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Legal Protection for Children in School Environments

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Abstract

This study investigates the implementation of legal protection policies for children in schools. The research design used a qualitative approach with a normative juridical approach. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews with teachers, students, and parents, as well as document analysis. Findings indicate that the school has successfully established a safe and supportive learning environment characterized by respectful teacher-student interactions, non-violent classroom management, and a strong sense of security among students. Guidance and counseling services serve as the primary mechanism for early detection, psychosocial support, and conflict mediation. At the same time, the School Violence Prevention and Response Team ensures structured case management aligned with national standards. Prevention programs, including human rights awareness campaigns, anti-bullying campaigns, and character development initiatives, raise student awareness of reporting mechanisms and foster a culture of mutual respect. Despite these achievements, the study identified significant obstacles, including inadequate teacher training, limited parental understanding of child protection procedures, a lack of adequate visual outreach materials, and challenges inherent in the rural educational context.

Keywords: Child Protection, Safe Learning Environment, School Counseling.

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Introduction

Child protection in educational settings has become a growing concern in global policy and academic discourse. Over the past decade, scholars have highlighted the persistent challenges of ensuring safe learning environments, particularly in schools with limited resources, where institutional oversight, teacher capacity, and community norms can significantly influence the implementation of child protection policies (Mathews & Collin-Vézina, 2017; Ttofi et al., 2012). In Southeast Asia, child protection in schools remains an important yet underexamined issue, as many countries continue to face systemic constraints in teacher training, reporting mechanisms, and school-based preventive programs (McCarry et al., 2021). These challenges are compounded by cultural perceptions of discipline, social hierarchies, and variations in local governance, resulting in differing levels of implementation across regions and school types.

In Indonesia, national surveys conducted by government agencies and civil society organizations indicate that a large proportion of Indonesian children have experienced some form of violence in schools, despite the existence of comprehensive child protection laws (KPAI, 2022; Lestari, 2018). Empirical studies on child protection reveal low compliance scores, minimal training and screening mechanisms, and a near-absence of explicit organizational policies governing child protection (Randall et al., 2015; Zamora & Madrigal, 2018). At the same time, research highlights

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how increased school autonomy, increased referrals to social services, higher thresholds for legal intervention, and gaps in the provision of early assistance have weakened channels of cooperation between local governments and the education sector (Baginsky et al., 2019). Child protection demands collaboration (Khan et al., 2024), particularly given that children dually involved in the child protection and juvenile justice systems experience cumulative vulnerabilities, including multiple adversities, repeated exposure to violence, contextualized abuse, educational exclusion, comorbid challenges, and structural inequities (White et al., 2024).

In some countries, child protection systems have also been criticized for neglecting children's social rights and broader welfare rights (Featherstone et al., 2019). In Indonesia, the legal framework, specifically Law No. 35 of 2014 concerning Child Protection, requires schools to provide a safe, inclusive, and non-discriminatory learning environment. However, empirical evaluation of how these legal provisions are implemented at the school level remains limited, particularly in remote rural areas where institutional capacity varies widely. This gap underscores the need for context-specific qualitative studies that examine the realities of school-based child protection practices and the experiences of students, teachers, and parents. This article analyzes how legal protection for children is implemented in the school environment.

Despite the legal mandate, the implementation of child-protection policies in Indonesia continues to face several persistent challenges. First, many schools lack adequate knowledge and training to translate legal norms into concrete procedures and preventive measures. Second, sociocultural norms, such as the acceptance of physical punishment as a disciplinary tool, create barriers to meaningful behavioral change among teachers and parents (Fitrianto et al., 2025). Third, reporting mechanisms for violence are often unclear or intimidating for children, resulting in underreporting and limited accountability. These systemic issues call for empirical studies that examine how schools work within these constraints to operationalize child protection, particularly in geographically isolated regions. Such research is crucial for informing targeted interventions and strengthening institutional frameworks at the school level. At the same time, the Indonesian government has introduced a variety of broad solutions to improve school-based child protection. These include the Child-Friendly School/Madrasah Program, the national guidelines for the Prevention and Response of Violence in Educational Units (PPKSP), and initiatives from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection. These frameworks emphasize preventive education, teacher training, psychosocial support services, and multisectoral collaboration with health and social service institutions.

