The Impact of CoRong Ajar on Teachers' Understanding to Enhance Self-Control in Children Exposed to Violence

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Abstract: The Impact of CoRong Ajar on Teachers' Understanding to Enhance Self-Control in Children Exposed to Violence. Objectives: The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of the CoRong Ajar program (Model, Encourage, and Teach) in enhancing teachers' understanding of how to improve self-control in children aged 4 to 8 who have been exposed to violence. **Methods:** A quasi-experimental design using a one-group pretest and posttest method was applied. A total of 11 teachers participated in the study. They all worked directly with children who had experienced different forms of violence. Participants were chosen based on their roles in both education and psychosocial support. The objective test was used to evaluate participants' understanding of the program. This instrument was developed to align with the content and objectives of the CoRong Ajar program. Data were analyzed using the Friedman Test to examine overall changes and the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test to compare differences between specific time points. **Findings:** The results showed a significant improvement in participants' understanding. The mean scores increased from pretest (8.78) to posttest (10.9) and further to the follow-up test (13.1). The Friedman Test also revealed a statistically significant difference across the three time points ($p < 0.05$). It indicated an effect of the overall intervention. Additionally, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test confirmed significant pairwise differences between the pretest and posttest, the posttest and follow-up test, and the pretest and follow-up test. **Conclusion:** CoRong Ajar program revealed effectiveness in enhancing teachers' understanding of how to teach self-control in children aged 4 to 8 who have been exposed to violence. The findings of this study provide a valuable reference for handling low self-control in children exposed to violence that is applicable within school environments.

Keywords: children abused, CoRong Ajar, early childhood, moral development, self-control.

To cite this article:

■ INTRODUCTION

The teaching profession, especially in early childhood education (ECE) and early primary school, is a complex, demanding, and highly responsible vocation. According to Law No. 14 of 2005 of the Republic of Indonesia concerning Teachers and Lecturers, teachers are required to possess four core competencies: pedagogical, professional, social, and personal. Within the context of early childhood, these competencies extend beyond cognitive or academic domains. Early childhood teachers also play a vital role in shaping children's character and fostering social-emotional development during a critical phase of growth (Kwartie et al., 2024; Mentha et al., 2015). Teachers' job is not only to transfer knowledge but also to be responsible for children's moral development; thus, the quality

of their interactions with children directly influences behavioral patterns and personality formation.

In practical life, teachers often encounter difficulties in fulfilling these roles, especially when dealing with children who exhibit problematic behaviors. Research and field observations indicated that some children aged 4 to 8 may display aggression, impulsivity, or social withdrawal (Anggreni et al., 2022; Carey, 2019; Santrock, 2011; Yumuº & Bayhan, 2016). For instance, a child reacts aggressively during group activities, makes demeaning comments toward peers, or even refuses to attend school due to emotional distress. These behavioral problems are frequently linked to experiences of domestic violence, including physical, verbal, and emotional abuse, or neglect (Agnew, 2001; Bunch et al., 2018; Carey, 2019). Such experiences disrupt emotional stability, significantly impairing a child's ability to regulate their behavior by social norms. Agnew (2001) stated that this behavior serves as a coping mechanism for children in response to the accumulation of negative emotions.

Self-control is a key factor that helps explain these phenomena. It is the ability to manage thoughts, emotions, and actions in accordance with personal moral standards (Borba, 2001). Self-control lays the foundation for prosocial behavior, constructive conflict resolution, and adaptive functioning in social settings (Borba, 2001; Burt, 2020). Many studies have shown that low self-control in children can come from both internal factors, like biology and brain function, and external factors, such as their social environment, parenting practices, and exposure to violence (Bunch et al., 2018; Snell et al., 2012). However, children who witness domestic violence often show significant issues with self-control. This is usually due to increased emotional stress, which can lead to aggressive reactions or social withdrawal (Agnew, 2001; Harris, 2023; Schilling, 2017)

