

## **CHILD CARE POLICY: PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM ABUSE, NEGLECT AND EXPLOITATION**

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### **Abstract**

The Child Care Policy is a series of measures and rules established by the government and relevant stakeholders, which aim to protect children's rights, ensure their safety, and prevent acts of violence, neglect, and exploitation against children. This policy includes prevention, protection, and case handling efforts, and aims to create a safe and supportive environment for children's growth and development. Thus, the Child Care Policy is an important initiative that aims to protect children from abuse, neglect and exploitation. With effective implementation, the Child Care Policy is expected to significantly reduce cases of child abuse, neglect and exploitation, and contribute to the formation of a better future generation.

**Keywords:** Child Care Policy, Violence, Neglect, Exploitation

### **Introduction**

Children are valuable assets for the future of a nation. As the next generation, children have the right to grow and develop in a safe, healthy and supportive environment. The next generation is a vital asset for the continuity and progress of a nation. They are the key holders of the future who will continue the relay of development and maintain the sustainability of noble values in society (Nurhayati et al., 2023); (Sulastri et al., 2023). As future leaders, innovators, and drivers of change, the next generation has great potential to bring the nation to a better direction. Therefore, investment in the development and protection of the younger generation is crucial for the long-term progress of a country (Salt et al., 2021).

The importance of the next generation also lies in their role as agents of change and adaptation in an evolving world. With rapid technological developments and increasingly complex global challenges, the younger generation has the capacity to bring new perspectives, creativity and innovative solutions to contemporary problems. They are also instrumental in bridging the gap between tradition and modernity, and in maintaining cultural identity while adapting to the demands of the times (Skinner et al., 2023). Thus, preparing and empowering the next generation is key in ensuring a nation's competitiveness and relevance in the global arena. However, reality shows that many children still face various threats to their well-being and safety, including violence, neglect and exploitation.

In Indonesia, cases of violence against children continue to show an alarming trend. According to data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI),

throughout 2020 there were 5,697 cases of violence against children, with 1,622 of them being sexual violence. Meanwhile, child neglect also remains a serious problem, with thousands of children living on the streets or being victims of neglect by their parents or guardians (Maguire-Jack et al., 2022).

Child exploitation, both in the form of economic and sexual exploitation, is also still rampant. Data from the International Labour Organization (ILO) shows that around 1.5 million children in Indonesia are involved in child labour, with many working in hazardous or exploitative conditions (Barboza et al., 2021).

In response to this problem, the Indonesian government has issued various policies and regulations to protect children. Law No. 35/2014 on the Amendment to Law No. 23/2002 on Child Protection is the main legal basis for child protection efforts in Indonesia. In addition, various programmes and initiatives have been launched, such as the Child Friendly Indonesia Programme (PILA) and Child Friendly Cities/Districts (KLA) (Ellis et al., 2021).

However, despite these policies and programmes, implementation in the field still faces challenges. Lack of coordination between institutions, limited resources, and low public awareness are factors that hinder the effectiveness of child care policies (Landers et al., 2021). Therefore, it is important to conduct an in-depth study of existing child care policies, especially in the context of protecting children from violence, neglect and exploitation. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of existing policies, identify challenges and obstacles in their implementation, and formulate recommendations for future policy improvements.

Through this research, it is hoped that a more comprehensive understanding of child protection efforts in Indonesia can be obtained, as well as contributing to the development of more effective policies in protecting children from various forms of violence, neglect and exploitation.

## **Research Methods**

The study in this research uses the literature research method. The literature research method, also known as a desk study or literature review, is a research method that focuses on collecting and analysing information from various existing written sources. (Abdussamad, 2022); (Wekke, 2020).

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Child Care Policy in Indonesia**

A Child Care Policy is a set of measures, rules, and programmes designed and implemented by a government, organisation, or institution to protect, fulfil the rights, and improve the well-being of children in various aspects of their lives. It covers areas such as education, health, protection from violence and exploitation, social-emotional development, and fulfilment of children's basic needs (Ayaya et al., 2023). Its main

objective is to create a safe, supportive and conducive environment for children's optimal growth and development, while ensuring that their rights are respected and fulfilled in accordance with applicable national and international standards (Ortiz et al., 2021).