Several specific solutions can help schools implement better legal protections for children. Studies have highlighted the crucial role of school counseling services in identifying early signs of distress, mediating conflicts, and supporting students experiencing violence (Teasley, 2018). Furthermore, evidence suggests that establishing school-based anti-violence committees, clear reporting procedures, and partnerships with external agencies can improve responses to child protection incidents (Lynas & Hawkins, 2017). Furthermore, research shows that teacher training is a key determinant of successful child protection implementation (Guzman et al., 2020). Furthermore, integrating child protection topics into student orientation programs and routine school activities has been shown to increase awareness and empower students to report incidents. This study aims to analyze how schools create safe learning environments, address cases of violence, engage students and parents, and address structural and cultural barriers.

This study aims to provide an in-depth empirical exploration of the implementation of legal protection for children in school settings. It offers a deeper understanding of how legal norms are translated into practice at the school level and identifies key mechanisms such as child-friendly pedagogy, counseling services, anti-violence committees, and preventive outreach that support student protection. This study contributes to a richer conceptualization of legal protection for children in school settings where resource constraints and sociocultural norms shape the implementation process. The findings are expected to inform national and local education policymakers, guide school administrators seeking to strengthen child protection systems, and enrich the broader academic discourse on child protection in various educational settings.

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Methods

This study used a qualitative research design with a normative-juridical approach to investigate child protection policies in educational settings (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The subjects of this study consisted of teachers, school administrators, students, and parents, who represent the main stakeholders in child protection in educational settings. The total number of research subjects was 15 informants, including five teachers, including the principal, a guidance and counseling teacher, a Pancasila and Civics teacher, two homeroom teachers, ten students (three girls and two boys) from various grade levels, and five parents or guardians. Data collection used three techniques: observation, in-depth interviews, and document review. Each technique has different but complementary objectives in producing a holistic and credible data set. Observation data allowed researchers to directly examine student-teacher interactions, classroom climate, the physical environment, and the presence of child-friendly practices such as participatory teaching and the absence of corporal punishment.

In-depth interviews formed the core of the empirical data, allowing researchers to explore participants' perspectives, institutional routines, and case-handling mechanisms in detail. Interviews with students provided valuable insights into their understanding of children's rights, experiences with bullying or violence, access to counseling services, and perceptions of the overall school climate. Interviews with parents helped contextualize school practices within broader community norms and family expectations. Parents acknowledged that the school communicated child protection information during meetings and that they were encouraged to communicate regularly with teachers. The third data collection technique, document review, focused on internal school documents, including TPPK procedural guidelines, guidance and counseling service records, school regulations, and related communication materials. These documents were reviewed to assess their compliance with legal provisions and national guidelines on child protection. The combination of document analysis and interview data enabled triangulation, strengthening the reliability and validity of the findings. Triangulation is a commonly recommended methodological strategy in qualitative and normative-legal research to ensure interpretations are supported by multiple data sources (Denzin, 2018).

Data analysis followed the principles of normative legal interpretation and qualitative thematic analysis. Normative legal analysis involved the systematic organization and interpretation of legal documents such as Law No. 35/2014, its implementing regulations, and national guidelines for child-friendly education to assess schools' legal obligations and compare them with observed practices. This aligns with doctrinal methodology, which emphasizes textual interpretation, systematization, and synthesis of legal norms(Suyanto, 2023). The empirical component of the analysis employed a thematic approach, in which interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were inductively coded. The coding process focused on identifying recurring themes related to child-friendly pedagogy, prevention programs, counseling services, violence management mechanisms, and barriers to implementation. Thematic analysis is widely recognized as a flexible and rigorous method for identifying patterns of meaning in qualitative data sets (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Result and Discussion

Creation of a Safe and Supportive Learning Environment

Observations collected on April 19, 2025, indicate that SMA Negeri 2 Wera has successfully created an atmosphere generally consistent with the principles of safe, inclusive, and violence-free education. Classrooms are characterized by orderly behavior, respectful teacher-student interactions, and an absence of physical punishment or aggressive verbal discipline. The school's physical environment, despite limited infrastructure due to its rural location, remains clean and safe. Although no formal child-friendly posters or visual materials were found due to resource constraints, the school's structural arrangement fosters a comfortable and safe environment for students. This finding aligns with the assertion that environmental order and a harmonious climate

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of relationships are key determinants of students' perceived safety (Kutsyuruba et al., 2015; Ttofi et al., 2012).

