



RESEARCH ARTICLE

The effectiveness of the self-protection model on children's assertive behavior in sexual violence

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Abstract: Children are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence because they are considered weak or powerless. Research data has found that 20% to 33% of girls and 10% to 16% of boys will become victims of sexual abuse before the age of 18. Kubu Raya Regency recorded that in 2021, there were 74 cases of violence against children and adolescents, which is quite high, with the majority of cases being sexual violence experienced by children aged 6-12 years. This indicates that children need to learn self-protection efforts through the Self-Protection Model. The Self-Protection Model is an intervention model provided as an effort to address the issue of sexual violence against children. This study employs a quantitative experimental design. The study uses purposive sampling, targeting children aged 9-12 years; attending elementary school; and willing and permitted by the school to participate until the intervention sessions are completed, with a total of 10 boys and 10 girls. Data analysis shows a difference in the application of the Self-Protection Model. The results of the Wilcoxon test output "Test Statistics" indicate that the Asymp.Sig. (2-tailed) value is 0.000. Since the value of $0.000 < 0.05$, it can be concluded that H_a is accepted. This means there is a significant difference in assertive behavior between the pretest and posttest results, suggesting that the Self-Protection Model has an influence on children as a method of self-protection against sexual abuse.

Keywords: assertive behavior, self-protection model, sexual violence

Abstrak: Anak-anak rentan terhadap kekerasan seksual karena dianggap lemah atau tidak berdaya. Data penelitian menunjukkan bahwa 20% hingga 33% anak perempuan dan 10% hingga 16% anak laki-laki akan menjadi korban kekerasan seksual sebelum usia 18 tahun. Di Kabupaten Kubu Raya tercatat pada tahun 2021 terdapat 74 kasus kekerasan terhadap anak dan remaja, dengan mayoritas kasus berupa kekerasan seksual yang dialami oleh anak-anak usia 6-12 tahun. Ini menunjukkan bahwa anak-anak perlu mempelajari upaya perlindungan diri melalui Self-Protection Model. Model ini adalah model intervensi yang diberikan sebagai upaya untuk mengatasi masalah kekerasan seksual terhadap anak. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain eksperimen kuantitatif dengan sampel purposif, menargetkan anak-anak berusia 9-12 tahun, bersekolah di SD, dan bersedia serta diizinkan oleh pihak sekolah untuk berpartisipasi hingga sesi intervensi selesai. Sebanyak 10 anak laki-laki dan 10 anak perempuan berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini. Analisis data menunjukkan perbedaan dalam penerapan Self-Protection Model. Hasil dari uji Wilcoxon output "Test Statistics", diketahui Asymp.Sig. (2-tailed) bernilai 0,000. Karena nilai $0,000 < 0,05$ maka dapat disimpulkan bahwa H_a diterima. Artinya ada perbedaan antara hasil perilaku asertif untuk pretest dan posttest, sehingga dapat disimpulkan bahwa ada pengaruh dari Self-Protection Model terhadap anak sebagai upaya perlindungan diri dari kekerasan seksual.

Kata kunci: kekerasan seksual, perilaku asertif, *self-protection model*

INTRODUCTION

Child sexual violence is a global issue that continues to be a serious concern, with children often being victims due to their perceived weakness and powerlessness

(Hinkelman & Bruno, 2008). According to Havighurst (2005), one of the developmental tasks of children is learning to perform roles consistent with their gender. In this context, adequate sexual education is essential to equip children with knowledge about how to protect themselves from acts of sexual violence. Such education is not only important for preventing sexual violence but also for reducing long-term trauma that can disrupt children's daily activities (Deblinger et al., 2011).

Sexual violence is defined by Law No. 35 of 2014 as acts against children that cause physical, psychological, or sexual suffering, including threats of such actions. Literature reviews indicate that children often have

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minimal knowledge about sexual abuse or self-protection skills, with some even perceiving sexual touching as acceptable (Maleki et al., 2023). This lack of understanding exacerbates children's vulnerability to abusers, who are often from the victim's immediate environment (Hinkelman & Bruno, 2008). Data indicate that 20% to 33% of girls and 10% to 16% of boys will experience sexual violence before the age of 18 (Russell & Bolen, 2000). Children aged 8 to 12 years are particularly vulnerable, with the average age of first abuse being 9.9 years for boys and 9.6 years for girls (Hinkelman & Bruno, 2008).

