

Profile of alleged criminal offenses of child abuse at Ibnu Sina Gresik Hospital in 2020-2023.

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Abstract

Introduction: Child abuse is a significant public health issue, and the consequences of child abuse on victims can last a lifetime. Meanwhile, the number of child abuse cases in Indonesia has increased in recent years. This study aimed to comprehend the profile of cases of alleged criminal offenses of child abuse at Ibnu Sina Gresik Hospital from 2020–2023.

Methods: This retrospective research used samples of medical records and visum et repertum of child abuse victims who had reported to Ibnu Gresik Hospital from 2020–2023. The sampling technique was total sampling with variables such as age, gender, type of abuse, scope of the perpetrator, and the incident location. The analyzed data were done in Microsoft Excel and presented as a distribution table.

Results: The highest number of cases was reported in 2023 (61.67%), with most victims being girls (59.17%). The reported types of child abuse were physical abuse (50.00%) and sexual abuse (50.00%). The majority of girl victims experienced alleged sexual abuse (77.46%), while most boy victims experienced alleged physical abuse (89.80%). The adolescent age group (13-17 years old) dominated the number of victims (64.17%). Perpetrators mostly came from non-family scope (60.83%). Most locations of incidents were unidentified (47.67%). The sub-district with the highest number of cases was Menganti (12.50%).

Conclusion: The number of child abuse cases increases every year. The reported types of abuse were sexual and physical abuse. Most victims were girl, adolescent age group, and perpetrators mainly came from non-family scope. Most of the incident locations were unidentified.

Keywords: Child Abuse; Child Sexual Abuse; Physical Abuse; Psychological Abuse; Neglect; Human Trafficking

1. Introduction

Child abuse is a major public health challenge and one of the most significant risk factors for psychopathology, health morbidity, and developmental disorders in victims [1]. Child abuse has long-term harmful impacts that weaken individual potential and hinder economic development [2]. The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection of Republic of Indonesia revealed that the number of reported cases of child abuse in Indonesia from 2020 to 2023 has constantly increased [3]. Based on data published by the National Children's Alliance in 2021, most victims are abused by their parents [4]. Meanwhile, in Indonesia, most perpetrators of child abuse are lovers or friends, followed by parents [3].

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Child abuse victims may experience lifelong effects [5]. Numerous studies show how biological processes, such as inflammation or the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis, raise the risk of psychopathology and physical illness in children who experience abuse. Psychosocial mechanisms could be used to explain some of the consequences, like risky sexual behavior and a distorted body image. Psychiatric factors could also help explain the link between physical health issues and childhood sexual abuse. Childhood sexual abuse for instance, may contribute to obesity through depression or specific eating disorders [6]. Child sexual abuse can also lead to suicidal ideation. Earlier onset of sexual abuse is associated with greater suicidal intent [7].

In contrast, most survivors of child abuse never come into contact with any official services/agencies [5]. In younger children, compared to late teens, a parent or caregiver is more likely to offer a medical history during a standard medical examination. The parent or caregiver who is present with the child in forensic situations may be the one who committed the alleged abuse or neglect. Relying on historical data from parents can be problematic, making it important to elicit more meaningful historical data from the child [8]. Recognizing that disclosure is a dynamic process influenced by diverse intersecting individual and contextual aspects can inform the focus of child forensic interview practices and procedures with the ultimate goal of overcoming obstacles and pursuing positive outcomes [9].

The data above shows that cases of child abuse in Indonesia are still not well resolved. The increased number of child abuse cases in recent years more or less illustrates that the community and the authorized institutions involved need more practical steps to prevent child abuse in Indonesia, especially in East Java. This province had the highest number of child abuse cases in 2021 and 2022. This study aims to increase public awareness of the urgency and consequences of child abuse and help various parties understand cases of child abuse in Indonesia, especially in one of the districts in East Java Province, precisely in Gresik, by presenting data related to alleged criminal acts of child abuse at Ibnu Sina Gresik Hospital.

