Literature Review

PSYCHOSOCIAL IMPACTS

of Child Sexual Abuse and their similarity to Online Sexual Exploitation of Children

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Executive Summary

Background

The last decade has ushered in substantial innovations in digital technology, drastically transforming the way we use and engage with the internet. However, the myriad opportunities afforded by innovations in technology and internet-based platforms have not come without cost (Grubb, 2019). Alongside every digital innovation and reconfiguration of our relationship with the internet has been a growing and insidious underbelly of technological advancement (Keller & Dance, 2019). Examples abound from cyber-bullying to image-based blackmail, sexting to revenge-porn, the dark web to online enticement (Hamilton-Giachristis, et al., 2020). However, arguably the most virulent manifestation of this underbelly has been witnessed in the proliferation of Online Sexual Exploitation of Children (*hereafter referred to as OSEC*). It is defined as the "It encompasses a range of crimes, including creating, possessing or distributing child sexual exploitation material (CSEM) like photos and videos. It also includes the sexual abuse of children by traffickers who livestream the exploitation to satisfy the online demand of child sex offenders paying to direct the abuse in real time" (IJM, 2021).

The extant research on OSEC is extremely scarce. In conduct of this review, only one (1) study was identified which specifically looked at OSEC as a subset of online child sexual exploitation (Aritao & Pangilinan, 2018). There is however, a small yet appreciable body of research which has examined the impacts of similar types of abuse including technology-

assisted child sexual abuse (Hamilton-Giachristis, et al., 2020), child pornography (Cooper, 2012; Gewirtz-Meydan, Lahav, Walsh, & Finkelhor, 2019), child sexual abuse images online (Martin, 2016) and online grooming (Whittle, Hamilton-Giachritsis, & Beech, 2013). For the sake of parsimony, this review adopts the umbrella term "online child sexual exploitation" in accordance with the Luxembourg Guidelines throughout this review (ECPAT, 2016).

Scope and Method

This review provides a comparative examination of existing research which has studied the impacts of CSA and online child sexual exploitation. To conduct the literature review, a comprehensive search of nine databases including UP Diliman, Philippine E-journal, Philippine E-Library, Cochrane Library, Child Abuse & Neglect Digital Library, OVID databases, PROQUEST, PubMed, SCOPUS was undertaken using key words and synonyms for "impacts," "online sexual exploitation" and "child sexual abuse."

Findings

This review provides evidence to suggest that there is significant similarity between the impacts of CSA and the impacts of online child sexual exploitation. These include but are not limited to: sexual difficulties (Noll, Trickett, & Putnam, 2003)**;** revictimization (Noll, Horowitz, Bonanno, Trickett, & Putnam, 2003); self-destructive behaviour (Yates, Carlson, & Egeland, 2008); anxiety and depression (Maniglio, 2010); relationship difficulties/avoidance (MacIntosh & Menard, 2021) and; shame (MacGinley, Breckenridge, & Mowll, 2019). Conversely, the available literature also provides sufficient evidence to indicate that there are a range of distinct impacts of online child sexual exploitation which do not co-occur among victim-survivors of CSA. These include but are not limited to: increase levels of deception; increased accessibility with increased control (Hamilton-Giachritsis, Hanson, Whittle , & Beech, 2017); self-objectification (Hanson E., 2017) permanency of abuse materials (Hamilton-Giachristis, et al., 2020); reach of images (Hanson E., 2017) and; deceit about the abuser (Quayle et al., 2012). The implications of this review are firstly, that increased investment in empirical research which examines the impacts specifically of online child sexual exploitation upon victim-survivors is greatly needed. Secondly, this review has implications for practitioners working directly with survivors and those involved in intervention planning. Specifically, this review indicates that interventions with victim-survivors of online child sexual exploitation must incorporate strategies to pro-actively address the availability of images on the internet (Hanson E., 2017). Furthermore, given the higher levels of deception and self-objectification involved in online child sexual exploitation, it is likely that interventions which specifically address cognitive distortions and actively target shame will be more effective than other

interventions (Hanson E., 2017).

