



Review of Sexual Abuse Against Children Perpetrators and Forms of Sexual Abuse : A Literature Review

Elvika Fit Ari Shanti^{1,5*}, Endang Sutisna Sulaeman², Anik Lestari³ and Aditya Nanda Priyatama⁴

¹ Development Extension/Community Empowerment Post-graduate School, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta, Indonesia

² Faculty of Medicine Universitas Sebelas Maret Surakarta, Indonesia

³ Faculty of Agriculture, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta, Indonesia

⁴ Faculty of Psychology, Uniververistas Sebelas Maret, Surakarta, Indonesia

⁵ Midwifery Program, Faculty of Health, Universitas Jenderal Achmad Yani, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

elvika06@student.uns.ac.id or Elvika0102@gmail.com

Abstract. Child sexual abuse is a serious global issue and represents one of the most harmful forms of violence against children. As the next generation, children's physical, psychological, and social well-being is essential; thus, any threat to their welfare directly impacts their overall quality of life. Sexual abuse not only destroys a child's future but also constitutes a multidimensional problem that affects families, communities, and public health systems. This study aims to examine child sexual abuse with a specific focus on identifying perpetrators and the various forms of abuse. A literature review was conducted by searching articles published between 2021 and 2025 in reputable international journals indexed in ScienceDirect, PubMed, and ProQuest. The search strategy used specific keywords related to child sexual abuse. The findings indicate that perpetrators are not limited to strangers; rather, the most concerning cases involve individuals within the child's immediate environment, such as family members, teachers, and community figures. Various forms of abuse were identified, ranging from non-contact acts such as exposure and verbal harassment to severe physical abuse including rape, which can result in long-term trauma. The review highlights that effective prevention requires a multilevel approach involving intrapersonal factors (knowledge, threat perception, and children's readiness), interpersonal factors (parent and teacher support), and community factors (school policies and safe social environments). Therefore, a comprehensive model of child reproductive health promotion—one that is culturally relevant and rooted in strong social support—is urgently needed to strengthen children's ability to recognize and prevent sexual abuse. This review is expected to provide a foundation for developing evidence-based interventions and stronger preventive policies at the family, school, and community levels.

Keywords: Child sexual abuse, perpetrators, forms of abuse

1 Introduction

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a severe violation of children's rights and a public health issue with far-reaching consequences. CSA is defined as the involvement of a child in sexual activities that they cannot understand or consent to, or that violate legal and social norms. Recent literature indicates that the global prevalence of CSA remains high, and its forms continue to evolve in line with social and technological changes. The inclusion of online child sexual abuse in prevalence surveys substantially increases estimated rates, highlighting digital-based exploitation as a critical component of this phenomenon (Ali et al., 2023).

WHO (2024) estimates that one in four girls and one in thirteen boys have experienced CSA, while meta-analytic findings report global prevalence rates of 18% among girls and 8% among boys. Online sexual exploitation has also risen sharply, with a 35% increase since 2020, and Southeast Asia reporting a 25–30% surge in live-streaming exploitation cases. The World Health Organization emphasizes that CSA involves sexual activities that children cannot fully comprehend or consent to and that contravene societal norms. Recent reports underscore a significant global rise in CSA cases, reinforcing the urgent need for more effective prevention and rehabilitation strategies.

At the national level, Indonesia continues to face high rates of child sexual abuse. Data from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (Kemen PPPA) through the SIMFONI-PPA online reporting system recorded 15,120 cases of violence against children from January to November 2023, with sexual violence being the most frequently reported form (Kemen PPPA, 2023). By mid-2024, the ministry documented 7,842 cases, again confirming sexual violence as the most dominant type (SIMFONI-PPA, 2024).

In addition to statistical data, the 2024 Annual Report (CATAHU 2024) of the Indonesian National Commission on Violence Against Women indicates that sexual violence remains the most dominant form of violence, with an increasing number of cases involving children, both within close relationships and in online contexts. Media reports further show that perpetrators are often individuals from the child's immediate environment, such as parents, teachers, and caregivers, and that online forms of abuse such as grooming and sextortion are rising. This highlights the evolving and complex nature of child sexual abuse and the need for a better understanding of its perpetrators and forms as a basis for effective prevention.

