

AN ANALYSIS OF THE WENSEN SCHOOL DEPOK INDONESIA CASE: A PARENTING THEORY PERSPECTIVE ON DAYCARE PRACTICES

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Abstrak

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The child abuse case at Wensen School in Depok involving Meita Irianty, a daycare owner and parenting influencer, generated national concern regarding the integrity of caregiving practices in early childhood institutions. The paradox lies in the disjunction between public authority in parenting discourse and the alleged perpetration of severe physical violence against toddlers aged two to three years. This article examines how extreme authoritarian control, when detached from emotional responsiveness, may deteriorate into physical abuse, and how such acts intersect with broader systemic vulnerabilities. Employing a descriptive qualitative case study design, the analysis draws upon court documents and verified public reports, interpreted through six complementary frameworks: Attachment Theory, Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory, Social Learning Theory, Ecological Systems Theory, Parenting Styles Theory, and the concept of Empathic Communication. The findings indicate that the incident reflects not only individual misconduct but also disrupted attachment formation, psychosocial developmental risks, learned patterns of aggression, and regulatory deficiencies within institutional and policy environments. The study argues that child protection in daycare settings requires a multidimensional response encompassing trauma-informed intervention, professional certification and training for caregivers, and strengthened national oversight mechanisms. Child abuse, therefore, should be understood as a systemic failure of caregiving ecology rather than merely an isolated moral deviation.

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INTRODUCTION

The child abuse case at Wensen School in Depok, involving Meita Irianty—the owner of the institution and a public figure known as a parenting influencer—sparked national attention and widespread debate concerning the quality of caregiving in early childhood education settings. The case was particularly paradoxical, as the perpetrator was publicly perceived as knowledgeable about parenting principles, yet was alleged to have committed severe physical violence against toddlers aged approximately 2 years and 8–9 months. Reported acts included hitting, kicking, stabbing in the back, and forcefully throwing the child, resulting in a leg dislocation—actions that, from both psychological and medical perspectives, constitute severe child abuse.

Conceptually, child abuse is defined as all forms of physical, emotional, sexual maltreatment, or neglect that result in, or have the potential to result in, harm to a child's health, survival, development, or dignity (World Health Organization, 2022). From a developmental psychology standpoint, violence during toddlerhood poses significant risks to the formation of attachment, emotional regulation, and early cognitive and social development (John Bowlby, 1969; Jack P. Shonkoff & Deborah A. Phillips, 2000). Between the ages of 0 and 3, children are in a critical phase of developing basic trust, as proposed by Erik Erikson (1950). Violence during this stage may result in long-term trauma, anxiety disorders, and difficulties in forming interpersonal relationships in adulthood.

This phenomenon also draws attention to the issue of parenting style. In the typology introduced by Baumrind (1967; 1991), authoritarian parenting is characterized by high control and low warmth, emphasizing absolute obedience without dialogue. In its extreme form, this pattern may evolve into coercive and aggressive practices when adults perceive children as objects of control rather than as individuals with developmental needs. Empirical findings indicate that harsh authoritarian parenting is associated with increased risks of aggression, anxiety, and low self-esteem among children (Gershoff, 2013). When combined with individual stress factors, social pressures, and weak institutional supervision systems, such patterns may escalate into physical violence.

Furthermore, this case reflects not only individual failure but also systemic shortcomings. As collective caregiving environments, daycare institutions are expected to implement clear standard operating procedures, effective supervision mechanisms, and transparent reporting systems to ensure child safety. Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory emphasizes that child development is shaped by the interaction of multiple systems—microsystem (family, school), mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem (culture and policy). When any of these systems fail to perform their protective functions, the risk of violence increases substantially.

In the Indonesian context, the growing participation of parents in the workforce has led to a heightened demand for childcare services. However, regulations, caregiver certification standards, and monitoring mechanisms remain uneven and insufficiently standardized at the national level. This situation creates opportunities for caregiving practices that do not align with child protection principles. Consequently, this case serves as a critical moment for reflection, prompting the evaluation of institutional caregiving policies and the strengthening of child protection systems grounded in a rights-based framework.

