

Model of Proactive Law Enforcement, Child Grooming and Body Boundaries Literacy in Child Protection: An Analysis of Cases of Alleged Child Abuse by Religious Leaders in a Lecture Forum

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Abstract

This study aims to propose a proactive legal framework that can prevent harm before it occurs. Using a normative juridical approach complemented by conceptual and comparative analyses, this study evaluates Indonesia's current legal instruments, international child protection standards, and preventive models adopted in other jurisdictions. The findings demonstrate that the absence of grooming as a standalone criminal offense, weak institutional accountability, and the lack of structured body boundaries education contribute to systemic gaps in child protection. This study concludes that shifting toward proactive law enforcement through the criminalization of grooming, strengthening institutional governance, and integrating body-boundaries literacy is essential to fulfilling the state's constitutional and international obligations. These recommendations also align with Indonesia's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 3, SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 10, SDG 16, and SDG 17.

Kata Kunci

Penegakan hukum proaktif;
Grooming;
Perlindungan anak;
SDGs;
Literasi batas tubuh

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengusulkan kerangka hukum proaktif yang mampu mencegah terjadinya kekerasan sebelum terjadi. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan yuridis normatif yang dilengkapi dengan analisis konseptual dan komparatif, studi ini mengevaluasi instrumen hukum Indonesia saat ini, standar perlindungan anak internasional, dan model pencegahan yang diterapkan di yurisdiksi lain. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa ketidakhadiran grooming sebagai tindak pidana tersendiri, akuntabilitas institusional yang lemah, dan kurangnya pendidikan tentang batas tubuh yang terstruktur berkontribusi pada celah sistemik dalam perlindungan anak. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa peralihan ke penegakan hukum proaktif melalui kriminalisasi grooming, penguatan tata kelola institusional, dan integrasi literasi batas tubuh merupakan hal esensial untuk memenuhi kewajiban konstitusional dan internasional negara. Rekomendasi ini juga sejalan dengan komitmen Indonesia terhadap Tujuan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan (SDGs), khususnya SDG 3, SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 10, SDG 16, dan SDG 17.

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INTRODUCTION

Child protection is one of the fundamental issues in modern international law that places the state as the leading actor in ensuring the fulfillment of children's rights without discrimination. Indonesia, as part of the global community, has ratified various international legal instruments that strengthen the child protection framework at the national level. This ratification affirms the country's commitment to adjust its laws, policies, and institutional mechanisms in accordance with international standards regarding the safety, welfare, and fulfillment of children's rights. Some of the Conventions that have been ratified related to the Protection of the Rights of the Child include the Convention on the Rights of the Child ratified through Presidential Decree Number 36 of 1990, the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (OPSC), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) through Law Number 12 of 2005, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) through Law Number 11 of 2005, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which has been ratified through Law No. 7 of 1984, ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the worst forms of child labor as outlined in Law No. 1 of 2000, United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons or Palermo Protocol ratified by Law No. 1 Number 5 of 2009 and Law Number 14 of 2009, Convention Against Torture (CAT) through Law Number 5 of 1998.

This research has a strong connection to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda, particularly those that promote child protection, the elimination of violence, and the strengthening of national legal systems. Sexual violence against children—including child grooming and harassment in education and Islamic boarding schools—is still a serious problem that hinders sustainable development efforts in Indonesia. Therefore, analysis of preventive law enforcement, the formulation of grooming practices, and the strengthening of body image literacy are not only important academically but also relevant for achieving SDG targets. Some of the objectives that are directly related to this research issue include:

First, SDG 3 Good Health and Well-Being. Sexual violence has an impact on children's psychological and mental health in the long term. Therefore, prevention approaches, both through proactive law enforcement and education about body limits, play a role as a public health strategy. Second, SDG 4 Quality Education. Educational institutions, including Islamic boarding schools, are

obliged to provide a safe environment. Body boundaries literacy is an essential component of character education that enables students to recognize and protect themselves from potential violence. Third, SDG 5 Gender Equality. The elimination of grooming and all forms of sexual violence against women and children is part of the global target to achieve gender equality and protection from gender-based violence. Fourth, SDG 10 Reduced Inequalities. Children often face difficulties in accessing legal protection. Changing law enforcement approaches in a more proactive direction helps reduce these inequalities, especially for vulnerable groups, as outlined in SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions. Building a strong, responsive, and victim-friendly legal system is part of the state's commitment to creating justice and safety for children – sixth, SDG 17 Partnerships for the Goals. Efforts to prevent violence against children can only be practical if they are supported through cooperation between the government, educational institutions, police, the community, UPT PPAs, NGOs, and digital platforms.

