



### PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID TO REDUCE TRAUMA AND DEPRESSION IN THE VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ABUSE: LITERATURE REVIEW Psychological First Aid untuk Menurunkan Trauma dan Depresi pada Korban Sexual Abuse: Literature Review

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#### ABSTRACT

Background: The most concerning now is the increasing cases of sexual abuse. The impact of sexual abuse is very detrimental, victims will experience a decrease in appetite, stress, trauma, and even depression. Purpose: To find out the description of Psychological First Aid (PFA) for victims of sexual abuse. Method: This is narrative literature review. The inclusion criteria used were the year of publication between 2019-2023, free full text, English or Indonesian, research subjects were victims of sexual abuse, victims' families, and psychology. The data searching method used was the Boolean searching method with the keywords "PFA" AND "sexual abuse" AND "trauma" OR "depression". Selection of articles were based on the prism method with data sources from Google Scholar. Results: PFA plays an important role in the long-term effects of sexual abuse in the form of trauma and depression. PFA can be done by providing modules, psychoeducation, counseling, and coaching to victims of sexual abuse. Therefore, both families and psychologists must work together in conducting PFA so that victims do not experience trauma and depression due to sexual abuse. Conclusion: There is an influence on the provision of PFA in reducing trauma and depression in victims of sexual abuse.

Keywords: psychological first aid (PFA), sexual abuse, trauma, depression

#### ABSTRAK

Latar Belakang: Hal yang paling memprihatinkan saat ini adalah meningkatnya kasus sexual abuse. Dampak sexual abuse sangat merugikan, korban akan mengalami penurunan nafsu makan, stress, trauma bahkan depresi. Tujuan: Untuk mengetahui gambaran Psychological First Aid (PFA) bagi korban sexual abuse. Metode: Ini adalah narrative literatur review. Kriteria inklusi yang digunakan adalah tahun terbit 2019-2023, free full text, bahasa Inggris atau bahasa Indonesia, subjek penelitian adalah korban sexual abuse, keluarga korban dan Psikologi. Pencarian data menggunakan metode boolean searching dengan kata kunci "PFA"DAN" sexual abuse" DAN "trauma" ATAU "depresi". Pemilihan artikel berdasarkan metode prisma dengan sumber data dari google scholar. Hasil: PFA berperan penting terhadap dampak jangka panjang dari sexual abuse berupa trauma dan depresi. PFA dapat dilakukan dengan memberikan modul, psikoedukasi, konseling dan pembinaan pada korban sexual abuse. Oleh karena itu, baik keluarga maupun ahli psikologi harus bekerja sama dalam melakukan PFA agar korban tidak mengalami trauma dan depresi akibat sexual abuse. Kesimpulan: Terdapat pengaruh terhadap pemberian PFA pada penurunan trauma dan depresi pada korban sexual abuse.

Kata Kunci: psychological first aid (PFA), pelecehan sexual, trauma, depresi

### **INTRODUCTION**

The most worrying development now is the increasing cases of sexual abuse, especially sexual abuse of children. Cases of sexual abuse are increasing but the incidence is difficult to detect. This can happen because survivors of sexual abuse do not report due to feelings of shame and guilt, fear of hearing family members, fear of retaliation by the perpetrator, and evoking trauma through questions and examinations that will be carried out later (Tetik et al., 2021). Most victims of sexual abuse are children (Gemilang & Santoso, 2021). According to data from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection for 2019-2021, violence against women and children continues to increase. According to November 2021 data, there were 12,566 cases of violence against children, compared to 11,057 in 2019 and 11,279 in 2020. The most common forms of violence against children were sexual violence (45% of cases), psychological violence (19% of cases), and physical violence (18% cases). Other forms of violence against children include neglect, human trafficking, economic exploitation, and others.

