

Teachers as Safeguards: An Analysis of Teachers' Attitudes Towards Child Sexual Abuse

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Submitted: 2025-09-05 Published: 2025-11-17 Keywords: Teacher, Child Sexual Abuse, Attitude, Anxiety Copyright holder: © Author/s (2025) This article is under:  How to cite: Fidiawati, L., Safriatullah, S., Hanum, C. F., Putri, A., & Trisnanda, N. (2025). Teachers as Safeguards: An Analysis of Teachers' Attitudes Towards Child Sexual Abuse. <i>Bulletin of Counseling and Psychotherapy</i>, 7(3). https://doi.org/10.51214/002025071606000 Published by: Kuras Institute E-ISSN: 2656-1050	ABSTRACT: Child sexual abuse is a serious problem that has a significant impact on child development and protection, making teachers' attitudes as protectors in the school environment crucial. However, research examining the psychological factors that shape teachers' attitudes toward child sexual abuse, particularly in the context of developing countries, remains limited and fragmented. This study aims to analyse the influence of teachers' attitudes toward child sexual abuse, specifically examining the role of anxiety, trust, and commitment in shaping these attitudes. The method used was a quantitative survey design. The research sample consisted of 307 kindergarten teachers in Banda Aceh City, Indonesia, randomly selected and stratified by length of work experience. The instrument used was the Teachers' Attitudes Toward Reporting Child Sexual Abuse, which consists of 21 items with a five-point Likert scale, divided into three main factors: anxiety, trust, and commitment. Data were analysed using multiple regression to measure the influence of independent variables on teachers' attitudes as the dependent variable. The results showed that teachers' commitment and trust significantly strengthened proactive attitudes in preventing and addressing child sexual abuse, while anxiety had a negative effect.
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INTRODUCTION

Child sexual violence is a serious concern in many countries. According to United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2024) , globally, more than 370 million, or 1 in 8 girls, have experienced rape or child sexual abuse. Meanwhile, 240-310 boys, or 1 in 11, have experienced rape or child sexual abuse. In Sudan, 2025 data shows that 221 cases of child rape have been recorded since the beginning of 2024, with victims aged 16-5 years, including 4 one-year-old babies (UNICEF, 2025). Meanwhile, data from the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2024 states that more than 1 billion children aged 2-17 years' experience sexual violence each year. Approximately 20% of girls and 14.3% of boys have experienced sexual abuse (WHO, 2024). Meanwhile, in Indonesia, according to data from the Indonesian Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KPPA, 2025), the number of recorded sexual harassment cases reached 9,244 in 2025. For example, in Makassar, 549 cases of sexual violence against children were recorded (Arsad et al., 2021). In Padang, a cross-sectional analysis of cases of violence against children recorded using medical records found that 38.6% were cases of child sexual abuse (Hidayat et al., 2021).

Child sexual abuse is an act of violence in the form of sexual violence perpetrated by an individual against a child. Children are vulnerable to sexual abuse, in addition to women, because they are not yet able to protect themselves, distinguish between right and wrong, and do not yet

understand the concept of a private body (Syahputri & Syafrini, 2024). Sexual abuse can occur anywhere, including at home, at school, or in the community (Sopyandi & Sujarwo, 2023). In Indonesia, the level of sexual violence that occurs in the educational environment, based on research results, several people have experienced sexual harassment in higher education institutions (Ishak, 2020). Meanwhile, at the elementary school level, research results conducted through interviews with several students have experienced sexual harassment (Agustina & Ratri, 2018).

Sexual harassment that occurs in the educational environment or school environment does not occur, because schools should be able to provide prevention and protection for students and schools should play a promotive, preventive, and curative role so that the school environment is safe from cases of sexual harassment (Wafa et al., 2023). In teacher education, besides teaching, teachers also have a role as guides who provide knowledge and protect themselves from sexual harassment (Oktaviasary & Sutini, 2024). The role of teachers in dealing with child abuse is to screen students who are victims of child sexual violence in schools to become protectors (Hasanah et al., 2023). Unfortunately, in other cases, there are educators or teachers who do not understand their role in responding to child sexual harassment because sexual harassment is taboo (Adikusuma & Maharani, 2023). Furthermore, the next problem is that teachers also lack skills in providing material related to self-protection against sexual harassment, resulting in misunderstandings regarding child sexual harassment occurring due to the child's or student's fault (Rakhmawati et al., 2023). Especially for early childhood, kindergarten teachers play a role as educators to prevent sexual harassment in children, but there are obstacles, namely difficulties in appropriate learning media, communication strategies for children, and the existence of taboo perceptions regarding sex (Fadilah & Muthmainah, 2025).