Informants agreed that schools are places of learning and educating children, not places for violence. The principal emphasized that all teachers are guided to implement a humanistic and non-violent pedagogical approach. FS explained: "We ensure that students learn in a safe and comfortable environment. Teachers are equipped with the understanding not to use physical or verbal violence. If a conflict occurs between students, teachers immediately mediate in an educational manner." (Interview, April 21, 2025). The principal also stated that classroom order and respectful interactions are top priorities in the daily management of the school. Teachers interviewed consistently described a positive classroom culture. One SC homeroom teacher explained: "I always try to reprimand students in a persuasive manner. We practice polite communication because we want students to feel valued and not afraid to learn or ask questions." (Interview, April 2, 2025). TD guidance counselors play a crucial role in creating a psychologically safe environment. He said: "We always give students space to talk. If someone feels uncomfortable, stressed, or afraid, we handle it privately. We want them to know that school is a safe place." (Interview, April 22, 2025). The guidance counselor also noted that a conducive classroom atmosphere facilitates counseling and problem prevention.

Students across grade levels provided consistent descriptions of their perceived sense of security. A 11th-grade GH student said: "I feel safe at this school. The teachers never get too angry, never hit. If there are problems, they are immediately resolved amicably." (Interview, April 26, 2025). A 10th-grade JK student added: "Sometimes friends tease them, but the teachers are quick to reprimand them. So, we know that bullying is not allowed here." (Interview, April 26, 2025). Most students noted that the presence of the guidance counselor and the prompt intervention of the homeroom teacher were instrumental in maintaining a comfortable school atmosphere. Parents also recognized positive changes in school culture. One DS parent explained: "We feel reassured because the school looks after the children. The teachers often tell us if there are problems and everything is resolved without violence." (Interview, April 28, 2025). However, some parents also acknowledged the need for increased outreach regarding children's rights so they can more fully support the school's efforts.

Overall, the implementation of child protection at State Senior High School 2 Wera demonstrated a number of important achievements. Teachers consistently avoided physical and verbal violence, enabling learning interactions to take a more humanistic approach and support student development. Students felt safe thanks to warm and respectful teacher-student interactions, ultimately creating a conducive and inclusive classroom climate. Prompt responses to conflicts by both the homeroom teacher and the guidance counselor reinforced students' sense of security and emphasized that any form of bullying or disharmony would be taken seriously. Parents appreciated the school's child-friendly approach but also indicated a need for further education to align their understanding of child protection with the school's practices. Relational practices and a harmonious school culture were shown to compensate for the lack of physical facilities, demonstrating that interpersonal relationships can be a strong foundation for creating a safe and supportive learning environment despite limited material resources.

Such findings illustrate the informal micro-practices schools use to instill protective norms, even though formal policies may remain limited (Mathews & Collin-Vézina, 2017; Weiss et al., 2025). This study found that State Senior High School 2 Wera successfully established a school climate characterized by safety, mutual respect, and a freedom from violence. This aligns with global research emphasizing that relational climates such as respect between teachers and students, orderliness, and inclusive interactions are key foundations of a child-friendly school environment(Kutsyuruba et al., 2015). The absence of physical or verbal violence by teachers and the presence of participatory pedagogy demonstrate a shift away from the historically punitive disciplinary culture that remains prevalent in various regions of Indonesia (Fitrianto et al., 2025).