The local context further reinforces the urgency of this research. In Kubu Raya Regency, 74 cases of violence against children and adolescents were recorded in 2021, with 19% involving sexual violence among children aged 6–12 years (Simfoni PPA, 2021). Most victims were girls (16.2%), while perpetrators were often individuals familiar to the victims. These data underscore the importance of early intervention to equip children with adequate self-protection skills.

Although various studies have highlighted the importance of assertive behavior in preventing sexual violence, there remains a lack of research directly evaluating educational interventions for assertiveness among children, particularly in Indonesia. Previous studies, such as Fernández-Fuertes et al. (2020), found that low levels of assertiveness contribute to an increased risk of sexual violence among adolescents. However, this study was limited to adolescent populations in Europe and did not include younger children.

Other research, such as Maleki et al. (2023), demonstrated that sexual violence prevention programs can improve self-disclosure skills and awareness among preschool children in Iran. However, this study focused on preschool-aged children and did not specifically evaluate assertive behavior. Similarly, Deblinger et al. (2011) highlighted the importance of trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy for children who have experienced sexual violence but did not explore primary prevention through the development of assertive behavior.

A study by Yuli Fitria (2023) in Banyuwangi revealed that assertiveness training effectively improves assertive skills in children. However, this study was limited to a local population and did not employ a quantitative experimental design with pretest-posttest evaluation. Additionally, it did not explicitly examine the relationship between assertive behavior and the prevention of sexual violence, leaving a gap to be addressed by further research.

This study aims to fill this literature gap by systematically evaluating the effectiveness of the Self-Protection Model (SPM) in enhancing assertive behavior among elementary school children. The research also seeks to provide a relevant contextual study in Indonesia, particularly in Kubu Raya Regency, to understand the local dynamics of implementing assertiveness-based interventions. Furthermore, the study employs an experimental design with pretest-posttest evaluations to directly assess the relationship between assertive behavior and the prevention of sexual violence among children.

The Self-Protection Model (SPM) is designed to integrate assertiveness education with knowledge-based self-protection strategies. This model aligns with Bloom's taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001), emphasizing that learning occurs through factual, conceptual, procedural, and metacognitive knowledge. Research shows that such intervention programs effectively enhance self-protection skills in children. For example, Maleki et al. (2023) demonstrated that educationally based sexual

violence prevention programs in Iran successfully improved children's self-disclosure skills and awareness.

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the Self-Protection Model (SPM) in enhancing assertive behavior among children in Kubu Raya Regency. By addressing existing literature gaps and providing relevant local context, this research offers both theoretical and practical contributions to understanding self-protection strategies for children. It also provides insights into the broader applicability of this model in educational settings across diverse cultural contexts.

METHOD

Participant characteristics and research design

This study employed a quantitative experimental design using a pretest-posttest framework. The data collection process utilized purposive sampling techniques. The measurement tool was a self-developed instrument, where the assertive behavior scale was constructed based on the aspects outlined by Hamzah B. Uno (2016), which states that the components of assertive behavior include the ability to express feelings, the ability to express beliefs and thoughts openly, and the ability to defend personal rights. The scale provided a score of 1 for "very inappropriate" responses, 2 for "inappropriate" responses, 3 for "appropriate" responses, and 4 for "very appropriate" responses. The Self-Protection Model (SPM) assertiveness scale consisted of 32 items, including 17 favorable items and 15 unfavorable items.

The measurement tool achieved a Cronbach's alpha reliability score of (.956) and used content validity methodology. The psychoeducation sessions were facilitated by two faculty members, who are also psychologists from the Faculty of Health Sciences at Muhammadiyah University of Pontianak. The intervention activities included, first psychoeducation providing knowledge related to sexual violence, including presenting scenarios of sexual violence cases, identifying potential perpetrators and victims, recognizing the characteristics of such violence, and understanding the impacts if sexual violence occurs. Second, psychoeducation on assertive behavior teaching about assertive behavior as a part of self-protection against sexual violence. Third, role-play activities, where the children simulated how to behave assertively when facing incidents of sexual violence. The pre-test was given before the intervention, and the post-test was given after all intervention activities were completed. Group counseling sessions in this study are listed in Table 1. The duration of each session was approximately 30–40 minutes with the following characteristics.