The history of Child Care Policies in Indonesia can be traced back to the early days of independence, but significant momentum occurred in 1990 when Indonesia ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (KHA) through Presidential Decree No. 36 of 1990. This step marked Indonesia's commitment to protect and fulfil children's rights according to international standards. Subsequently, in 2002, the Indonesian government passed Law No. 23 of 2002 on Child Protection, which became the main legal foundation for child-related policies and programmes in the country. This law was later updated with Law No. 35 of 2014 to strengthen aspects of child protection (Spencer et al., 2021).

The development of child-related policies in Indonesia continued with the establishment of the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KPPPA) in 2009, which plays an important role in coordinating and implementing child-related policies. Some notable programmes that have been launched include the Healthy Indonesia Programme with a Family Approach (PIS-PK), the Family Hope Programme (PKH), and the Child Friendly City/District (KLA) initiative (Austin et al., 2022). In addition, the government has also developed a National Action Plan for Child Protection (RAN-PA) as a strategic guide for the implementation of child-care policies at the national and local levels. While there has been significant progress, Indonesia still faces challenges in ensuring effective and comprehensive implementation of these policies across the country (Nguyen, 2021).

The main challenge in implementing the Child Care Policy in Indonesia is limited resources, both financial and human. Although the government has allocated budgets for child-related programmes, the amount is often insufficient to reach all children in a vast and diverse country like Indonesia. In addition, the lack of trained professionals in child protection and welfare, especially in remote areas, is a serious barrier to policy implementation (McCoy & Keen, 2022). Infrastructure disparities between urban and rural areas also make it difficult to provide equitable services to all children. Another significant challenge is coordination between government agencies and between central and local governments, which is often ineffective, leading to overlapping programmes or even gaps in services (Smith, 2023).

Other barriers include socio-cultural factors that are still strong in many parts of Indonesia. Some traditional practices and community views sometimes conflict with modern child protection principles, such as child marriage, child labour, or the view that children 'belong' to their parents. This requires a sensitive approach and long-term educational efforts to change the mindset of the community (Seddighi et al., 2021). In addition, low public awareness and understanding of children's rights and the

importance of child protection are also obstacles to policy implementation. Another important challenge is the problem of recording and collecting data on children, especially in remote areas, which makes it difficult for the government to plan and implement targeted programmes. Finally, changes in the global situation such as the COVID-19 pandemic have created new challenges in child protection, forcing the government to adapt quickly in developing and implementing child care policies (Moayad et al., 2021).

Thus, the Child Care Policy in Indonesia faces various complex challenges and obstacles in its implementation. Key issues include limited resources, both financial and human, as well as infrastructure gaps between urban and rural areas. Socio-cultural factors, low public awareness, and suboptimal inter-agency coordination are also significant obstacles. In addition, challenges in child registration and adapting to changing global situations, such as pandemics, add to the complexity of the problem.

Overcoming these challenges requires a holistic and sustainable approach. The government needs to increase resource allocation, strengthen inter-agency coordination, and develop strategies that are sensitive to Indonesia's cultural diversity. Increasing public awareness through education, improving data collection systems, and increasing the capacity of professionals are also key to success. With coordinated and sustainable efforts from all stakeholders, it is hoped that the implementation of the Child Care Policy in Indonesia can be more effective in ensuring the protection and welfare of children throughout the country.

### **Efforts to Protect Children from Violence**

Violence against children can manifest in many forms that are often interrelated and have a serious impact on a child's physical, mental and emotional development. These forms of violence include physical violence, such as hitting, kicking, or using objects to cause harm; emotional or psychological violence, including humiliation, threats, or neglect; sexual violence, ranging from abuse to sexual exploitation; and neglect, which is the failure to meet a child's basic needs (Fluke et al., 2021). In addition, there are also more contemporary forms of violence such as cyberbullying or exploitation of children through digital media. Structural violence, such as poverty or systemic discrimination, can also be considered a form of violence against children because it hinders their access to basic rights. It is important to remember that violence against children often occurs in environments that should be safe for them, such as homes, schools, or communities, and the perpetrators can be people close to the child, including parents, teachers, or peers (Marmor et al., 2023).