The urgency of this study stems from the critical need to address the gaps in child protection, particularly in educational and religious institutions where children are vulnerable to abuse. Reactive law enforcement has proven ineffective in preventing child sexual violence, especially in cases of grooming by individuals in positions of power, such as religious leaders. This study highlights the lack of a specific criminal offense for grooming, weak institutional accountability, and insufficient body boundaries education, all of which contribute to systemic failures in safeguarding children. By proposing a proactive legal framework criminalizing grooming, strengthening institutional governance, and integrating body-boundaries literacy, this study not only fills existing legal gaps but also supports Indonesia's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 3, SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 10, SDG 16, and SDG 17. These measures are essential for creating a safer environment for children, empowering them with the tools to protect themselves while ensuring the state fulfills its constitutional and international obligations.

This study aims to propose a proactive legal framework for child protection that addresses the limitations of reactive law enforcement in cases of child sexual violence, particularly those involving grooming and manipulation in educational and religious institutions. This research aims to highlight the gaps in Indonesia's current legal instruments, including the absence of grooming as a standalone criminal offense, weak institutional accountability, and a lack of comprehensive body boundaries education. By examining international child protection standards and preventive models from other jurisdictions, the study aims to offer actionable recommendations for criminalizing grooming, strengthening institutional governance, and integrating body-boundaries literacy into educational curricula to ensure a safer environment for children and fulfill Indonesia's constitutional and international obligations.

METHOD

This study uses normative-empirical legal research (*socio-legal approach*), which combines the analysis of positive (normative) legal rules, norms, and doctrines with the study of their implementation in a factual (empirical) social context. The author adopts this approach to analyze the *gap* between the state's normative obligations, particularly within the framework of *Proactive Law Enforcement* and the criminalization of *Child Grooming*, and the reality of child protection practices in Indonesia. In addition, this research is grounded in a qualitative paradigm that emphasizes understanding the meaning, process, and context of child protection issues. The data collected are in the form of texts, regulatory narratives, and interpretations by legal practitioners to build a comprehensive understanding of the structural and cultural barriers to implementing proactive protection models.

This approach focuses on an in-depth analysis of specific cases of child sexual violence, especially those involving power relations in religious institutions and alleged *child grooming cases*. Case analysis is carried out to identify crime patterns, weaknesses in early detection, and evidentiary challenges in law enforcement. The author uses this approach to elaborate and critique legal concepts, law

enforcement theory, and international doctrine. The focus is to review the concept of *Proactive Law Enforcement*, *Child Grooming* as an independent crime, and the urgency of *Body Boundaries Literacy* as an early protection mechanism in the context of fulfilling *the country's positive obligations*.

The author uses primary data in the form of laws and regulations, such as Law Number 35 of 2014 concerning Child Protection, Law Number 12 of 2022 concerning the Crime of Sexual Violence (TPKS Law), and international legal instruments that have been ratified, such as *the Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC). In addition to primary data, the author also uses secondary data to support this paper. This secondary data consists of research results, journal articles, books, reports from government agencies (KPAI, KemPPPA, UPT PPA), reports from international organizations (UNICEF, ECPAT), and relevant actual case reports.

The author of this paper employs qualitative data analysis techniques, utilizing descriptive and analytical methods. In the descriptive stage, the author conducts a comprehensive inventory, categorization, and description of legal norms related to child protection, the concept of *Child Grooming*, and the position of *Body Boundaries Literacy*. At this stage, the elements of *Proactive Law Enforcement* are clearly mapped. Furthermore, at the analytical stage, the author conducts interpretation, synthesis, and critical evaluation of the data that has been described. In this regard, the analysis focuses on: 1) Normative Criticism; 2) Gap Analysis; and 3) Synthesis of Recommendations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

1 Proactive Law Enforcement as a New Paradigm for Child Protection

The law enforcement approach in child protection is generally still dominated by the pattern of reactive law enforcement, which is handled only after the occurrence of violations, violence, or exploitation of children. This reactive model has proven inadequate, given the fact that most acts of violence against children are repetitive, hidden crimes, and involve unequal power relations between children and perpetrators (UNICEF, 2014). Therefore, the development of law enforcement theory encourages a transformation towards proactive law enforcement, which is a law enforcement model that is preventive, predictive, collaborative, and oriented towards early detection and intervention before losses occur. Conceptually, proactive law enforcement places the State as an actor that not only responds to law violations, but also identifies potential risks, maps vulnerabilities, and builds protection mechanisms from the pre-crime stage. This model aligns with the principle of the best interests of the child in the CRC, which emphasizes the state's obligation to take legislative, administrative, and social measures as an anticipatory step (United Nations, 1990). Thus, proactive law enforcement shifts the paradigm of child protection from a victim-centered reaction to a risk-centered prevention approach.