Sampling procedures

The population in this study includes children in Sungai Raya District, Kubu Raya Regency. The sampling method used in this research is purposive sampling. According to Sugiyono (in Saputra, 2022), purposive sampling is a sampling technique determined based on specific considerations to meet the needs of the research.

Intervention Design and Implementation

This study employed a structured intervention program designed to enhance assertive behavior in children using

the Self-Protection Model (SPM). The intervention consisted of three primary components, each developed based on theoretical frameworks and prior research on assertiveness training and sexual violence prevention (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Deblinger et al., 2011). The

program was implemented over four sessions, with each session lasting approximately 30–40 minutes. A detailed description of the sessions and their objectives is provided in Table 1.

Table 1
Stages of Research Implementation

Session	Methods	Information and Achievements
<i>Skimming</i>	Subject Selection	According to the research subject criteria
<i>Pretest</i>	Measurement Sclae	Subjects filled out the Self-Protection Model (SPM) questionnaire
<i>Building Raport</i>	Games	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to the research team and resource persons • The team conducts games • Q&A
Session 1. Material "Knowledge about Sex Education in Children"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Discussion and Q&A 	Children understamd the concepts of body parts, genital organs, and how to protect genital organs, as well as recognizing the signs of sexual harassment and demonstration activities.
Session 2. Material "Assertive Behavior in Acts of Sexual Violence"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Discussion and Q&A 	Children understand what assertive behavior is in preventing sexual harassment.
Session 3. Showing Sex Education Videos to Children and Role-Play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video Playback • Discussion and Q&A • <i>Role-Play</i> 	Children are given a refresher on sexual violence prevention through video presentations, role-play, and a question-and-answer session.
Posttest	Measurement Scale	Subjects fill out the Self-Protection Model (SPM) questionnaire.

Table 2
Description of Participant Characteristics

Respondent Characteristics	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	10	50%
Female	10	50%
Age		
9 years	-	-
10 years	-	-
11 years	7	35%
12 years	13	65%
Level of Education		
5 th Grade	20	100%

Training of Facilitators

Two trained facilitators, both psychologists from the Faculty of Health Sciences at Muhammadiyah University of Pontianak, conducted the intervention sessions. To ensure consistency and quality in the delivery of the program, the facilitators underwent preparatory training prior to the intervention. This training included several critical components. First, content mastery involved reviewing all materials related to sexual violence prevention and assertiveness training, ensuring a thorough understanding of the theoretical foundations and practical applications. Second, the facilitators practiced role-playing techniques to effectively model assertive behaviors and manage potential variations in participant responses. Third, the training covered child engagement strategies, which equipped facilitators with methods to maintain children's attention, encourage participation, and create a safe and supportive learning environment. Finally, standardized protocols were provided, including scripts and activity outlines, to ensure uniformity in the delivery of intervention sessions. These preparatory measures enabled the facilitators to address

the diverse needs of participants and respond effectively to questions or concerns raised during the sessions (Maleki et al., 2023).

Implementation of Intervention Sessions

The intervention sessions followed a structured format designed to enhance children's knowledge and assertive behavior. Session 1 focused on increasing children's understanding of sexual violence, including identifying signs of harassment, recognizing potential perpetrators, and understanding the importance of safeguarding personal boundaries. Interactive discussions and demonstrations were utilized to reinforce these concepts. Session 2 provided education on assertive behavior, emphasizing its role as a protective strategy against sexual violence. Practical examples of assertive responses to unsafe situations were introduced to enhance applicability. Session 3 incorporated role-playing activities where children practiced assertive behaviors in simulated scenarios. Video presentations were included to refresh and consolidate previously learned concepts. Each session concluded with a question-and-answer segment to address uncertainties and reinforce key messages. The design of the intervention ensured that the material was age-appropriate, engaging, and directly applicable to real-life situations faced by children. Pretests and posttests were administered before and after the intervention to evaluate changes in assertive behavior, providing valuable insights into the program's effectiveness.

