend to exhibit sexually violent or promiscuous behavior will transmit this behavior to their friends. Children who lack supervision and social control are more likely to be influenced to imitate their peers' negative behavior [6]. Ulubas Varpula (2024) emphasized that violence and harassment between peers frequently occur in school environments, especially among young males.

3.2 External Factors

a. Family Factors

Education level, occupation, and socioeconomic status significantly influence how parents supervise their children. Parents with low levels of education and economic status often lack an understanding of the importance of supervising their children, resulting in less attention to their children's well-being.

b. Social Environment

Many studies have revealed that schools and other educational settings have a significant impact on acts of sexual violence against children [7]. Research indicates that violence can be perpetrated by teachers, school staff, or fellow students.

c. Community Economic and Cultural Conditions

Poverty, unemployment, neglected children, and low public awareness of child protection are the main causes of the increase in cases of sexual violence. Patriarchal culture can also increase the risk factors for sexual violence against children [8].

d. Media and Pornography Exposure

Globalization has had a significant impact on technological and communication developments, including increased exposure to pornography and sexual content. This increases risky sexual behavior and sexual violence for both victims and perpetrators. According to Wright, Tokunaga & Kraus (2021) in the Journal of Interpersonal Violence, viewing pornography too frequently can increase a person's risk of committing acts of sexual aggression. Furthermore [9] found that exposure to pornography can lower morale and increase sexual impulsivity.

e. Legal System

Weak law enforcement, excessively lenient sanctions, and disharmony between laws and regulations indicate that structural protection for children is suboptimal. This reduces the long-term impact on perpetrators of sexual violence and increases the likelihood of recurrence [8].

In addition, insufficient understanding and limited skills elevate children's vulnerability to sexual violence. Those who are not provided with fundamental education about sexuality tend to be more susceptible to exploitation. Apart from the lack of knowledge, children's skills in acting when facing risky situations are mostly still lacking.

To minimize the risk factors that occur, clear prevention and handling efforts are certainly needed. Efforts to prevent and handle child sexual abuse (CSA) are closely related to several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). First, SDG 16.2 aims to end torture, exploitation, trafficking of children, and all forms of violence against children. Therefore, every effort to prevent, report, and provide services to victims of CSA directly supports the achievement of this goal. Second, SDG 5 (sub-target 5.2) emphasizes the elimination of violence against women and girls. This requires policies and programs that pay attention to gender, because gender inequality is a structural factor that increases the risk of sexual violence. Third, SDG 3, which focuses on health and well-being, is also relevant, because sexual violence against children has long-term impacts on the physical and mental health of victims. Therefore, responsive and sustainable health services are needed. Implementing comprehensive policies to prevent and address CSA not only protects children from violence, but also accelerates the achievement of SDG targets related to child protection, gender equality, and overall societal well-being. Comprehensive prevention is needed through sex education, family supervision, increased public awareness, and strict law enforcement to prevent sexual violence against children.

4. Conclusion

The results of this systematic review indicate that sexual dysfunction in children is a multifaceted issue that is influenced by both internal and external factors. Internal factors such as age under 12 years, gender, psychological and moral conditions, and the influence of family life increase a child's vulnerability to become korban. Conversely, external factors include family conditions, social environments, economics, culture, pornography, and, more generally, a legal system that isn't the best at providing protection for children. By understanding various risk factors, strategies for child protection and welfare can be developed in a more effective, contextual, and illuminating manner.

Author Contributions

This document was prepared with the collective contributions of all the authors. N.R.A. is responsible for the coordination and compilation of data. A.F.R. carries out the evaluation, methodology, and writing of the journal and abstract. T.L.P. is in charge of writing the results and discussion sections, as well as structuring the systematic framework and literature analysis. F.L. contributed to the writing and final editing of the manuscript.

Funding

This research is part of an assignment for the Midwifery Care for Reproductive Health and Sexuality course and did not receive any specific funding from any institution, whether government, private, or non-profit organization. No sponsors were involved in the study design, data collection, analysis, interpretation, writing of this report, or the decision to submit this article for publication.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author states that there is no conflict of interest that could affect the results and interpretation of this study.

Data Availability

The data used in this study are journal articles that are publicly available through academic databases including Google Scholar, PubMed, ScienceDirect, and Publish or Perish. Data summary that is being viewed can be obtained from the author of the response based on open-ended questions.