2. Material and methods

This research is a descriptive study with a retrospective design using secondary data samples of patient medical records and visum et repertum from Ibnu Gresik Hospital that were reported in 2020–2023. The sampling technique was total sampling with variables such as age, gender, type of abuse, scope of the perpetrator, and incident location. The population of this study was victims of child abuse cases aged under 18 years old who reported to the police and then proceeded to make visum et repertum at Ibnu Gresik Hospital from 1st January 2020 until 31st December 2023. There were 120 in total as the sample of this research, which fulfills the inclusion criteria. One data was excluded because it did not provide two or more variables in the medical record as the exclusion criteria. The data was processed in Microsoft Excel and presented as a distribution table. This study received ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee for the Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Airlangga, Surabaya, Indonesia.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Prevalence of child abuse case and types of abuse

Table 1 Distribution of cases types of abuse and reporting year

Year	Type of abuse					Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
	Physical	Psychological	Sexual	Neglect	Human Trafficking (TPPO)		
2020	0	0	8	0	0	8	6.67%
2021	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%
2022	14	0	24	0	0	38	31.66%
2023	46	0	28	0	0	74	61.67%
Total	60	0	60	0	0	120	100.00%

Source: Research data, processed

The total number of alleged child abuse from 2020-2023 is listed in Table 1, which is 120 cases divided into each year with the following details: 8 cases in 2020, 0 cases in 2021, 38 cases in 2022, and 74 cases in 2023. Overall, in 2020-

2023, the number of types of child abuse cases was equally divided between allegations of physical abuse and sexual abuse, namely 60 cases each (50.00%).

The results of this study indicate that the highest number of alleged cases of child abuse at Ibnu Sina Gresik Hospital was in 2023. This figure shows a drastic increase compared to previous years. Neighborhood countries such as Malaysia and Singapore have also reported a similar phenomenon. The number of child abuse cases investigated by Singapore's Early Childhood and Development Agency (ECDA) increased to 147 cases in 2023 [10]. The Social Welfare Department of Malaysia revealed a 19% increase in the number of child abuse cases in Malaysia in 2023 compared to the previous year [11]. The increased number of cases in 2023 can be associated with the COVID-19 pandemic events that peaked in 2020-2022. Many health facilities allocated resources to screening and vaccines during the pandemic, resulting in a gap in other care services [12]. On the other hand, a study by Alkış Küçükaydın [13] acknowledged the relationship between abuse awareness and the propensity to report abuse. Increased awareness of abuse leads to increased reporting of cases.

This study found that the most common types of abuse reported to Ibnu Sina Gresik Hospital in 2020-2023 were alleged physical abuse and sexual abuse, with the same number of cases between the both. Within the same period, the most reported type of child abuse in Indonesia was sexual abuse [3]. Meanwhile, data presented by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare shows that in 2020-2023, the highest number of abuse in Australia each year was psychological abuse [14]. Variations in cultural backgrounds in each region can cause these different findings. Klikla and Linkenbach [15] stated that social norms influence the way people think, speak, and act about child abuse. Meanwhile, the development of society in Indonesia is still closely tied to a patriarchal culture [16].

3.2. Victim's gender

Table 2 shows that the number of girl victims (71) in cases of alleged child abuse is higher than the number of boy victims (49). The majority of boy victims experienced cases of physical abuse with 44 cases (89.80%), while girl victims dominated sexual abuse with 55 cases (77.46%).