Limitations

The literature review faced several limitations which significantly impacted upon the manner in which it was conducted. One of the issues facing researchers of online sexual abuse of children is the myriad of terms used to describe the crime and the preponderance of typologies, which often have intersecting qualities. The differences in terms and definitions of online sexual abuse of children significantly impairs a singular body of evidence being established. Secondly, if recognised within its own specific typology, there are precious few studies on OSEC. No studies could be found which examined the psychosocial impacts of OSEC on victims-survivors. Lastly, given the author's location outside of the Philippines, it was difficult to access all the possible databases which may be available to a researcher in the Philippines. Access was denied to certain libraries and University databases which constricted the extent of the search.

Introduction

Children in our time find themselves at the mercy of a powerful system in the ecology of their world, a system which no single jurisdiction governs, no natural borders limit and no authority holds accountable; Cyberspace. Though having reshaped the fabric of society in countless ways to the benefit of children, the internet has also brought about innumerable harms to children of which the most virulent may be the Online Sexual Exploitation of Children (OSEC). The simultaneous explosion of global connectivity via the internet and cheap, internet-capable devices has paved the way for online crimes against children to be committed with greater anonymity, targeted specificity, and minimal accountability (Aritao & Pangilinan, 2018; Grubb, 2019). The proliferation of OSEC has been noted by major child protection and law enforcement agencies from countries all around the globe. Current prevalence estimates of OSEC vary in quantity and methodology and range from: 750,000 offenders worldwide (NBI, 2009); 81,723 IP addresses used to access CSE material, reflecting a three-fold increase since 2014 (IJM, 2020); 18.4 million reports of child sexual abuse imagery representing 45 million images and videos (Keller & Dance, 2019). Though these estimates may not agree on the exact measure of prevalence, they do concur that OSEC is an increasingly common phenomenon in the 21st century and its prolific growth is being documented all around the globe (Grubb, 2019; IJM, 2020; Keller & Dance, 2019; NBI, 2009; Reid & Fox, 2020). However, nowhere else has it proliferated faster and more acutely than in the Philippines. In their recent study on OSEC, International Justice Mission (IJM) found that from 2010-2017 global law enforcement made 287 referrals to the Philippine police for OSEC, accounting for more than eight times as many cases as other countries identified in the study (IJM, 2020b).

Despite exponential growth of this crime, there are no studies to date which have specifically examined the psychosocial impacts of OSEC (as defined above). There is however, a small body of research which has examined the impacts of similar types of abuse including technology-assisted child sexual abuse (Hamilton-Giachristis, et al., 2020), child sexual abuse images online (Martin, 2016), online grooming (Whittle, Hamilton-Giachritsis, & Beech, 2013) and child pornography (Gewirtz-Meydan, Lahav, Walsh, & Finkelhor, 2019). For the sake of parsimony, and in accordance with recommendations made in the Luxembourg Guidelines (ECPAT, 2016, p. 28), OSEC alongside the range of similar typologies of abuse are all considered under the umbrella term of "online child sexual exploitation" throughout this review. The studies which examine the impact of online child sexual exploitation are mostly small, qualitative studies with heterogenous populations which make findings difficult to generalise or compare. Broadly, they include those which either examine practitioner perspectives (Hamilton-Giachristis, et al., 2020; Hamilton-Giachritsis, Hanson, Whittle , & Beech, 2017; Martin, 2016) or survivor perspectives (Whittle, Hamilton-Giachritsis, & Beech, 2013; Gewirtz-Meydan, Lahav, Walsh, & Finkelhor, 2019; Canadian Centre for Child Protection, 2017). Given the heterogeneity of study methodologies and small sample sizes, it is difficult to clearly ascertain what psychosocial impacts upon victim-survivors are distinct to online child sexual exploitation.

In the absence of sufficient empirical examination of the impacts of online child sexual exploitation upon victim-survivors, the common approach in the literature has been to draw on similar fields of research which have a stronger evidence base to determine similarities and differences (Hamilton-Giachristis, et al., 2020; Hanson E., 2017). Child sexual abuse (*hereafter referred to as* CSA) has a rich and longstanding body of evidence with numerous systematic reviews, meta-analyses, and prospective longitudinal studies (Hanson & Wallis, 2018). Given the increasing recognition that online child sexual exploitation may produce different effects on children than offline CSA, a comparative analysis of the available research could prove useful to determining where impacts converge and diverge from one another (Hanson E., 2017; Hamilton-Giachristis, et al., 2020).