In the Indonesian context, the need for a proactive model is increasingly urgent, considering the high rate of violence against children, both in the form of sexual violence, economic exploitation, child trafficking, and gender-based violence. International instruments such as the ICCPR and ICESCR require states to protect children from torture, exploitation, and inhuman treatment through positive obligations that include anticipatory and preventive measures (UNHRC, 2018). Similarly, ILO Convention No. 182 and the Palermo Protocol require countries to carry out early detection, risk mapping, and active surveillance of networks that have the potential to exploit children. From an academic perspective, proactive law enforcement in child protection can be broken down into four fundamental components. First, early detection, which includes an integrated reporting system, risk analysis, and monitoring of children's digital consumption as an effort to prevent online exploitation. Second, structural prevention, such as regulatory reform, strengthening cross-agency SOPs, and data integration between schools, social services, the police, and judicial institutions. Third, early intervention, in the form of administrative or social measures taken before a crime occurs, for example, the recovery of at-risk families, social assessment of vulnerable children, and assistance by the UPT PPA. Fourth, multi-stakeholder collaboration is necessary, as proactive law enforcement cannot rely

solely on law enforcement officials; instead, it requires synergy between local governments, communities, schools, digital platforms, and service institutions.

Critically, it can be argued that Indonesia still faces structural and cultural obstacles in implementing this proactive model (Susilo et al., 2025). First, national laws are still too focused on criminalization and prosecution, but weak in early detection mechanisms and risk-based protection. Second, service institutions such as UPT PPA, P2TP2A, and the National Police SPPA unit often work sectorally and are not integrated (Street, 2023). Third, there is a deficit of human resources in case management-based assistance, which is the core of a proactive approach (KemPPPA, 2023). In addition, a permissive societal culture, a lack of knowledge about children's rights, and inadequate reporting systems all contribute to the reduced effectiveness of prevention. The next criticism concerns the absence of predictive policing in child protection in Indonesia. Although other sectors have begun to implement data analytics to predict crime, child protection has not yet adopted the technology systemically. In fact, various countries have used machine learning to map children's vulnerability to online sexual exploitation or domestic violence (ECPAT, 2022). Indonesia still lags in this aspect, indicating that the law enforcement paradigm has not entirely shifted from a reactive to a proactive approach.

Proactive law enforcement is not only a technical strategy but also a representation of the State's obligation to carry out comprehensive child protection (Nirmalasari, 2024). This approach demands the integration of international law, national reforms, a paradigm shift in law enforcement, and sustainable multi-sector collaboration. Without a transformation towards a proactive pattern, child protection will continue to be stuck in the vortex of late intervention, where the country often responds too late after the damage has occurred. Therefore, proactive law enforcement must be understood as a normative framework, institutional strategy, and moral imperative to prevent violence against children and ensure the complete and sustainable fulfillment of children's rights.

2. Paradigm Shift: From Reactive to Proactive in Child Protection

Over the years, law enforcement in Indonesia has tended to adopt a reactive pattern, which is to move after a violation, when a child has been a victim of sexual violence, exploitation, or neglect. This model results in the state "always being late" and focusing only on punishing the perpetrators. In international literature, the so-called new paradigm proactive law enforcement is defined as a legal mechanism that emphasizes prevention, early detection, and early intervention, before harm to children occurs (Ariely, 2021). A proactive approach places the State as the obligatory party to prevent through monitoring, education, service supervision, and risk-based rapid response (UNICEF, 2020). In the context of child protection, the proactive paradigm not only strengthens the enforcement aspect but also ensures that the entire social-education system, health services, social service institutions, digital platforms, and families function as an early warning system (Wahyuni, 2022).

3. Normative Basis in the Indonesian Legal System

The 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia Article 28B paragraph (2) guarantees the right of every child to protection from violence, which implicitly includes the State's obligation to prevent a crime from occurring. This principle reflects the State's positive obligations (Sundari, 2019).

Law No. 23 of 2002 jo. Law No. 35 of 2014 requires the State to make preventive and promotive efforts, in addition to curative and repressive measures. However, this preventive norm remains declarative and lacks a clear operational derivative (Prasetyo, 2022).

The TPKS Law is the most progressive regulation because it regulates: 1) systemic prevention; 2) public education; 3) reporting obligations; and 4) cross-agency cooperation. However, the "proactive" mechanism has not been structurally emphasized because there is no norm that requires the apparatus to carry out early detection or risk-based monitoring (Rahman, 2023).

As a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Indonesia has a responsibility to carry out effective prevention of all forms of sexual violence and child exploitation (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2020). The CRC emphasizes that prevention is the core of protection.