Unfortunately, even though teachers are some of the most influential figures in a child's development, their role in self-control interventions for children affected by violence is still limited. Many teachers lack the necessary knowledge and practical skills to effectively support children in such situations (Crothers & Kolbert, 2008; Hidayat et al., 2023; Selvik & Helleve, 2023). As a result, teachers may experience psychological strain, which in turn affects their responses to the children (Felver, 2016). Many teachers lack the necessary knowledge and practical skills to effectively support children in that situation (Crothers & Kolbert, 2008; Hidayat et al., 2023; Selvik & Helleve, 2023). As a result, teachers may have a psychological strain, which in turn affects how they respond to the children (Felver, 2016). Many reports state feeling unprepared, overwhelmed, or anxious when confronted with explosive behaviors in the classroom. In such situations, teacher responses tend to be reactive, unstructured, and possibly harmful to the child's mental health. This situation is worsened by the lack of school-based interventions specifically designed to support teachers working with victims of violence. To date, most intervention studies targeting children who have experienced violence focus on parental roles or family-based approaches. While several programs have been developed to support these children, such as a study employing expressive writing as a strategy to reduce stress in children who were victims of domestic violence (Rahmawati, 2014). The findings revealed a significant decrease in stress levels following the intervention. However, a key limitation of the study was the tiny sample size (n = 2). The small number of participants significantly limited the ability to generalize the findings to a larger population. The researcher also pointed out challenges in recruiting participants. This was mainly due to limited access to child victims of domestic violence and worries from parents or

guardians about the possibility of increased stress after the intervention.

A similar situation was seen in the study by Schweitzer and Sulzer-Azaroff (1988), which analyzed how self-control develops by promoting tolerance in impulsive children. This study included six preschool children, all from middle-class families and similar ethnic backgrounds. Involving children as direct subjects in intervention studies often raises both ethical and practical concerns, especially when attempting to gather a sufficient number of participants to ensure the results are applicable more broadly. Moreover, interventions aimed directly at children as victims usually need to be implemented over more extended periods to produce reliable and stable outcomes (Kazdin, 2011). Therefore, it would be wise to consider alternative methods, particularly those that include adults in the child's setting, such as teachers.

One promising theoretical approach to developing self-control is Borba's (2001) concept of Building Moral Intelligence. This concept presents a three-step strategy: modeling appropriate behavior, motivating children to regulate themselves, and explicitly teaching self-control skills. This framework is summarized in the principle CoRong Ajar, which means "Model, Encourage, and Teach." It is mainly designed to help parents foster self-control through consistent and meaningful daily interactions at home.

However, several limitations remain. First, Borba's approach has yet to be empirically tested through experimental research. Second, its use is mainly restricted to home settings, with minor adjustments for formal educational environments. Third, there is no specific advice on how teachers could use this strategy for young children who have experienced violence.

In response to gaps in both literature and practice, this study introduces and evaluates CoRong Ajar, a teacher-focused intervention program. It adapts and expands Borba's (2001) framework for use in formal school settings.

Although teacher-focused interventions are not entirely new, such as the mindfulness-based program developed by Roeser et al. (2013) to help teachers manage stress and improve well-being, many of these efforts primarily target personal development. They have often not yet directly addressed teachers' capacity to help children with problematic behaviors. CoRong Ajar offers a method for teachers to understand how to improve self-control in children who are exposed to violence. The program empowers teachers to be change-makers and make a positive difference in their classrooms. Using Kolb's experiential learning cycle, CoRong Ajar emphasizes the four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, conceptualization, and active experimentation. This approach enables teachers to grasp theoretical concepts and apply them effectively in their daily practice.

The focus of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the CoRong Ajar program in increasing teachers' knowledge of how to foster and strengthen self-control in children aged 4–8 who are victims of violence. This period of development is crucial because children start to develop emotional control and understand social rules. (Santrock, 2011).

CoRong Ajar program comprises three core components: (1) Model teachers act as role models for self-controlled behavior in everyday interactions.; (2) Encourage teachers motivate children to internalize self-control through positive reinforcement and value-based discussions; and (3) Teach teachers provide explicit instruction in emotional recognition and socially appropriate decision-making. This method helps teachers understand how violence affects young children. It also gives them practical strategies to promote self-control in the school environment.

■ METHOD
Participants
This study involved 11 teachers from early childhood education and lower primary school

levels. They all had direct experience working with children aged 4 to 8 years who were victims of violence. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, based on specific criteria that aligned with the study's goals. These criteria were: (1) ages 25 to 55 years, (2) direct experience with children exposed to violence, (3) no prior participation in similar parenting or intervention training programs, and (4) willingness to take part in the entire program.

The recruitment process spanned two months. It involved sharing digital and printed flyers on social media, professional networks, and schools in Tangerang, South Jakarta, and West Jakarta. Prospective participants were asked to complete an online registration form containing a screening questionnaire to ensure alignment with the inclusion criteria. Those who met the criteria were subsequently invited to join a dedicated communication group and were formally confirmed as participants in the CoRong Ajar program.