This article aims to analyze how extreme authoritarian parenting styles and systemic failures may culminate in child abuse, and how developmental psychology theories can provide a framework for both victim recovery and systemic reform in Indonesia's caregiving practices. The analysis integrates perspectives from attachment theory, psychosocial development theory, ecological systems theory, and trauma-informed care as the basis for comprehensive and sustainable intervention recommendations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This analysis employs six major theories in developmental and social psychology to construct a comprehensive conceptual framework for understanding the phenomenon under discussion.

Attachment Theory – John Bowlby & Mary Ainsworth

Attachment Theory, developed by Bowlby (1969) and empirically expanded by Ainsworth (1978), posits that the emotional bond between a child and a primary caregiver constitutes the foundational basis of psychological development. Bowlby conceptualized attachment as an innate behavioral system designed to maintain proximity between the child and the caregiver to ensure survival. When a child feels threatened, fatigued, or distressed, the attachment system is activated, eliciting behaviors such as crying, seeking proximity, or clinging to the caregiver.

1. Internal Working Model

According to Bowlby, repeated interactions between a child and caregiver give rise to an internal working model—relatively stable mental representations of the self, others, and the world. This model encompasses the child's perception of whether they are worthy of love, whether others are responsive and trustworthy, and whether the environment is safe or threatening. The internal working model is primarily formed during the first three years of life, when early relational experiences establish the foundation of a sense of security. This cognitive-affective structure subsequently functions as an interpretative framework through which future social experiences are understood. Consequently, the quality of early attachment strongly influences emotional regulation, self-concept formation, and interpersonal relationship patterns extending into childhood, adolescence, and adulthood.

2. Attachment Patterns

Through the *Strange Situation* procedure, Ainsworth identified three primary attachment patterns: secure attachment, insecure-avoidant attachment, and insecure-ambivalent/resistant attachment. Securely attached children demonstrate confidence in exploring their environment when the caregiver is present and seek comfort when distressed, reflecting caregiver responsiveness and warmth. In contrast, children with insecure-avoidant attachment tend to suppress emotional needs and appear to avoid the caregiver, often as an adaptation to unresponsive caregiving. Those with insecure-ambivalent/resistant attachment exhibit heightened anxiety, excessive dependency, and difficulty being soothed due to inconsistent caregiver responses. Subsequently, Main and Solomon (1990) introduced a fourth category: disorganized attachment, characterized by contradictory behaviors, confusion, or fear toward the caregiver. This pattern is frequently associated with trauma, abuse, or frightening/frightened caregiving, wherein the figure expected to provide protection becomes a source of threat.

3. The Impact of Physical Violence in Toddlerhood

During toddlerhood (0–3 years), brain development is particularly rapid, especially within stress-regulation systems such as the hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal (HPA) axis. Physical violence during this period may activate chronic stress responses, leading to long-term neurobiological alterations. Beyond disrupting the formation of a secure base, violence fosters associations in which the caregiver becomes a source of fear rather than protection. This condition heightens the risk of insecure or disorganized attachment. Long-term consequences may include emotional dysregulation, aggression or social withdrawal, anxiety disorders, and interpersonal difficulties in adulthood. Neuropsychologically, repeated exposure to violence may reinforce “fight, flight, or freeze” responses, increasing vulnerability to hypervigilance, emotional reactivity, or dissociation in social contexts.

4. Daycare as a Secondary Attachment Context

In daycare settings, caregivers function as secondary attachment figures who contribute to a child’s sense of security. Although parents remain primary attachment figures, consistent and emotionally attuned interactions with daycare caregivers can foster additional attachment bonds. High-quality daycare relationships characterized by warmth, consistency, and responsiveness may support secure attachment and even serve as protective factors in the presence of mild stress at home. However, when violence or frightening treatment occurs, the impact may extend beyond the specific caregiver relationship to the child’s broader perception of the social world. Negative experiences may be generalized, leading children to perceive external environments as unsafe, thereby inhibiting the development of basic trust and healthy exploration.

5. Theoretical and Practical Implications

From an attachment perspective, preventing violence in early childhood involves not only physical protection but also safeguarding the child’s foundational psychological structures. Interventions should emphasize sensitive caregiving—responsive, consistent, and warm interactions. Monitoring the quality of interactions in daycare settings is crucial to ensuring emotional safety. Children exhibiting signs of disorganized attachment require psychological support to mitigate long-term consequences. Furthermore, educating parents and caregivers about the importance of consistency, empathy, and emotional regulation represents a strategic preventive approach. Attachment theory thus provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how physical violence in early childhood—whether occurring at home or in daycare—can disrupt the enduring foundations of socio-emotional development.