Some policies to support a safe school environment and children receiving protection, namely:

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Table 1. Regulations that Support a Safe School Environment and Child Protection

Regulation	Article	Content / Provision	Forms of Protection in Educational Settings
Law No. 35 of 2014 on Child Protection	Article 1	Defines a child as any person under 18 years of age, including those still in the womb.	Establishes the subject who must be protected in educational institutions.
	Article 9 (1)	Children have the right to receive education and teaching to develop their personality according to their interests and talents.	Right to safe, high-quality, nondiscriminatory education that supports personal development.
	Article 9 (2)	Children have the right to protection in schools from violence, discrimination, and other inappropriate treatment.	Protection from physical, psychological, and verbal violence; bullying prevention; positive discipline.
	Article 13 (1)	Children have the right to protection from violence, abuse, exploitation, discrimination, and torture.	Reporting systems, SOPs for handling violence, character education, teacher supervision.
	Article 54	Children in educational institutions must be protected from physical and/or psychological violence committed by educators, education personnel, fellow students, or other parties.	Prohibition of corporal punishment and verbal abuse; establishment of TPPK; student counseling.
	Article 59	Government, local authorities, and educational institutions must provide special protection for children who experience acts of violence.	Coordination with DP3A, counseling services, case referrals, follow-up for victims and perpetrators.
Minister of Education Regulation No. 82 of 2015 on the Prevention and Handling of Violence in Educational Units	Articles 4–7	Preventing violence through socialization, school community development, and supervision.	Anti-bullying programs, child-rights socialization, character education, child-friendly school campaigns.
	Articles 8–14	Mechanisms for handling violence, including the establishment of the School Violence Prevention and Handling Team (TPPK).	TPPK, reporting procedures, investigation, initial assessment, victim confidentiality, follow-up recommendations.
	Articles 15–16	Recovery for victims and rehabilitation for perpetrators.	Counseling services, psychosocial recovery, mediation, referrals to external services when needed.
National Education System Law (Law No. 20 of 2003)	Article 4 (1)	Education is conducted democratically, fairly, and nondiscriminatorily.	Protection from discrimination, intimidation, and structural violence.
	Article 12 (1)	Students have the right to receive protection from violence during the learning process.	Prohibition of violence by teachers, students, and school personnel; enforcement of educator ethics.
Minister of PPPA Regulation No. 8 of 2014 (Child-Friendly Cities/Schools)	—	Provides standards for child protection services across institutional environments.	Implementation of child-friendly school principles, safe spaces, and child participation in decision-making.

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Several regulations in the table above demonstrate that the legal framework for child protection in Indonesia, ranging from Law No. 35 of 2014, Regulation of the Minister of Education and Culture No. 82 of 2015, the National Education System Law, to the policies of the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (PPA), consistently emphasize the obligation of educational institutions to ensure a safe, violence-free, non-discriminatory learning environment that supports children's development. These regulations not only establish children's basic rights to protection but also provide operational mechanisms through the establishment of TPPK (Community Empowerment and Child Protection Team), SOPs for case handling, positive discipline, counseling services, and cross-sectoral coordination such as with the DP3A (Regional Empowerment and Child Protection Agency). This synthesis aligns with previous research findings, which emphasize that a strong legal framework must be accompanied by consistent implementation at the school level. Wurtele (2018) indicate that clear procedures, teacher training, and structured reporting mechanisms are key to effective child protection. Meanwhile, research by McCarry et al. (2021) highlights that implementation tends to be uneven in rural areas due to limited resources, making approaches based on school culture and interpersonal relationships important compensatory factors. Thus, this regulatory synthesis reinforces the research findings that effective child protection efforts in schools depend not only on a comprehensive legal framework, but also on the quality of implementation in the field, teacher capacity, parental support, and a school culture that rejects all forms of violence.

Implementation of Guidance and Counseling Services

The Guidance and Counseling Unit emerged as one of the strongest institutional pillars supporting the implementation of child protection at SMA Negeri 2 Wera. Guidance and Counseling teachers reported performing a variety of functions, including academic counseling, social-emotional support, consultations for teachers and parents, early detection of psychological distress, and mediation in the event of conflict between students. Informants stated, "As guidance and counseling teachers, we are tasked with being the primary advocates for students in both academic and non-academic matters. Our role is not only to listen to complaints, but also to proactively detect signs of psychological distress and provide education on children's rights. We regularly conduct outreach on child protection in the classroom, collaborating with homeroom teachers and the principal to ensure every student has the right to a safe education." The role of guidance and counseling teachers demonstrates that guidance and counseling are key elements in creating a safe school environment that is responsive to children's protection needs. Guidance and counseling teachers function not only as counselors but also as early detection of psychological problems, conflict mediators, and child rights educators for the entire school community. Although the limited number of guidance and counseling teachers hinders optimal support, their role still makes a significant contribution to the prevention and management of violence in schools.

