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Governance for Sexual Bullying Prevention among Students with Special Needs in Pekanbaru Special Schools

Achmad Fauzi[1*], Seno Andri[2], Muchid Albintani[1], Febri Yuliani[1]
[1]Public Administration Study Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Riau, Pekanbaru, Indonesia
[2]Business Administration Study Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Riau, Pekanbaru, Indonesia

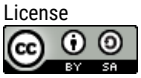
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*Corresponding Author Email:
achmad.fauzi675@grad.unri.ac.id

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Abstract: Students with Special Needs are a vulnerable group with a high risk of experiencing sexual bullying in educational environments. Special Schools in Pekanbaru City face challenges in preventing and handling cases of sexual bullying against students with special needs due to limitations in integrated governance systems. This study aims to analyze the implementation of anti-sexual bullying governance and design an effective networking governance model for protecting students with special needs in Special Schools throughout Pekanbaru City. A qualitative approach using the case study method was conducted across all Special Schools in Pekanbaru, involving in-depth interviews with principals, teachers, parents, and related stakeholders. Policy document analysis and school environment observations were also conducted to obtain comprehensive data. The research findings indicate that anti-sexual bullying governance in Pekanbaru Special Schools remains partial and not yet integrated among stakeholders. A networking governance model is needed that involves systematic collaboration between schools, families, education departments, child protection institutions, and communities. This model includes early detection systems, safe reporting mechanisms, victim assistance, and sustainable prevention programs. The implementation of networking governance is expected to create a safe and protective learning environment for students with special needs, while strengthening institutional capacity in preventing sexual bullying.

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INTRODUCTION

Sexual bullying in educational settings has emerged as a critical global concern, affecting millions of students worldwide and posing significant threats to their physical, emotional, and academic well-being. According to recent global burden studies, childhood sexual abuse and bullying accounted for 0.02% and 0.28% of global all-cause deaths and disability-adjusted life years, respectively, in 2019. Global burden of diseases attributable to childhood sexual abuse and bullying: findings from 1990 to 2019 and predictions to 2035 | Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology (Xiong et al., 2025). The pervasive nature of this phenomenon transcends geographical and cultural boundaries, demanding urgent attention from policymakers, educators, and communities worldwide to create safe learning environments for all students.

Students with special needs represent one of the most vulnerable populations in educational contexts, experiencing disproportionately higher rates of bullying and sexual harassment compared to their typically developing peers. Recent data indicate that teenagers with developmental disabilities (44.4%) were more likely to be bullied than teenagers without developmental disabilities (31.3%). Bullying Statistics – PACER Center (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024). Research consistently shows that students with autism spectrum disorder are among those who suffer most from bullying, with female students receiving special education services being 3.9 times more likely to be victims and 4.8 times more likely to be bully-victims than their peers without disabilities NCBITaylor & Francis Online (Farmer et al., 2012). Addressing sexual bullying in educational institutions presents complex challenges that cannot be effectively resolved through traditional hierarchical governance structures alone. These challenges demand innovative governance approaches that facilitate coordination among multiple stakeholders and enable flexible, context-responsive solutions. The

multifaceted nature of sexual bullying—encompassing psychological, social, legal, and educational dimensions—requires collaborative frameworks that transcend organizational boundaries and leverage diverse expertise and resources.

Network governance has emerged as a critical framework for managing collaborative arrangements among public institutions, private sector entities, and civil society organizations, particularly in addressing complex social problems that necessitate multi-stakeholder engagement (George et al., 2024). This governance model moves beyond simple coordination to create integrated systems where different actors work collaboratively toward shared objectives while maintaining their distinct roles and responsibilities. Research demonstrates that network management and trust are essential factors in achieving desired network outcomes, as evidenced by meta-analyses examining the effectiveness of collaborative governance across diverse public administration contexts (George et al., 2024).

In the context of sexual bullying prevention within special education settings, network governance offers particular advantages. This approach emphasizes building trust among stakeholders, managing collaborative relationships effectively, and establishing sustainable coordination mechanisms that can respond to evolving challenges. The framework acknowledges that the effective protection of vulnerable student populations necessitates sustained collaboration among schools, families, government agencies, healthcare providers, law enforcement, and community organizations—each bringing unique capabilities and perspectives essential for comprehensive prevention strategies.

Indonesia faces significant challenges with bullying in its educational system, with recent national assessments revealing alarming statistics about violence against students. According to the 2022 National Assessment, 36% of students in Indonesia were at risk of experiencing bullying, 35% of experiencing sexual violence, and 27% of experiencing physical punishment (Ministry of Education, 2022). While the Global School-based Health Survey showed that 20.6% of Indonesian students aged 13-17 years were bullied, which is lower than in other Southeast Asian countries (28.3-51.0%) (Nurhayati et al., 2020), the absolute numbers remain concerning, given Indonesia's large student population.

Special schools (*Sekolah Luar Biasa* - SLB) in Indonesia cater to students with various disabilities and special educational needs, creating unique environments that require specialized protection mechanisms against sexual bullying. Indonesian research indicates that school bullying can be caused by differences in race, sexuality, religion, disabilities and abilities, weight, height, or anything that creates differences between children (Nurhayati et al., 2020). The vulnerability of students with special needs in SLB settings is compounded by communication barriers, dependency relationships, and limited self-advocacy skills, making them particularly susceptible to various forms of abuse and exploitation.

Pekanbaru, as the capital city of Riau Province, hosts multiple SLB institutions serving diverse populations of students with special needs. The city's educational landscape reflects broader Indonesian challenges while presenting unique local contexts that influence governance structures and stakeholder relationships. Research literature highlights a global trend towards replacing "hard" governance with "soft" governance in education, whereby legally binding procedures are replaced by advice and persuasion, amplified by datafication and digitalization (Dovigo, 2024). This transition creates both opportunities and challenges for implementing effective protection mechanisms in SLB settings.

Despite growing recognition of the need for comprehensive anti-bullying strategies, a significant gap persists in understanding how network governance can be effectively implemented to prevent sexual bullying against students with special needs in Indonesian SLB contexts. Current research emphasizes that managing network and collaborative arrangements is essential to mitigate risks of failure and enable networks to achieve desired outcomes in terms of more effective and democratic governance (Netherlands Institute of Governance, 2025). This study addresses this critical gap by examining the current state of governance mechanisms in SLB Pekanbaru and proposing a network governance model that can effectively protect vulnerable students while strengthening institutional capacity for sustainable prevention efforts.