Based on the explanation above, it can be seen that the attitude of teachers, especially kindergarten teachers, towards child sexual harassment is important. If kindergarten teachers do not act as guides and protectors, it will make children vulnerable and not receive optimal protection from child sexual harassment (Mariyona et al., 2024). Research on teacher attitudes towards sexual harassment has been conducted. For example, research on elementary school teachers' attitudes towards sexual harassment, elementary school teachers will implement sex education into learning materials (Putra et al., 2023). The attitude of junior high school teachers towards sexual harassment, junior high school teachers will provide understanding (Ningsih et al., 2023). However, research on kindergarten teachers' attitudes towards child sexual harassment is still limited, so the purpose of this study was to identify teacher attitudes towards child sexual harassment.

METHODS

Design

This study used a quantitative method with a survey approach to measure the influence of teachers' attitudes toward sexual violence against children. Quantitative methods are a scientific approach that uses data in the form of numbers that can be categorized, measured, and analysed statistically to test previously formulated hypotheses (Creswell, 2012).

Participants

The sample size in this study was 307 kindergarten teachers in Banda Aceh City, obtained using a random sampling technique, namely random sampling from the teacher population that met the research criteria. The sample was then grouped based on length of work experience into eight groups. Group 1 consisted of 89 teachers with 1–2 years of work experience, group 2 with 49 teachers with 3–4 years of experience, group 3 with 66 teachers with 5–6 years of experience, group 4 with 13 teachers with 7–8 years of experience, group 5 with 37 teachers with 9–10 years of experience, group 6 with 27 teachers with 11–12 years of experience, group 7 with 17 teachers with

13–14 years of experience, and group 8 with 9 teachers with > 15 years of experience. The division of the sample into these groups was carried out to observe differences in teachers' attitudes towards child sexual violence in terms of variations in length of work experience.

Instruments

This study utilized the Teacher Reporting Attitude Scale for Child Sexual Abuse (Koç et al., 2020; Walsh et al., 2010), consisting of 21 questions, divided into three main factors: anxiety, trust, and commitment. Measurements were conducted using a Likert scale with five-point answer options, ranging from "Very Appropriate," "Appropriate," "Neutral," "Not Appropriate," to "Very Not Appropriate." The quality of this instrument has demonstrated excellent reliability with an item reliability value of 0.98, a person reliability of 0.81, and a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.82. This indicates that the measuring instrument is very consistent and reliable in measuring teachers' attitudes regarding reporting cases of child sexual abuse, so that the results of the study are based on valid and reliable data.

Data Analysis

Multiple regression analysis (Stolzenberg, 2004) is a statistical technique used in this study to measure the extent of influence of independent variables such as anxiety, trust, and commitment on the dependent variable, namely teachers' attitudes towards child sexual violence.

The parameters analysed include the regression coefficient (β) to determine the level and magnitude of influence, the significance value (p-value) to test the influence, and the coefficient of determination (R^2) to measure the model's ability to explain variations in the dependent variable. Furthermore, the study employs a visualisation analysis through the utilisation of variable maps, incorporating parameters such as the distribution of mean scores and the distribution pattern of variables based on teacher work experience groups.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The analysis conducted in this study includes multiple regression analysis to measure the influence of independent variables in the form of anxiety, trust, and commitment on teacher attitudes as dependent variables, as well as visualization analysis using variable maps to interpret the distribution and dynamics of each variable in the context of teacher work experience groups.

Table 1. The Influence of Teachers' Attitudes on Child Sexual Violence on Anxiety, Commitment, and Trust

Predictor	B	SE B	β	t	p
Constant	3.64	0.80	—	4.56	< .001
Anxiety	-0.64	0.04	-0.32	-15.11	.048
Trust	1.29	0.05	0.43	27.12	< .001
Commitment	1.30	0.03	0.68	42.87	< .001

Note. B = unstandardized regression coefficient; SE B = standard error of B; β = standardized coefficient.