Sexual abuse of children according to End Child Prostitution Institution Asia Tourism (ECPAT) International is a relationship or interaction between a child and an older person or an adult such as a foreigner, sibling or parent who uses a child as an object to satisfy the perpetrator's sexual needs. This act was carried out using coercion, threats, bribes, deception, and even pressure. Activities of sexual abuse are not limited to sex, but also actions that lead to sexual activity against children, such as: touching a child's body sexually, whether the child is wearing clothes or not; all forms of sexual penetration, including penetration into a child's mouth using objects or limbs; induce or force a child to engage in sexual activity; intentionally engaging in sexual activity in the presence of children, or not protecting and preventing

children from witnessing sexual activity carried out by other people; create, distribute, and display images or films containing scenes of children in indecent poses or actions; and showing children pictures, photograph, or films that display sexual activity (Ivo, 2015).

Sexual abuse can be done by anyone, such as friends, teachers, family or relatives, and others. Sexual abuse can also occur anywhere, regardless of place and time (Gemilang & Santoso, 2021). Usually, sexual abuse is committed by those who are closest to the victim and whose age difference is older than the victim. This occurs because of the constant depiction of victims as helpless and weak individuals. Sexual abuse usually starts from verbal abuse to rape, this action can occur in a situation where the victim cannot consent because he is under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Sexual abuse is coercive, both physical and psychological. Often victims tend to hesitate to seek help for personal or cultural reasons and victims may also not have the ability to avoid being attacked because of threats of danger or drunk offenders, so victims are powerless, lose power and control, even death threats (Tetik et al., 2021). In addition, sexual abuse can occur at unexpected times when no one is around to ask for help, so that the victim cannot escape from the perpetrator.

According to Saputra et al., (2021), cases of sexual violence are an iceberg phenomenon, namely what is seen on the surface is much smaller than what is not This can prove that visible. the government's policy in dealing with the issue of sexual violence, especially in terms of legal protection in Indonesia, is still weak. Legally related to sexual violence in general has been regulated in Chapter XIV of the Criminal Code regarding crimes of decency. In addition, it is also regulated in Law no. 23 of 2004 concerning domestic violence which contains threats of criminal sanctions against perpetrators of sexual violence in the household sphere and Law

no. 35 of 2014 concerning the protection of children from sexual crimes. However, formally it has not yet been regulated regarding the protection of victims and special handling of victims which should be the priority for victims who are entitled to protection during the law enforcement process. Obstacles in handling victims of sexual abuse are the lack of knowledge and information from both the community and the family. Communities and families think that cases of sexual abuse are embarrassing and have a negative impact on the family. In addition, cases that often go unrevealed, who especially in children do not understand that they are victims, because they cannot provide psychological first aid or treatment due to sexual abuse they experienced (Milia et al., 2021).

The impact of sexual abuse is very detrimental to the victim, both in the short and long term. Victims will experience a decreased appetite, face anxiety, sadness, mental shock, guilt, and self-blame. difficulty children have sleeping or insomnia, and be afraid of various things, including objects, smells, locations, going to the doctor, self-esteem problems, sexual pain, dysfunction, chronic addiction, somatic complaints of unwanted pregnancy, emergence of psychological illness, even victims can commit suicide which will result in death (Anisa et al., 2021). Victims who experience sexual abuse will feel traumatized for the rest of their lives or worse, namely Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). In addition, victims may suffer from depression, which results in avoidant behavior and decreased activity.

According to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), Psychological First Aid (PFA) is described as a humane and supportive response to fellow human beings who are suffering or need support. PFA is an alternative form of assisting in providing long-term recovery to people who have experienced a crime or trauma. This includes feeling safe, having access to social, physical, and emotional support, and feeling able to help oneself, as an individual and as a community (Sanjani, 2020).

Research (Nahar et al., 2022) explained that victims of sexual violence against children can be handled with a system-based approach which includes social welfare for children and families, a justice system that complies with international standards and mechanisms to encourage appropriate behavior in society. Based on research (Nauri & Sudarmawan, 2022), victims of sexual violence against children receive assistance from psychology, motivators and providing legal assistance for victims. (Sanjani, 2020) argued that PFA for women victims of sexual violence is very important to do. This right is useful when finding victims of sexual violence and can prevent negative consequences in the short and long term.