The group size was chosen to improve the interactive, group-based nature of the training. According to Ezhumalai et al. (2018), group interventions are most effective with 8 to 12 participants. This size allows for lively interaction and keeps the group united. In this setup, having 11 participants is ideal. It offers sufficient depth for interaction, making it easier to manage the group, and provides flexibility during training sessions.

Research Design and Procedures
This study used a quantitative method with a one-group pretest-posttest design. This design was chosen to measure changes in teachers' knowledge before and after participating in a psychoeducational intervention, namely the *CoRong Ajar* program. To assess the sustainability of the program's impact, a follow-up test was conducted one week after the intervention.

The study started with an assessment of needs. Researchers carried out in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with individuals who have experience helping children exposed to violence. This group included teachers, community facilitators, and families of child victims. The results of this assessment informed the development of the training materials. This ensured that the content was based on real-life challenges encountered in the field.

The *CoRong Ajar* program was implemented over two full days in an offline setting. Prior to the offline training, an online introductory session was held to obtain informed consent and provide an overview of the program structure. The training was divided into two main sessions: the first focused on understanding child abuse and self-control, while the second introduced the *CoRong Ajar* strategies. Table 1 provides an overview of the CoRong Ajar concept.

Each session lasted between 120 and 150 minutes and was delivered using an experiential learning framework (Kolb, 2018), encompassing concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Training activities included interactive lectures, group discussions, video analysis, role-playing, personal reflection, and written evaluations. Throughout the training, participants were guided by a lead facilitator (the researcher) and three co-facilitators. These co-facilitators supported the sessions by observing participant engagement, documenting group dynamics, and assisting with practice activities.

Table 1. Overview of the CoRong Ajar concept

Aspect	Teaching Content	Prompt example
Model	Teachers learn to manage their behavior.	

	Invite children to recognize their own and others' emotions	"You must be angry about this. I know it is bothering you," or "Yes, that must have hurt. Do you think they might also feel sad or upset?"
	Speak with empathy and without judgment, and only speak when you are calm and composed.	"It looks like you are still outraged. Take your time to calm down. I will go talk to your friend first, and we can talk again when you are ready."
Encourage	Offer positive praise and rephrase "I" statements as "You" statements.	"I saw you help your friend when they had trouble picking something up. That was great! You must be proud of yourself. Let's add that to your agenda later. I will sign it so your parents can see it."
	Help children acknowledge their good behavior, no matter how small.	
Teach	Teach children to: stop, think, and act right.	"What are you going to do now?" If the child says, "I want to hit him!" → "If you hit your friend, he will cry. You might get the toy, but he will not want to play with you later because they are scared. If you ask for the toy with me, maybe he will give it to you. Then you get the toy, and your friend still wants to play. Which one do you choose?"
	Gently tap the child's shoulder when they seem about to "explode" and say "STOP."	
	Ask questions to help the child think.	
	Let the child choose their next action.	

Table 2. Intervention module overview

Session	Activity	Information
1	Pretest assessment	Assessment of participant understanding before intervention
	Child Behavior Reflection & Sharing	Participants are encouraged to reflect deeply on children's behavior.
	Lesson: Self-Control, Definitions and Categories of Violence, How Violence Affects Self-Control, Factors Influencing Self-Control	
	Small Group Video Analysis	Participants write their group discussion results and present their analysis.
2	First role-play	The teacher responds to a child's low self-control behavior using general (non-CoRong Ajar) methods.
	Discussion and Sharing	Participants are allowed to reflect deeply on the situation in the role-play.
	Lesson: model, encourage, teach (CoRong Ajar method)	
	Second role-play	The teacher responds to a child's low self-control behavior using the CoRong Ajar method.
	Posttest assessment	Assessment of participant understanding after intervention
3	Follow-up assessment	Assessment of participants' retained understanding some time after the intervention."

Instrument

The evaluation of the program's effectiveness was conducted at the "learning" level of Kirkpatrick's Evaluation Model (2006), focusing on assessing participants' changes in understanding. The instruments employed in this study included the following:

Objective Test: A 15-item multiple-choice test was administered to measure participants' conceptual understanding of self-control and the CoRong Ajar strategies. The test was administered three times: a pretest, conducted before the training; a posttest, given immediately after the training; and a follow-up test, administered one week after the training.