Table 1 shows that teacher commitment and trust are dominant factors strengthening their attitudes in preventing and responding to cases of child sexual violence. Teachers who are highly committed to their profession and believe in the school system, reporting mechanisms, and their own capacity tend to be more proactive. Commitment enables teachers to view harassment not only as a personal issue but also as a professional and moral responsibility. Meanwhile, trust both in themselves and in the institution encourages them to be more courageous in reporting, taking preventive action, and providing support to vulnerable students. This means that building a school culture of trust and strengthening teacher dedication is crucial for creating a safe school

environment. Conversely, anxiety has been shown to negatively impact teacher attitudes. Teachers who are overwhelmed by anxiety tend to exhibit hesitation, fear of making mistakes, or even avoid involvement in cases of sexual harassment. Anxiety can arise from various sources: 1) concern about legal consequences if actions are taken incorrectly, 2) fear of social stigma or conflict with parents, and 3) internal anxieties such as lack of confidence or lack of knowledge regarding mechanisms for handling sexual harassment. The following is clarified with map variables to see a picture of teachers' attitudes in dealing with sexual violence.

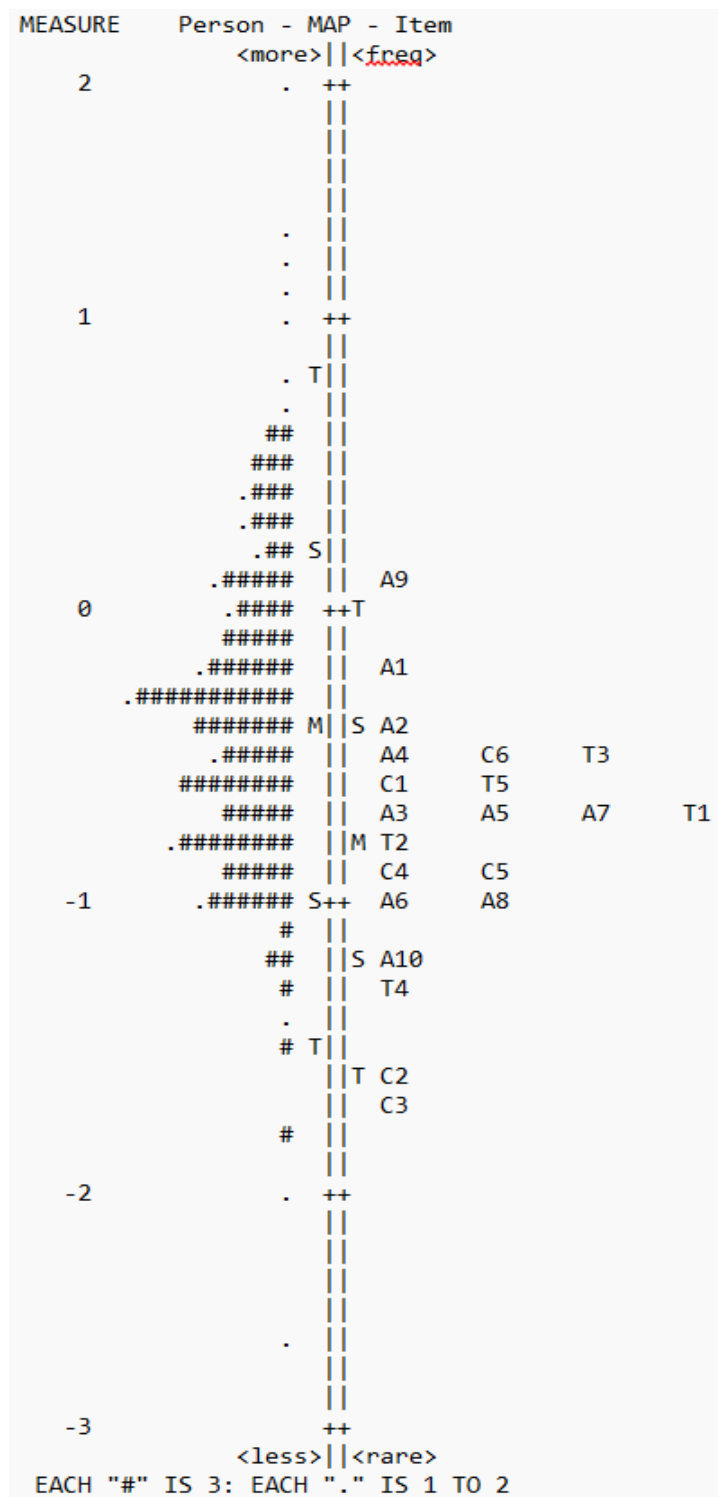


Figure 2. Condition of Teachers' Attitudes towards Sexual Violence against Children
C = Commitment; T = Trust; A = Anxiety

Based on the analysis, teachers' attitudes toward child sexual violence tend to be at a moderate level. This is indicated by the distribution of the majority of teachers in the logit range of -1 to 0, with many items in the commitment and anxiety aspects occupying this area. This condition indicates that most teachers already have a basic awareness of the dangers of child sexual violence and express anxiety when this issue arises. However, this awareness has not yet fully developed into a firm and consistent attitude in concrete