Domestic Violence: Parent's Perception about Child Abuse

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Article Info

Abstract

The number of child abuse cases in Indonesia is increasing every year. The perpetrators of child abuse are mostly the parents. It is important to understand various types of domestic violence because home is children's first environment where they learn many things. Besides that, home is a safe place for children, with parents as the main actor who guards them. The limited facility that can be used as information source of what should be done by parents in parenting and educating children is alarming. Therefore, research to identify and to analyse parents' understanding about domestic violence is needed. This research was conducted using descriptive qualitative method in which researchers analyse further about parents' perception about child abuse. The result from 3 participants of this research is that child abuse still exists and is done intentionally by parents with different educational and economic background.

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INTRODUCTION

Child is God's blessing given to each pair of human in the world. For most parents, child is the most beautiful blessing who needs to be nurtured and to be provided with knowledge, including how to behave according to the community's norm. As mentioned in many studies on child development, every child is different. It is also applied in twins who physically have similarities. As the next generation, children have their roles and responsibilities to create a better future.

Parent's role is very important in monitoring, in shaping child's character, and in educating children. Parent's rights and responsibilities are regulated in Act No. 20 Year 2003, article 7, verse 1 and 2, stating that: (1) parents have the right to choose child's education and to gain information about their child's educational progress, and (2) parents of school-age children are responsible for giving basic education for their children. It can be further explained that parents have the responsibility to take care of, to educate, to nurture, to guard, and to develop their children based on their talent and interest, to prevent child marriage, and to provide character education and the internalization of moral to children (Muliyawan, 2015). The various tasks that parents have to do in terms of educating their children need self-awareness and motivation to create qualified next generation because there is no special school to educate parents on how to correctly educate children and to create harmony in the family.

In this modern era, there are many young families that have the awareness and willingness to educate their children correctly as can be seen in their participation in seminars on parenting, such as seminars by a psychologist, Elly Risman, that are always full. It shows that parents are aware of the importance of child education in family so that these parents are expected to have a good background to educate and to guard their children. However, the number of parents who neglect their children is also abundant. It can be seen from many child abuse cases in families. In fact, according to Sirait (in Liputan6, 2006), parents cannot let their children unattended in their daily activities. Children need to be given attention in all aspects. Parents' neglect when they do not monitor their children can be used by irresponsible people.

The discussion on child abuse has been going on many times. Based on Susenas 2006 data from www.menegpp.go.id (in Lestari, 2012), the number of child abuse victim reaches 2.29 million, or 3%, with more cases happening in rural than urban areas. From that number, 61.4% of the perpetrators are parents, followed by neighbor (6.7%), family member (3.8%), and teacher (3%). From those cases, 53.7% are torture, 36.7% are insult, 10.3% are neglect, 3.9% are harassment, and 15.2% represent others (YKAI, n.d.). Meanwhile, the monitoring and evaluation from KPAI in 2012 in 9 provinces show that 91% of abuse happens in family environment, 87.6% in school environment, and 17.9% in the community (Setyawan, 2015). With those numbers, according to Sopuan Hadin in Yayasan Kesejahteraan Anak Indonesia's (YKAI) website, child abuse problem in Indonesia is at the top rank in Asia Pacific.

Child abuse may be triggered by divorce, economic factor, waywardness, lack of political will (in which Child Protection Act has not been able to induce wary effect on the perpetrators), past experience of being the victim of abuse, and being a witness of abuse done to other children (Lestari, 2012; Setyawan, 2015; Hadi, n.d.). Child abuse cases will keep on increasing if these factors are not balanced with parents' understanding on the importance of children's education and psychology. Parental education can also be a triggering factor of children's rights neglection. As mentioned in the earlier data, child abuse cases mostly happen in rural area, among those with primary school to high school educational background.

There are many kinds of violence, including non-physical or verbal violence. An example of verbal violence is calling child with a name that implies negative character, such as "fatty", "black", etc. These names are often heard in family environment and have become "gray" because they do not seem as violent behavior. Indeed, this type of behavior is thightly related to the violation of children's rights. Most perpetrators of child abuse do not understand the meaning of children's rights mentioned in Act No. 35 Year 2014, which include protection, education, health, and other aspects described comprehensively in many articles. According to Act No. 35 Year 2014, children's rights is a part of human rights that needs to be guaranteed, protected, and fulfilled by parents, family, community, country, government, and provincial government.