The impacts of CSA are profound and long-lasting, affecting not only physical health but also psychological and behavioral functioning. Survivors often experience post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, and social impairment. Neurobiological studies show that early exposure to sexual trauma can disrupt brain development and stress-regulation systems. At the individual level, many perpetrators have histories of childhood abuse or neglect and personality disorders. At the family level, low parental supervision, household conflict, and alcohol misuse significantly increase CSA risk, particularly because most perpetrators are individuals close to the child with direct access (Rusyidi & Krisnani, 2019; Teicher & Samson, 2016). Socio-cultural factors such as taboos surrounding sexuality, limited sex education, and poverty further heighten children's vulnerability and suppress reporting rates, as highlighted by Collin-

Vézina et al. (2013) and Barth et al. (2013). In addition, technological developments have created new forms of risk such as online grooming, where perpetrators use social media and messaging applications to approach and exploit children (Hamilton-Giachritsis et al., 2017). Taken together, the evidence demonstrates that CSA is a multidimensional phenomenon influenced not only by individual behavior but also by family dynamics, social norms, and inadequate child protection systems.

2 Tools and Method

The method used in this study was a literature review, focusing on articles published within the last five years. The approach involved analyzing each article related to the theme of child sexual abuse, including the identification of perpetrators and the various forms of abuse. The collected data were then analyzed and synthesized with relevant references, supported by scientific arguments. This study examined five selected articles in depth, aligned with the research objectives and grounded in an appropriate theoretical framework. The following is a description of the reviewed articles.

The literature search was conducted using the keywords “child sexual abuse”, “perpetrators”, “forms of abuse”, “online child sexual exploitation”, and “sexual grooming” in the databases ScienceDirect, PubMed, and ProQuest. The inclusion criteria were: (1) articles published between 2021 and 2025; (2) peer-reviewed journal articles; (3) studies focusing on child sexual abuse, perpetrators, or forms of abuse; and (4) articles written in English. The exclusion criteria were: (1) articles not focused on children; (2) opinion papers, editorials, and commentaries; and (3) articles without full-text access.

Table 1. Description of Articles

No	Name & Article Title	Study Design	Results
1	B. Mathews, <i>et al.</i> Child sexual abuse: Trends by perpetrator class, types, victim gender, and age group in Australia	Cross-sectional population-based study	The age at which abuse first occurred was most commonly between 6 and 11 years old, and the majority of victims experienced repeated abuse (≥ 2 times). Most perpetrators were male, with the highest proportion consisting of adult acquaintances, unfamiliar adult males, and peers.
2	Mahirah Abdul Latiff, Lue Fang, Deborah A. Goh, dan Li Jen Tan dari Singapore.	Systematic review	Most OCSE perpetrators are adult males. They typically come from the child’s immediate environment or approach the child through digital means (grooming). Emerging trends show an increase in

No	Name & Article Title	Study Design	Results
	A systematic review of factors associated with disclosure of child sexual abuse.		technology-facilitated abuse, such as sextortion and the distribution of child sexual exploitation material. Many perpetrators engage in intensive psychological manipulation through social media, chat applications, and online games. These findings highlight the importance of early detection and digital literacy in preventing online-based CSA.
3	Genevieve Bloxsom, Gemma McKibbin, Cathy Humphreys, Jennifer Davidson, dan Nick Halfpenny Five Forms of Coerced “Self-Produced” Child Sexual Exploitation Material: A Critical Interpretive Synthesis	Systematic literature review	There are five forms of coerced self-produced child sexual exploitation material, namely direct requests, peer sexting, viral challenges, sextortion, and financial coercion. This study highlights the importance of a victim-centered approach that recognizes children as victims, as well as the need for stronger regulation and further research, particularly regarding financially motivated coercion, to enhance child protection against sexual exploitation. This approach shifts the perspective from victim-blaming to prioritizing victim protection and support.
4	Marta Ferragut, Margarita Ortiz-Tallo, dan Maria J. Blanca Victims and Perpetrators of Child Sexual Abuse: Abusive Contact and Penetration Experiences	Survey cross-sectional	Approximately 27.8% of participants who reported having experienced any form of sexual abuse indicated that it involved physical contact during childhood. The most common age at first disclosure was from 6 years and above, particularly within the 6–11-year age group, which accounted for the majority of reported cases. Most perpetrators were male; however, male victims were more

No	Name & Article Title	Study Design	Results
			likely to report female perpetrators compared to female victims. Perpetrators were generally adults known to the victim, unfamiliar adult males, or other children (peers).
5	Samantha S and David F. Perpetrators' Identity in Online Crimes Against Children	Empirical study / mixed quantitative and qualitative methods	The study found that the identities of online child sexual abuse perpetrators are highly diverse: not only adults outside the family, but also peers and individuals known to the child through the internet. The study emphasizes that many perpetrators are not authority figures, and that preventive interventions should take into account the digital social profiles of perpetrators.