4. Elements of the Proactive Law Enforcement Model in Child Protection

From a juridical perspective, proactive law enforcement consists of several main components, namely:

a). Early Detection (Deteksi Dini)

Perpetrators of violence against children often exhibit specific patterns, including grooming, digital manipulation, controlling behavior, or unsupervised access to children (Wolak & Finkelhor, 2022). The proactive enforcement model requires: 1) social media surveillance; 2) digital platform monitoring; 3) psychosocial screening in schools; and 4) reporting of early signs. In this case, it has not been integrated into the Indonesian legal system.

b). Risk-Based Intervention

The State must intervene when there is a potential risk, not just after the incident has occurred. For example, when: 1) children are often brought in by adults who are not the nuclear family; 2) there is an undue emotional closeness between the teacher and the student; 3) the child shows signs of sexual trauma, and 4) the digital platform signals dangerous conversations. This model has been implemented in the UK through the Child Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework (Holt, 2018).

c) Mandatory Reporting

Indonesia has not required all professionals (teachers, doctors, psychologists) to report potential sexual violence (Putri, 2021). In countries with proactive systems, such as Australia and Canada, mandatory reporting is a crucial step in preventing exploitation.

d) Education-Based Prevention

Proactive law enforcement involves education as a legal instrument. Education on: 1) body boundaries; 2) consent; 3) grooming; and 4) digital security should be part of the compulsory curriculum (UNICEF, 2020).

Discussion

1. Critical Analysis: the Gap Between Norms and Practices In Indonesia

Preventive Regulations Are Still Normative. Although many regulations include the word "prevention", there is no legal instrument that explains who is obliged to prevent, what the mechanism is, and how to be accountable (Prasetyo, 2022).

The Apparatus Still Has a Reactive Paradigm. Most of the officers moved after the report was released. In fact, in many cases, such as Grooming, online exploitation, and incest, victims are unable or unwilling to report (Wolak & Finkelhor, 2022).

Weaknesses of Cross-Sector Coordination. Child protection requires the involvement: 1) The Education Office; 2) Social Service; 3) UPT PPA; 4) Police; 5) Communication and Informatics; and 6) schools and communities. The absence of an integrated system makes the country fail to detect risks early.

Lack of Digital Surveillance. Indonesia does not yet have regulations governing the supervision of risky communication patterns for children, despite an increase in cases of digital Grooming.

2. The Relevance of Proactive Law Enforcement for the Future of Child Protection

The proactive model is particularly relevant to address violence against children because Grooming occurs before physical exploitation, so it must be prevented from the psychological stage. Children often do not understand that they are being taken advantage of. Digital crime often occurs in private spaces, making it essential to prevent it through early detection. Early prevention is much more effective than

trauma recovery. The proactive paradigm is a modern legal framework that aligns with the principle of the best interests of the child (Proposer, 2021).

3. Getting to Know Child Grooming, from Power Relations to Sexual Exploitation

Child grooming is a form of sexual crime against children that is growing rapidly in the digital era and poses serious challenges to the national legal system. This term refers to the manipulative and planned process carried out by the perpetrator to build trust, emotional closeness, and psychological dependence of children to commit sexual exploitation, both in person and online (ECPAT, 2021). Unlike other forms of sexual violence that are visible, child grooming takes place gradually, secretly, and often without causing any obvious early signs, making children more vulnerable to being trapped in manipulative relationships that are difficult to break.

Viewed from the perspective of international law, child grooming has been seen as a serious threat to the child's right to protection from violence, exploitation, and inhuman treatment as set out in the CRC and the Optional Protocol on Trafficking in Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography (United Nations, 1990; United Nations, 2000). International organizations such as Interpol and Europol affirm that Grooming is now the main entry point for commercial sexual exploitation of children, primarily through social media, online games, and instant messaging apps (Europol, 2020). Thus, child grooming is a crime that not only attacks the physical aspect, but also the psychological, identity, and development of the child. In the Indonesian context, regulations regarding child grooming have not yet been formulated comprehensively. Although the Sexual Violence Crime Law (TPKS Law) and the ITE Law have regulated the criminalization of acts that "seduce, seduce, or influence" children sexually through electronic media, the construction of Grooming is still partial and does not explicitly target a gradual pattern that is manipulative (Aprilia, 2023). This certainly causes difficulties in proving it, especially when the perpetrator has not committed a sexual act directly, even though the pre-execution phase is actually the core of Grooming itself.

From the perspective of academic analysis, there are three main weaknesses in Indonesia's positive law regarding the handling of child grooming. First, the legal system tends to focus on the outcome (sexual exploitation that occurs) and not on the grooming process as an independent crime (Zahirah et al., 2025). The outcome-oriented approach is not in line with the concept of proactive law enforcement adopted by international instruments, as analyzed above, which emphasizes state intervention from the risk stage, not after losses have occurred (UNHRC, 2018). Second, the absence of a detailed legal definition of the elements of Grooming opens up a space for diverse interpretations at the law enforcement level, causing disharmony in its handling. Third, the mechanism for reporting children is still highly dependent on the family or the nearest environment, even though Grooming is usually done without the parents' knowledge.