Based on the problems above, it is known that treatment for victims of sexual violence is very important in preventing short- and long-term impacts. Therefore, fast psychological assistance is needed for victims of sexual abuse to help them recover from long-term trauma and depression. This research was conducted to describe Psychological First Aid (PFA) measures that can be used to reduce trauma and depression rates for victims of sexual abuse in children.

# METHOD

This research was based on the narrative literature review research method. The sources of literature used in the Psychological First Aid (PFA) literature search to reduce trauma and depression in victims of sexual abuse were national and international articles from Google Scholar. The article selection method used the keywords "Psychological First Aid (PFA)" AND "sexual abuse" AND "trauma" OR "depression". The articles obtained were screened using the PRISMA method (preferred reporting items for systematic review and meta-analysis) with inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria in this study were the year of publication from 2019-2023, free full text, in English or Indonesian. Besides that, the research subjects were victims of sexual abuse, victims' families and psychology. The selected article discussed PFA to reduce and prevent the impact of trauma and depression from sexual abuse. While the exclusion criteria in this study were articles published before 2019, inappropriate titles. inappropriate abstracts and inaccessible articles. Below was shown the Prisma flowchart of data search results.



Figure 1. Search Table of PRISMA

Total search of *Psychological First* Aid (PFA) (n=3.150). The data was filtered based on duplicate records removed (n=1,170), Exclusion criteria (n=13), then,

Table 1. Results of Literature Review Study

of 13 types of research articles, a selection of articles were analyzed based on the following inclusion criteria: 1) articles published in 2019-2023 2) free full text 3) research subjects were victims of sexual abuse, victims' families and psychology

Each article was studied and analyzed according to the inclusion criteria. There were many articles that were eliminated because they did not meet the criteria, including: there was an intervention, not a research article, the results section did not describe the set variables and the year of the study was not 2017-2022. Article analysis was obtained after applying the stages of identification, screening, setting criteria for up to 4 articles were analyzed.

A total of 4 articles met the criteria and were used as samples for synthesis and analysis. The "outcome" inclusion criteria were determined according to the purpose of writing a literature review and variables so that they could be explored broadly and clearly about the description of the form of PFA. There were 4 articles that met the criteria, the articles were analyzed, synthesized, and shown in Table 1 below:

## RESULT

Based on the articles obtained, according to the topic using 3 national articles and 1 international article with the 2019-2023 timeframe, the results were obtained in Table 1 below.

Authors	Method	Sample	Result
Rino Gohansen, Didik Widiantoro (2022)	The design of this research is action research	Victims of sexual abuse came from Elementary School of Buana Makmur students	The program from Psychological First Aid (PFA) at National Elementary School of 12 Buana Makmur, Dayun District in the form of visualized modules which was creative videos can reduce the negative impact of traumatic experiences, strengthen short- term and long-term adaptive functions of sexual abuse survivors and accelerate the recovery process of sexual abuse survivors.
Gail Ironson, Emily Hylton, Brian Gonzalez, Brent Small, Blanche Freund, Myriam	Randomized controlled trial	Victims of rape or sexual violence, physical violence and victims of armed crimes.	Psychological First Aid (PFA) which is implemented with care and counseling performed on victims provides positive improvement and influence to avoid trauma and minimize suffering and prevent future problems.

Authors	Method	Sample	Result
Gerstein, Fabian Thurston, Lindsay Bira (2020)			
Kharisma Tiara Anisa, Amalia Djuwita (2021)	Interview and Literature Study	Seven respondents, including 2 psychologists as key informants, 2 child victims of sexual violence and parents of victims of sexual violence as auxiliary informants, and a lecturer in communication as an IT specialist.	Psychological first aid which was applied in the counseling activities of the JaRI Foundation, showed positive changes in behavior after the counseling of the JaRI Foundation and emotional changes, such as feelings of relief, after counseling from the Psychologists of the JaRI Foundation. The applied PFA adopts five interpersonal attitudes, including openness, empathy, supportive attitude, positive attitude, and equality.
Yustina Gemilang, Magdalena Pranata Santoso, S.TH, M.Si, D.Min (2021)	Interview and Literature Study	Victims of sexual harassment aged 0-12 years and survivors of sexual harassment	Psychoeducational video as a tool in psychological first aid which contains the true values of God's word and links to counselors or psychologists for follow- up, can increase self-healing, reduce the incidence of mental problems, and give hope to sufferers