Aims

The aim of this literature review is to examine the psychosocial impacts of child sexual abuse upon victim-survivors and how these compare with impacts of online child sexual exploitation including OSEC. The primary research question guiding this review is:

> *Is there similarity between the psychosocial impacts of CSA and the psychosocial impacts of OSEC upon victim-survivors?*

Following this question, the review sought to interrogate the following sub-questions:

1.1: In what ways are the impacts of CSA similar to the impacts of OSEC?
1.2: In what ways are the impacts of CSA different to the impacts of OSEC?

Scope

For the purposes of this literature review, a broad-scope approach was adopted in which studies examining the impact of multiple types of online child sexual exploitation, including but not exclusively 'OSEC', were considered. This approach was adopted due to two key trends within the literature: the *limited amount of studies on OSEC* and *heterogenous typologies*. In the case of the former, it was hypothesized that given OSEC is located as a niche subset of online child sexual exploitation, there would be limited studies specifically examining the impacts of this crime upon children. This hypothesis was confirmed as no study was identified which exclusively examined the impact of OSEC upon children. Rather studies were more likely to consider the impacts of other types of online child sexual exploitation or discuss it as a broad category in which different typologies were not distinguished within the discussion. In the case of the latter trend, as previous studies have articulated (IJM, 2020b), there is substantial variation and little agreement within both literature and practice regarding the terminology used to define types of sexual abuse of children commissioned through the use of information and communication technology (ICT) and internet-capable devices. For the sake of parsimony, this review adopts the umbrella term "online child sexual exploitation" in accordance with the Luxembourg Guidelines throughout this review (ECPAT, 2016).

To compensate for the paucity of literature examining impacts of OSEC on child victim-survivors, this literature review draws comparisons from two larger fields of study; child sexual abuse; online child sexual exploitation. Literature from these fields are considered for the primary purpose of ascertaining what the overlapping impacts are with OSEC and where the distinctions may liwe (see figure 1). Thus, whilst the focus remains on determining the impacts of OSEC, literature from other fields forms a large part of the body of the review.

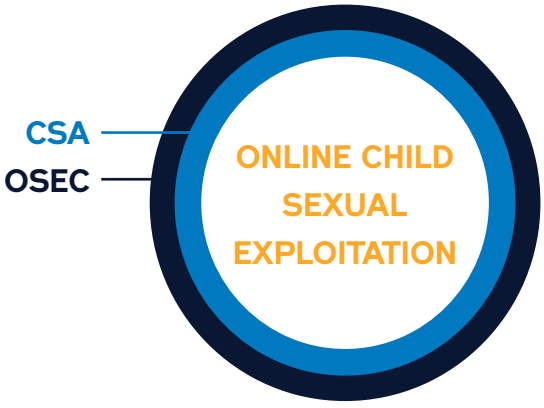


FIGURE 1. FIELDS OF STUDY DRAWN ON FOR THIS REVIEW

Methodology

This literature review examined peer-reviewed journal articles and unpublished grey literature produced from January 2000 to September 2020 which to examine the psychosocial impacts of online child sexual exploitation upon victim-survivors and how these compare with impacts of traditional child sexual abuse. This time period was selected given that the rapid expansion of the internet and technology boom occurred around the year 2000 and therefore, it is unlikely this type of abuse existed before this period (Grubb, 2019). Given the comparative approach which this literature review adopts, it was necessary to define clear parameters in order to ensure studies included were of highest relevance. To do this, a set of inclusion and exclusion criteria were established to assist in the narrowing of the scope of the search (see table 1). In particular, it was important to consider which studies in the field of child sexual abuse would be of most relevance for comparison. Due to the enormity of the available literature in child sexual abuse, it was determined that only studies which adopted a synthesis review (rapid, literature, systematic or meta-analysis) or prospective study design would be included. This narrowed down the search to studies of child sexual abuse which synthesized several studies or several years of research into one article.