Psychosocial Development Theory – Erik Erikson

Psychosocial Development Theory, articulated by Erik Erikson in *Childhood and Society* (1950), proposes that human development unfolds through eight sequential psychosocial crises across the lifespan. Each stage is characterized by a developmental conflict that must be resolved adaptively to establish a healthy psychological foundation for subsequent stages.

During infancy (0–1.5 years), children navigate the stage of trust vs. mistrust. At this phase, infants are entirely dependent on caregivers for basic needs such as nourishment, comfort, and protection. When caregivers are consistently responsive, warm, and predictable, children develop basic trust—a fundamental belief that the world is safe and others are reliable. Conversely, inconsistent, rejecting, or violent caregiving may foster mistrust, characterized by insecurity, suspicion, and diminished

confidence in the social environment.

Between 1.5 and 3 years, children enter the stage of autonomy vs. shame and doubt. Rapid motor and language development motivates toddlers to explore their surroundings and perform tasks independently, such as feeding themselves or choosing preferred objects. Patient guidance and opportunities for self-directed action support the development of autonomy—the belief in one’s capacity to control actions and make simple choices. However, excessive control, harsh punishment, severe criticism, or physical violence may lead children to internalize experiences of failure, resulting in shame and self-doubt that inhibit independence.

Physical violence during toddlerhood directly disrupts the adaptive resolution of these crises. In the trust vs. mistrust stage, violence undermines the foundational sense of security by transforming caregivers—who should provide protection—into perceived threats. In the autonomy vs. shame and doubt stage, harsh punishment and humiliating treatment suppress exploratory initiative and instill fear of making mistakes. Long-term consequences may include low self-esteem, social anxiety, excessive dependency or defensive hostility, and difficulties forming healthy interpersonal relationships. Erikson’s framework thus underscores that emotional support and nurturing treatment during the first three years of life are not merely ideal caregiving practices but essential prerequisites for the development of basic trust, autonomy, and a positive identity in later stages of life.

Social Learning Theory – Albert Bandura

Social Learning Theory, proposed by Albert Bandura in *Social Learning Theory* (1977), asserts that human behavior is shaped not only by internal drives or direct consequences but also through observational learning. Children learn by observing models, imitating behaviors, and maintaining those behaviors when reinforced, either directly or vicariously. The social environment therefore plays a central role in behavioral acquisition, particularly when observed models possess authority, power, or emotional significance.

In context of child abuse, this theory explains two principal dynamics. First, perpetrators may reproduce aggressive behaviors previously learned in their own environments, reflecting intergenerational transmission of violence through repeated modeling. Second, children who experience or witness violence risk internalizing aggression as a legitimate conflict-resolution strategy. When authority figures employ violence to discipline or control behavior, children may interpret aggression as functional and socially sanctioned.

Bandura’s concept of modeling emphasizes the powerful influence of authority figures—parents, teachers, or daycare caregivers—in shaping behavioral patterns. Children internalize not only overt actions but also implicit norms regarding power and relational dynamics. Furthermore, through mechanisms of vicarious reinforcement, children may learn that violence yields compliance or control, thereby increasing the likelihood of reproducing such behaviors in the future. The theory also relates to self-efficacy: children raised in violent environments may develop diminished confidence in managing conflict constructively, perceiving aggression as the only effective strategy. Social Learning Theory thus provides a robust conceptual framework for understanding how violence is learned, reproduced, and transmitted socially, highlighting the necessity of providing consistent, non-violent behavioral models in caregiving environments.

Ecological Systems Theory – Urie Bronfenbrenner

Ecological Systems Theory, introduced by Urie Bronfenbrenner in *The Ecology of Human Development* (1979), conceptualizes child development as the product of dynamic interactions between individuals and multilayered environmental systems. Bronfenbrenner identified five interrelated systems: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem.

The microsystem comprises immediate environments such as family, school, and daycare, where direct and recurring interactions occur. The mesosystem refers to interconnections among microsystems, including communication between parents and daycare providers. The exosystem encompasses broader social structures that indirectly affect the child, such as parental workplace conditions and institutional regulatory frameworks. The macrosystem includes cultural values, social norms, ideologies, and legal systems, while the chronosystem addresses the dimension of time, including sociohistorical changes and life transitions.