Reaction Questionnaire (Level 1): This was used to assess participants' satisfaction with the program's implementation.

Interview. The instruments underwent a reliability test and content validation conducted by two experts in child educational psychology. Editorial refinements were made to ensure linguistic clarity and accessibility, while the validation process ensured that each item conceptually and representatively measured relevant competencies.

Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha yielded a coefficient of á = 0.597, which falls below the commonly accepted threshold (e" 0.7). However, this value should be interpreted within the context of data collection. Most participants had not yet received the intervention at the time of instrument completion, and several items were specifically designed to assess competencies expected to develop after the intervention. Thus, a score of 0 at this stage reflects participants' actual baseline condition rather than indicating psychometric weakness. No items were removed due to substantive considerations related to the instrument's design and research objectives.

To evaluate the accuracy of the instrument, item difficulty and discrimination indices were analysed. The distribution of item difficulty was deemed ideal, with 26.67% categorized as difficult, 40% as moderate, and 33.34% as easy, reflecting a balanced measure across varying levels of understanding. All items showed discrimination indices ranging from 0.36 to 0.54. This range falls in the "good" to "very good" categories. It indicates that the instrument consistently distinguishes participants based on their level of comprehension.

Data Analysis

Non-parametric statistical analysis techniques were conducted using the Friedman Test and the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test. Both tests are appropriate for data that does not follow a normal distribution. The Friedman Test was used to examine significant differences among the three time points. The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was applied to examine specific changes between the pretest and posttest, the posttest and follow-up test, and the pretest and follow-up test.

■ **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The data show an upward trend in most items. This suggests that participants' understanding improved after the intervention. The summary of the comparison of mean scores for each item across the pretest, posttest, and follow-up test is shown in Figure 1. Notably, Item 15 showed no noticeable change across the pretest, posttest, and follow-up phases. This stability suggests that participants may have already had prior knowledge about this item. Item 15 represents the "teach" dimension of the CoRong Ajar framework. This dimension focuses on helping children reflect on their impulses and consider suitable responses to situations that may lead to impulsive behavior.

On the other hand, Items 2 and 14 showed no change in scores and remained at a low level. This may be due to several factors. Participants may not have fully understood the material in these items. They may also require additional time and hands-on practice to grasp the concepts following the intervention fully. This interpretation is

supported by interview findings, which revealed that some participants continued to struggle with differentiating and labelling specific responses categorized under "model," "encourage," or "teach." Nevertheless, these participants reported being able to apply the concepts at a conceptual level. Their statements are consistent with the increased scores observed in the follow-up test, during which many participants admitted relying more heavily on the pocketbook to reference the correct terms for each type of behavior or response introduced during the intervention.

Besides, items 9 and 13 showed a drop in mean scores. This trend might suggest that new misunderstandings appeared after the intervention. Participants may have initially answered correctly based on their intuition or general knowledge, but they may have gotten confused or misinterpreted the more complex ideas introduced during the intervention phase.

The overall mean score increased from the pretest (M = 8.78) to the posttest (M = 10.9). This indicates a significant improvement in participants' knowledge immediately following the intervention. This suggests that the CoRong Ajar program had a short-term positive impact on participants' understanding. Furthermore, the mean score continued to rise in the follow-up assessment (M = 13.1), although the increase was less pronounced than the initial post-intervention gain. This sustained improvement also opens the possibility that external factors may have influenced participants' understanding after the intervention concluded.

In terms of data distribution, the standard deviation increased from 1.09 in the pre-test to 1.90 in the post-test, with the highest variability observed in the follow-up test (3.22). This growing variation suggests that teachers' levels of understanding increased throughout the intervention. The low variability in the pretest indicates a relatively uniform baseline of knowledge, likely due to limited prior exposure to the CoRong Ajar program content. As the intervention progressed, participants absorbed and applied the material at different rates. The greater variability observed at the follow-up test may have been influenced by contextual factors, such as differences in how participants engaged with the supporting material (in this case, a pocketbook) and their opportunities to implement the strategies in daily practice. At the end of the intervention, participants were given a pocket book. It was intended to serve as a practical reference and a tool to reinforce key concepts. Interviews revealed that several participants relied on the pocketbook during the follow-up test. This indicates that some participants needed additional support to retain the material over time.