3 Discussion

The findings from the five international articles reviewed indicate that child sexual abuse (CSA) is a complex phenomenon influenced by social, psychological, and technological factors that increasingly shape patterns of abuse. Overall, the articles emphasize that perpetrators of CSA are not limited to strangers; rather, they are more commonly individuals who have social and emotional proximity to the child, including family members, known adults, teachers, neighbors, and peers. This aligns with global literature showing that close relationships facilitate manipulation and control of victims. Haslam et al. (2023) highlight that many victims first experience sexual abuse between the ages of 6 and 11, often with repeated occurrences throughout childhood. While adult males constitute the majority of perpetrators, other studies show that perpetrators may also include peers and individuals interacting with children through digital spaces (Whittle et al., 2013; Leclerc et al., 2011), demonstrating the diverse contexts in which CSA occurs. Ferragut et al. (2021) further illustrate this complexity by noting that female perpetrators also appear, particularly in cases involving male victims, indicating that gender dynamics in CSA are more nuanced than commonly assumed.

Latiff et al. (2024) show that digital technology has become a significant contributing factor to contemporary CSA patterns. The reviewed articles reveal an increase in digital grooming, sextortion, and internet-based sexual exploitation. Online perpetrators come from diverse backgrounds and frequently use false identities to access children, placing them at higher risk because perpetrators can approach victims without

physical or social barriers. The systematic review also outlines factors influencing disclosure and the rising prevalence of online child sexual exploitation (OCSE). Most OCSE perpetrators are adult males who exploit social proximity or conduct grooming through social media, online games, and messaging platforms. The findings highlight the growing prevalence of technology-facilitated abuse, including sextortion and the circulation of sexual exploitation material, underscoring the importance of early detection, digital literacy, and online safety-based interventions.

In terms of forms of abuse, all articles agree that CSA includes both non-contact acts—such as exposure to pornography, requests for sexual content, and digital grooming—and contact abuse, including fondling, sexual exploitation, and rape. Blossom et al. make a significant contribution by identifying five forms of coerced self-produced sexual exploitation among children, indicating that CSA has expanded beyond direct physical interaction to digital forms that are often difficult for caregivers and authorities to detect.

Beyond forms and perpetrators, the reviewed articles also discuss psychological aspects and factors influencing disclosure. Many children do not report abuse due to fear, perpetrator manipulation, emotional attachment, and cultural taboos surrounding discussions of sexuality. These factors often result in CSA going undetected for long periods. This underscores the importance of a socioecological approach to prevention, involving intrapersonal factors (knowledge, risk perception), interpersonal factors (family and teacher support), and community factors (school policies, digital literacy, and safe social environments).

Effective prevention requires a multilevel approach that involves:

a) Intrapersonal Factors

Children's vulnerability to sexual abuse is influenced by limited knowledge of their bodies and personal boundaries, weak risk perception, fear of threats, and low readiness or confidence to report unsafe situations. Children who do not understand the concepts of consent and safe touch are less able to recognize warning signs or seek help. Enhancing children's ability to identify and disclose unsafe circumstances has been shown to be one of the most effective prevention strategies (Kandi et al., 2022).

b) Interpersonal Factors

Support from parents, teachers, and caregivers is a key factor in both preventing and facilitating the disclosure of CSA. Children are more likely to speak up when they feel safe, trusted, and not blamed, whereas negative responses from adults can inhibit disclosure and increase vulnerability. Studies indicate that the quality of interpersonal relationships—including healthy attachment with caregivers—significantly influences a child's ability to seek help and reduces the likelihood of revictimization in the future (Ali et al., 2023; Hedo et al., 2021).

c) Community Factors

At the community level, CSA risk is influenced by the presence of child protection policies in schools, social environmental monitoring, and digital literacy. Communities

lacking protection policies, adequate supervision, or those that normalize violence create opportunities for perpetrators. Additionally, increased internet access without proper guidance heightens the risk of online sexual exploitation. Community- and school-based prevention approaches have been proven effective in strengthening protection systems and reducing children's exposure to sexual abuse risks.

4 Conclusion

Based on the review of the five international articles, child sexual abuse (CSA) is a complex phenomenon involving various forms of abuse and perpetrators with diverse backgrounds. Most perpetrators come from the child's immediate environment, including family members, known adults, teachers, neighbors, and peers. The review by Mathews et al. indicates that children most commonly experience their first incident of sexual abuse between the ages of 6 and 11, with many experiencing repeated victimization. Perpetrators are predominantly male, with the most frequent categories being adult acquaintances, unfamiliar adult males, and peers.