References

- [1] R. Reichel, A. Daser, F. M. Gnielka, A. F. Schmidt, A. Blokland, and R. J. B. Lehmann, *A review of risk factors for online and mixed child sexual abuse material offending: what is being researched?*, no. November. 2024. doi: 10.1080/13552600.2024.2418100.
- [2] I. Zych and I. Marín-López, "PROTOCOL: Risk and protective factors for child sexual abuse and interventions against child sexual abuse: An umbrella review," *Campbell Syst. Rev.*, vol. 20, no. 4, pp. 1–16, 2024, doi: 10.1002/cl2.70000.
- [3] D. J. Whitaker *et al.*, "Risk factors for the perpetration of child sexual abuse: A review and meta-analysis," *Child Abus. Negl.*, vol. 32, no. 5, pp. 529–548, 2008, doi: 10.1016/j.chiabu.2007.08.005.
- [4] A. B. Bozzini, A. Bauer, J. Maruyama, R. Simões, and A. Matijasevich, "Factors associated with risk behaviors in adolescence: a systematic review," *Brazilian J. Psychiatry*, vol. 43, no. 2, pp. 210–221, 2021, doi: 10.1590/1516-4446-2019-0835.
- [5] C. Claussen, E. Esina, and L. Wells, "Child Sexual Abuse : A Cursory Review of Risk and Protective Factors for Victimization and Perpetration Prepared for the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services," pp. 1–23, 2013.
- [6] F. Sukardi, M. Mamlukah, L. Wahyuniar, and D. N. Iswarawanti, "Faktor yang berhubungan dengan kejadian kekerasan seksual terhadap anak," vol. 5, no. 02, pp. 190–199, 2025.
- [7] M. Fadhil, "Determinan Kekerasan Anak di Kabupaten Bener Meriah: Studi Cross-Sectiona," vol. 8, no. 3, pp. 498–511, 2025.
- [8] K. Kayowuan Lewoleba and M. Helmi Fahrozi, "Studi Faktor-Faktor Terjadinya Tindak Kekerasan Seksual Pada Anak-Anak," *Esensi Huk.*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 27–48, 2020, doi: 10.35586/esensihukum.v2i1.20.
- [9] Ф. Котлер *et al.*, "Children with Problematic Sexual Behavior Resource Document Colorado Sex Offender Management Board Best Practices Committee/Children with Problematic Sexual Behavior Sub-Committee Approved February 17, 2023," *Accid. Anal. Prev.*, vol. 183, no. 2, pp. 153–164, 2023.
- [10] I. A. Dania, "Kekerasan Seksual Pada Anak Child Sexual Abuse. Jurnal Kedokteran dan Kesehatan, Fakultas Kedokteran Universitas Islam Sumatera Utara," *Ibnu Sina J. Kedokt. dan Kesehat. - Fak. Kedokt. Univ. Islam Sumatera Utara*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 46–52, 2020, [Online]. Available: <http://bit.ly/OJSIbnuSina>
- [11] Maziah Ulfah *et al.*, "Analisis dampak Korban Kekerasan Seksual pada Anak," *J. Ilmu Pendidik. dan Psikol.*, vol. 2, no. September, pp. 46–56, 2024.
- [12] T. Solehati *et al.*, "Metode Pencegahan Kekerasan Seksual pada Anak Berbasis Orang Tua: Systematic Review," *J. Obs. J. Pendidik. Anak Usia Dini*, vol. 7, no. 4, pp. 4128–4143, 2023, doi: 10.31004/obsesi.v7i4.5139.
- [13] S. R. Meyer *et al.*, "based violence and child nutrition in fragile settings : exploring intersections and opportunities for evidence generation," pp. 1–7, 2025, doi: 10.1136/bmjnph-2023-000682.
- [14] S. Ali, H. Abou, H. Enaam, and Y. Mohammed, "Child Sexual Abuse and the Internet — A Systematic Review," *Hum. Arenas*, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 404–421, 2023, doi: 10.1007/s42087-021-00228-9.
- [15] H. Asmawati, "ANALISIS FAKTOR-FAKTOR YANG MEMPENGARUHI TERJADINYA KEJAHATAN SEKSUAL OLEH PELAKU ANAK," *J. Evid. Law*, vol. 1, no. 3, pp. 108–115, 2022.