Table 2 Distribution of victim's gender and types of abuse

Type of abuse	Gender			
	Boy		Girl	
	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Physical	44	89,80%	16	22.54%
Psychological	0	0,00%	0	0.00%
Sexual	5	10,20	55	77.46%
Neglect	0	0,00%	0	0.00%
Human Trafficking (TPPO)	0	0,00%	0	0.00%
Total	49	100%	71	100%

Source: Research data, processed

This research shows that victims of alleged cases of child abuse at Ibnu Sina Gresik Hospital in 2020-2023 were dominated by girls. A report by The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection of Republic of Indonesia reveals that in cases of child abuse in Indonesia in 2020-2023, the number of girls victims consistently exceeds the number of boy victims with a significant difference [3]. The same matter was also found in a meta-analysis study by Niu et al [17], which presented findings related to the average percentage of the number of child abuse experienced by girls who were higher than boys, which amounted to 57.8%. Wellman, through Asscher et al [18] considers that a greater likelihood of victimization may arise from women's socialization to be more obedient and sensitive to the needs of others. Through their research, Rechenberg et al [19] also mentioned women's stereotypical attributions, such as weakness, passivity, and vulnerability.

The main differences between the genders were found in sexual abuse and physical abuse. The prevalence of girls experiencing sexual abuse was 9.98%, almost double that of boys (4.54%). In contrast, victims of community violence were much higher among boys than girls, with an estimated combined prevalence of 43.1% [20]. A systematic review and meta-analysis study by Whitten et al [21] reported global results that boys were 25% more likely than girls to be

victims of physical abuse in the family and household. Some of these findings are equivalent to the results of this study that boy victims at Ibnu Sina Gresik Hospital in 2020-2023 mostly experienced alleged physical abuse (89.80%), while girl victims dominated in alleged sexual abuse (77.46%).

The increase in community violence among boys compared to girls may be due to girls being more restrained in the home [22]. Boys are considered more likely to misbehave and receive corporal punishment, making them more likely to experience violent injuries [23]. Gender inequality may increase girls' risk of abuse, dating violence, or exploitation [24]. On the other hand, the cause of low rates of sexual abuse among male victims was suggested by Mathews et al [25] that toughness and social stereotypes of masculinity prevent men from disclosing their experiences, even with those closest to them.

3.3. Victim's age

The age classification of children follows the division into 4 age groups according to the American Medical Association's age classification. Based on Table 3, it was found that the largest population of victims in cases of alleged child abuse was the adolescent age group (13-17 years), with a total of 77 cases (64.17%).

Table 3 Distribution of victim's age group and type of abuse

Age classification	Type of abuse					Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
	Physical	Psychological	Sexual	Neglect	Human Trafficking (TPPO)		
0 - 1 months old (neonates)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%
1 - 12 months old (baby)	1	0	0	0	0	1	0.83%
1 - 12 years old (children)	18	0	24	0	0	42	35.00%
13 - 17 years old (adolescent)	41	0	36	0	0	77	64.17%

Source: Research data, processed

This finding is in line with data revealed by The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection of Republic of Indonesia that in 2020-2023, the adolescent age category (13-17 years) ranks the highest in the number of victims of child abuse in Indonesia [3]. Similar results were found in a study by Quille-Mamani et al [24] that the most vulnerable age group was 12-17 years old, with a total of 54.47% of cases, followed by the 6-11 age group, which accounted for 27.01% of cases.

The high incidence of abuse in adolescence can be due to several factors, one of which is that adolescence is marked by significant emotional and physical changes that present difficulties for both parents and children [24]. Meanwhile, as children age, reporting/disclosure is more likely to be made to peers, authorities, professionals, and siblings [26]. Failure to disclose abuse in younger children can be attributed to a limited understanding of sociosexual taboos, poor recall of the abuse, and underdeveloped communicative and cognitive capacities [9].

3.4. Scope of the perpetrator

The scope of perpetrators in cases of alleged child abuse was classified into three categories, namely family, non-family, and unidentified. Table 4 shows that the perpetrators of alleged cases of child abuse were dominated by perpetrators from the non-family scope, namely 73 cases (60.83%).

