



# Developing School-Based Mechanism for Handling and Referral of Child Protection Cases through Co-Design Process

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**Abstract.** This study focused to develop school-based mechanism for handling and referral of child protection issues through co-design process. Research design was co-design approach using the Double Diamond framework consisting of four distinct phases such as discover, define, develop, and deliver. Participants by different background were involved to design the school-based mechanism consisting of teachers, counsellor teachers, social workers, frontliners in child protection, social service providers as a representative of governments, and lecturers. Findings show that schools have potential resources which can be empowered in handling child protection cases in the schools, and there are some resources from local government as a social service provider which can be used to refer child protection cases which cannot be handled by schools. Moreover, by developing school-based mechanism, parents and children will be easier to access the child protection services provided by local government.

**Keywords:** Co-design process, Child Protection, School-Based Mechanism, Handling and Referral System.

## 1 Introduction

Child protection Issues have become crucial issues and have been studied by some previous studies [1–3]. There are various problems that can potentially be experienced by children such as mental health problems [2], [4], violence [5], [6], school drop-out [7], [8], lack of motivation to learn [9], slow learners [10], unwanted pregnancy [11], child marriage [12], drugs [13], and other problems. These problems will certainly have a negative impact on children not only in the short term but also have the potential to have long term impacts on the child's future if not handled properly and quickly. In addition, every child has the potential to experience these problems if comprehensive and holistic prevention efforts are not made.

In Indonesia, various social services have been provided by the government to assist children in fulfilling their basic rights in the aspects of education, protection, health, and several other basic rights [14]–[16]. These social services are facilitated by

several agencies in each district/city, including social services, women's empowerment and child protection services, health offices, education offices, and other related offices. During the Covid-19 Pandemic, there were various cases experienced by children, such as victims of violence, dropping out of school, children who were employed, and several other cases. Unfortunately, some parents choose not to report these cases to the service providers, even though when parents report these cases, social service providers will probably help children and families to get these basic rights and help children to overcome the problem they face. There is a tendency why parents and children choose not to report these cases to the relevant social service provider institutions. One of them is that they lack information where they can get assistance when children need social services or assistance. In addition, some parents knew that social service providers existed, but because the access was too far from their home, they chose not to report the case [17]–[19]. Therefore, it can be concluded that it is important to help social service providers to socialize the various child protection services provided to parents and children, and it is important to make it more accessible for parents and children to get access to these social services.

Schools have a key duty as duty holders to ensure the wellbeing of all children [20]–[21]. In addition, schools have potential resources that can be empowered and invited to work together in handling child protection cases such as counseling teachers and several other school members. Therefore, it is deemed important to empower the role of the school as an intermediary between the child's family and social service providers. In addition, schools are also expected to be able to provide basic services when children need assistance, especially related to psychological problems, so that not all problems experienced by children are referred to referral institutions but can also be handled by counseling teachers or other school members if possible. Involving schools in handling children problems is important to do because local government resources as social service providers are also limited [22], [23].

This study focused to develop school-based mechanism for handling and referral of child protection issues through co-design process. Co-design refers to the method of engaging various individuals or groups with a vested interest in the creation and advancement of products, services, or systems. The objective is to generate solutions that are better suited, efficient, and gratifying for the end users [24]. Some of previous studies used co-design approach in developing child protection programs [25]–[27]. According to the studies, it can be concluded that co-design is one of viable approaches to be used in developing a child protection program.

## **2 Research Method**

### **2.1 Research Design**

This qualitative study used co-design approach focusing on engaging communities in designing a process, framework, model, and others which will be used by the communities. This co-design approach used the Double Diamond design process comprising four distinct phases: discover, define, develop, and deliver [28]. Co-design approach allows participants having opportunities to participate in the decisions that impact on their life and contribute to a design process. By using this framework, it can be seen

clearly that the design process can be divided into problem space and solution space. The problem space means when the researchers try to understand the problems clearly based on various perspectives from different participants. The solution space means when the ideas are generated, visualized, and tested prototypes. Double diamond framework consists of four distinct phases: discover, define, develop, and deliver.