Sample size, power, and precision

The measurement tool used is an instrument designed by the researcher, where the assertive behavior scale is based on aspects from Hamzah B. Uno (2016), which states that the aspects of assertive behavior consist of the ability to express feelings, the ability to express beliefs and

thoughts openly, and the ability to defend personal rights, and then modified by the researcher according to the needs of the study. This study uses several methods to collect data to obtain information related to the research being conducted, namely interviews and scales as research instruments.

Data analysis

The data analysis for this research utilized the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test, a non-parametric statistical test suitable for comparing paired samples. The Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test is highly effective in detecting differences between pretest and posttest scores within the same group. The significance condition for interpretation, where sig (p-value) > 0.05, indicates that the data are normally distributed. The primary objective of the data analysis is to identify significant differences in assertive

behavior before and after the intervention within the group. This analysis helps in understanding the effectiveness of the self-protection model in enhancing assertive behavior as a strategy to combat sexual abuse in children.

RESULTS OF STUDY

This research used a usable try-out conducted as a pilot test and simultaneously as a survey by distributing an assertive behavior scale in the form of pretest and posttest, which were directly given to the subjects. The study involved 20 children from SDN 03 Sungai Raya, consisting of 10 boys and 10 girls. The comparison of effectiveness was analyzed through the results of the pretest and posttest.

Table 3
Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test Results for Pretest and Posttest Scores

Comparison	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Test Statistic	Value
Negative Ranks (Posttest < Pretest)	1	5.00	5.00	Z-Score	-3.625
Positive Ranks (Posttest > Pretest)	18	10.28	185.00	Asymptotic Significance (2-tailed)	.000
Ties (Posttest = Pretest)	1	-	-		
Total	20				

Negative ranks, both in terms of N, Mean Ranks, and Sum of Ranks, show a value of 1. This indicates a decrease from the pretest score to the posttest score. Positive ranks show that there are 18 positive data points in N, meaning that 18 children experienced an increase in assertive behavior after the intervention, from pretest to posttest. The Mean Rank, or average increase, is 10.28, and the Sum of Ranks is 185.00. Ties refer to the similarity between pretest and posttest scores, with a value of 1, indicating

that one child had the same score for both pretest and posttest.

Based on the output of "Test Statistics" the Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) is 0.000. Since the value of 0.000 is less than 0.05, it can be concluded that H_a is accepted. This means there is a significant difference between the assertive behavior results for pretest and posttest, indicating that the Self-Protection Model (SPM) has an influence on the children.

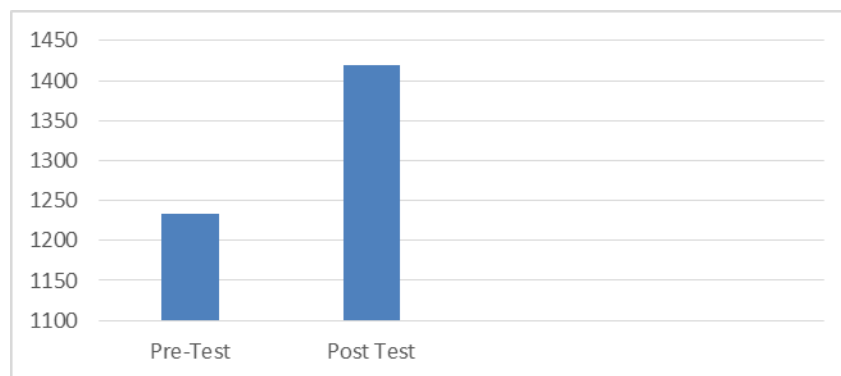


Figure 1. Comparison of pretest and posttest

The graphical comparison of pretest and posttest scores highlights a notable shift in assertive behavior, with all participants scoring higher in the posttest. This visualization supports the quantitative findings and demonstrates the practical impact of the intervention. Before the intervention, the group scored predominantly low in assertive behavior, reflecting limited knowledge and skills in self-protection. After the intervention, participants showed marked improvements, achieving higher scores across all measured dimensions of assertive behavior.