Participants such as RM and BK reported using the pocketbook as a daily guide in their teaching practice. These findings underscore the importance of providing accessible learning tools to enhance the long-term retention and application of intervention materials. Although the pocketbook helped some participants recall and apply the intervention content, its effectiveness depended on individual differences in information processing. The impact of the pocketbook could be varied among participants. For example, participant JT still needed some time and help to recall the key concept written in the pocketbook. The guidance this participant used was personal notes and recording.

A Friedman test analysis showed a significant difference in participants' knowledge on strategies for improving self-control in children aged 4 to 8 who were exposed to violence, with a p-value of 0.008 (<0.05). These results suggest that the CoRong Ajar program had a positive impact on participants' knowledge. However, the Friedman test does not specify when these differences occurred. Therefore, another analysis was conducted using the Wilcoxon signed-rank test.

Table 3 shows that the Wilcoxon signed-rank test results indicate a significant difference between pretest and posttest scores (p < 0.05).
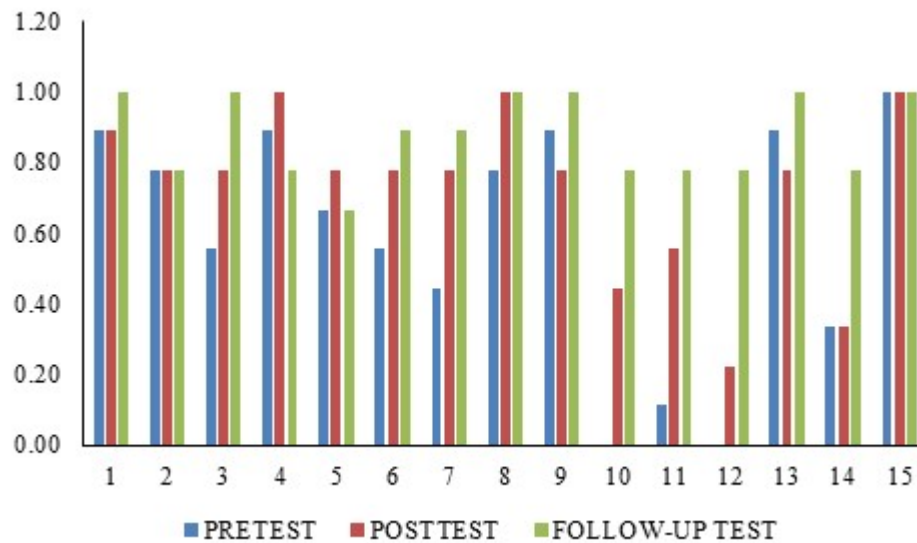
Figure 1. Total understanding score comparison

These results suggest a significant increase in participants' knowledge following the CoRong Ajar intervention. In contrast, there was no significant difference between posttest and follow-up test scores ($p > 0.05$). This suggests that the knowledge gained from the intervention remained stable over a short period, as no substantial changes were observed within two weeks after the program ended.

Furthermore, the comparison between the pretest and follow-up test scores also showed a significant difference ($p < 0.05$). However, the level of significance was slightly lower than that observed between the pretest and posttest. This supports the notion that the knowledge improvement gained through the CoRong Ajar program was not temporary but showed longer-term effects, within a week.

Table 3. Wilcoxon signed-rank test result

Wilcoxon W	Mean Difference	SE Difference	Sig. P
Pretest-Posttest	-2.50	0.423	0.014
Postest-Follow up test	-2.00	1.15	0.095
Pretest-Follow-up test	-5.50	0.972	0.020

Key Component of Engagement in CoRong Ajar Program

The effectiveness of the CoRong Ajar program directly responds to the underlying issues of low self-control in children exposed to violence and the lack of teacher competence in addressing such cases. This study also aligns with Borba's (2001) conceptual framework, which emphasizes the importance of modelling, encouraging, and explicitly teaching children strategies to develop self-control. Although Borba's approach is typically formulated for parents to use at home, CoRong Ajar successfully adapted these principles for a school context. The significant increase in participants' understanding observed in this study demonstrates the feasibility and potential impact of implementing Borba's model through professional development programs for educators.

Furthermore, this study addresses a gap in existing literature. The Borba's framework, which is widely used in parenting resources, has rarely

been subjected to empirical testing in formal educational contexts. These findings support Borba's theoretical approach, which extends beyond the home into early childhood educational settings, where children spend a substantial portion of their developmental years.