Indonesia confronts an escalating crisis of violence and bullying within its educational system, with recent data revealing alarming trends that demand urgent policy intervention. According to the Indonesian Education Monitoring Network (Jaringan Pemantau Pendidikan Indonesia/JPPI), reported cases of violence in educational settings surged dramatically from 285 cases in 2023 to 573 cases in 2024, representing more

than a 100% increase within a single year (JPPI, 2024). Of these cases, approximately 31% were directly related to bullying incidents, indicating that peer-to-peer aggression remains the predominant form of school violence. The Indonesian Child Protection Commission (Komisi Perlindungan Anak Indonesia/KPAI) reported that approximately 21,000 children fell victim to violence in 2024, marking a 34% increase from the previous year, with 17% of these incidents occurring within educational institutions (KPAI, 2024).

National assessment data corroborate these troubling trends. The 2022 National Assessment conducted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology revealed that 36% of Indonesian students were at risk of experiencing bullying, 35% were vulnerable to sexual violence, and 27% faced the threat of physical punishment (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2022). These figures underscore the pervasive nature of violence across multiple forms within Indonesian schools. International comparative data further highlight Indonesia's disproportionate burden: the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey found that 41% of Indonesian students reported experiencing bullying at least several times per month, nearly double the 23% average reported across Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries (OECD, 2019). This substantial disparity positions Indonesia among the countries with the highest bullying prevalence globally, signaling systemic challenges in creating safe learning environments.

Geographical analysis reveals concentrated patterns of violence. Throughout 2024, three provinces reported the highest numbers of bullying cases: East Java, with 81 incidents, West Java, with 56 cases, and Central Java, with 45 cases, collectively accounting for over one-third of the national cases (JPPI, 2024). These provincial concentrations suggest regional variations in school governance, community awareness, and reporting mechanisms. The Indonesian Teachers' Union Federation (Federasi Serikat Guru Indonesia/FSGI) documented that bullying incidents disproportionately affected junior high school students, representing 50% of all cases in 2023, followed by elementary school students (30%), senior high school students (10%), and vocational high school students (10%) (FSGI, 2023). This age-based distribution indicates that early adolescence represents a particularly vulnerable developmental period requiring targeted intervention strategies.

Students with special needs experience significantly elevated rates of bullying victimization compared to their typically developing peers, representing one of the most vulnerable populations within Indonesian educational contexts. UNESCO's comprehensive literature review encompassing over 300 publications confirmed that all forms of bullying victimize children with disabilities at substantially higher rates than children without disabilities (UNESCO, 2021). Recent Indonesian research corroborates this global pattern: a 2023 national survey found that children with disabilities frequently become targets of bullying due to their perceived differences, communication limitations, and dependency on others (Buchori & Wulandari, 2023). A 2023 Kompas poll involving 512 respondents across 34 provinces revealed that three out of ten respondents perceived that Indonesian society had not fully accepted children with disabilities, with 4.4% of respondents indicating that society could not accept these children at all (Kompas, 2023). This societal stigma creates permissive environments where bullying of students with special needs is normalized or inadequately addressed.

Indonesia's special education system comprises 6,764 special schools (Sekolah Luar Biasa/SLB) that span preschool through high school levels, serving students with various disabilities, including visual, hearing, intellectual, physical, and multiple impairments (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2023). Despite dedicated infrastructure, these institutions face substantial challenges in providing comprehensive protection against bullying. Research conducted in West Java revealed that many SLB students who attempted integration into mainstream schools returned to special schools after experiencing abandonment by teachers who lacked the requisite skills and demonstrated an unwillingness to accommodate their needs. Some educators expressed concern that special needs students would 'disturb' other students (Tempo, 2018). This segregation, while providing specialized services, can inadvertently create isolated environments with limited external oversight, potentially allowing undetected bullying incidents to occur.

Female students with disabilities face compounded vulnerabilities, experiencing intersectional discrimination based on both gender and disability status. A 2024 World Bank symposium highlighted that female students with disabilities continue confronting stereotypes and stigma that

impede their educational access and create elevated risks for sexual violence and harassment (World Bank, 2024). This intersectionality demands gender-responsive governance approaches that acknowledge the specific protection needs of girls with disabilities, who may face unique barriers to reporting incidents due to cultural sensitivities, communication limitations, and fears of family shame or institutional retaliation.

Recent Regulatory Framework

Responding to mounting public concern, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology issued Regulation Number 46 of 2023 concerning violence prevention and handling in educational units, including provisions for addressing gender-based violence (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2023). This regulation represents significant progress in establishing formal mechanisms for reporting, investigating, and taking disciplinary action regarding violence. The regulation mandates that all educational institutions establish Violence Prevention and Handling Teams (Tim Pencegahan dan Penanganan Kekerasan/TPPK) within six months of promulgation, requiring comprehensive team formation by January 2024. This policy development reflects successful advocacy by civil society organizations, including the Network for Education Watch Indonesia (NEW Indonesia/JPPI), which collaborated extensively with government stakeholders to formulate evidence-based prevention strategies.

Implementation Challenges and Compliance Gaps

Despite regulatory advancement, implementation remains inconsistent and incomplete. Education monitoring organizations report that numerous schools, particularly in remote areas and resource-constrained settings, have not yet established mandated TPPK teams or have formed teams only nominally without operational capacity (P2G, 2024). The Indonesian Teachers' Association emphasized that violence prevention regulations remain inadequately socialized in Islamic boarding schools (*madrasah*) and religious educational institutions (*pesantren*), with 92 bullying cases documented in *madrasah* and 114 cases in *pesantren* during 2024, indicating that religious educational settings require targeted policy attention (JPPI, 2024). Furthermore, the regulation's emphasis on reactive response mechanisms—reporting and investigation after incidents occur—reflects insufficient attention to proactive prevention strategies that address root causes and build protective school cultures.

The Imperative for Collaborative Approaches

The escalating violence crisis, coupled with heightened vulnerabilities of special needs students and persistent implementation gaps, underscores the inadequacy of traditional hierarchical governance approaches. Single-institution responses prove insufficient given the multidimensional nature of bullying, which intersects with family dynamics, community norms, socioeconomic factors, and systemic educational challenges. The specific context of Pekanbaru, as the capital of Riau Province—one of the regions experiencing concerning bullying trends—necessitates innovative governance mechanisms that can coordinate action across multiple stakeholders, including SLB administrators, teachers, parents, government education offices, child protection services, healthcare providers, law enforcement, and civil society organizations.