These findings align with research by Teasley et al. (2018) and Trupin et al. (1993), which emphasizes that school counselors are at the forefront of the child protection system, particularly in the early detection and management of emotional distress. Similarly, Mathews & Collin-Vézina (2017) demonstrated that the presence of trusted adult figures such as guidance and counseling teachers increases the likelihood of children reporting violence or traumatic experiences. Furthermore, a study by Gillen et al. (2024) confirmed that a counseling approach based on empathy and positive communication is effective in reducing violent behavior and strengthening a supportive school climate. Thus, the results of this study confirm the global literature that the role of the guidance and counseling teacher is an essential foundation of school-based child protection, but its success is highly dependent on structural support, adequate number of personnel, and the integration of counseling services into the overall school culture.

Functioning of the School Violence Prevention and Handling Team (TPPK)

The existence of the Violence Prevention and Handling Team (TPPK) as a formal structure demonstrates the school's institutional commitment to a systematic violence response mechanism.

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Interviews with the principal and guidance counselor confirmed that the TPPK operates based on written Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), starting with the initial assessment by the guidance counselor, confidential case documentation, and escalation to the Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Agency (DP3A) for serious cases. The TPPK Task Force will conduct an investigation by summoning relevant parties, preparing a confidential case report, and facilitating the victim's access to counseling, medical assistance, and legal assistance. This process is carried out while maintaining the victim's confidentiality, safety, and comfort (Suhendri et al., 2025). The following outlines steps to protect children in the school environment.