actions. The commitment aspect is one of the dimensions most readily agreed upon by teachers, as evidenced by the large number of commitment items in the low logit. This indicates that almost all teachers can verbally express a commitment to reject child sexual violence. However, higher forms of commitment, such as the courage to act, report, and advocate, have not yet emerged strongly. In other words, teachers find it easier to express normative statements, but not all are able to translate these attitudes into concrete actions. The anxiety aspect appears in the medium to high range, indicating that teachers are relatively easy to admit to feeling worried or anxious about cases of child sexual violence. This is positive because anxiety can trigger a sense of vigilance. However, if anxiety isn't accompanied by appropriate coping strategies, it can make teachers hesitant or passive when faced with real-life situations. Therefore, teachers' anxiety needs to be channelled into positive energy, transforming it into alertness and readiness to act.

In contrast, the trust aspect tends to be more difficult to achieve, as some items are at a higher logit level. Only a small proportion of teachers expressed complete confidence in the child protection system, reporting mechanisms, or support from official institutions. This indicates that teachers still have doubts or a lack of confidence in fully relying on the existing system. Trust is, in fact, a crucial factor in building the courage to report and optimally support victims. Overall, teachers' attitudes toward child sexual violence can be described as quite caring, but not yet fully firm and confident. Teachers have expressed basic commitment and felt real anxiety, but remain weak in the trust and commitment aspects at the action level. Therefore, strengthening programs in the form of training, outreach, and ongoing supervision are needed to provide teachers with a deeper understanding, complete trust in protection mechanisms, and the courage to take decisive action in preventing and handling cases of child sexual violence.