From a criminal perspective, child grooming is a crime based on power relations and psychological manipulation, where the perpetrator takes advantage of the child's emotional vulnerability to create dependency (Wurtele & Kenny, 2016). In some cases, the perpetrator builds a persona as a friend, mentor, or trusted adult figure. This strategy causes the victim to experience cognitive distortion that hinders their ability to realize that they are being manipulated. This situation is exacerbated by "private digital spaces" such as chat rooms, secret messaging features, or online games that make it easier for perpetrators to build relationships without adult supervision. Sharer criticism also needs to be directed at the state's weak capacity in conducting digital forensics and predictive monitoring of risky accounts. Although some countries have utilized algorithms to detect grooming conversation patterns on digital platforms, Indonesia has not adopted a technology-based approach systematically (Livingstone et al., 2020). This indicates a significant disparity between the complexity of the crime mode and the capacity of law enforcement.

In addition, the low digital literacy of children and parents in Indonesia creates a vast space for perpetrators to approach victims through emotional manipulation techniques. In many cases, victims

do not understand that they are being conditioned to engage in sexual behavior or send explicit content (Adiarti et al., 2025). This demonstrates that the handling of child grooming cannot rely solely on legal aspects, but also requires strengthening the protection ecosystem through education, digital supervision, and the involvement of technology platforms. Thus, child grooming is not just a new form of sexual crime, but a social-legal phenomenon that requires a progressive, prevention-based, and risk-oriented approach to the law. Legal reform should focus on establishing an explicit legal definition, criminalizing Grooming as an independent offense, and adopting a proactive law enforcement model that utilizes digital technology. Without it, Indonesian children will remain in a vulnerable position as targets for manipulation by perpetrators who are increasingly adapting to technological developments.

a). Conceptualization of Child Grooming in Legal and Criminological Perspectives

Child grooming refers to the manipulative process carried out by the perpetrator to build trust, create emotional dependence, and blur the moral boundaries of the child until sexual exploitation finally occurs (Craven, Brown, & Gilchrist, 2006). Unlike direct forms of sexual violence, Grooming works gradually, systematically, and often unnoticed by the victim and the adults around him (Olson, 2019).

From a legal perspective of child protection, Grooming is a complex threat because it involves elements of power relations, psychological pressure, and emotional control, which makes it difficult to detect by traditional legal systems that require physical contact or actual violent events (Finkelhor, 2020). Globally, various countries have criminalized Grooming even though there has been no physical exploitation. Indonesia itself is in a transition phase: there is a normative recognition in the TPKS Law regarding acts that lead to sexual exploitation, but without an explicit definition of Grooming as an independent crime.

b). Power Relations as the Foundation for the Formation of Grooming

Grooming capitalizes on the disparity in unequal social relations, particularly between the perpetrator and the child. The perpetrator establishes an authoritative, persuasive, or emotionally charged relationship that makes it difficult for the child to refuse or report. In many cases, the perpetrators are close people: teachers, uncles, stepfathers, family friends, or even religious figures (Wolak & Finkelhor, 2022). Unbalanced power relations can be formed through: 1) Formal authorities (teachers, trainers, religious leaders); 2) Emotional power (proximity, attention, reward), 3) Digital power (anonymity, conversation control, threats), and 4) Economic need (provision of facilities to lure victims). In the context of child protection, this power of attorney is a criminogenic factor that is not adequately addressed by the Indonesian legal system. The law still focuses on acts of violence, even though Grooming is the initial phase of sexual exploitation that takes place before physical touch or intimate photography (Holt, 2018).

c). Grooming Patterns and Stages: From Approach to Exploitation

Academically, Grooming is generally divided into five stages (Craven et al., 2006): 1) Targeting the Child, the perpetrator chooses a child with high vulnerability: lack of parental supervision, loneliness, or emotional needs; 2) Gaining Access and Isolation, the perpetrator approaches the child and creates a private space (physical or digital); 3) Building Trust and Dependency, the perpetrator creates emotional closeness, provides rewards, attention, or validation; 4) Desensitization to Sexual Content, where children are introduced to conversations, content, or sexual touch gradually; and 5) Maintenance and Emergency Control, where the perpetrator maintains confidentiality through threats, manipulation, guilt, or intimidation. This stage shows that Grooming is a psycho-social crime that runs in stages, so that legal evidence is often difficult to find. In this case, many cases go undetected until sexual exploitation has actually occurred.

d). Gap in the Definition of Grooming in Indonesian Regulations

Although Indonesia has a relatively comprehensive legal framework for protecting children, including the Child Protection Law, the ITE Law, and the TPKS Law, no regulation provides an explicit definition of Grooming as a punishable act (Prasetyo, 2023).

Child Protection Law. This law regulates the prohibition of sexual exploitation, but it is still oriented towards actions that have already occurred. Grooming behavior is not included in the formulation of criminal acts before sexual abuse or visual exploitation occurs (Sundari, 2019).

UU ITE. The ITE Law only regulates sexually charged electronic content and does not include manipulative communications or sexual introductions that lead to exploitation (Rahman, 2022).

TPKS Law. The TPKS Law begins to recognize "acts that lead" to sexual violence, but does not contain elements of Grooming in detail, so its interpretation depends on law enforcement. Without a specific definition, grooming evidence often clashes with formal evidentiary standards that require direct evidence of exploitation.