It refers to *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC) that states that children are the responsibility of their parents (article 18) and that they have the right to be protected from abuse and neglect (article 19). Therefore, this research focuses on children's rights within family context as they are often neglected.

Violence

Act No. 35 Year 2012, article 1, verse 15a mentions that violence is any action done towards children, which results in physical, psychological, and/or sexual misery and pain, and/or neglect, including the threat to do something, coercion, or the deprivation of freedom that is against the law. It has been clearly stated in that act that any form of violence consequently violates the law. UNCRC article 19 also mentions: "*Children have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, physically or mentally.*" The verse can be translated that children have the right to be protected from violence and abuse, physically or mentally. Furthermore, it is also explained that the government should ensure that every child is protected from violence and neglect done by parents or others.

According to Subhan (2001), violence is divided into physical and non physical violence. Subhan (2001) mentioned that physical abuse (to women – also applicable for girls) includes sexual harassment, such as unwanted physical touch, beating, torture, and rape. Physical abuse also includes terror and intimidation, forced marriage (under-age marriage), incest, porn, illegal marriage, forced prostitution, negative stigma, and exploitation (RAN PKTP/ Konsultasi Regional in Subhan, 2001). Meanwhile, non-physical abuse includes sexual harassment such as greeting, whistling, pokes and unwanted attention, being degraded, and being under-expected.

In a research done by Putri & Santoso (2012), it was found that more than 500 population of Kebondalem Village, Kendal, are graduates from university/academy. 10 of them admitted that they had done violence towards their children. 5 of them mentioned that they had done physical abuse towards their children, but they were not aware that verbal actions can also be categorized as abuse. The rests mentioned that they had never done physical abuse, but had done verbal abuse. This result is in line with Miller's (2012: p. 442) notion that "*historically, corporal punishment was common as a means of controlling and disciplining children.*" This means that physical violence was first commonly used as a form of control and discipline for children. Even in Western world, this is a legal and acceptable behavior.

The discussion about children is closely related to their developmental task. It is also highlighted in *Rencana Aksi Nasional Pendidikan untuk Semua Indonesia* document (National Education Forum, 2003: 1) that mentions that early childhood is an influential developmental period that affects the future of a nation. Development means something that can be measured, such as height, head circumference, and weight. Children who are not mini adults will always develop until a certain age, depending on age and gender. Children are not mini adults, which means that children cannot talk and think as adults so that they have to understand what the adults think. On the other hand, the adults have to come into the children's world to understand what they want. Therefore, communication between children and adults can happen well, without whining, crying, and shouting.

METHOD

Researchers used qualitative research method, which according to Sugiyono (2009) is used to investigate in object's natural condition with researcher as the key instrument. The sample, as data resource, was chosen by *purposive sampling,* considering the area that was being research has various educational and economic backgrounds. The subject of this research was 3 parents with 4-5 years-old children with junior high school, high school, and university education background. 2 mothers have permanent job, and 1 mother is a stay-at-home mom.

The data collection method was done through triangulation method from in-depth interview. Esterberg (in Sugiyono, 2009) suggested that interview is the meeting of two people to exchange information and idea through question and answer so that meaning can be constructed about a certain topic. An interview done in semi-structured way is aimed to gain closure in respondent's answer (Sugiyono, 2007). To support the interview process, researchers used voice recorder in mobile phone, pen/pencil, and interview guidelines to ease the recording.

In analyzing the data, researchers used Miles and Huberman technique. This technique analyses qualitative data interactively and continuously until the data is saturated (Sugiyono, 2007). The activity done was data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing / verification.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Each respondent is given label: R1 for the first respondent, R2 for the second, and R3 for the third respondent. R1 is a mother of one 5-year-old who possess undergraduate degree, as well as her husband. R1 and her husband work at a government institution, and based on the physical evidence and facility of their house, R1 family can be categorized to middle-up socio-economic level so they can facilitate their child's needs well.

The next respondent is R2 who is a mother of two sons aged 9 and 5 years old. R2 is a house-wife whose daily activity is taking care of her children and family. R2 is a highschool graduate, the same as her husband. R2's husband works as a construction worker without permanent income. Sometimes, R2's husband works as a motorcycle taxi driver to fulfil his family's life demand. R2's children go to school at different places; the first son goes to a public primary school and the second son goes to a kindergarten not too far from their house.