Table 4 Distribution of scope of perpetrators and types of abuse

Scope perpetrator of	Type of abuse					Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
	Physical	Psychological	Sexual	Neglect	Human Trafficking (TPPO)		
Family	5	0	10	0	0	15	12.50%
Non-family	47	0	26	0	0	73	60.83%
Unidentified	8	0	24	0	0	32	26.67%

Source: Research data, processed

Data accessed through The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection of Republic of Indonesia shows that the highest number of perpetrators of child abuse in Indonesia in 2020-2023 are lovers or friends [3]. Different results were obtained in a study by Hurren et al [27] that most (78.5%) of the relationships between perpetrators and victims in cases of child abuse were between biological parents and biological children. Research conducted in Saudi Arabia by Almuneef et al [28] also stated that the perpetrators of child abuse were dominated by parents (62.3%).

Psychological burden, stress, and the inability of parents to control emotions are some of the factors that contribute to acts of child abuse by parents. This can be caused by several stressors, such as early marriage, inadequate parenting insight, economic constraints, family disputes, domestic violence, trauma, divorce, inability to socialize, and physical illness [29]. Especially parents who have experienced adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) will tend to continue the impact on their offspring [30]. The difference in these findings with this study can be attributed to the number of perpetrators who cannot be identified in cases of alleged child abuse at Ibnu Sina Gresik Hospital.

3.5. Location of the incident

The location of the incident was divided based on 18 sub-districts in Gresik District, the category outside Gresik District, and unidentified. Most of the incident location could not be identified, with a total of 56 cases (47.67%). The sub-district with the highest number of cases was Menganti, with 15 cases (12.50%).

Table 5 Distribution of location incident by reporting year

Location of the incident	Year				Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
	2020	2021	2022	2023		
Balongpanggang	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%
Benjeng	0	0	0	2	2	1.67%
Bungah	0	0	1	2	3	2.50%
Cerme	0	0	1	5	6	5.00%
Driyorejo	0	0	2	5	7	5.83%
Duduk Sampeyan	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%
Dukun	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%
Gresik	0	0	5	4	9	7.50%
Kebomas	0	0	4	4	8	6.67%
Kedamean	0	0	0	1	1	0.83%
Manyar	0	0	0	4	4	3.33%
Menganti	0	0	4	11	15	12.50%
Panceng	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%
Sangkapura	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%

Sidayu	0	0	1	1	2	1.67%
Tambak	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%
Ujung Pangkah	0	0	0	1	1	0.83%
Wringinanom	0	0	1	1	2	1.67%
Outside Gresik District	1	0	1	2	4	3.33%
Unidentified	7	0	18	31	56	47.67%

Source: Research data, processed

The results above can be attributed to the risk factors for child abuse that are not only seen by the victim or perpetrator but also by environmental factors. Several demographic variables are consistently associated with abuse at the family and community level, particularly socioeconomic status, population density, and neighborhood stability [31]. Data retrieved through the Central Bureau of Statistics of Gresik shows that Menganti ranks first with the highest number of schools among other sub-districts [32]. This finding can be associated with Menganti's position as the sub-district with the highest number of suspected child abuse cases in Gresik District because, according to research by Alkış Küçükaydın et al [13], teachers and principals play an important role in reporting child abuse cases.

4. Conclusion

The number of cases increases every year and reached its highest number in 2023. The types of child abuse reported are physical and sexual abuse. Victims were mostly girls and adolescent age group. Most girl victims experienced allegations of sexual abuse, and boy victims experienced physical abuse. The perpetrators of the alleged criminal offenses of child abuse were mostly from non-family scope. The area of incident in most cases of alleged child abuse was unidentified.

Compliance with ethical standards

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Disclosure of Conflict of interest

The authors declared there is no conflict of interest.

Statement of ethical approval

The Health Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Airlangga, Surabaya, Indonesia, granted ethical clearance for this study on February 29, 2024 (No. 59AIC/KEPK/FKUA/2024).

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