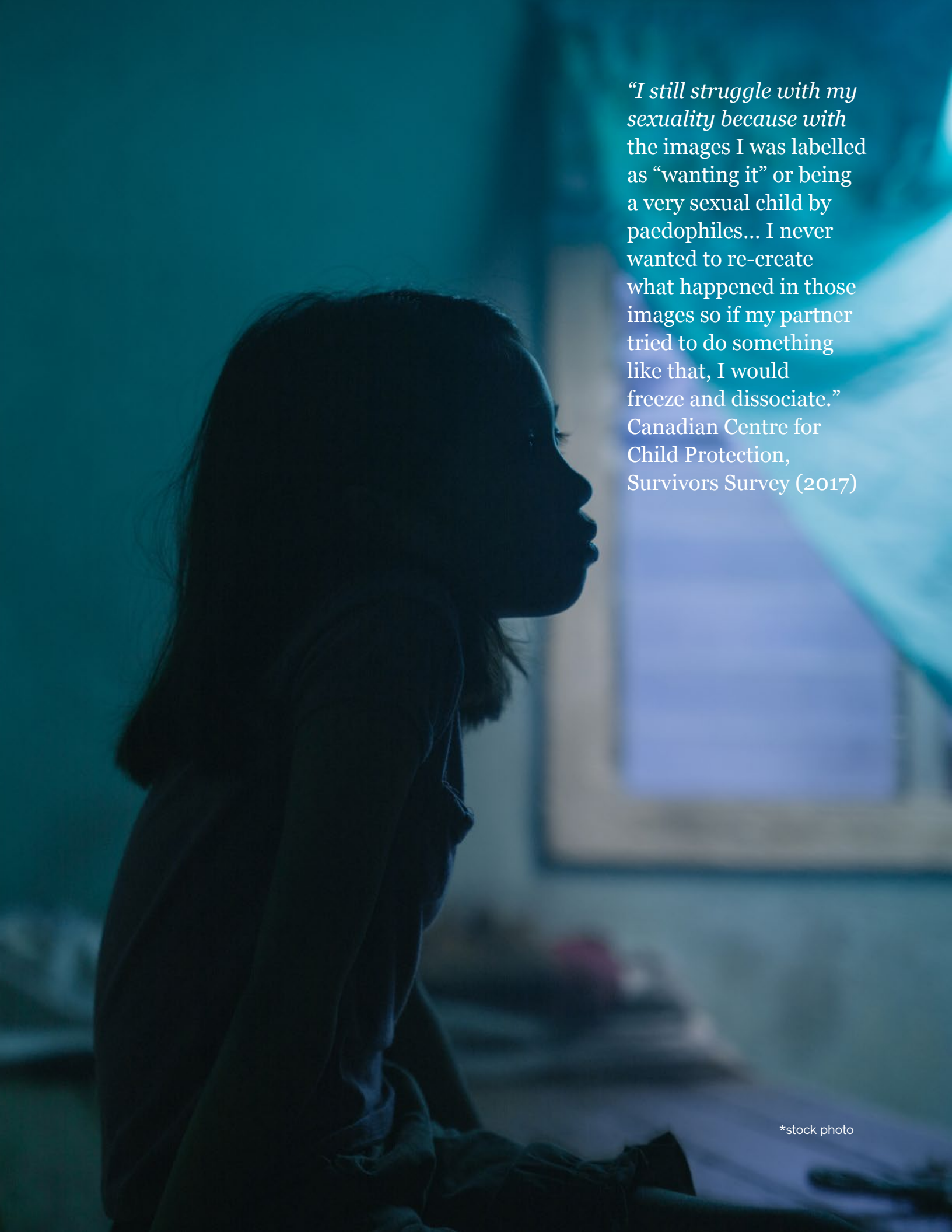
After inclusion and exclusion criteria were established, a comprehensive search of nine databases including UP Diliman, Philippine E-journal, Philippine E-Library, Cochrane Library, Child Abuse & Neglect Digital Library, OVID databases, PROQUEST, PubMed, SCOPUS was undertaken using key words and synonyms for "impacts," "child sexual abuse," "online sexual exploitation" and "child." The search procedures yielded 1,581 citations. After duplicates and ineligible studies were removed, 45 full-text reports were retrieved and were screened for inclusion. After full-text screening, 23 studies met eligibility criteria for this review.