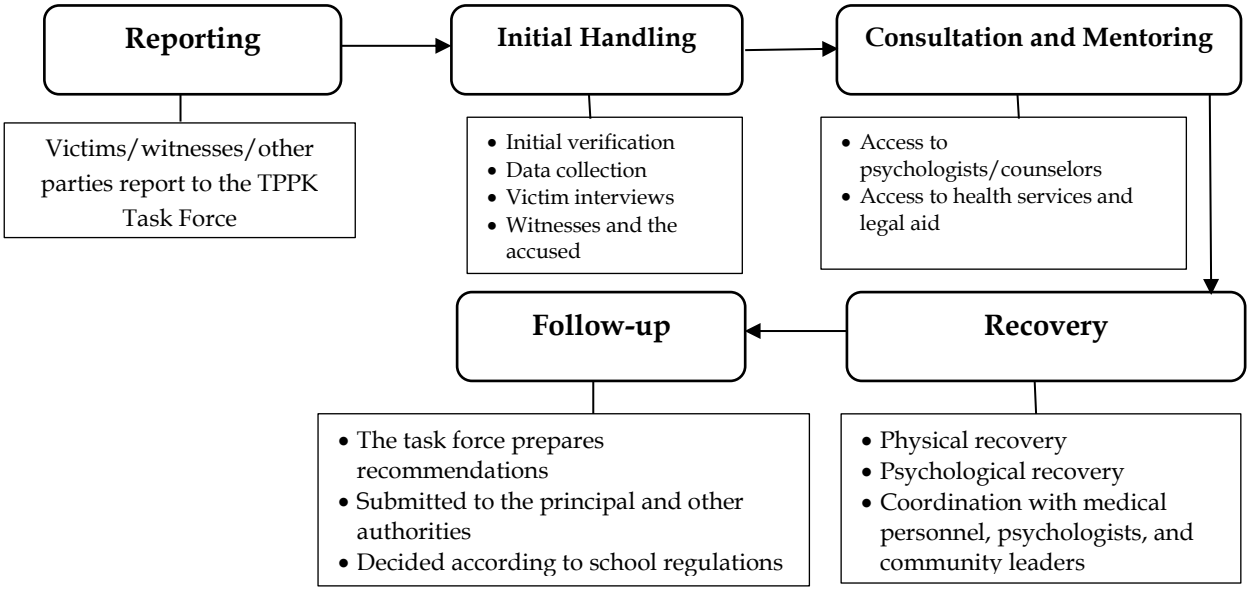

Figure 1. Child Protection Steps in the School Environment

The steps are as follows: 1) Reporting: The victim or other party reports the case of sexual violence to the TPPK Task Force. 2) Initial handling: The Task Force will conduct initial verification and collect case data, including interviewing the victim, witnesses, and the reported party. All data is kept confidential and may only be accessed by interested parties. 3) Consultation and assistance: The Task Force facilitates the victim to consult with a psychologist or counselor. In addition, the task force also helps victims gain access to health services and legal assistance. 4) Recovery: The Task Force coordinates with medical personnel, psychologists, community leaders, and related institutions to provide physical and psychological recovery for the victim. 5) Follow-up: After the handling process is complete, the task force will make follow-up recommendations that are submitted to the authorities, such as the dean, to be decided in accordance with applicable academic regulations. The following is a description of the implementation of school child protection by the Violence Prevention and Handling Team (TPPK) at SMA Negeri 2 Wera, Bima Regency in the 2024-2025 academic year.

The child protection services table shows that the reporting and follow-up process was carried out in a gradual and structured manner, with 32 of 210 students (15.2%) reporting, which was then filtered to 29 students receiving initial treatment and 22 students requiring further counseling and support. The decrease in numbers at each stage indicates the effectiveness of the initial assessment by teachers and guidance counselors in resolving some cases without further escalation. Only a small proportion of students required in-depth recovery (15 students) and intensive follow-up through the TPPK or DP3A (8 students), indicating that preventive interventions and counseling were able to address most problems at an early stage. This pattern aligns with the findings of Teasley (2018) and Dwyer et al. (2000), which emphasize that rapid teacher response, appropriate initial assessment, and easy access to counseling services can minimize the escalation of violence and emotional distress in students. Furthermore, these results support the research of

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Volungis & Goodman (2017) and Kutsyuruba et al. (2015) stated that schools with a culture of open communication, close teacher-student relationships, and clear reporting mechanisms tend to have lower levels of violence and more effective recovery. Thus, this table shows that State Senior High School 2 Wera has implemented a responsive and multi-layered child protection model, where early intervention plays a significant role in preventing cases from escalating into more serious situations.

Table 2. Handling of Child Protection at State Senior High School 2 Wera, Bima Regency

Service Stage	Process Description	Number of Students Served	Percentage (%)
Reporting	Students report cases of bullying, verbal violence, peer conflict, or psychological distress to teachers, homeroom teachers, or the guidance and counseling (BK) unit.	32 students	15.2%
Initial Handling	Teachers/Homeroom teachers conduct an initial assessment: calming the student, identifying the level of risk, and ensuring immediate safety.	29 students	13.8%
Consultation & Support	The BK teacher provides individual/group counseling, mediates with involved parties, and communicates with parents.	22 students	10.4%
Recovery	Psychosocial recovery services, emotional strengthening, routine monitoring, and restoring students' sense of safety.	15 students	7.1%
Follow-Up	Coordination with TPPK, referrals to DP3A when necessary, further interventions, or behavioral guidance for the perpetrator.	8 students	3.8%
Total	Total number of students in the school.	210 students	100%

Preventive Programs and Socialization of Children's Rights

Preventive programs and the socialization of children's rights in the school environment are efforts to socialize so that children receive legal protection. Informants emphasized that child protection messages such as anti-bullying guidelines, positive discipline principles, and reminders to respect each other among peers are delivered routinely through Monday ceremonies, morning briefings, and classroom learning activities. Students confirmed that these messages appear repeatedly in school routines, especially during orientation activities such as MPLS, where the rights to safety, non-discrimination, and support are introduced. Informant GH stated that "efforts made to prevent verbal and physical violence in the school environment include always prioritizing a persuasive approach when reprimanding students and avoiding statements that could hurt feelings. In addition, teachers routinely remind students to respect each other in daily communication, both inside and outside the classroom" (Interview, April 21, 2025). Prevention of verbal violence is carried out through a persuasive approach and the habituation of mutually respectful communication. These efforts create a more positive and child-friendly learning atmosphere.