Research Significance and Gap Identification

While national statistics document the scope of Indonesia's bullying crisis and regulatory frameworks establish formal prevention requirements, substantial knowledge gaps persist regarding effective governance mechanisms specifically designed for special education contexts. Existing research predominantly focuses on mainstream educational settings, with limited empirical investigation of bullying prevention in SLB environments where students present diverse communication capabilities, dependency relationships, and protection needs. Furthermore, scholarship examining the implementation of collaborative governance in Indonesian education remains nascent, particularly concerning how network approaches can bridge policy-practice gaps, strengthen institutional capacity, and create sustainable protection systems. This study addresses these critical lacunae by investigating the potential of network governance for preventing sexual bullying in Pekanbaru SLB institutions, thereby contributing both theoretical insights into collaborative

governance in non-Western educational contexts and practical knowledge applicable to Indonesia's evolving child protection framework.

Literature Review

1. Sexual Bullying: Concepts and Impacts in Educational Context

Sexual bullying represents a complex form of aggression with serious impacts on student well-being in educational environments. Hall (2016) defined sexual bullying as one dimension of bullying that encompasses both physical and non-physical behaviors based on an individual's sexuality or gender. The long-term impacts of sexual bullying are highly significant for child development. Xiong et al. (2025) in their global burden of disease study found that childhood sexual abuse and bullying contributed to 0.02% and 0.28% of total global deaths and disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) in 2019. Longitudinal studies demonstrate that victims of sexual bullying experience higher risks of depression, anxiety, sleep difficulties, insecurity, loneliness, physical and mental symptoms, and poor academic performance (Hymel & Swearer, 2015). Espelage, Hong, Rao, & Thornberg (2017) identified that sexual bullying often goes undetected because victims are reluctant to report incidents due to stigma, shame, and fear of retaliation. This creates a perpetual cycle of violence and worsens the psychological condition of victims.

2. Students with Special Needs as Vulnerable Populations

Students with special needs represent a highly vulnerable population to various forms of bullying, including sexual bullying. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2024) reported that teenagers with developmental disabilities (44.4%) were more likely to experience bullying compared to teenagers without developmental disabilities (31.3%). This data indicates a vulnerability rate nearly twice as high. Farmer et al. (2012) in comprehensive research found that female students receiving special education services were 3.9 times more likely to be victims and 4.8 times more likely to be bully-victims compared to peers without disabilities. Similar findings were also discovered by Blake, Lund, Zhou, and Benz (2012) in the United States, confirming consistent patterns across geographic locations.

UNESCO (2021), in an extensive literature review encompassing over 300 publications, reported that children with disabilities are victims of all forms of bullying and significantly more often victims of bullying compared to children without disabilities. Menesini and Salmivalli (2017) analyzed global data and found that students with the highest risk of experiencing bullying are those with disabilities, suffering from obesity, or belonging to ethnic or sexual minorities. Research by Rose, Monda-Amaya, and Espelage (2011) identified that students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) suffer most from bullying due to their status as individuals with special educational needs. Limited communication characteristics, difficulties in social interactions, and dependence on adults make students with special needs easy targets for bullying perpetrators.

3. Networking Governance in Educational Context

The concept of networking governance has evolved into an increasingly important approach in addressing complex problems in the public sector, including education. Ansell and Gash (2008) defined collaborative governance as arrangements where one or more public institutions directly involve non-state stakeholders in formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative collective decision-making processes to implement or create public policy. In a comprehensive meta-analysis, George et al. (2024) confirmed that network management and trust have a significant influence on network outcomes. Their research analyzed 50 effect sizes from public administration studies and found that collaborative governance and network governance assume that network management and trust are important for achieving desired network outcomes.

Dovigo (2024) proposed an innovative networking governance model for global education, led by UNESCO as a global convener. This model responds to the global trend toward replacing "hard governance" with "soft governance" in education, where legally binding procedures are replaced by advice and persuasion. This approach is highly relevant for bullying prevention contexts that require multi-stakeholder collaboration.

Netherlands Institute of Governance (2025) emphasizes that transformations of state and society over the last 3 decades have increased the importance of various forms of collaborative and network governance in shaping and implementing public policy. This includes partnerships, arrangements to foster co-produced public services, and engaging public, private, and civil society actors at transnational, national, regional, and local levels.

4. Anti-Bullying Policies and Interventions in Special Schools

Research on the effectiveness of anti-bullying policies shows varied results. In a systematic review, Gower and Borowsky (2017) found that although anti-bullying policies are prevalent, knowledge about their effectiveness remains limited. Several studies have shown that the presence or quality of policies is associated with lower bullying rates among students, while other studies have found no such associations. Ttofi and Farrington (2011), in a comprehensive meta-analysis of anti-bullying programs, found that the most effective interventions are those using whole-school approaches, involving multiple components, and lasting for sufficiently long periods. Programs such as KiVa, the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, and Steps to Respect have shown promising results.

Fink et al. (2015) developed and validated the Bullying Behaviour and Experience Scale specifically to assess bullying and victimization experiences of children with special educational needs in general schools. This instrument accommodates the unique characteristics of students with special needs, providing more accurate measurements. Houchins, Oakes, and Johnson (2016), in a systematic literature review of bullying intervention studies for students with disabilities, found that the most effective interventions involve: (1) systematic staff training, (2) clear policy development, (3) peer support programs, and (4) individual interventions for victims and perpetrators.

5. Indonesian Context and Implementation in Special Schools

Indonesia faces significant challenges in addressing bullying in its education system. The Ministry of Education (2022) reported that 36% of Indonesian students are at risk of experiencing bullying, 35% experience sexual violence, and 27% experience physical punishment. Although the Global School-based Health Survey showed that 20.6% of Indonesian students aged 13-17 experienced bullying, which is lower than in other Southeast Asian countries (28.3-51.0%), the absolute numbers remain concerning (Nurhayati et al., 2020).