Within this framework, violence in daycare settings reflects systemic failures across multiple levels. At the microsystem level, direct caregiver–child interactions are compromised. At the exosystem level, insufficient regulation or supervision may enable abusive practices. At the macrosystem level, cultural tolerance of harsh discipline may implicitly legitimize violence. Effective solutions, therefore, must extend beyond individual accountability to encompass policy reform, enhanced monitoring systems, strengthened child protection regulations, and shifts in cultural paradigms surrounding discipline. Ecological Systems Theory underscores the necessity of multidimensional and systemic interventions to foster safe developmental environments.

Parenting Styles Theory – Diana Baumrind

Parenting Styles Theory, developed by Baumrind (1967; 1991), classifies parenting along two dimensions: demandingness (control) and responsiveness (warmth). Based on these dimensions, four styles are identified: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful/uninvolved. Authoritative parenting combines high control with warmth, open communication, and rational explanations for rules. Authoritarian parenting, by contrast, involves high control with low warmth, rigid rule enforcement, and punitive discipline. In extreme forms, authoritarianism may escalate into coercive or violent practices. Permissive parenting demonstrates high warmth but low control, whereas neglectful parenting is characterized by low levels of both.

Subsequent research, including that of Laurence Steinberg (2001), consistently associates authoritative parenting with healthier socio-emotional outcomes, stronger self-regulation, positive self-esteem, and greater social competence. Harsh authoritarian parenting, conversely, correlates with anxiety, fear-based compliance, diminished self-worth, and heightened aggression. This framework clarifies how distorted interpretations of “discipline” may devolve into aggression when control is not balanced with empathy and warmth.

Empathic Communication – Haim Ginott

The concept of empathic communication, introduced by Haim Ginott in *Between Parent and Child* (1965), emphasizes that the quality of adult language and emotional responses profoundly shapes children’s self-concept and emotional regulation. Ginott argued that discipline must target behavior rather than the child’s identity, thereby avoiding negative labeling that may be internalized.

Empathic communication validates children's emotions while guiding behavior constructively, fostering trust and emotional literacy. In contrast, physical or verbal aggression represents the antithesis of empathic dialogue, suppressing emotional expression and undermining relational security. Over time, children may either repress emotions or express them explosively due to inadequate modeling of healthy regulation.

Accordingly, empathic communication demonstrates that effective discipline is not defined by severity but by the capacity to preserve a child's dignity while firmly guiding behavior. This perspective reinforces the importance of respectful daily interactions as the foundation of healthy emotional development and violence prevention.

METHOD

This article employs a descriptive qualitative case study approach. This design was selected because it enables an in-depth exploration of a specific event within its real-life context, with the aim of understanding the underlying psychological, relational, and systemic dynamics (Yin, 2018). A case study approach is particularly appropriate when the phenomenon under investigation is complex, contextual, and inseparable from its broader social environment.

Data Sources and Types

The primary data for this study were derived from court proceedings and the documented chronology of events as adjudicated by the court, including information regarding the legal verdict imposed on the perpetrator in the case at Wensen School involving Meita Irianty, who received a one-year prison sentence. In addition to official legal documents, this study utilized reports from national media outlets containing witness testimonies, information regarding the victim's condition, and public as well as institutional responses.

All data analyzed in this research are secondary in nature and were examined using document analysis, defined as a systematic procedure for reviewing and evaluating written documents in order to identify patterns, themes, and meanings (Glenn A. Bowen, 2009). To enhance analytical validity, source triangulation was conducted by cross-referencing legal documents with public reports to ensure chronological consistency and factual accuracy.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted thematically through several systematic stages. The first stage involved data reduction, a process of selecting and focusing on information relevant to the research objectives—particularly aspects related to forms of violence, the relational dynamics between perpetrator and victim, and the institutional context in which the incident occurred. Information not directly related to the study's focus was excluded to maintain analytical depth and coherence.

The second stage consisted of theoretical categorization, in which empirical findings were mapped onto the six developmental and social psychological theories forming the analytical framework of this study. This process aimed to identify the connections between case facts and key theoretical constructs, ensuring that each finding was interpreted within a broader conceptual structure rather than as an isolated occurrence.