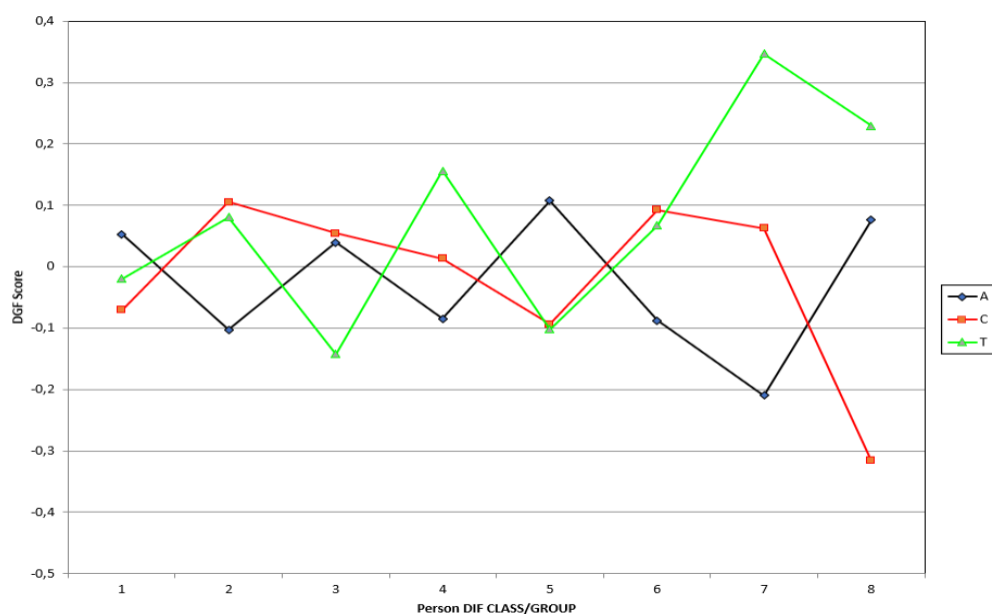


Figure 2. Analysis of Teachers' Attitudes towards Child Sexual Violence at the Item and Person Levels

DIF = Differential Item Functioning; item level.

DPF = Differential Person Functioning; person level.

DGF = Differential Group Functioning; group level.

The graph above shows the dynamics of Differential Group Functioning (DGF) scores for three key aspects of teacher attitudes toward child sexual violence: anxiety (A), commitment (C), and trust (T), analysed by work experience group. The results indicate that trust (T) is the most fluctuating variable, with a significant increase in the group of teachers with the most experience (groups 7 and 8). This suggests that the longer the work experience, the more diverse the patterns of trust formed, with some teachers showing increased confidence in the importance of child protection, while others experienced a decline. This phenomenon can be understood as the impact of accumulated experience: some teachers become increasingly convinced of the urgency of their role as they are exposed to cases, while others become sceptical due to structural fatigue or a sense of powerlessness in the face of a child protection system that is perceived as suboptimal. On the other hand, commitment remains relatively stable in the early to midcareer groups, but experiences a sharp decline in the group with the longest experience. This indicates that professional loyalty to child protection issues does not always increase with experience and can even decline due to work burnout or dissatisfaction with the existing case handling mechanisms. Anxiety tends to be in the neutral to negative range, indicating that this emotional factor is more stable and is not a major differentiator between groups, although it remains relevant because excessive anxiety can hinder teachers' courage in taking a firm stance on cases of child sexual violence. Thus, this analysis confirms that trust is the most critical variable that differentiates attitudes between experience groups, while commitment needs to be strengthened through institutional support so that it does not decrease in senior teachers, and anxiety needs to be managed so as not to weaken the role of teachers as agents of child protection in schools.

Discussion

The results show that kindergarten teachers' attitudes toward harassment vary and tend to be influenced by their level of education, knowledge, experience, and school environmental support. The results of the study indicate that, cognitively, teachers understand that sexual harassment is harassment that is not limited to physical contact. It also includes inappropriate touching of the body, sexually suggestive sentences, also known as verbal harassment, and invitations that lead to acts that violate norms. The results of this study are in line with the results of research conducted by Rahmawati et al (2024) which showed that teachers' educational level plays a significant role in preventing sexual harassment in children. Teachers with knowledge are better able to identify signs of sexual harassment, respond appropriately, and create a safe environment to protect children. Thus, cognitive development not only shapes theoretical knowledge but also attitudes and actions to protect children from sexual harassment.

The results of this study indicate that kindergarten teachers' affective attitudes include emotional feelings, concern, sympathy, or empathy when they learn about or hear about cases of sexual abuse in children. These attitudes are used by teachers to emotionally protect children who experience sexual abuse. These results are also in line with research conducted by Sousa et al (2023), which shows that empathy plays a crucial role in protecting children's safety from abuse. Kindergarten teachers with high empathy will feel pity, anger, and be moved when they see, hear, or experience sexual abuse in children. This sensitivity allows kindergarten teachers to not trivialize cases of sexual abuse in children, but instead, sensitivity is used for protective actions such as reporting, accompanying, and learning that includes sexual education.

Furthermore, the results of this study demonstrate the attitudes of kindergarten teachers in the conative aspect, namely the attitudes or actions of teachers in preventive and curative measures against sexual harassment in children. The results of this study also show that kindergarten teachers are directly involved in children's interactions in the classroom, aligning learning materials with simple sex education, and providing examples of reporting. The results of this study are also in line with research conducted Amalina & Masyithoh (2024) which shows that the role of teachers in

addition to providing education regarding child sexual harassment, teachers also act as protectors for children and teachers also play a role as children's companions in cases of sexual harassment. This way, children or students understand, thus increasing the effectiveness of preventing sexual harassment in children.