4. Challenges of Law Enforcement Practices

Lack of understanding of the apparatus. Grooming is often considered a "common approach", not a crime. It is difficult for the authorities to separate manipulative behavior from normal social relations (Putri, 2021)

The child does not understand that he or she is being manipulated. Many children feel they have a "relationship" with the perpetrator, so they do not report (UNICEF, 2020).

Easy-to-delete digital evidence. Manipulative conversations can be deleted by the perpetrator, making it difficult to meet conventional evidentiary standards.

Victim-blaming social norms. Families often close cases because they feel ashamed, or think that children "play a role", even though Grooming is entirely done through psychological power.

All of these challenges further underscore the need for a lex specialis that clearly and firmly regulates Grooming.

5. The Urgency of Criminalizing Grooming as an Independent Crime

In international law, various developed countries, including the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, have criminalized Grooming even before physical exploitation occurred (Ariely, 2021). This approach aligns with the principle of the best interests of the child, as outlined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which requires states to take preventive action. Indonesia, as a CRC party, should place Grooming as a serious threat to children's safety, not just pre-crime behavior. Grooming arrangements in particular will: 1) provide a strong legal basis for taking action against offenders at an early stage; 2) prevent more severe sexual exploitation; 3) strengthen the legal basis for investigations into manipulative digital communications; and 4) guarantee the child's right to protection from the earliest phase. Without the criminalization of Grooming, Indonesia's legal system will continue to lag in preventing crimes based on emotional manipulation.

Body Boundaries Literacy as an Early Protection Mechanism in the Indonesian Legal System: A Critical Analysis of the Regulatory and Practice Gap

The concept of body boundaries is one of the important instruments in child protection efforts, especially in preventing sexual violence and exploitation. Body boundaries literacy refers to the ability of children to understand their own body rights, recognize safe and unsafe touch, and know how to respond to and report situations that threaten the integrity of their bodies (Wurtele & Kenny, 2010). This education aims to foster children's self-awareness of bodily autonomy from an early age, enabling them to reject, avoid, and report actions that violate bodily boundaries, both from strangers and those they know. From the perspective of international law, body literacy is in line with the principles of the best interests of the child and the child's right to protection from violence, abuse, and exploitation as affirmed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (United Nations, 1990). This education-based prevention effort is also consistent with the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights

of the Child, which encourages countries to conduct comprehensive sexuality education that is age-based, non-discriminatory, and oriented towards the prevention of sexual violence (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2016). The international instrument places body limit literacy as part of the country's preventive obligations in protecting children.

In the Indonesian context, the urgency of body limit literacy is increasingly prominent as cases of sexual violence against children increase, most of which are committed by close people, such as teachers, religious leaders, family, and peers. National research shows that more than 70% of child victims of sexual violence do not understand the concept of body boundaries and are unable to identify actions that fall into the category of abuse (KemPPPA, 2022). This condition shows that legal protection without preventive education creates a significant gap for perpetrators to manipulate children through emotional closeness, power relations, or psychological threats. From an academic perspective, body limitation literacy has a strategic character in the prevention of child sexual violence because it functions as a self-protection mechanism that can transcend the limitations of the legal system. The criminal justice system often faces evidentiary barriers, particularly in cases where there are no witnesses, minimal physical evidence, or when victims do not report the incident immediately. Thus, body limit literacy reduces the chances of perpetrators of Grooming and predatory behavior because children are better able to recognize manipulation patterns from the early stages (Kenny & Abreu, 2015). This demonstrates that body limitation education is not only an educational program, but also a criminological and preventive instrument with direct implications for law enforcement.

Notably, it is crucial to highlight that Indonesia continues to face several structural challenges in implementing body literacy. First, cultural resistance to sexuality education causes schools and parents to be reluctant to discuss the topic of body limitations openly. In fact, research shows that age-based sexuality education does not increase early sexual behavior, but rather strengthens children's ability to resist abuse (UNESCO, 2018). Second, the national curriculum has not explicitly included body limit literacy as a mandatory competency, so its implementation depends on school initiatives or community organizations. Third, the lack of training for teachers and school counselors often results in this material being delivered in a normative, uncontextual, and incomprehensible manner.

Additionally, the legal approach in Indonesia remains reactive, focusing primarily on enforcement after a crime has occurred. This perspective is contrary to the principle of proactive law enforcement, which places prevention as a state obligation at the risk stage. Body limit literacy should be an integral part of the state's preventive obligations as stipulated in the TPKS Law, the Child Protection Law, and related international instruments. The absence of standardized education programs indicates that the state has not fully fulfilled its duty of due diligence in child protection. Thus, body limitation literacy is an essential component in child protection that connects education, developmental psychology, and the legal framework. To build an effective protection ecosystem, the state needs to integrate body limit literacy in the national curriculum, strengthen teacher and parent training, and develop evidence-based education modules. Furthermore, this literacy should be viewed as a preventive legal strategy that aligns with regulatory reform and law enforcement. Without literacy of body limits, child protection will remain in a defensive position, late, and unable to maximally prevent sexual violence that continues to grow in complexity.