Meanwhile, the third respondent (R3) has a 1.5-year-old son and a working husband. However, they still live with R3's parents. According to R3, this is more practical because their child can be taken care of by her parents when she and her husband are working. R3 graduated from high school while her husband graduated from the academy. R3 did not mention her field of work implicitly, but through observation, it can be assumed that R3 is in middle socio-economic level. The interview result of those three respondents is as follows.

Given several questions, all respondents gave different answers although they are generally similar. R1 mentioned that violence is a "harsh" behavior done towards children, such as hitting and pinching. R2 answered that violence is something that hurts children. Meanwhile, R3 suggested that violence is related to being angry to children. When the question was given, R1 suggested if she could seek for the answer from the internet. However, researchers gave further explanation that the questions in this research do not have to be answered correctly based on the theory, but based on respondents' understanding.

With the information that R1 wanted to find the answer from the internet, researchers added another sentence after the question: "based on respondents' understanding"; in further interview. It was done to minimize respondents' worry about incorrect or inappropriate answer. Besides that, as the respondents have different educational background, the interview guidelines were given to respondents so they can read the questions. This was done to make respondents comfortable and not "tested" with the questions. Based on experience from the previous studies using interview, most respondents feel steady and more relaxed when they have the interview guidelines, combined with information that the answer should be based on their understanding.

Regarding types of violence, each respondent answered differently. R1 mentioned: *"The violence that I know is verbal abuse. So it is direct to…*

what is it? The object, such as hitting, and there is also non-verbal violence with words that are offensive, and… snapping to children. That also counts as violence". Meanwhile, R2 and R3 answered the same question by directly mentioning the behavior, such as hitting, pinching, tweaking, and whipping. When they were specifically asked about the type of violence, R2 and R3 did not understand the terms used to describe types of violence.

The presence of information about violence, especially towards children, is known as all respondents have some ideas in their mind. It can be seen as R2 mentioned: *"I got the idea of child abuse, but I cannot answer according to what you want. In my opinion, child abuse is hitting, tweaking, and pinching."* Different from R2, R1 mentioned that child abuse happens when parents do something not good towards children. Similar to R2, R3 said that child abuse is doing something harsh towards children.

Abundant news about child abuse, either through printed or electronic media, these days makes all respondents able to answer easily that they have heard news about child abuse. They mentioned that the perpetrators are the parents, either the biological parents or the non-biological parents. Angeline's case was mentioned by R1. She said that what was done by Angeline's step-parents is "severe" as it caused death: *"parents should not behave like that. Child should be protected with parents as the first protector. The main child protector is parents, home…".*

When respondents were asked about their feeling about those violence cases, they answered that they feel concerned and sad because child does no sin and nothing wrong. R3 said, *"Parents should not do something like that, parents should protect their childrent".* Their facial expression also represented their concern when hearing and imagining children treated like that. This information is connected to further question about the forms of physical abuse known by the respondents. They gave similar answer by saying pinching and hitting. R3 added those with "stepping on", and elaborated her answer by illustrating a case in which a mother covered her child's head with pillow and stepped on it.

When question about the forms of sexual abuse was given, all respondents were quiet and thought for a while about the answer. All of them seemed to feel awkward to answer it. Researchers saw that the question, or the word "sex", is still taboo to be explored. The situation was worsened as all respondents have not been involved in seminars about parenting, especially about sexual education for children. R1answered that she gains in-

formation about child education through books, such as those written by Ayah Edi (a writer on parenting). Meanwhile, R2 mentioned that she does not understand the meaning of *parenting*: "*what is parenting? I don't know.*"

R1 answered this question with: "*… sexual abus is… doing something not good, doing sexual things to children*". What interesting is that R2 mntioned: "*sxual abuse is when something is done to the children, like that*". R3 also said: "*what is it… sexual abuse is when the child is the victim of sexual behavior*". Furthermore, R1 mentioned that sex education for children is important so children know which toy is for which gender. R1 explained that playing cooking is only for girls, and boys should play ball.