Despite the lack of visual materials typically recommended for child-friendly schools, the school relies heavily on verbal communication and dialogue between teachers and students. This method appears effective in the local context, particularly given the close relational dynamics characteristic of rural schools. As noted in previous research, preventive outreach through repeated communication, even in informal formats, can significantly increase student awareness and reduce tolerance for violence (Dusenbury et al., 1997; Hawkins et al., 1998). Teachers also employed character-building strategies, such as creating classroom agreements that encourage mutual respect, empathy, and cooperative behavior. These pedagogical techniques serve as informal behavioral contracts and reinforce normative expectations for a violence-free school culture. These efforts align with international standards for child-friendly schools, which emphasize the importance of multimodal communication to maximize students' ability to recognize and report abuse(UNICEF, 2022).

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The establishment of the Violence Prevention and Response Team (TPPK) reflects the school's commitment to a proceduralized response to violence. The existence of SOPs, confidentiality measures, and escalation pathways to the DP3A align with best practice guidelines that promote a multi-layered response system (Wurtele, 2017). The school's emphasis on confidential handling and structured assessments is consistent with global standards that emphasize sensitivity and a child-centered approach to addressing violence. However, the study findings indicate that the TPPK's functionality remains limited. While teachers trust the system and students feel protected, parents demonstrate limited knowledge of the formal mechanisms. The lack of parent integration reduces the system's reach, given that research indicates that multi-stakeholder engagement including families is essential for achieving comprehensive child protection outcomes (Hooley et al., 2021; Maemunah & Sakban, 2020). Furthermore, the relative rarity of severe cases may paradoxically limit the team's experience, potentially impacting their preparedness to handle more complex incidents. These findings highlight the need for ongoing, practice-based training, clearer communication strategies, and more explicit outreach to parents.

Teacher Roles, Classroom Practices, and Early Detection of Student Distress

Teachers play a central role in early detection of psychological disorders, interpersonal conflicts, and signs of violence in students. Teachers described taking swift action when they saw students appearing anxious, withdrawn, or fearful. Common responses included approaching students privately to build trust, inquiring about their emotional state, and referring students to a guidance counselor if the situation required more in-depth intervention. One informant stated: "When I see a student appearing moody or withdrawn, the first step is to speak with them privately. I immediately approach the student, inquire about their condition, and then refer them to a guidance counselor or TPPK for further support." (Interview, April 21, 2025). Teachers engage with students experiencing difficulties with a personal and empathetic approach. This approach reflects an effort to create a safe space for students.

These early detection practices are consistent with literature emphasizing that teacher-student engagement is a crucial element of school-based child protection systems (Leonard & Gudiño, 2021). Teachers also consistently stated that corporal punishment had been completely eliminated, and verbal reprimands were delivered in persuasive, rather than punitive, language. This reflects a shift toward positive discipline models recommended by the global child protection framework (Finan et al., 2018). Despite these strengths, some teachers expressed a need for further training in child psychology, trauma-informed approaches, and professional protocols for case management. They noted that most of their understanding had been gained through informal guidance or limited workshops. This reflects the national gap in teacher capacity also identified in research on child protection in Indonesia (Boothby & Stark, 2011). Athough teachers in this study reported avoiding punitive or violent disciplinary actions, their need for more in-depth professional training highlights a crucial area where policy interventions would be most beneficial.

Parental Engagement and Community Context

Parental and community involvement within the MGMP (National Child Protection Group) represents a collaborative effort to address child protection within the school environment. Findings revealed varying levels of awareness regarding school-based child protection policies. One parent of a student with RG stated that "the school always strives to create a safe, comfortable, and child-friendly learning environment. As a parent, I feel reassured that my child receives full attention from the teachers, both in the learning process and in character development. This makes me confident in entrusting my child's education to this school." (Interview, April 26, 2025). This statement demonstrates a high level of parental trust in the school's commitment to implementing child protection and reflects a positive perception of a supportive school climate. Parents generally expressed confidence in the school's handling of conflict and appreciated the regular communication provided by homeroom teachers. Many described actively encouraging their children to talk openly about their school experiences, aligning with child protection literature that emphasizes the role of