Body boundaries literacy refers to a child's ability to recognize their body boundaries, understand the right to body privacy, and reject unwanted touches (Wurtele, 2017). In the theory of child protection based on primary prevention, literacy is positioned as the first line of defense that enables children to identify risky situations before sexual violence occurs. This is in line with the principle of preventive education affirmed by UNICEF (2020), that child empowerment through body autonomy education is the most effective strategy to break the chain of Grooming and sexual exploitation from the earliest stage. Indonesia does not yet have regulations that explicitly define or require body boundaries literacy as part of the education curriculum and child protection interventions, so these initiatives are more likely to emerge from non-governmental institutions and sporadic programs (Putri & Damayanti, 2021).

This regulatory gap is one of the causes of children's low awareness of their bodily rights, especially in areas with strong patriarchal cultures and norms that limit conversations about sexuality.

6. Regulatory Void in the Indonesian Legal Framework

Although Indonesia has various legal instruments, such as the Child Protection Law, the TPKS Law, and Permendikbud 46/2023, the concept of body boundaries literacy is not explicitly included in legal norms. Regulations only regulate repressive laws and a small part of prevention, without detailing body education as a state obligation (Prasetyo, 2022).

a) Child Protection Act

Law No. 35 of 2014 jo. Law No. 23 of 2002 only mentions the right of children to "get protection from sexual violence" without regulating educational preventive mechanisms. The norms are declarative, not operational (Sundari, 2019).

b). TPKS Law 12/2022

The TPKS Law recognizes the importance of prevention, but still places the state in a reactive position because its focus is on enforcement and recovery for victims. No article affirms the state's obligation to include body literacy in the formal education system or that it must be implemented in educational units (Rahman, 2023).

c). Permendikbud 46/2023

This regulation is more progressive because it regulates the prevention of sexual violence in schools. However, it still does not define body boundaries as an educational competency that BK teachers or homeroom teachers are required to teach. Its implementation depends on the interpretation of each school (Yuwono, 2024). The absence of these operational norms indicates that Indonesia still views body education as a moral or cultural issue, rather than a legal aspect of children's right to a sense of security.

7). The Practice Gap in the Field: Between Norms and Reality

a). Culture of silence and the taboo of body talk

Research conducted by UNICEF (2019) shows that more than 60% of Indonesian children have never received education about personal body parts from parents or teachers. Parents consider body education to be a taboo topic, so children do not have the vocabulary to articulate experiences of sexual violence.

b). Lack of capacity of teachers and educators

BK teachers, homeroom teachers, and PAUD educators have not received formal training on body literacy. Most teachers only emphasize behavioral discipline, not body education and consent (Novianti, 2020). This reduces the effectiveness of implementing Permendikbud 46/2023.

c). Lack of integration in the curriculum

The Merdeka Curriculum has not made body boundaries literacy a mandatory learning achievement. As a result, education is provided in a fragmented manner or only when there is a specific case or campaign, rather than systematically. The state has not required a body safety education module as standardized for character education.

d). Impact on cases of sexual violence

Children's lack of preparedness in recognizing risky situations makes them vulnerable to Grooming, seduction, threats, and emotional manipulation (Wolak & Finkelhor, 2022). Many cases go unreported because the child does not understand that he or she has been abused.

8. The Relevance of Body Boundaries Literacy in the Modern Legal System

In the child empowerment-based child protection paradigm, the state is obliged to ensure that children have the capacity to understand their bodily rights as a form of preventive legal protection (Ariely, 2021). In other words, body boundaries literacy is no longer a cultural affair, but part of the

state's due diligence obligation to protect children. The state is considered negligent if it fails to provide a comprehensive education program for its children (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2020). The principle of "best interest of the child" requires the state to adopt a preventive approach, including early intervention, rather than just punishing the perpetrator after the crime has occurred.

9. Recommendation: Integration of Body Boundaries Literacy in the Indonesian Legal System

To strengthen child protection, the author is of the view that concrete steps such as: 1) Explicitly inserting body boundaries literacy in the Child Protection Law and the TPKS Law as a primary prevention strategy; 2) Developing National Standards for Body Safety Education (Body Safety Curriculum) that must be applied in schools and PAUD institutions; 3) Mandatory training for BK teachers, homeroom teachers, UPT PPA assistants, and health workers to be able to provide appropriate education; 4) Integrating body literacy in parenting education programs as an obligation of the state and local governments; and 5) Adopt the best practices of other countries, such as Australia and Canada, which make body education a mandatory part of the national curriculum.