Besides physical and sexual forms of abuse, respondents were also asked about psychological or emotional abuse. R1 mentioned that "*physical abuse is… what is it… from harsh words given by parents, snapping, which makes children loss their confidence, killing their confidence. That includes in psychological abuse towards children*". Not too different, R2 also mentioned that, "*psychological abuse is through words, right? Psychological is something inside, right?*" Asked by R2, researchers did not give answer on whether her understanding is correct or not and informed the respondent that researchers cannot help respondents answering the questions. The explanation was aimed to ensure respondents answer the question purely based on their understanding, without any intervention from the researchers. Meanwhile, R3 answered, "*hmmm… what is it… psychological abuse can be through words so children's emotion can be influenced. That is my opinion*".

When asked about whether there is any form of child abuse in their living area, all respondents admitted that they have never heard of any. So far, they know child abuse cases from the television and national news. R1 said that her living area is quite safe and it seems that there is no child abuse. This question was then followed by asking respondents if they have ever conduct child abuse, which was denied by all of them. However, R2 elaborated with: "*never, but maybe… just snapping, but I never hit them*". Meanwhile, R1 and R3 looked at researchers for a while when they were answering the question. This gesture, according to the researchers, represents attitude that they know that they have done such thing although it was just snapping, but they were shy to admit it to the researchers.

All respondents revealed that some actions, such as snapping, are done towards children by parents without awareness. They said that those actions are done because the children are whining, asking for something, or disturbing the parents when they are doing something. An example of sentence that is used by R2 to snap is "*Later on!*" with high tone. R3 admitted that she had pinched her child because she is being unpatient in wanting to buy something in public place: "*… I am shy, so I pinched Tisya (the child's name) so she is quiet and patient.*" R1 added that she felt sorry after snapping to her child, "*… why did I snap to my child…*" The feeling is similar to R2 and R3 after snapping to their child. They are confused on how they keep on repeating the action.

Related to that, in question about parents' perception on verbal/word child abuse, all respondents are aware of it and suggested that snapping is a form of verbal abuse. Speech with high volume and tone can scare children, which makes them quiet for a moment. However, this does not solve the problem. The trigger of verbal abuse towards children is children's whining or parents' exhaustion after work. R3 said, "*Usually, after I got home from work and my child is whining, sometimes I get emotional…*"

For the answer about child neglect, R1 answered it as the behavior of not attending children and parents who are not taking care of child's primary and secondary needs. Similar to that, R2 regarded child neglect behavior as parents' ignorant attitude towards children. R3 also agreed with that by saying that neglect is a condition in which parents neglect children and do not fulfil their needs. In terms of the law regarding child protection, all respondents are aware of that.

R1 added, "*I know that there is child protection, but I don't really know in Semarang, where is the office. But I have heard in… PKK, that it exists… reported to movement team, and the team will give counseling to the mother about the problem. It is also applicable in domestic violence. The PKK movement team will provide psychologist.*" Meanwhile, R2 said, "*I think there is, but I don't really understand the process*".

The question about the parties influencing their parenting practice at home induced various answers. R2 and R3 revealed that they are the most influencial party in their child's parenting. Meanwhile, R1 said that she and her husband have the same influence on parenting at home. R1 and R3 admitted the role of their parents, or their children's grandparents because they ask for their parents' help in daily parenting practices. However, they did not mention the grandparents' role in educating their children.

When asked about forms of discipline for children, R1 explained, "*Discipline is knowing the*

time, waking up in the morning using their own alarm at 5, then taking shower and going to school. Child will follow the parents' rhythm who are working and going out early in the morning…" Meanwhile, R2 and R3 seemed to think for a while before answering this question. It could be seen from their gesture, looking above for a few seconds before answering. *"I teach about discipline through what is it… go to school, do not fight with siblings, and obey the parents,"* said R2. On the other hand, R3 mentioned praying and going to school as ways to discipline her child. Regarding violence or abuse that happens at their early childhood, all of the respondents said that they did not experience it.

Discussion

Based on respondents' answers on aspects related to parents' understanding of child abuse at home, researchers discuss them to synchronize the answers with the theories related to it.

In answers about the awareness of doing child abuse in the form of verbal abuse, such as snapping, all respondents answered that they are unaware of their abuse. This contradicts Carpenito's (in Putri & Santoso, 2012) argument that violence is intentionally done and causes physical injury or mental stress. However, Act No. 35 Year 2012, article 1 verse 15a mentions that violence is any action done towards children that causes misery or pain physically, psychologically, sexually, and neglect, including the threat to do something, coercion, or deprivation of freedom that is against the law. Clearly, through that regulation, any kinds of violence consequently violates the law.