Furthermore, the systematic review by Mahirah Abdul Latiff et al. emphasizes that perpetrators of online child sexual exploitation (OCSE) are primarily adult males, often originating from the child's close environment or approaching children through digital means (grooming). Technology-facilitated abuse, such as sextortion and the distribution of child sexual exploitation material, has continued to rise alongside the increasing use of social media and online applications. Many perpetrators employ psychological manipulation to influence children and cultivate unhealthy relationships through prolonged digital interactions.

In conclusion, the forms of sexual abuse experienced by children are highly diverse, ranging from non-contact acts such as digital grooming, exposure to pornography, and verbal harassment, to contact forms of abuse such as fondling, sexual exploitation, and penetration. Technological developments significantly contribute to the growing cases of sextortion and coerced self-produced sexual content. Therefore, the most appropriate model for preventing CSA is a multilevel approach that encompasses intrapersonal, interpersonal, and community-level factors.

5 References

1. Abdul Latiff, M., Fang, L., Goh, D. A., & Tan, L. J. (2024). A systematic review of factors associated with disclosure of child sexual abuse. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 147, 106564.
2. Ali, S., Haykal, H. A., & Youssef, E. Y. M. (2023). Child sexual abuse and the internet: A systematic review. *Human Arenas*, 6(2), 404–421.
3. Barth, J., Bermetz, L., Heim, E., Trelle, S., & Tonia, T. (2013). The current prevalence of child sexual abuse worldwide: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *International Journal of Public Health*, 58(3), 469–483. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00038-012-0426-1>
4. Bloxsom, G., McKibbin, G., Humphreys, C., Davidson, J., & Halfpenny, N. (2024). Five forms of coerced "self-produced" child sexual exploitation material: A critical interpretive synthesis. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 25(5), 4230–4244. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15248380241271376>

5. Collin-Vézina, D., Daigneault, I., & Hébert, M. (2013). Lessons learned from child sexual abuse research. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 14(2), 99–113. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838013487801>
6. Ferragut, M., Ortiz-Tallo, M., & Blanca, M. J. (2021). Victims and Perpetrators of Child Sexual Abuse: Abusive Contact and Penetration Experiences. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(18), 9593. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18189593>
7. Haslam.(2023). The Australian Child Maltreatment Study (ACMS), A National Survey Of The Prevalence Of Child Maltreatment And Its Correlates: Methodologyhaslam D, Lawrence D.
8. Hedo, B., Ramos, M. M., Trujillo, M. A., & Saltijeral Méndez, M. J. (2021). Disclosure of child sexual abuse: The role of maternal support and attachment. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 117, 105076
9. Kandi, Z. R. K., & rekan. (2022). Significance of knowledge in children on self-protection of sexual abuse: A systematic review. *Iranian Journal of Public Health*, 51(8), 1755–1763.
10. Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak Republik Indonesia. (2023). Data kekerasan terhadap anak periode Januari–November 2023 [Data dari sistem pelaporan SIMFONI-PPA]. <https://kekerasan.kemenpppa.go.id>
11. Kloess, J. A., Hamilton-Giachritsis, C., & Beech, A. R. (2017). Offense processes of online sexual grooming and abuse of children via Internet communication platforms. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, 31(1), 73–96. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1079063217720927>
12. Leclerc, B., Wortley, R., & Smallbone, S. (2011). Victim resistance and offender modus operandi in sexual offenses against children: A script analysis. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, 23(3), 263–283.
13. Mathews, B., Finkelhor, D., Pacella, R., Scott, J. G., Higgins, D. J., Meinck, F., Erskine, H. E., Thomas, H. J., Lawrence, D., Malacova, E., Haslam, D. M., & Collin-Vézina, D. (2024). Child sexual abuse by different classes and types of perpetrator: Prevalence and trends from an Australian national survey. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 147, 106562. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2023.106562>
14. Rusyidi B, Krisnani H. (2019). Memahami Pengungkapan Kekerasan Seksual Terhadap Anak (Understanding Disclosure Of Sexual Violence Against Children)
15. Sutton, S., & Finkelhor, D. (2023). Perpetrators' identity in online crimes against children: A meta-analysis. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15248380231194072>
16. The Effect Of Child Abuse And Neglect Prevention Program On Awareness Levels And Child Abuse Potential Of Pregnant Women: A Randomized Controlled Studysubaşi Damla.
17. Whittle, H. C., Hamilton-Giachritsis, C., Beech, A., & Collings, G. (2013). A review of online grooming: Characteristics and concerns. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 18(1), 62–70

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