TABLE 1: CRITERIA FOR INCLUSION/EXCLUSION

INCLUSION CRITERIA	EXCLUSION CRITERIA
Study examines the child(ren) as the focus of discussion of impacts	Study examines online child sexual exploitation which exclusively look at sexting or self-produced material without an element of coercion.
Study discussions one or more elements of psychosocial impact of abuse on the child(ren)	Study examines impacts of child sexual abuse which exclusively consider impacts beyond the direct impacts to the child.
Study examines the impact of one or more types of online child sexual exploitation including: - Online Sexual Exploitation of Children - Technology Assisted Child Sexual Abuse - Child Pornography - Child Sexual Abuse Images Online - Online Grooming - Child Sexual Abuse Materials	Study examines child sexual abuse but does not adopt a synthesis review (rapid, literature, systematic review, or meta-analysis) or prospective study design.

Psychosocial Impacts of CSA Co-Occuring in Online Child Sexual Exploitation

The embryonic state of the literature on online child sexual exploitation severely impacts the clarity with which one can examine the unique impacts of this crime upon children's psycho-social wellbeing. Conversely, there is an accumulating body of evidence, including many long-term and controlled studies, which have substantiated the significant adverse impact of CSA upon children's psychosocial wellbeing (Hanson & Wallis, 2018). This section thus draws primarily on the literature pertaining to the impacts of CSA on children's psycho-social wellbeing and draws comparisons based on the limited available literature on the impacts of online child sexual exploitation and similar forms of abuse.



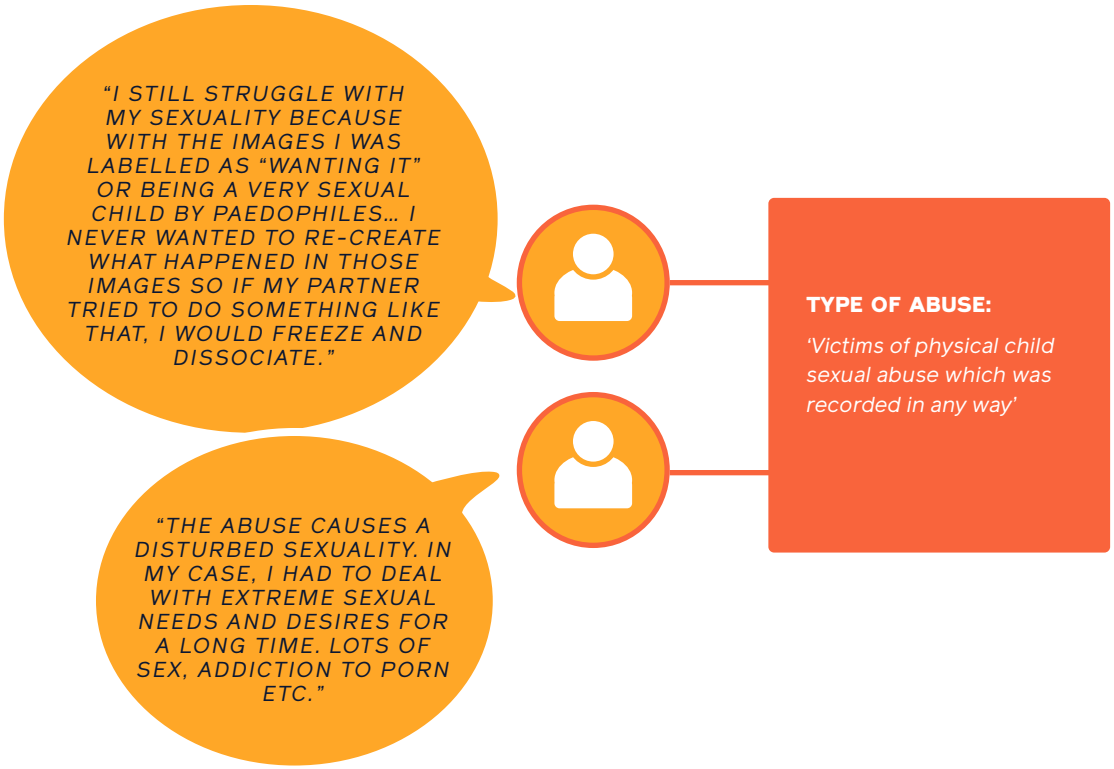
"I still struggle with my sexuality because with the images I was labelled as "wanting it" or being a very sexual child by paedophiles... I never wanted to re-create what happened in those images so if my partner tried to do something like that, I would freeze and dissociate."
Canadian Centre for Child Protection, Survivors Survey (2017)