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family communication in preventing violence or harm to children (Maemunah et al., 2024; Shlonsky et al., 2007). However, interviews also indicated that certain cultural norms persist and may indirectly hinder the implementation of child protection measures. For example, some parents' statements reflected a broader societal acceptance of harsh discipline outside of school, suggesting that nonviolent school approaches may not always be reinforced at home. This dynamic aligns with research documenting the influence of sociocultural context on child protection outcomes in rural communities (Wertsch & Rupert, 1993).

In addition, the Subject Teacher Consultative Assembly (MPGP) community involvement in child protection is carried out regularly in MGMP activities. Findings indicate that this forum makes a significant contribution in supporting the implementation of child protection in the school environment. One MGMP teacher stated: "In MGMP, we often discuss how learning approaches should be child-friendly. The principal usually reminds teachers not to use verbal or physical violence, and we always repeat this in every meeting." Another MGMP teacher added: "There is no specific training on child protection in MGMP, but every workshop or teacher discussion usually includes material on character building, educational ethics, and how to handle students with a positive approach. This really helps us avoid actions that can violate children's rights." MGMP also plays a role in strengthening teacher competency by sharing experiences in handling student cases. This dynamic aligns with research by Sprague & Walker (2021) and Osegbue et al. (2025), which emphasizes the importance of teachers' professional capacity as the frontline in detecting risks, managing student behavior non-violently, and creating a safe classroom climate. Furthermore, the MGMP's role as a collaborative space for sharing best practices reinforces the findings of Arifin (2019), who stated that teacher learning communities contribute significantly to improving pedagogical competencies based on empathy and positive communication. However, the limited formal training faced by the MGMP also reflects the systemic gap highlighted in the study by Atmoko & Kuswandono (2021): the unequal distribution of teacher capacity development in child protection, particularly in rural schools. Thus, MGMPs serve as an informal driving force in strengthening child protection, but still require structural support, standardized training, and more systematic policies for their contribution to be sustainable and have a broader impact.

The results of this study provide an important contribution to the development of legal science and Pancasila and Citizenship Education, particularly in strengthening understanding of how child protection norms stipulated in Law No. 35 of 2014 are operationalized at the educational unit level. From a legal perspective, these findings enrich studies on the effectiveness of legal implementation (law in action), demonstrating how legal instruments such as child protection articles, TPPK SOPs, and child-friendly school policies can be translated into concrete mechanisms that safeguard students' rights in schools. Meanwhile, in the field of Pancasila and Citizenship Education, this study confirms the relevance of Pancasila values—particularly just and civilized humanity, social justice, and respect for human dignity—in establishing a school culture that respects children, is democratic, and free from violence. The findings of this study can be used as a basis for developing Pancasila and Citizenship Education materials on children's rights education, relational ethics, anti-violence culture, and the role of the school community in creating safe spaces. However, this study has limitations because it was conducted in only one school in a rural area, so it cannot describe variations in child protection implementation in urban contexts or schools with different characteristics. The limited number of informants and reliance on qualitative data also limit the generalizability of the findings, so cross-regional comparative studies and mixed methods approaches are needed to strengthen validity and broaden understanding of child protection implementation in various educational contexts in Indonesia.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that legal protection for children in schools has been successful in fostering a safe and supportive learning environment through respectful teacher-student interactions, nonviolent classroom practices, and a relationship-oriented school culture that prioritizes student well-being. This is supported by core institutional mechanisms—including

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guidance and counseling services and the School Violence Prevention and Response Team—serving as the foundation of a responsive protection system capable of early detection, conflict mediation, and structured case management. However, the findings also reveal persistent structural and cultural barriers, including inadequate teacher training in trauma-focused practices, limited parental understanding of child protection norms, inadequate visual outreach materials, and resource constraints typical of rural areas. Future research should expand on this analysis through rural-urban comparison studies, longitudinal evaluations of prevention programs, and investigations of community-based child protection systems that complement school-level mechanisms.

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