The third stage involved conceptual interpretation, whereby the interaction among individual, relational, and systemic factors was analytically examined to explain

the occurrence of violence. At this stage, the data were not merely described but interpreted to reveal patterns, dynamics, and underlying mechanisms. Through this approach, comprehensive integration between empirical evidence and theoretical frameworks was achieved. The resulting analysis is therefore not solely descriptive—merely outlining what occurred—but also explanatory, elucidating why and how the violent incident could emerge within the context of child development and the surrounding social systems.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis of court documents and the chronology of events in the case at Wensen School involving Meita Irianty, several patterns were identified that can be mapped onto the six psychological frameworks outlined previously. The findings indicate that the violence cannot be understood solely as an individual act but rather as the result of interacting psychological, relational, and systemic factors.

Distortion of Authoritarian Parenting into Violence (Baumrind)

The findings indicate the presence of extreme control over the child accompanied by low emotional sensitivity. Within Diana Baumrind's (1967; 1991) typology, this pattern corresponds to authoritarian parenting—characterized by high control and low warmth. In this case, however, such characteristics escalated into severe physical punishment. Ideally, discipline should be corrective and educational; when control transforms into domination and aggression, the caregiver–child relationship shifts into a power-based dynamic. This aligns with research by Laurence Steinberg (2001), demonstrating that harsh authoritarian parenting correlates with increased risks of aggression and emotional dysregulation in children.

The implication is the necessity of standardized training in positive discipline for daycare personnel as a preventive strategy against distortions of disciplinary concepts that may evolve into violence. Such training should emphasize the balance between firmness and warmth, the use of empathic communication, and behavior management strategies oriented toward learning and self-regulation rather than physical punishment or intimidation. Structured and continuous professional development would help ensure shared understanding of professional boundaries, constructive intervention techniques, and developmental sensitivity, thereby fostering daycare environments that are safe, supportive, and conducive to socio-emotional growth.

Attachment Disruption and Trauma Risk (Bowlby & Ainsworth)

Children aged 2–3 years are in a critical phase of forming secure attachment, as described by Bowlby (1969) and Ainsworth et al. (1978). At this stage, children depend heavily on consistent, warm, and responsive caregiving to establish a basic sense of security. Violence perpetrated by a caregiver may result in disorganized attachment, wherein the figure expected to provide protection becomes a source of threat. Developmentally, this condition may trigger chronic stress responses, increase the risk of anxiety disorders, impair trust in adults, and lead to long-term emotional dysregulation. From a neurodevelopmental perspective, early exposure to violence may disrupt stress-response systems, as emphasized by Shonkoff and Phillips (2000), who highlight the impact of toxic stress on developing brain architecture.

Accordingly, victim recovery requires more than cessation of violence; it necessitates a trauma-informed care approach focused on restoring safety, relational stability, and predictability. Emotional security must be prioritized, alongside rebuilding

trust in adult figures and supporting the child's capacity for emotional regulation through consistent and supportive interactions. Trauma-sensitive interventions are essential to minimize long-term socio-emotional consequences.

Psychosocial Developmental Crisis (Erikson)

According to Erik Erikson (1950), children aged 1.5–3 years are in the stage of autonomy vs. shame and doubt. During this phase, children develop independence through exploration and mastery of basic skills. Patient and consistent support fosters autonomy and confidence. However, extreme physical violence may instill excessive fear and shame, inhibiting exploratory initiative. Rather than learning healthy self-control, children may develop excessive dependency, social withdrawal, or defensive aggression. Failure to resolve this crisis adaptively may have lasting implications for self-esteem and social competence.

Psychological interventions should therefore focus on restoring autonomy and self-confidence through developmentally appropriate approaches such as play therapy. Through therapeutic play, children can express emotions, process traumatic experiences, and regain a sense of control within a safe and supportive environment. Strengthening warm and consistent relationships with primary caregivers is equally essential to rebuilding trust and reinforcing positive developmental trajectories.

Modeling of Violence (Albert Bandura)

Albert Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory explains that aggressive behavior may be acquired through observation of authority figures. Children internalize not only visible actions but also patterns of conflict resolution and power use in relationships. Two interrelated dynamics are evident: perpetrators may reproduce aggression learned from past experiences, and child victims may internalize violence as a legitimate strategy for conflict resolution. This phenomenon is often described as the "cycle of violence," reflecting intergenerational transmission of aggression in the absence of corrective intervention.