Nurhayati et al. (2020) in qualitative research in Mataram identified seven main themes related to school bullying: (1) Bullying as a problem, (2) Causes of bullying, (3) Effects of bullying, (4) Curricular interventions, (5) Cultural interventions, (6) Institutional interventions, and (7) Challenges and recommendations. This research demonstrates that moral education in the curriculum and cultural activities are avenues for school bullying prevention.

Indonesia's unique cultural context, with the world's largest Muslim population (87%) and ethnic diversity of more than 300 groups, provides special characteristics in anti-bullying approaches. Islamic teachings emphasize that "there shall be no infliction of harm on oneself or others" and that education to respect differences becomes a strong cultural foundation (Nurhayati et al., 2020). Statistics Indonesia (2023) shows that bullying is more common among Indonesian children and adolescents at the junior high school level compared to other educational levels, with 35.55% of fifth-grade students reporting experiencing bullying, while 30.31% of high school students reported being bullied.

6. Collaborative Governance in Educational Policy Implementation

Bonny and Cahlikova (2025), in a case study of a digital education project in Switzerland, explored cross-sector collaboration structures resembling collaborative governance regimes with distinct roles attributed to specific stakeholders. Their findings indicated that the lack of leadership and a lack of clarity on each partner's role during the pilot phase did not allow for the creation of a shared understanding among the involved partners.

Cairney et al. (2023), in a qualitative systematic review of collaborative policymaking, found that complex policy problems cannot be solved with simple solutions by a few powerful policy actors within a single central government. They require collaboration across government and between actors inside and outside of government. Ansell and Gash (2008) identified critical variables that influence whether

this mode of governance will produce successful collaboration, including: prior history of conflict or cooperation, incentives for stakeholders to participate, power and resource imbalances, leadership, and institutional design.

7. Gaps in Existing Research

Despite extensive research on bullying against students with special needs and collaborative governance in education, several significant gaps are identified: First, limitations in measurement instruments specific to students with special needs. Rodriguez-Hidalgo et al. (2019) developed instruments to measure traditional bullying and discriminatory bullying around special educational needs, but instruments specifically for sexual bullying contexts in special schools remain very limited.

Second, there is a lack of research on implementing networking governance in preventing sexual bullying in special education settings. The majority of collaborative governance research focuses on issues such as water management, public health, or environmental policy, with few exploring its application in protecting students with special needs. Third, Indonesia's unique cultural and institutional context requires adapted governance models. Nurhayati et al. (2020) emphasized the need to modify existing interventions to respond to societal changes in Indonesia, but research on how networking governance can be adapted for Indonesian special school contexts remains very limited.

Fourth, there is a lack of longitudinal research on the long-term effectiveness of implementing networking governance. The majority of existing studies are cross-sectional or evaluate programs in the short term. Fifth, gaps in understanding how specific characteristics of students with special needs (such as communication limitations, dependence, and vulnerability) affect the design and implementation of effective governance systems. This research aims to fill these gaps by exploring the implementation of networking governance for preventing sexual bullying against students with special needs in Special Schools in Pekanbaru City, considering cultural, institutional contexts, and unique characteristics of the population served.

The systematic review of recent literature on sexual bullying prevention, students with special needs, and governance in education reveals a multifaceted landscape of scholarly inquiry spanning from 2022 to 2025 (See. Supplementary Files). This comprehensive analysis of 25 contemporary studies demonstrates the growing recognition of the intersection between educational governance, child protection, and the unique vulnerabilities of students with disabilities. The literature encompasses three primary thematic clusters: (1) the heightened vulnerability of students with special needs to various forms of bullying and sexual exploitation, (2) the effectiveness of prevention and intervention programs specifically designed for this population, and (3) the emergence of collaborative and network governance models as frameworks for addressing complex educational challenges. These interconnected themes provide crucial context for understanding both the magnitude of the problem and the innovative approaches being developed to address it.

A significant body of recent research consistently confirms that students with disabilities experience disproportionately higher rates of bullying victimization compared to their typically developing peers. Ručman and Šulc (2025) documented that students with disabilities face complex dilemmas, including fear of retribution, shame, and reluctance to burden their parents when experiencing bullying. Similarly, Bright et al. (2022) established that children with intellectual and developmental disabilities are at significantly elevated risk for multiple forms of interpersonal victimization. This vulnerability is further compounded by communication barriers, dependency relationships, and limited self-advocacy skills, as highlighted by McMinn et al. (2024) in their examination of children with special educational needs facing child sexual exploitation and abuse. The convergence of these findings underscores a critical imperative: traditional approaches to bullying prevention, designed primarily for mainstream educational contexts, prove inadequate for addressing the unique protection needs of students with disabilities.

The literature also provides important insights into the effectiveness of interventions and the challenges of their implementation. Research by Reis et al. (2022) demonstrates that knowledge acquisition about sexual abuse does not automatically translate into protective behaviors, suggesting the need for more comprehensive, practice-oriented prevention programs. Hikmat et al. (2024) identified

that effective anti-bullying interventions require collaborative approaches integrating psychoeducation, empathy training, counseling, and self-management strategies. Lu et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of the 'train-the-trainer' model in contexts with educator shortages, while Guastaferro et al. (2023) demonstrated that universal school-based prevention programs require sustained policy support and ongoing teacher training. However, a critical gap emerges from these studies: while they establish the effectiveness of specific intervention components, they predominantly focus on programmatic interventions within individual schools, rather than examining the broader governance systems necessary for systematic and sustainable implementation across multiple institutions serving vulnerable populations.

The third thematic cluster addresses collaborative and network governance as emerging frameworks for managing complex educational challenges. Dovigo (2024) proposed that network governance models, characterized by the shift from 'hard' to 'soft' governance mechanisms, offer promising approaches for coordinating multi-stakeholder action in education. George et al. (2024) provided empirical validation through meta-analysis, confirming that network management and trust significantly influence collaborative outcomes in public administration contexts. The OECD (2023) documented the evolution of multi-stakeholder partnerships through innovation labs and expertise centers, while García et al. (2024) mapped the complex governance networks that emerged during educational digitalization. Cairney et al. (2023) emphasized that complex policy problems require collaboration across governmental boundaries and between public, private, and civil society actors. However, these governance studies predominantly focus on digital education, curriculum implementation, or general educational policy, with limited application to the specific context of child protection and sexual bullying prevention in special education settings.