Discovering phase focuses on understanding the problem and getting more information about handling and referral system of child protection issues, children and parent's understanding related to the existing handling and referral system provided by local government, and potential child protection cases faced by children in the schools. Defining phase focuses on synthesizing the information from the discovery phase into a problem definition. Developing focuses on suggesting possible solutions including a final evaluation to determine the chosen solution. Output of this phase are idea, concept, and initial prototype. Lastly is delivering step focusing on implementing the final prototype of school-based mechanism for handling and referral of child protection.

## 2.2 Participants

This study involved community elements by different background in the village and district level. Participants consist of children, parents, teachers, community facilitators, social workers, local NGO, and representative of local governments.

## 2.3 Data Collection

Focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted to get information from the participants. FGD was conducted separately between children and adults to make sure that children feel safe and enjoyed to share their perspectives. In-depth interview also was conducted to get information deeper to the selected participants.

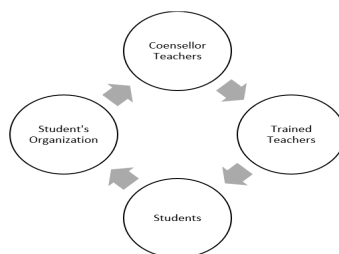
## 2.4 Data Analysis

Research data was analyzed descriptively by using triangulation method. This method was used to track discrepancies between data obtained from various participants to obtain accurate and precise conclusions.

# 3 Finding and Discussion

## 3.1 Involved Potential Actors in Handling child protection Cases

Before designing the mechanism, it is important to identify the potential actors in the school who can be empowered and worked with. The results of interview process show there are various potential actors who can be involved in handling child protection cases, the further information can be seen in the figure 1:

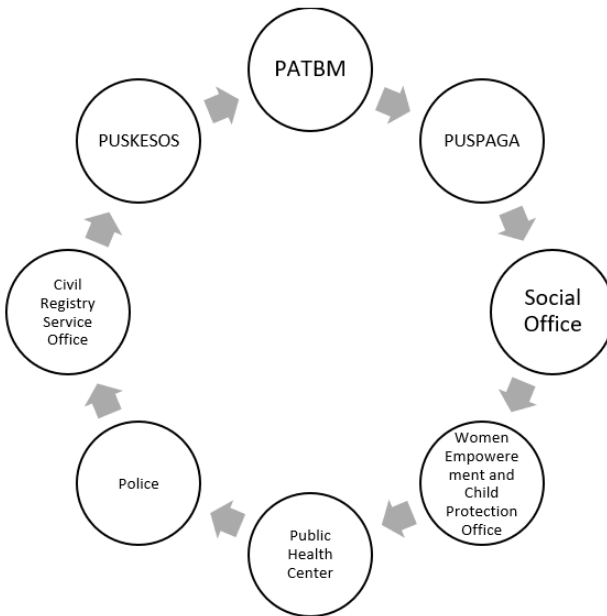


**Figure 1.** Potential Actors in Handling child protection Cases in the School

Every school should have counsellor teachers especially secondary school and senior high school who are responsible to assist the student to make adjustment to different situations in life, to assists students in the planning of educational, career, personal, and social development, to identify the potential problems faced by students which can affect to the students' performance in the school. In fact, mostly public primary schools and early childhood education do not have counsellor teachers. However, the role of counsellor teachers can be substituted by other teachers by providing a special training for the teachers. Some previous studies explained the crucial role of counsellor teachers in the schools who can provide psychological first aid and others emotional and psychological supports [29]–[31].

Focus group discussion with the school elements also shows that student's organizations in the school have a role in contributing to the development of students in achieving their full physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual potentials as individuals, as responsible citizens, and as members of their communities. Another potential actor who can be involved is trained teachers. They are teachers who are trained to be able providing psychosocial support or psychological first aid for students and screening problems faced by students using a standardized instrument.