Islamic boarding schools, which have historically been known as centers for religious learning, morality, and character building, are now often tarnished by the actions of individuals who abuse spiritual authority and religious positions to commit sexual violence against students (Hidayat, 2022). The highly unequal power relationship between ustazd/z/kiai and students creates conditions that enable the abuse of authority to occur (Nisa, 2021). In some cases, violence even goes on systematically for years without detection due to the closure of pesantren structures, lack of state supervision, and a culture of high compliance with religious authoritative figures (Barker, 2020). This condition confirms that the ratification of international treaties does not automatically guarantee adequate protection on the ground. The weakness lies in the implementation, supervision, and courage of religious educational institutions to build a transparent and accountable child protection system. Many Islamic boarding schools do not have child protection SOPs, reporting mechanisms, or internal complaint units as required by the CRC and OPSC. This dark zone is a loophole used by perpetrators to commit repeated sexual violence under the pretext of education, punishment, or spiritual guidance.

Furthermore, the phenomenon of sexual violence by religious individuals in Islamic boarding schools is not only a violation of national law but also a form of denial of Indonesia's international obligations (Pangestu, 2024). International treaties are designed to prevent violence, but their effectiveness becomes meaningless if educational institutions fail to implement governance reforms and the state does not fulfill its supervisory functions to the fullest extent. This phenomenon is ironic. Institutions that normatively aim to produce a generation with noble character are actually tarnished by the actions of a handful of individuals who use religious authority to commit physical, psychological, and sexual violence against students. From a legal perspective, these acts not only violate religious norms but also fall into the category of violations of children's rights, which is contrary to Law Number 35 of 2014 concerning Child Protection. Article 76D and Article 76E expressly prohibit the exploitation and sexual violence against children in any form, including those committed by educators or leaders of religious institutions.

Furthermore, Islamic Boarding School Law Number 18 of 2019 has emphasized that Islamic boarding schools are obliged to provide a safe, violence-free, and dignified educational environment. However, the absence of a strong internal supervision mechanism and the power relationship between teachers and students often make violence go unreported. Students are in a subordinate position: they are nurtured, patronized, and economically and socially dependent on the figure of ustazd or kiai (Nisa, 2021). This condition creates an asymmetry of power, which in many cases is manipulated by the perpetrator to silence the victim. Through the perspective of the criminology of religion, spiritual authority can become a "legitimizing power" for the perpetrator, where violence is wrapped in the pretext of education, discipline, or even moral coaching (Barker, 2020). This phenomenon explains why some cases only come to light after many years, when the victim finally dared to speak outside the

pesantren environment. Thus, juridically, violence committed by pesantren caregivers is a common offense, so law enforcement must be carried out regardless of religious status, position, or reputation of the institution. Perpetrators can be charged under the Criminal Code, the Child Protection Law, the Sexual Violence Law (Law 12/2022), and the ITE Law if there are elements of documentation or digital threats involved. In many jurisprudences, courts punish perpetrators who have a relationship of custody or supervision over the victim, including ustaz, kiai, and pesantren managers.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study show that the pattern of law enforcement that has been reactive is no longer adequate to answer the complexity of sexual crimes against children, especially in cases involving grooming, psychological manipulation, and power relations in educational and religious institutions. Therefore, changing the approach towards proactive law enforcement is a crucial step, so that the state is not only present after the child becomes a victim, but also able to prevent it from the first signs appearing. The establishment of grooming as an independent crime, strengthening the literacy of body limits in children, and increasing the capacity of educational institutions and Islamic boarding schools are foundational elements that must be established to ensure more comprehensive protection.

The study's findings also confirm that a proactive approach not only strengthens the legal system but also empowers children. Through education about body limits, the ability to recognize risks, and access to safe reporting mechanisms, children are better equipped to protect themselves. At the same time, educational institutions and Islamic boarding schools need to carry out governance reforms to create a transparent and accountable environment, so that violent practices no longer hide behind religious authorities or closed hierarchical structures. This effort is a tangible manifestation of fulfilling state obligations, both constitutionally and in accordance with international instruments that have been ratified.

In addition, strengthening child protection through a proactive approach is directly linked to achieving various Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Initiatives to safeguard children's mental health and well-being support SDG 3; the integration of body limit education in schools contributes to SDG 4; elimination of gender-based sexual violence in line with SDG 5; reducing inequalities in access to legal protection in relation to SDG 10; strengthening legal systems and institutions that are responsive to SDG 16; and all of these processes require cross-sectoral collaboration as mandated in SDG 17. In other words, the success of preventing sexual violence against children is part of an important indicator of the sustainability of national development.

Overall, without a paradigm update and a comprehensive overhaul of the system, the state will continue to lag in dealing with sexual violence against children, as it only moves after the injury has occurred. Changes towards proactive law enforcement are an absolute requirement so that child protection does not stop as a slogan, but is realized as a reality felt by every child in Indonesia. This commitment is not only a legal investment but also an investment in the nation's future and a crucial prerequisite for achieving the Sustainable Development Agenda.

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