This research addresses the identified gaps through a comprehensive investigation of network governance for sexual bullying prevention among students with special needs in Pekanbaru Special Schools, offering several distinctive contributions to existing scholarship. First and foremost, this study represents the first empirical examination of network governance mechanisms specifically designed for preventing sexual bullying in special education contexts. While existing literature treats governance frameworks and special education protection as separate domains, this research demonstrates how collaborative governance theory can be operationalized to address the unique protection needs of students with disabilities. By conducting an in-depth multiple case study across eight special schools (SLB) in Pekanbaru serving 580 students with diverse disabilities, this research provides concrete evidence regarding how network governance functions—or fails to function—in protecting one of the most vulnerable student populations.

Second, this study makes a significant contribution by developing and validating a culturally-adapted network governance model specifically designed for the Indonesian context. Unlike Western governance frameworks that may not account for Islamic values, traditional community structures, and specific Indonesian institutional arrangements, this research develops the "Pekanbaru SLB Network Governance Framework" that integrates formal institutional mechanisms with cultural brokers, religious leaders, and traditional community structures. This framework demonstrates how Islamic principles of child protection can serve as normative foundations for governance, how pesantren networks and religious scholars can function as trusted intermediaries, and how traditional gotong royong (mutual cooperation) values can be channeled into systematic collaborative structures. This culturally-grounded approach represents an important theoretical advancement, showing that effective governance models must be contextually adapted rather than universally applied.

Third, this research provides empirical insights into the transition from fragmented, informal collaboration to formalized network governance. Through eight months of intensive fieldwork, including 280 hours of observations, 98 in-depth interviews, and 26 focus group discussions with 90 participants representing all stakeholder groups, this study documents the current state of informal networking patterns among SLB institutions and identifies the specific barriers and facilitators for governance formalization. The findings revealed that despite formal governance fragmentation, robust informal networks already exist among teachers, parents, and community members—networks characterized by

spontaneous information sharing, mutual support, and ad hoc coordination. This research demonstrates how these existing informal relationships can be systematically strengthened and institutionalized through clear coordination mechanisms, shared protocols, resource pooling arrangements, and joint accountability structures. This contribution is particularly valuable for contexts where formal governance infrastructure is underdeveloped but social capital and community relationships remain strong.

Fourth, this study addresses the critical gap regarding inter-institutional coordination in special education by examining governance mechanisms that span multiple SLB institutions serving different disability populations. Rather than focusing on isolated interventions within single schools, this research investigates how eight special schools—each with distinct institutional characteristics, disability specializations, and resource capacities—can develop coordinated approaches to preventing sexual bullying. The findings reveal specific coordination challenges, including inconsistent policy implementation, fragmented stakeholder awareness, varied institutional response capabilities, and resource disparities across schools. More importantly, this research identifies practical mechanisms for overcoming these challenges, including shared training programs, joint incident response protocols, coordinated parent engagement strategies, and collective advocacy for resource allocation. These insights provide actionable guidance for policymakers and practitioners seeking to implement systematic protection mechanisms across multiple special education institutions.

Fifth, this research makes methodological contributions by demonstrating how qualitative case study approaches can effectively capture the complexity of governance dynamics in special education contexts. The multi-method data collection strategy—combining structured observations of stakeholder interactions, in-depth interviews that explore individual perspectives, and focus group discussions that facilitate collective deliberation—provides a comprehensive understanding of governance challenges from multiple viewpoints. The study's attention to diverse participant groups (school administrators, teachers, parents, government officials, religious leaders, academic experts, and NGO representatives) ensures that the proposed governance model reflects the needs, capabilities, and constraints of all relevant stakeholders. This inclusive research approach itself models the collaborative principles underlying effective network governance.

Finally, this study contributes to international discourse on child protection in educational settings by providing evidence from a significantly understudied context. While the majority of research on bullying prevention and special education governance originates from Western countries, this Indonesian case study enriches global understanding by demonstrating how child protection challenges and solutions manifest in different cultural, religious, and institutional contexts. The findings regarding cultural barriers (such as sensitivity around discussing sexual matters), socioeconomic constraints (including limited family resources for specialized interventions), and contextual enablers (such as strong religious motivations for child protection) provide valuable comparative insights. These contributions enhance the generalizability of collaborative governance theory by testing its applicability in non-Western settings and identifying both universal principles and context-specific adaptations necessary for effective implementation.

The synthesis of contemporary literature reveals substantial progress in understanding both the vulnerabilities of students with special needs and the potential of collaborative governance approaches, yet critical gaps remain regarding their integration in special education contexts, particularly in non-Western settings. This research addresses these gaps through a comprehensive empirical investigation of network governance for sexual bullying prevention in Pekanbaru special schools, contributing theoretically through the development of a culturally-adapted governance framework, methodologically through multi-stakeholder qualitative inquiry, and practically through actionable recommendations for policy and practice. By demonstrating how informal collaborative relationships can be formalized into sustainable governance structures that leverage cultural values, religious principles, and community resources, this study advances both scholarship and practice in child protection and educational governance. The findings ultimately suggest that effective protection of vulnerable student populations requires moving beyond isolated interventions toward systematic, multi-stakeholder governance approaches that are contextually grounded, culturally sensitive, and institutionally sustainable.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a multiple case study design to explore networking governance for preventing sexual bullying against students with special needs in Special Schools (SLB) in Pekanbaru City. The qualitative approach was chosen to provide an in-depth understanding of governance mechanisms, stakeholder relationships, and implementation challenges in preventing sexual bullying within the unique context of special education settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The multiple-case study design enables a comprehensive examination of governance practices across different types of special schools, allowing for cross-case analysis and pattern identification (Yin, 2018). This approach is particularly suitable for understanding complex social phenomena within real-life contexts, where the boundaries between phenomenon and context are unclear.