The results of interview process with representative of local government, social workers, and other frontliners show there are various potential actors in the community who can be involved in handling child protection cases, the further information can be seen in the figure 2:



**Figure 2.** Potential Actors in Handling child protection Cases in the Community

Local community organizations such as family learning centre (PUSPAGA), centre of community-based integrated child protection (PATBM), Social Welfare Centre (PUSKESOS), and other community organizations who focus on child protection issues are one of potential resources owned by community in the village level who can be empowered. Family learning centre called PUSPAGA aims to improve the ability of families to care for and protect children as well as create referrals for care, education, health, protection for children and parents/families to support optimal child growth and development. Center of Community based integrated child protection called PATBM aims to prevent and respond to violence against children at the village. The Social Welfare Center called PUSKESOS focuses on carrying out social service activities in a synergistic and integrated manner between community groups in the community in the village in implementing social welfare. According to their roles, the organizations are really closed to the child protection issue in the village level. There are some previous studies conducted the role of the local community organizations such as PUSPAGA, PATBM, and PUSKESOS in Indonesia. The studies show that every village should have some local community organizations, as they have crucial role in supporting children and their families fulfilling their basic rights [32][34].

Moreover, in the district level, there are several government agencies that also provide child protection services such as the health service, the social service, the women's empowerment and child protection service, the population and civil registration service, and the police. These government agencies have different tasks and functions, but all of these government agencies also focus on child protection issues, so they can be used as referral institutions for getting treatment from professionals.

### **3.2 School-Based Mechanism for handling and Referral of Child Protection Issues**

There are some stages in the school-based mechanism for handling and referral of child protection issues consisting of:

#### **a. Report Receipt**

Reports of cases of children received by schools can be reported by families, parents, students and other school members. When parents observe that their child's behavior is not as usual, for example being more aggressive, or always choosing to be alone, eating and sleeping patterns are disrupted, parents can report this to the school for an assessment. In addition, children are also expected to be able to report cases they experience to the school, for example when experiencing violence from friends, teachers, parents, or from others. Apart from parents and children, school members, in this case one of the teachers, can also report cases experienced by their students. All reports will then be noted and databased by the teacher/educational staff assigned by the school principal to handle this stage.

### **b. First Stage Assessment**

After the report is received, the child will be assessed to find out the types of cases experienced by the child and the potential causes of these cases. Cases experienced by children at this stage will be identified whether they are health problems, psychological, legal (law), or other problems. This identification checklist sheet is used by the teacher to students to identify the potential problems that students have. The teacher's role in this stage is to facilitate students to fill in the checklist sheet by interviewing students. This checklist sheet contains 3 indicators, namely 1) problems related to learning, 2) problems at school, 3) problems in the family. After identifying the problem, the teacher writes down the conclusions of any potential problems experienced by the child.

### **c. Referral to Social Service Providers**

After the first stage of assessment, children who experience health cases, legal (law), administrative will be immediately referred to social service providers such as the health service, the social service, the women's empowerment and child protection service, the population and civil registration service, and the police.

### **d. Second Stage Assessment**

If cases experienced by children are related to psychological problems, a second stage of assessment will be carried out using the SDQ (*Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire*) instrument developed by Goodman (1997). The SDQ is a 25-item parent report measure for 4–16-year-old children that includes subscales related to emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention, peer relationship problems and prosocial behavior. There are numerous previous studies suggesting the use of SDQ instrument to assess psychological problems faced by children [35]–[37].

### **e. Intervention Planning and Implementation**

The results of the SDQ instrument will categorize the psychological problems experienced by children into 3 levels (normal/low, medium and high). Children who are in the normal/low category can be immediately directed to the termination stage (case closure) because it is considered that the problems experienced by the child do not require intervention from the school. However, even though they are in the normal/low category, when the teacher feels the child needs intervention, the case child will be referred to the planning and implementation stages of the intervention.

## **4 Conclusion**

There are various problems that can potentially be experienced by children, and one of the viable solutions to help children in facing their problems is providing a mechanism for handling and referral. Schools have a key duty as duty holders to ensure the

wellbeing of all children. According to the role, it is considered important to involve school actively in handling and referring children's problems. This study focused to developing School-Based Mechanism for Handling and Referral of Child Protection Cases through Co-Design Process. This study shows that schools have potential resources which can be empowered in handling child protection cases in the schools, and there are some resources from local government as a social service provider which can be used to refer child protection cases which cannot be handled by schools. By developing school-based mechanism, parents and children will be easier to access the child protection services provided by local government.

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