Long-term prevention therefore requires not only legal accountability but also caregiver education emphasizing emotional regulation and stress management. Training programs should highlight non-violent communication, positive discipline strategies, and constructive coping mechanisms. By providing consistent and healthy behavioral models, educational environments can serve as corrective spaces that disrupt the cycle of violence and foster adaptive social interaction patterns.

Systemic Failure from an Ecological Perspective (Bronfenbrenner)

Within Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological framework, child violence reflects failures across multiple environmental systems. At the microsystem level, direct caregiver–child interactions were dysfunctional. At the mesosystem level, inadequate communication between parents and the daycare institution may have hindered early detection. At the exosystem level, weak supervision and regulatory oversight allowed abusive practices to occur. At the macrosystem level, cultural tolerance of harsh discipline may have implicitly legitimized violence.

This ecological analysis demonstrates that focusing solely on punishing the perpetrator is insufficient. Structural reforms are necessary, including strengthened monitoring systems, improved institutional standards, and competency certification for caregivers. National standardization of daycare oversight and transparent reporting mechanisms are essential for comprehensive and sustainable child protection.

Absence of Empathic Communication (Haim Ginott)

The concept of empathic communication proposed by Ginott (1965) emphasizes respectful language that acknowledges children's emotions in caregiving and discipline. Physical and verbal violence reflect failures in adult emotional regulation and the absence of empathic communication. In empathic parenting, behavior is corrected without attacking identity; emotions are validated before behavioral guidance; and discipline is implemented without humiliation. Such practices promote emotional awareness and healthy regulation.

Conversely, the absence of empathic communication increases the likelihood of conflict escalation into aggression, as children lack constructive models for managing emotions. When adult responses are dominated by anger or intimidation, educational interactions devolve into fear-based relationships. Therefore, daycare training curricula should systematically incorporate modules on empathic communication and emotional management to equip caregivers with practical skills for responding firmly yet respectfully to children's behavior.

Synthesis

Addressing child violence requires a multi-level and integrated approach. At the individual level, trauma therapy and attachment restoration are essential to reestablish emotional security. At the family level, strengthening parents' roles as secure bases is critical. At the institutional level, competency certification and strict supervision of caregivers are necessary. At the policy level, national child protection regulations grounded in developmental psychology principles should be established. Child abuse must thus be understood not merely as personal deviance but as an indicator of broader systemic caregiving failures, necessitating comprehensive, preventive, and sustainable responses.

CONCLUSION

The child abuse case at Wensen School involving Meita Irianty demonstrated that violence within childcare institutions cannot be understood merely as an individual deviation, but rather as the result of a complex interaction among distorted authoritarian parenting practices, disrupted attachment processes in early childhood, impaired psychosocial development, social modeling of aggression, and systemic failures in institutional oversight. Drawing upon the theoretical frameworks of Baumrind, Bowlby and Ainsworth, Erikson, Bandura, Bronfenbrenner, and Ginott, this analysis underscores that exposure to violence during the critical developmental period of ages two to three poses significant long-term risks to emotional regulation, sense of security, autonomy formation, and future relational patterns. Accordingly, child protection must be conceptualized as a collective and systemic responsibility encompassing individuals, families, institutions, and the state.

Implications and Recommendations

The findings suggest the necessity of a multidimensional response to both prevention and intervention. First, affected children require trauma-informed psychological interventions aimed at restoring emotional safety and secure relational bonds. Second, daycare institutions should implement rigorous recruitment standards, mandatory training, and certification programs grounded in developmental psychology and empathic communication principles. Third, policymakers must strengthen national regulatory frameworks and monitoring mechanisms for childcare institutions. Fourth,

broader societal efforts are needed to promote positive parenting literacy and to challenge cultural norms that legitimize harsh disciplinary practices. A systemic ecological approach is essential to ensure that reform extends beyond punitive measures toward sustainable structural improvements in childcare systems.

Limitations

This study employed a descriptive qualitative case study approach based on secondary data sources, including court documents and publicly available reports. The absence of primary data—such as direct interviews with the victim, family members, or institutional representatives—limits the depth of psychological exploration. Furthermore, as the analysis focuses on a single case, caution must be exercised in generalizing the findings to all daycare institutions in Indonesia. Future research is encouraged to employ empirical field studies, mixed-method designs, or comparative analyses to provide a more comprehensive understanding of risk and protective factors within institutional childcare settings.

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