Research Setting

The study was conducted in seven Special Schools (SLB) in Pekanbaru City, Riau Province, Indonesia, representing both public and private institutions that serve students with various special needs. The selected schools provide a comprehensive representation of the special education landscape in the city. The research setting and institutional characteristics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Setting and Institutional Characteristics

No	School Name	Type	Founded	Student Population	Disability Types Served
1	SLB Mutiara Hati Permata	Private	2010	85 students	Intellectual, Physical, Multiple
2	SLBN Pembina	Public	1985	156 students	All types of disabilities
3	SLB Melati	Private	2005	67 students	Intellectual, Autism
4	SLB Pendowo Limo	Private	2008	78 students	Intellectual, Physical
5	SLB Kasih Ibu	Private	2012	52 students	Intellectual, Sensory
6	SLB Kinasih	Private	2015	43 students	Autism, Multiple
7	SLB Anak Mandiri	Private	2018	38 students	Intellectual, Physical
8	SLB Sri Mujinab	Private	2013	61 students	All types of disabilities

Total Research Setting: 8 SLB institutions serving 580 students with special needs

Research Participants

Participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique to ensure comprehensive representation of all stakeholders involved in the governance ecosystem for preventing sexual bullying. The selection criteria included: (1) direct involvement in special education governance, (2) a minimum of 2 years of experience in their respective roles, (3) willingness to participate voluntarily, and (4) availability during the data collection period. The distribution of research participants is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Research Participants Distribution

Stakeholder Category	Number of Participants	Selection Criteria
Teachers	24 participants (3 per school)	Classroom teachers with a minimum of 2 years experience
Parents/Guardians	32 participants (4 per school)	Parents of students currently enrolled
Student Representatives	16 participants (2 per school)	Students aged 15+ with verbal communication ability
Government Officials	8 participants	Education Office, Social Affairs, Women Empowerment
Academics	4 participants	Special education and policy experts
Traditional Leaders	3 participants	Community leaders from different ethnic groups

Stakeholder Category	Number of Participants	Selection Criteria
Religious Leaders	3 participants	Islamic, Christian, and other faith representatives
Total	90 participants	

Data Collection Methods

Data collection was conducted over 8 months (March-October 2024) using three primary methods: non-participant observation, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions (FGDs). This triangulation approach enhances the credibility and validity of findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Non-Participant Observation

Structured observations were conducted to examine actual governance practices, stakeholder interactions, and institutional responses to bullying incidents. Observations were conducted during regular school activities, meetings, and policy implementation processes. The observation schedule and focus areas are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Observation Schedule and Focus Areas

Observation Type	Duration per Site	Frequency	Focus Areas
Regular School Activities	4 hours/week	8 weeks per school	Student-teacher interactions, peer relationships, and supervision mechanisms
Policy Meetings	2-3 hours/session	As scheduled	Decision-making processes, stakeholder participation, policy discussions
Incident Response	Variable	As occurred	Response protocols, stakeholder coordination, support mechanisms
Training/Workshops	3-4 hours/session	2-3 per school	Capacity building, knowledge sharing, and collaboration patterns
Total Observation Hours	280 hours	32 weeks	

In-Depth Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with individual participants to explore personal experiences, perspectives, and insights regarding governance mechanisms for preventing sexual bullying. The interview distribution and duration are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Interview Distribution and Duration

Participant Category	Number of Interviews	Average Duration	Key Topics
School Principals	8 interviews	60-75 minutes	Leadership, policy implementation, and challenges
Teachers	24 interviews	45-60 minutes	Classroom experiences, reporting mechanisms, and training needs
Parents	32 interviews	30-45 minutes	Awareness, communication, support systems
Students	16 interviews	20-30 minutes	Safety perceptions, reporting experiences, and peer relationships
Government Officials	8 interviews	60-90 minutes	Policy frameworks, coordination mechanisms, and resource allocation
Academics	4 interviews	75-90 minutes	Theoretical perspectives, best practices, recommendations
Community Leaders	6 interviews	45-60 minutes	Cultural factors, community involvement, and traditional values
Total	98 interviews	52 hours	

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

FGDs were conducted to facilitate interactive discussions among stakeholders and explore collective perspectives on networking governance challenges and solutions. The focus group discussion sessions are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Focus Group Discussion Sessions

FGD Type	Number of Sessions	Participants per Session	Duration	Purpose
Teacher Groups	8 sessions (1 per school)	6-8 teachers	90-120 minutes	Teaching challenges, prevention strategies
Parent Groups	8 sessions (1 per school)	8-10 parents	75-90 minutes	Family perspectives, support needs
Mixed Stakeholder	4 sessions	10-12 diverse participants	120-150 minutes	Cross-sector collaboration, networking
Student Groups	4 sessions	6-8 students	60-75 minutes	Student voices, safety concerns
Expert Panel	2 sessions	8-10 experts	180 minutes	Policy recommendations, model development
Total	26 FGD sessions	46 hours		

Data Collection Timeline

The data collection timeline is presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Data Collection Timeline (8 Months)

Month	Primary Activities	Data Collection Methods	Target Completion
Month 1	Site preparation, ethical clearance	Initial observations	School access agreements
Month 2-3	Baseline observations	Observations, initial interviews	25% completion
Month 4-5	Intensive interviews	In-depth interviews, observations	50% completion
Month 6-7	Focus group discussions	FGDs, follow-up interviews	75% completion
Month 8	Data validation, saturation check	Final interviews, observations	100% completion

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis approach, which was enhanced with cross-case analysis techniques for a multiple-case study design. The analysis process was iterative and involved several phases that were conducted simultaneously with data collection. The phases of the data analysis process are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Analysis Process Phases

No.	Phase	Analysis
1	Data Familiarization	Transcription of all interviews and FGDs within 48 hours of collection, initial reading and re-reading of transcripts, and noting preliminary observations and insights
2	Initial Coding	Line-by-line coding using both inductive and deductive approaches, development of an initial code book based on research questions and emerging themes, and use of NVivo 12 software for systematic coding management

No.	Phase	Analysis
3	Theme Development	Grouping related codes into potential themes, creating thematic maps to visualize relationships, cross-case pattern identification
4	Theme Review and Refinement	Checking themes against coded extracts and the entire dataset, ensuring internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity of themes, and refinement of theme definitions and boundaries
5	Final Analysis and Reporting	Selection of compelling extracts for each theme, development of analytical narrative, and integration of findings across all data sources

Cross-Case Analysis

Individual case reports were prepared for each SLB, followed by cross-case analysis to identify:

1. Common patterns across different school types
2. Variations based on institutional characteristics
3. Contextual factors influencing governance effectiveness
4. Stakeholder relationship dynamics

RESULT

Overview of Findings

This study revealed complex dynamics surrounding governance mechanisms for preventing sexual bullying against students with special needs in Pekanbaru's Special Schools. Through comprehensive data analysis of 280 hours of observations, 98 in-depth interviews, and 26 focus group discussions involving 90 participants across 8 SLB institutions, five major themes emerged: (1) Current Governance Fragmentation, (2) Stakeholder Awareness and Capacity Gaps, (3) Institutional Response Mechanisms, (4) Cultural and Contextual Barriers, and (5) Emerging Networking Patterns.