### Continuation of Table 1. Results of Literature Review Study

### DISCUSSION

There are 4 articles that have been eliminated which discuss Psychological first aid (PFA) for victims of sexual abuse. The 4 articles show relatively the same results. The results of Gohansen and Widiantoro's research (2022) explain that Psychological first aid (PFA) in the form of creative modules and videos given to survivors of sexual abuse has been proven to reduce initial post-traumatic pressure and speed up the recovery process for survivors of sexual abuse. Psychological first aid (PFA) is carried out by providing explanations of support to survivors through emergency response services both medical, physical, emergency education and recreational activities carried out by mental health professionals. Psychological first aid (PFA) given to survivors uses a narrative preparation method in the form of modules that refer to both national and international journals which are then supported by visualization in the form of creative videos. Gohansen In and Widiantoro's research (2022), PFA is carried out online using telephone or online media due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The system used in implementing PFA is see, hear, and connect which is designed in various actions such as contact and engagement, safety and comfort, stabilization, information gathering,

practical assistance, connection with social support, information about coping support, and relationships with collaborative services.

Based on the results of research by Ironson et al (2020), it showed positive things for crime victims after receiving Psychological first aid (PFA), namely experiencing a reduction in PTSD symptoms, somatization, depression, and anxiety. Victims who receive Psychological First Aid (PFA) also show a reduction in problems related to a person's main role as a student, worker and so on. Victims who receive Psychological First Aid (PFA) have a much greater advantage in not finding worsening symptoms and as a provision of support to prevent mental health problems from occurring in the future.

Research results by Anisa et al., (2021), state that sexual abuse survivors were more confident and feel protected after receiving PFA. They who previously liked to daydream and cry showed positive changes: they are not afraid to meet other people, are not afraid to communicate with others, have feelings of relief, are not depressed, and feel happier. Psychological first aid (PFA) carried out in this study was in the form of counseling which applied five positive attitudes interpersonal of communication: openness, empathy,

supportive attitude, positive attitude, and equality. Counseling was undertaken by psychologists, by providing support in verbal form such as motivational and encouraging words and occasionally giving sentences of praise. In this counseling, psychologists also provided direction if they would like to take legal action and provide a solution as protection, thus they who have received counseling gives a positive response and managed to survive (Anisa *et al.*, 2021).

Based on the results of Gemilang & Santoso (2021) research, states that Psychological first aid undertaken via video overcame the traumatic impact of sexual abuse which causes major problems related to self-confidence in children. The video made child survivors of sexual abuse more courageous in sharing their experiences. This video also helped the recovery of victims who previously felt worthless to feel more valuable. Not only that, but this video also educated children about sexual abuse and how to prevent sexual abuse from happening again. This psychoeducational video in applying Psychological first aid was intended for child survivors of sexual abuse and teachers. The psychoeducational video aimed at them contained information on how to deal with their trauma and connects victims to counselors or psychologists through links for follow-up and conveys religious values. Meanwhile, the psychoeducational videos shown for teachers contain information on cases of sexual abuse in children which are increasing and their impact on children, thus awakening teachers and inviting teachers to worked together to help the recovery of survivors of sexual abuse. These two videos were publicly published via YouTube which were then disseminated to teachers, counselors, and guidance counselors at schools to help children who are survivors of sexual abuse.

Based on the research results of Gohansen and Widiantoro (2022), (Ironson *et al.*, (2020), Anisa *etal.*, (2021), Gemilang

& Santoso (2021) it was known that Psychological First Aid (PFA) had a role in providing assistance to sexual abuse survivors. This was in line with what was conveyed by Tetik *et al.*, (2021), that Psychological First Aid was a method or action for individuals who experienced traumatic events after an incident. The main objective of PFA was to provide individuals who need a safe, calm, and hopeful place, which possible for social, physical, and emotional support by initiating contact with others, and reduced feelings of loss of control.