Policies and programmes to prevent violence against children in Indonesia have been a major focus of the government and various non-governmental organisations in recent years. One significant step was the passing of Law No. 35/2014 on the Amendment to Law No. 23/2002 on Child Protection, which strengthened the legal

framework to protect children from various forms of violence (Vermeulen et al., 2023). The government has also launched the Community-Based Integrated Child Protection Programme (PATBM) which aims to increase community awareness and participation in preventing and handling cases of violence against children. In addition, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection has developed various educational programmes and public campaigns to increase public understanding of children's rights and the negative impacts of violence (Katz & Cohen, 2021).

At the implementation level, various initiatives have been undertaken to strengthen child protection systems at the local level. These include the establishment of Integrated Service Centres for Women and Children Empowerment (P2TP2A) in various regions, which provide integrated services for victims of violence. Training programmes for law enforcement officers, social workers, and educators have also been intensified to improve their capacity to handle cases of violence against children. In the education sector, the implementation of the Child-Friendly School policy aims to create a learning environment that is safe and free from violence (Kimber et al., 2021). Nonetheless, challenges still remain in terms of inter-agency coordination, adequate resource allocation and outreach to remote areas. Therefore, sustained efforts and closer collaboration between the government, civil society and the private sector are still needed to ensure the effectiveness of child abuse prevention policies and programmes across Indonesia (Whaling et al., 2023).

Handling cases of violence against children in Indonesia involves a multi-sectoral approach that includes legal, social, health, and psychological aspects. The process generally begins with the reporting of a case, either through a child protection hotline, the police, or a social agency. Once the report is received, a multidisciplinary team consisting of social workers, psychologists, medical personnel, and law enforcement will conduct an assessment to determine the level of risk and need for intervention. The victim will then be provided with the necessary protection and care, including placement in a safe house if needed, psychological counselling, and medical treatment (Herrenkohl et al., 2022). Meanwhile, the legal process will be carried out to ensure the perpetrator is prosecuted according to the applicable law. Rehabilitation and reintegration of victims into the community is also an important part of the treatment process, with ongoing support from social institutions and communities. It is important to note that a child-centred approach is always a priority at every stage of the response, taking into account the special needs and rights of children as victims (Bennett et al., 2022).

As such, Indonesia has made important strides in addressing the issue of violence against children, but there is still room for improvement and strengthening of existing systems to ensure better protection for children across the country.

### **Strategies to Address Child Neglect**

The strategy to address child neglect requires a comprehensive approach that involves various parties and aspects of life. The first step is to strengthen early detection and reporting systems for child neglect cases. This can be done through training health workers, teachers and social workers to recognise the signs of neglect, as well as providing reporting channels that are easily accessible to the public (Deb, 2022). In addition, public education campaigns need to be conducted to raise public awareness about the negative impact of child neglect and the importance of reporting suspected cases. Strengthening the legal framework and strict law enforcement against perpetrators of neglect is also an important part of this strategy (Sharratt et al., 2023).

The second step focuses on prevention and early intervention. Family support programmes, such as positive parenting education, family counselling and economic assistance for vulnerable families, can help prevent neglect. The development of affordable and quality childcare services is also important to help working parents (Powell et al., 2021). In addition, comprehensive social protection programmes, including health and education insurance for children from poor families, can reduce the risk of poverty-related neglect. Collaboration between the government, non-governmental organisations and local communities is crucial in effectively implementing these programmes (Haque et al., 2021).

Finally, long-term strategies should include rehabilitation and reintegration efforts for children who have experienced neglect. This involves providing mental health services, educational support and life skills development programmes to help children recover from trauma and build a better future. The development of alternative care systems, such as kinship care programmes or trained foster families, is also important for children who are unable to return to their families of origin. Continuous monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the various programmes and policies implemented is essential to ensure that these strategies continue to evolve and are able to address the changing social dynamics that affect child welfare (Smith, 2023).

### **Protection of Children from Exploitation**

Protecting children from exploitation is a shared responsibility that requires coordinated efforts from various parties. The first step is to strengthen legal and policy frameworks that specifically prohibit and punish all forms of child exploitation, including sexual exploitation, child labour and child trafficking. Strict and consistent law enforcement against exploiters is essential to create a deterrent effect (Rebbe et al., 2021). In addition, raising public awareness through intensive educational campaigns on children's rights and the dangers of exploitation can help create a more protective environment for children. Collaboration between governments, law enforcement agencies, civil society organisations and the international community is also needed to address the often cross-border nature of child exploitation (Toros et al., 2021).