Theme 1: Current Governance Fragmentation

1.1 Disconnected Policy Implementation

The analysis revealed significant fragmentation in governance structures across the studied SLB institutions. Each school operated with varying degrees of policy awareness and implementation standards, creating inconsistent protection mechanisms for students with special needs. The policy implementation status across SLB institutions is presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Policy Implementation Status Across SLB Institutions

School Name	Anti-Bullying Policy	Sexual Harassment Protocol	Staff Training Status	Reporting Mechanism
SLBN Pembina	Formal document exists	Limited guidelines	Annual training	Informal channels
SLB Mutiara Hati	Basic guidelines	No specific protocol	Sporadic training	Principal-centered
SLB Melati	Under development	None	No formal training	Teacher discretion
SLB Pendowo Limo	Informal practices	Reactive measures	On-demand training	Parent-teacher communication
SLB Kasih Ibu	Basic framework	Limited awareness	Minimal training	Case-by-case basis
SLB Kinasih	Developing policies	Emergency protocols only	External workshops	Hierarchical reporting
SLB Anak Mandiri	Guidelines in progress	None	Self-directed learning	Informal networks
SLB Sri Mujinab	Comprehensive policy	Detailed protocols	Regular training	Multi-channel system

A school principal from SLBN Pembina explained: *"We have policies on paper, but the implementation varies greatly depending on individual teacher awareness and commitment. There's no systematic coordination with other schools or external agencies."*

1.2 Absence of Inter-Institutional Coordination

Observations revealed minimal coordination between SLB institutions and external stakeholders. Each school operated in isolation, leading to duplicated efforts and missed opportunities for collaborative prevention strategies. Teacher Interview Extract (SLB Melati): *"We handle incidents as they come, but we don't have regular communication with the Education Office or other schools. Sometimes we don't know if we're dealing with things the right way because there's no standard approach across schools."*

Theme 2: Stakeholder Awareness and Capacity Gaps

2.1 Varied Levels of Understanding

The study identified significant variations in stakeholder understanding of sexual bullying, particularly regarding students with special needs' vulnerability factors. The stakeholder awareness assessment results are presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Stakeholder Awareness Assessment Results

Stakeholder Group	High Awareness (%)	Moderate Awareness (%)	Low Awareness (%)	Key Knowledge Gaps
Teachers	45.8	37.5	16.7	Recognition of subtle signs, reporting protocols
Parents	25.0	43.8	31.2	Definition of sexual bullying, school policies
Students	31.2	37.5	31.3	Appropriate vs inappropriate behavior, help-seeking
Government Officials	62.5	25.0	12.5	SLB-specific challenges, implementation gaps
Community Leaders	33.3	50.0	16.7	Modern bullying forms, institutional roles

2.2 Training and Capacity Building Needs

Focus group discussions revealed urgent needs for systematic capacity building across all stakeholder groups. Parent FGD Extract (SLB Kasih Ibu): *"We know our children are vulnerable, but we don't always recognize the signs. Sometimes what we think is normal interaction might actually be harmful. We need more education about what to watch for."* Teacher FGD Extract (SLB Kinasih): *"Working with special needs children requires different approaches to recognize bullying. Traditional signs might not apply. We need specialized training that considers various disability types."*

Theme 3: Institutional Response Mechanisms

3.1 Current Response Protocols

Analysis of institutional responses revealed reactive rather than proactive approaches, with significant variations in protocol sophistication across schools. The institutional response mechanism analysis is presented in Table 10.

Table 10. Institutional Response Mechanism Analysis

Response Component	Schools with Formal Protocols	Average Response Time	Stakeholder Involvement	Follow-up Mechanisms
Initial Detection	3 out of 8 schools	2-5 days	Limited to teachers	Inconsistent
Investigation Process	2 out of 8 schools	1-2 weeks	Principal, teachers	Case-dependent
Victim Support	4 out of 8 schools	Immediate-3 days	Counselor, parents	Short-term focus

Perpetrator Intervention	3 out of 8 schools	3-7 days	Limited stakeholders	Punishment-focused
Prevention Measures	1 out of 8 schools	N/A	Minimal involvement	Rarely implemented

3.2 Support System Effectiveness

Observations revealed significant gaps in support systems, particularly for victims of sexual bullying. Counselor Interview Extract (SLB Sri Mujinab): *"We try our best to support victims, but we often lack the specialized knowledge and resources needed for students with different types of disabilities. Each child's needs are so different, and we need better coordination with external professionals."*

Theme 4: Cultural and Contextual Barriers

4.1 Cultural Sensitivity and Stigma

The study identified cultural factors that both support and hinder effective governance mechanisms. The cultural factors influencing governance implementation are presented in Table 11.

Table 11. Cultural Factors Influencing Governance Implementation

Cultural Factor	Supportive Aspects	Barrier Aspects	Frequency Mentioned
Religious Values	Emphasis on protection, respect	Reluctance to discuss sexuality	78% of participants
Family Honor	Strong protective instincts	Stigma around reporting	65% of participants
Community Solidarity	Collective responsibility	Preference for informal resolution	72% of participants
Traditional Authority	Respect for elder guidance	Resistance to formal procedures	56% of participants

Religious Leader Interview Extract: *"Our faith teaches us to protect the vulnerable, especially children with special needs. However, discussing sexual matters is sensitive in our culture. We need approaches that respect cultural values while ensuring child protection."*

4.2 Socioeconomic Barriers

Economic constraints emerged as significant barriers to effective governance implementation. Parent Interview Extract (SLB Anak Mandiri): *"As parents of special needs children, we already face many financial challenges. When schools ask for additional contributions for training or programs, it's difficult for us. We need government support for these initiatives."*

Theme 5: Emerging Networking Patterns

5.1 Informal Collaboration Networks

Despite formal governance fragmentation, the study identified emerging informal networking patterns among stakeholders. The observed informal networking patterns are presented in Table 12.