These improvements align with the objectives of the SPM program, which integrates knowledge provision, assertiveness training, and role-playing to empower children against sexual violence.

The Self-Protection Model (SPM) program, which includes stages such as providing knowledge about sexual education for children, assertive behavior in response to sexual abuse, showing educational videos on sexual education, and role-playing activities, has effectively increased assertive behavior in children.

The results of this study are consistent with previous research that has employed models to measure children's abilities and skills in dealing with sexual abuse. However, previous research has not yet demonstrated an experimental model that directly teaches and observes children's capabilities through assertive behavior activities in response to sexual abuse. The findings of Linehan (Shorey et al., 2012) identified several skills that, if possessed by an individual, can prevent or reduce the occurrence of abuse.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the Self-Protection Model (SPM) in enhancing children's assertive behavior as a protective measure against sexual violence. Results from the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test demonstrated a statistically significant difference between pretest and posttest scores ($Z = -3.625$, $p = 0.000$), confirming the hypothesis that the implementation of the SPM effectively improves assertive behavior in children. These findings align with Uno's (2006) theory of assertiveness, which describes the ability to express thoughts and feelings clearly, defend oneself, and maintain one's opinions. By following the intervention stages, children demonstrated an enhanced ability to engage in self-protective actions, such as opposing unsafe situations assertively.

The study findings strongly reinforce the theoretical framework that positions assertiveness as a fundamental component of child protection. Assertive behavior encompasses the ability to express thoughts and feelings clearly, defend personal boundaries, and effectively respond to external pressures or threats. These abilities are particularly crucial in preventing sexual violence, as they empower children to resist manipulation and coercion. The results of this study demonstrate significant improvements across these dimensions, suggesting that the Self-Protection Model (SPM) is an effective tool for fostering assertive behavior in children.

These findings align with the work of Maleki et al. (2023), who emphasized the importance of education-based interventions in equipping children with the necessary skills to protect themselves. Maleki et al. noted that interventions combining knowledge provision with practical skill-building activities, such as role-playing and interactive discussions, are more effective in helping children internalize self-protection behaviors Fernández-Fuertes & Fernández-Rouco (2020). Similarly, Gubbels et al. (2021) highlighted that programs incorporating active engagement techniques, such as simulations and practice scenarios, yield higher retention of protective skills among children. This is supported by the findings of Yusof et al. (2022), who demonstrated that interactive learning strategies significantly improve children's ability to recognize and respond to unsafe situations, particularly in contexts involving personal safety and sexual violence prevention.

The incorporation of such activities in the SPM aligns well with this approach, suggesting that experiential learning methods are particularly effective for young learners. Experiential learning is further validated by Kolb's experiential learning theory, which underscores the importance of hands-on activities in fostering critical skills, including self-protection (Kolb, 2015). Complementary findings by Chan et al. (2021) suggest that programs integrating experiential methods, such as role-playing, lead

to more significant behavioral changes than those relying solely on lecture-based approaches. Additionally, Muir et al. (2022) argued that children are more likely to internalize and apply learned behaviors when interventions are delivered in an engaging, participatory format that mirrors real-life scenarios.

The emphasis on role-playing as a method to practice assertive responses has also been supported by Hillis et al. (2016), who found that children who actively practice protective behaviors in structured environments demonstrate greater confidence and competence in handling real-world threats. These findings collectively reinforce the efficacy of the SPM's design, which integrates both knowledge and skill-building activities to promote assertive behaviors and enhance children's self-protection abilities.

The role of assertive behavior as a protective factor is further supported by Shorey et al. (2012), who found that assertiveness training enhances children's ability to resist and report instances of abuse. They identified that practicing assertive responses helps children build confidence and reduces their vulnerability to victimization. This study expands upon these findings by demonstrating that a structured model like the SPM can lead to statistically significant improvements in assertive behavior, as evidenced by the Wilcoxon test results.