Preventing child exploitation also requires a holistic and community-based approach. Poverty alleviation programmes, improved access to education and family economic empowerment can reduce children's vulnerability to exploitation. The development of community-level child protection systems, such as the establishment of village or neighbourhood child protection committees, can assist in the early identification and intervention of exploitation cases. Training for teachers, social workers and health workers on how to recognise signs of exploitation and safe reporting procedures is also important. In addition, close monitoring of high-risk sectors, such as the tourism and entertainment industries, can help prevent child sexual exploitation (Puls et al., 2021).

Finally, treating victims of child exploitation requires a sensitive and comprehensive approach. The provision of integrated recovery services, including medical care, psychosocial support, legal aid and social reintegration programmes, is essential to help child victims of exploitation recover and rebuild their lives. The development of child-friendly and accessible reporting mechanisms, such as child protection hotlines, can facilitate faster identification and rescue of victims. Specialised training for law enforcement officers and social workers in handling child exploitation cases is also needed to ensure a trauma-sensitive approach. In addition, international co-operation in information exchange and case management across countries is essential given the transnational nature of many forms of child exploitation (Molnar et al., 2021).

### **Evaluation of Child Care Policy**

Child policy evaluation is a crucial step in ensuring the effectiveness and relevance of programmes aimed at improving children's welfare. The evaluation process involves systematic data collection, in-depth analysis and objective assessment of various aspects of the policy, from planning, implementation and impact (Holt & Lewis, 2021). The main objective is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the existing policy, and provide recommendations for improvement and future development. A comprehensive evaluation also considers the social, economic and cultural context in which the policy is implemented, and involves various stakeholders, including children themselves, in the assessment process (Lines et al., 2021).

One important aspect of evaluating child-care policies is measuring the long-term impact on children's well-being. This involves using relevant and measurable indicators, such as education levels, health, protection from violence and children's participation in decisions that affect their lives (Higgins et al., 2022). Cost-benefit analysis is also important to assess the efficiency of resource use in achieving policy objectives. In addition, the evaluation should consider aspects of policy sustainability, including the capacity of implementing institutions, political support, and integration of the policy into the wider system. The use of mixed methodologies, which combine

quantitative and qualitative approaches, can provide a deeper understanding of policy effectiveness and the factors that influence its success or failure (Cappa & Jijon, 2021).

The results of childcare policy evaluations should be used as a basis for future policy improvements and innovations. Transparency in the evaluation process and dissemination of findings to the public and policymakers is essential to ensure accountability and promote positive change. Learning from best practices and failures in policy implementation can be valuable inputs for the formulation of more effective strategies (Rogowski, 2024). In addition, regular and continuous evaluation is necessary given the changing dynamics of children's needs and the evolving social context. The active involvement of civil society, academics and international organisations in the evaluation process can enrich perspectives and strengthen the validity of findings. Finally, a strong political commitment to follow up on evaluation recommendations is essential to ensure that child-care policies continue to evolve and deliver tangible benefits to children (Tufford et al., 2021).

## **Conclusion**

The Child Care Policy is an important step in efforts to protect children from various forms of threats such as violence, neglect and exploitation. This policy reflects the commitment of the government and society to guarantee children's rights and create a safe and conducive environment for their growth and development. Through the implementation of this policy, it is expected that there will be an increase in public awareness about the importance of child protection, strengthening of legal and institutional systems related to child protection, and increased coordination between stakeholders in addressing issues related to child abuse, neglect and exploitation.

However, the success of the Child Care Policy relies heavily on effective and consistent implementation in the field. Continuous efforts are needed to overcome existing challenges, such as limited resources, gaps in law enforcement, and socio-cultural barriers that are still entrenched in society. Regular policy evaluation and improvement are also needed to ensure its relevance and effectiveness in the face of changing social dynamics and new forms of threats to children. With strong commitment from all parties and proper implementation, the Child Care Policy is expected to significantly reduce cases of child abuse, neglect and exploitation, and create a healthier, safer and more prosperous future generation.

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