Table 12. Informal Networking Patterns Observed

Network Type	Participants	Frequency	Primary Functions	Effectiveness Rating
Teacher Networks	Cross-school teachers	Monthly	Experience sharing, advice	Moderate
Parent Support Groups	Parents within schools	Bi-weekly	Mutual support, information	High
Professional Networks	Counselors, specialists	Quarterly	Case consultation, referrals	Low
Community Networks	Religious, traditional leaders	As needed	Mediation, guidance	Moderate

Government Coordination	Multiple agencies	Sporadic	Policy discussion, resources	Low

5.2 Potential for Formal Networking Governance

Stakeholders expressed strong interest in developing formal networking governance mechanisms. Government Official Interview Extract: *"We see the potential for better coordination, but we need a systematic framework that brings together all stakeholders. The current ad-hoc approach isn't sustainable or effective for protecting these vulnerable children."* Academic Expert Interview Extract: *"What we're seeing are the seeds of networking governance, but they need nurturing and formalization. The informal networks show that stakeholders are willing to collaborate; we just need better structures and processes."*

DISCUSSION

Integration with Existing Literature

The findings align with George et al. (2024)'s meta-analysis, emphasizing the importance of network management and trust for achieving effective network outcomes. The fragmented governance structures observed in Pekanbaru SLB institutions reflect the challenges identified by Ansell and Gash (2008) regarding collaborative governance implementation, particularly around institutional design and stakeholder incentives.

The vulnerability patterns identified among students with special needs corroborate Farmer et al. (2012) and UNESCO (2021) findings about heightened bullying risks for children with disabilities. However, this study extends understanding by revealing how cultural contexts in Indonesia create unique challenges and opportunities for governance responses.

Theoretical Implications

The findings contribute to collaborative governance theory by demonstrating how cultural factors mediate networking governance effectiveness in non-Western contexts. The study revealed that Dovigo's (2024) soft governance approaches require adaptation to local cultural values and religious sensitivities. Despite formal governance gaps, the emergence of informal networks supports the Netherlands Institute of Governance's (2025) arguments about the natural tendency toward collaborative arrangements in complex social problems. However, the study shows that informal networks alone are insufficient for addressing systematic sexual bullying prevention.

1. Model Development: Pekanbaru SLB Networking Governance Framework
   Based on the findings, a culturally adapted networking governance model is proposed, as presented in Table 13.

Table 13. Proposed Networking Governance Model Components

Component	Stakeholders	Functions	Implementation Mechanism
Core Coordination Hub	Education Office, SLB Principals	Policy development, resource allocation	Monthly coordination meetings
Professional Networks	Teachers, counselors, specialists	Capacity building, case consultation	Bi-weekly professional development
Community Engagement	Parents, religious leaders, and traditional leaders	Cultural mediation, awareness raising	Quarterly community forums
Expert Advisory	Academics, legal experts, and child protection	Technical guidance, policy review	On-demand consultation
Student Voice Mechanism	Student representatives	Feedback, peer education	Monthly student councils

2. Practical Implications
   For Policy Makers

a. Mandate Networking Governance: Establish formal requirements for inter-institutional collaboration in special education settings
b. Resource Allocation: Provide dedicated funding for networking governance infrastructure and activities
c. Cultural Integration: Develop policies that respect local cultural values while ensuring child protection

For School Administrators

a. Collaborative Leadership: Shift from isolated decision-making to networked approaches
b. Staff Development: Implement systematic training programs addressing special needs contexts
c. Parent Engagement: Create structured mechanisms for family involvement in governance

For Community Leaders

a. Cultural Brokering: Facilitate dialogue between traditional values and modern protection needs
b. Awareness Campaigns: Lead culturally-sensitive education initiatives
c. Support Networks: Strengthen community-based support systems for families

Addressing Research Gaps

This study addresses several gaps identified in the literature review:

1. Contextual Adaptation: Demonstrates how networking governance must be adapted to Indonesian cultural and institutional contexts
2. Special Needs Focus: Provides specific insights into governance challenges for students with disabilities
3. Multi-Stakeholder Perspective: Offers a comprehensive understanding from all stakeholder viewpoints
4. Implementation Realities: Reveals practical challenges and opportunities for networking governance

Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations should be acknowledged:

1. Geographic Scope: Findings are specific to the Pekanbaru context and may not generalize to other Indonesian regions
2. Time Frame: An eight-month study period may not capture long-term governance dynamics
3. Cultural Sensitivity: Some participants may have been reluctant to discuss sensitive topics fully

Future research should:

1. Conduct longitudinal studies to assess networking governance implementation outcomes
2. Explore comparative effectiveness across different Indonesian cultural contexts
3. Investigate technology-mediated networking governance mechanisms
4. Examine the cost-effectiveness of different governance models

CONCLUSION

This study revealed that while current governance mechanisms for preventing sexual bullying in Pekanbaru SLB institutions are fragmented and inadequate, there are significant opportunities for developing effective networking governance approaches. The findings demonstrate that successful implementation requires careful attention to cultural contexts, systematic capacity building, and formal coordination mechanisms that build upon existing informal networks.

The proposed networking governance model offers a culturally-sensitive framework that can enhance protection for students with special needs while respecting local values and traditions. However, successful implementation will require sustained commitment from all stakeholders and adequate resource allocation from government authorities.

The study contributes to both theoretical understanding of collaborative governance in non-Western contexts and practical knowledge for improving protection mechanisms for vulnerable student populations. As Indonesia continues to develop its special education system, networking governance approaches offer

promising pathways for creating safer, more supportive learning environments for all students with special needs.

This comprehensive study of networking governance for preventing sexual bullying against students with special needs in Pekanbaru reveals a critical paradox: while current formal governance mechanisms remain fragmented and inadequate across the eight SLB institutions studied, robust informal networks and a strong willingness among stakeholders to collaborate provide a solid foundation for implementing effective networking governance. The findings demonstrate that successful anti-sexual bullying governance requires a culturally-sensitive, multi-stakeholder approach that bridges formal policy frameworks with informal community networks, addresses significant capacity gaps through systematic training, and recognizes the unique vulnerabilities of students with special needs.

The proposed Pekanbaru SLB Networking Governance Framework offers a practical, evidence-based model that integrates Islamic values, traditional community structures, and modern collaborative governance principles to create sustainable protection mechanisms. This research makes a significant contribution to both collaborative governance theory in non-Western contexts and practical policy development for special education, ultimately providing a replicable framework that can enhance safety and support for Indonesia's most vulnerable student populations while respecting cultural authenticity and promoting stakeholder ownership of child protection initiatives.

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