In terms of parents' unawareness of their behavior of snapping towards their children, if it is based on the Act No. 35 Year 2012, it can be ensured that this also violates the law. Generally, parents threaten to not involve children in doing certain activity, which was also mentioned by a respondent. It is clear that threat is written in the regulation, and that children actually have the right to be protected from violence and torture, either physically or mentally (UNCRC, n.d.).

A respondent mentioned that several forms of child abuse, such as verbal abuse, can eliminate children's creativity and make children passive. This shows that the respondent has already understood the danger of child abuse. Saunder (2012) also explained that psychological abuse can make children feel inferior, have lack of self-esteem, passive, and do not have hope. Furtherly explored, psychological abuse is likely to happen in the community, such as when a child does not want to wear an outfit chosen by the parents; the child is forced to wear it anyway. It is usually fol-lowed by heightened parents' voice and the addition of threatening sentence, such as "you will not come to grandparents' house!" These words were mentioned by R1 with better educational and occupational background during the interview. This "nonsense" threat, with high frequency, will create an imprinted pattern, which can be followed by the children in their interaction with siblings, or even their own children in the future.

Moreover, parents' aim of threatening their children is to control the children (Subhan, 2001) and to make children follow their suggestion, which is regarded to be effective (Solihin, 2004). However, psychological abuse cannot be seen visually because there is no physical evidence and only the child knows what had been done to them. It is supported by Saunder (2012) who mentioned that psychological abuse is difficult to be traced because it cannot be seen. The threat mentioned by parents towards children, in theory, will be imprinted. This has been proven by R3's experience when she shared that she was treated harshly by her parents when she was playing with her friends during her adolescence.

Based on the interview result, it can be seen that all of the respondents know that what they have been doing to their children is wrong and can hurt their children, either psychologically or physically. However, they do not have the skill or the ability to change their parenting or disciplining method without any verbal or physical abuse. Their past education experience also influence the way parents, represented by the respondents, educate their children at home. Many parents, in the past, applied strictly discipline education towards their children. In spite of that, their children succeed and are steady adults who can make the parents happy. This becomes "example" for current parents in educating their children through discipline way.

However, this paradigm will make children who are born in modern era have gap with their parents. As mentioned by Kristo (2010), Gunarsa (1991), and Graha (2007), fast world and technological development will be a challenge for parents nowadays to educate and parent their children. Gadgets and sophisticated toys are easily accessed by children, making children "closer" to trendy objects. It can be said that technology is the cause of new approach to handle children.

Mother occupational background, which includes working mother and stay-at-home mother, also differentiates the violence done. Based on the interview result, R1 who is working as a government official and has undergraduate degree is different from R2 who is a housewife

and graduates from junior highschool although they both had conducted violence. R2 has never read informational books, lacks of information about parenting, and tends to not involve children at home. Meanwhile, R1 knows more about parenting from the information she got from books, and often finds information through the internet.

This was revealed from the interview result and from the observation during the interview towards R2. From the interview result, R2's big house is messy with papers, scissors, and various toys. According to R2, she and her husband spend time during weekends to play together, making toys that can be used by her child, such as paper planes, which can also be seen by the researcher. This picture can show that R2 is aware of her role to educate and to be close with her children so she can communicate and listen to what her children need. This is in line with Steede (2007) and Gunarsa (1991) opinion, stating that parents who can be close and communicate effectively with their children can guard children from negative influences during their adolescence and can help children understand rules. As well as the study brought by Handayani and Munawar (2015) suggest that the working mothers should maintain their quality time to interact with their children, as to conduct collaborative parenting with their husband, to make a positive influence on children's growth.

CONCLUSION

Child abuse is still often seen at home and done by parents or people closest to children. Parents are aware about child abuse at home, either verbally or non-verbally. However, in reality, it is still done as a way to discipline children. Parents know that some of their behaviors are wrong, but not all of them know that threatening and tweaking children violate the law. The forms of violence done towards children are aimed to teach children about right and wrong. Lack of information about what should be done by parents in parenting and educating children is the main factor in this research. It happens because there is no school for parents that teaches about educating and parenting children. All of the lessons are learned through past experience and instinct.

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