Additionally, the findings support Uno's (2006) assertion that assertiveness is not only about defending oneself but also about maintaining self-respect and equal standing in interpersonal relationships. This aligns with the broader goals of child protection, which include fostering a sense of agency and resilience in children. By improving children's assertive behavior, the SPM contributes to their overall psychological well-being, equipping them with lifelong skills to navigate interpersonal challenges safely and confidently.

The improvements observed in this study are also consistent with the recommendations of Deblinger et al. (2011), who emphasized the importance of integrating behavioral and cognitive approaches in interventions for child protection. Combining psychoeducation with role-playing activities addresses both the knowledge and practical application aspects of assertive behavior, creating a comprehensive learning experience for children.

While this study provides strong evidence for the effectiveness of the SPM, future research could explore additional dimensions of assertive behavior, such as its long-term sustainability and adaptability in different cultural contexts. For example, Nevid, Rathus, & Greene (2019) suggested that cultural norms and family dynamics significantly influence how children express assertiveness. Incorporating these considerations into future interventions could further enhance the relevance and effectiveness of assertiveness training.

The local cultural context likely influenced the outcomes of this study. In Indonesian communities, children are often taught to prioritize obedience and respect, which might limit their willingness to assert themselves in certain situations. This cultural tendency may explain why the aspect of expressing beliefs and thoughts openly remained relatively low, even after the intervention. Addressing this barrier requires culturally sensitive approaches that balance assertiveness training with local norms and values (Hinkelman & Bruno, 2008). Integrating parents and teachers into the intervention process could help reinforce the lessons of assertiveness within a supportive cultural framework.

The findings suggest that the SPM can be effectively applied in various educational settings to improve

children's self-protection against sexual violence. Schools can adopt this model to promote assertive behavior as part of their child protection programs. Additionally, training for teachers and parents on assertiveness and child protection can further enhance the effectiveness and scalability of the program. These initiatives align with global recommendations for holistic approaches to child safety, emphasizing community-wide involvement (Deblinger et al., 2011).

This study has several limitations. The small sample size ($n = 20$) limits the generalizability of the findings, and the absence of a control group prevents a comparative analysis. Future research should include larger, more diverse samples and employ a randomized control trial design to strengthen the validity of the findings. Additionally, longitudinal studies are needed to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of the SPM in maintaining assertive behavior over time. Expanding the scope of the intervention to include digital tools or cross-institutional collaborations could further enhance its accessibility and scalability.

This study demonstrates that the Self-Protection Model is an effective intervention for enhancing assertive behavior in children, contributing both theoretically and practically to the literature on child protection. By addressing existing gaps and offering culturally sensitive recommendations, this research paves the way for more comprehensive and sustainable approaches to preventing sexual violence against children.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the research and discussion presented, it can be concluded that the results of this study show a positive influence between the Self-Protection Model (SPM) and assertive behavior in children. The higher the assertive behavior, the stronger the self-protection efforts against sexual violence in children. The school is expected to continue the Self-Protection Model (SPM) program not only for the students themselves but also to share this knowledge with peers outside of Elementary School 03 Sungai Raya. The Wilcoxon test results show a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest assertive scores ($Z = -3.625$, $p = 0.000$). This finding reinforces the hypothesis that the provision of the Self-Protection Model enhances assertive behavior in children as a self-protective effort against sexual violence.

In conclusion, this study provides evidence supporting the effectiveness of the Self-Protection Model on children's assertive behavior regarding sexual violence, in line with the theory proposed by Hamzah B. Uno (2006), which states that assertiveness is the ability to clearly express thoughts and feelings, to defend oneself, and to maintain one's opinions. Assertive behavior is characterized by decisiveness and the courage to express opinions.

However, this study has several limitations that need to be acknowledged. The small sample size and the lack of a control group for comparison with the experimental group are notable limitations. Future research should consider using a larger sample size and employing a control group for comparison to broaden the resulting data. Future studies could explore the longitudinal effects of the effectiveness of the Self-Protection Model (SPM) on children's assertive behavior regarding sexual violence to determine its long-term impact on children.

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DECLARATIONS

Ethics approval and consent to participate

The researcher has obtained permission from the school to conduct the research.

Consent for publication

The researcher has received permission from the supervisors to publish this research.

Availability of data and material

"Not Applicable".

Competing interest

"Not Applicable".

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