Providing PFA assisted survivors in receiving ongoing and appropriate support and care to prevent and reduce the longterm negative impacts of sexual abuse This can be started from assessing threats, building relationships, identifying problems, defining feelings, finding alternatives, building action plans, referring further actions to be able to overcame their safety needs and negative feelings and help reduce their psychological trauma in the long term (Tetik et al., 2021).

When experiencing sexual harassment, it would be much better if they immediately received PFA. If the problem was not identified until they were adults, it would be more difficult to address, and the healing process would be more protracted. An ignored, unreported, secretive, or hidden wounds of sexual harassment would have a more severe effect and required a longer healing time (Gemilang & Santoso, 2021). Thus, survivors of sexual abuse must be treated immediately so as not to cause longterm impacts.

Based on research results from four articles, it was known that the provision of Psychological First Aid can be undertaken in various methods such as counseling. This was in accordance with research from (Jr & Burr, 2022) which states that PFA can be applied to children of sexual abuse by counseling through play therapy. This therapy was undertaken to overcome the long-term effects of sexual abuse. This therapy was undertaken through a counselor who plays with the child. The child will then feel protected and comfortable and begin to dare to tell stories. Every child who experiences sexual abuse has a different personality and character. Children will quickly bounce back once they feel confident enough to tell stories without being forced.

In the research results of Gohansen (2022), Widiantoro PFA and was implemented by applying this PFA, namely see, hear, and connect. This was supported by Sanjani (2020), where there were three basic things regarding standard PFA operations: first look by checking security and checking if anyone needs emergency assistance and examining people with very serious stress reactions. Next, listening, this was undertaken by listening well when helping others, to understand the situation and their need, also provide a sense of calm and help appropriately. In addition, there was a link, by helping them to get information and services related to problems experienced by both survivors and those closest to them, such as family, friends, neighbors and so on. This management system would assist and direct PFA volunteers thus they can see and approach victims and understand victims and connect them with the assistance and information needed (Sanjani, 2020).

Psychological first aid was not only undertaken by experts or psychiatrists. The closest people, especially parents, also played an important role in dealing with children who are survivors of sexual abuse. According to Iva's research, the ability of families in the Jombang Women Crisis Center (WCC) Working Area to care for children of victims of sexual violence (Post sexual abuse) was highly lacking (Milia et al., 2021). In fact, the role of the family in providing assistance such as caring for children in the family environment, at school or in other matters was essential, since children were subject to sexual abuse those closest to them. Thus. bv

Psychological First Aid can be realized, apart from experts also from parents to prevent long-term effects due to sexual abuse.

Based on some of these studies, there was one article unexplained in detail the form of PFA that is applied to survivors of sexual abuse. Meanwhile, three other articles explained in detail the forms of PFA applied to them, such as modules, psychoeducational videos, and counseling. The four articles also explain that PFA did not only provide first aid to them and explained that sexual violence was not their fault at all. Instead, PFA explained to them where to seek help from. The limitation in the preparation of this article was that it only uses Google Scholar as a writing source. Consequently, the discovery and evaluation of articles is limited.

# CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the four articles that have been reviewed, the narrative literature review showed the same results: the provision of Psychological First Aid (PFA) can reduce the impact of trauma and depression on victims of sexual abuse, even though the application of PFA uses a different method. They show changes in behavior, and a greater sense of selfconfidence as well as decreased symptoms of trauma and depression in victims of sexual abuse after receiving PFA. Thus, PFA can assist sexual abuse survivors in preventing and reducing long-term negative impacts such as trauma and depression.

It is necessary to conduct a deeper study regarding the importance of PFA to reduce trauma and depression because of sexual abuse using article sources other than Google Scholar and different research methods or designs.

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# **AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION**

Author Naila Zulfa Rosyida: Data collection, data analysis, manuscript writing, literature review, reference. Author Jayanti Dian Eka Sari: study design, data collection and supervision, data analysis, manuscript revision. Author Mohammad Zainal Fatah: supervision and manuscript revision.

## **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

This research has no conflict of interest.

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