Several key factors contributed to the program's success. First, there was a high level of urgency in the field: the majority of participants reported confusion when dealing with children with backgrounds of violence and noted that they had never received similar training before. Second, participant engagement was exceptionally high, both physically and psychologically, as demonstrated by active involvement in discussions, reflections, and simulations. Some participants even travelled from other cities, reflecting a strong intrinsic motivation to improve their professional competence.

Methodologically, Kolb's experiential learning model contributed to the program's overall success. This strategy not only enabled participants to understand theoretical concepts but also to directly experience and practice skills. Methods such as Role-Play, Video Analysis, and Group Reflection not only enhanced participants' conceptual understanding but also strengthened their practical skills. As Yardley et al. (2012) emphasized, experiential learning fosters deeper learning by immersing participants in direct experiences that allow for personal and contextual meaning-making. During the concrete experience phase, participants engaged in behavior scoring simulations and role-plays that contrasted conventional approaches with CoRong Ajar strategies. Their emotional responses during Role-Play, such as empathic expressions while acting as a child victim of violence, revealed a transformative learning process. One participant spontaneously remarked, "Wow, that means it was wrong to do that to a child." Another participant was brought to tears while observing a Role-Play session, indicating a significant shift in their perception of children's problematic behaviors.

In the reflective observation phase, participants shared personal insights, challenges, and emotions through written reflections and open group discussions. This open exchange highlighted the creation of a psychologically safe learning environment where participants could learn not only from the materials but also from one another. As one participant noted in the post-intervention interview, "Hearing others' experiences helped me integrate the material more easily."

These findings also complement and extend the results of Sargent's (2016) study on the Change a Life program, which aimed to enhance adults' understanding of the impact of violence on children. Although that program, delivered through online video modules, successfully increased knowledge among parents and university students, it lacked hands-on experience and practical skill-building, thereby failing to enhance self-efficacy consistently. In contrast, the offline, experiential learning-based CoRong Ajar program successfully integrates knowledge and skills in a contextual manner, making it more relevant for teachers directly involved in caring for and educating children affected by violence.

However, the score variability observed in the follow-up test suggests that reinforcement tools, such as a pocketbook, used after training, remain necessary to ensure sustained understanding. Some participants reportedly used the booklet while completing the test, indicating the importance of supplementary materials in the long-term internalization process.

Limitations

Overall, this study makes a significant contribution to the field by developing a training program specifically designed for teachers and early childhood education practitioners, employing an applied, participatory, and contextual approach. By integrating field needs,

participant motivation, and experiential learning methodology, from the observation, CoRong Ajar presents a promising intervention model to help teachers enhance their knowledge of how to improve self-control in children who were exposed to violence in educational settings. Still, the program has several limitations that should be addressed in future development.

First, most participants in this study were teachers and education practitioners with higher education backgrounds (mostly a bachelor's degree), which may limit the generalizability of the findings to educators with lower levels of education or non-educator populations.

Second, although a significant increase in conceptual understanding was observed, it remains uncertain to what extent the strategies introduced in the program were consistently applied in participants' daily interactions with children, as the study did not include direct observation after the training. Third, the absence of a control group limits the ability to conclusively attribute changes in understanding solely to the intervention, as external influences such as personal experiences, other learning exposures, or informal peer discussions may also have contributed to the changes.

In addition, limitations were identified in the measurement tool used to assess participants' understanding. Although the instrument was developed based on relevant theoretical frameworks, reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha showed that several items did not meet the standard reliability threshold. This suggests that the instrument may require refinement. The refinement can be done either through expanding the sample for instrument assessment or by revising statistically weak items, particularly items 2, 9, and 14. After implementation, these items also showed inconsistent response patterns across the pretest, posttest, and follow-up test, reinforcing the need for further evaluation and improvement of the tool to ensure its accuracy and reliability in future studies.

■ **CONCLUSION**

Teachers play a vital role in supporting young children who have experienced violence, particularly in addressing issues related to self-control. By empowering teachers with effective strategies to foster self-control in children who were exposed to violence, we can safeguard these children from more severe behavioral consequences and break the cycle of violence. This study concludes that the CoRong Ajar program significantly improves teachers' understanding of strategies to strengthen self-control in young children who are exposed to violence. However, future research should adopt a more rigorous experimental design that includes a control group and long-term practice observations to validate and reinforce these findings.

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