The results of this study are also in line with the results of research conducted by Ulfaningrum et al (2021) which shows that prevention of sexual harassment in children can be done by providing appropriate sexual education, teacher support and teacher attitudes in preventing sexual harassment, so that acts of sexual harassment are not considered trivial so that perpetrators of sexual harassment have a deterrent effect and sexual harassment is not only physical contact but also verbal which is considered normal for the surrounding community. The results of this study are also in line with the results of research conducted by Adikusuma & Maharani (2023), which showed that the attitudes of kindergarten teachers towards sexual harassment in children can be prevented through sex education. Kindergarten teachers believe that sex education is important and beneficial in preventing and protecting students from sexual harassment, but the implementation of sex education has obstacles, including the difficulty of establishing communication between teachers and parents because they consider sex to be taboo.

The results of this study also align with those of Mutiara (2023), which showed that teachers' attitudes toward child sexual abuse are that teachers act as educators who provide sex-related education. Kindergarten teachers can provide children with information about sex integrated with learning. Furthermore, kindergarten teachers create or build comprehensive communication so that children can easily understand and comprehend the topic of sex, which is still considered taboo. Kindergarten teachers also understand that sex education helps students protect themselves from child sexual abuse. A barrier to sex education is that sex is considered taboo, making discussing it a negative topic.

The results of this study also indicate that kindergarten teachers' attitudes toward child sexual abuse include introducing sex education through creative learning. This aligns with the research conducted by Mariyona et al. (2024), which showed that teachers act as facilitators, so creative learning for sex education can help students recognize sexual prevention. Through videos, images, or posters, children can easily remember how to protect themselves from sexual abuse. Furthermore, the results of this study revealed that kindergarten teachers' attitudes toward child sexual abuse are preventative. These results align with research conducted by Fitriana et al (2024), who demonstrated self-protection as a preventative measure against child sexual abuse. Their research emphasized the importance of teaching children about boundaries and body awareness, as well as appropriate behavior in responding to strangers. Therefore, it can be concluded that kindergarten teachers' attitudes, from a cognitive, affective, and conative perspective, play a crucial role in preventing and addressing child sexual abuse. Good understanding, emotional sensitivity, and the courage to act are the main foundations for teachers to protect children from acts of sexual abuse.

Implications

The implications of this study's findings are the importance of providing comprehensive training for kindergarten teachers, encompassing cognitive, affective, and conative aspects, to strengthen attitudes and actions for preventing sexual violence against children. Furthermore, creative and communicative integration of sex education into the curriculum is essential to facilitate children's understanding and self-protection. School support and parental involvement are also crucial factors in creating synergy in child protection. It is also crucial to overcome cultural barriers related to taboos about discussing sex to facilitate smooth communication between teachers, children, and parents. Overall, positive teacher attitudes across multiple dimensions are key to creating a safe and responsive learning environment for children with sexual violence.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that teachers' attitudes toward preventing and addressing child sexual violence have a significant influence, influenced by their commitment and trust. High levels of commitment and trust significantly strengthen teachers' proactive attitudes in protecting children from sexual violence, while anxiety significantly weakens these attitudes, leading to hesitation and potential passivity. These findings emphasize the importance of developing training programs and policies that can significantly enhance teachers' commitment, trust, and manage anxiety, enabling them to act decisively and effectively in creating a safe school environment for children. Given these significant influences, appropriate educational interventions are essential as a strategic step to support teachers' role as child protectors in schools.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The researcher would like to express his deepest gratitude to the Directorate of Research and Community Service (DPPM) of the Ministry of Education and Culture, and the Higher Education Service Institute (LLDIKT) Region XIII for their financial support in the form of a Beginner Lecturer Research Grant. He also expressed his gratitude to Universitas Bina Bangsa Getsempena (UBBG) and the Institute for Research and Community Service (LPPM) for the support, facilities, and opportunity given to us to conduct this research.

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