*stock photo

Sexual Difficulties

Research on CSA has consistently identified strong associations between childhood sexual abuse and the prominence of sexual difficulties later in life. This includes difficulties such as sexual aversion, sexual ambivalence, preoccupation with sex, sexual risk-taking behavior, early pregnancy, and compulsive sexual behaviors. In their 10-year longitudinal study incorporating a matched comparison group, Noll, Trickett & Putnam (2003) confirmed that abused participants were more preoccupied with sex, younger at first voluntary intercourse, more likely to have been teen mothers, and endorsed lower birth control efficacy than comparison participants. Furthermore, when they examined the psychological functioning of participants in early development, they found that sexual preoccupation was predicted by anxiety (Noll, Trickett, & Putnam, 2003). They also identified that sexual aversion was predicted by childhood sexual behaviour problems and sexual ambivalence was predicted by pathological dissociation. In corroboration of other studies, they also noted that biological father abuse was associated with greater sexual aversion and sexual ambivalence (Noll, Trickett, & Putnam, 2003).

STUDY: CANADIAN CENTRE FOR CHILD PROTECTION, *SURVIVORS SURVEY 2017*



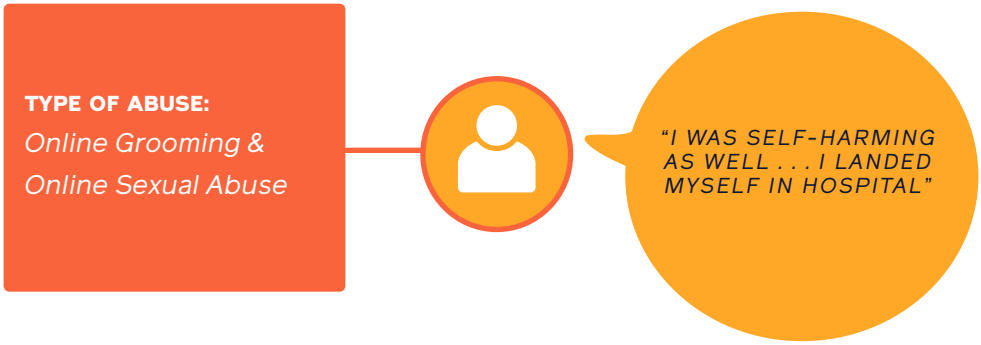
Revictimization

The pattern in which children who have been sexually abused become more likely to experience abuse again in some form later in life has been well-studied and is commonly termed 'revictimization'. Studies have highlighted that children who are sexually abused are more likely than those who are not abused to experience subsequent sexual victimization as well as physical victimization including to domestic violence and self-harm (Noll, Horowitz, Bonanno, Trickett, & Putnam, 2003). In their 7-year longitudinal study, Noll, Horowitz, Bonanno, Trickett, & Putnam (2003) identified that, compared to non-abused participants, sexually abused participants were: twice as likely to have been raped or sexually assaulted; reported significantly higher rates of physical revictimization (including domestic violence); reported a greater number of significant subsequent lifetime traumas than comparison participants. Their findings corroborate the robust evidence base indicating a strong correlation between childhood sexual abuse and revictimization later in life (Barnes, Noll, Putnam, & Trickett, 2009).

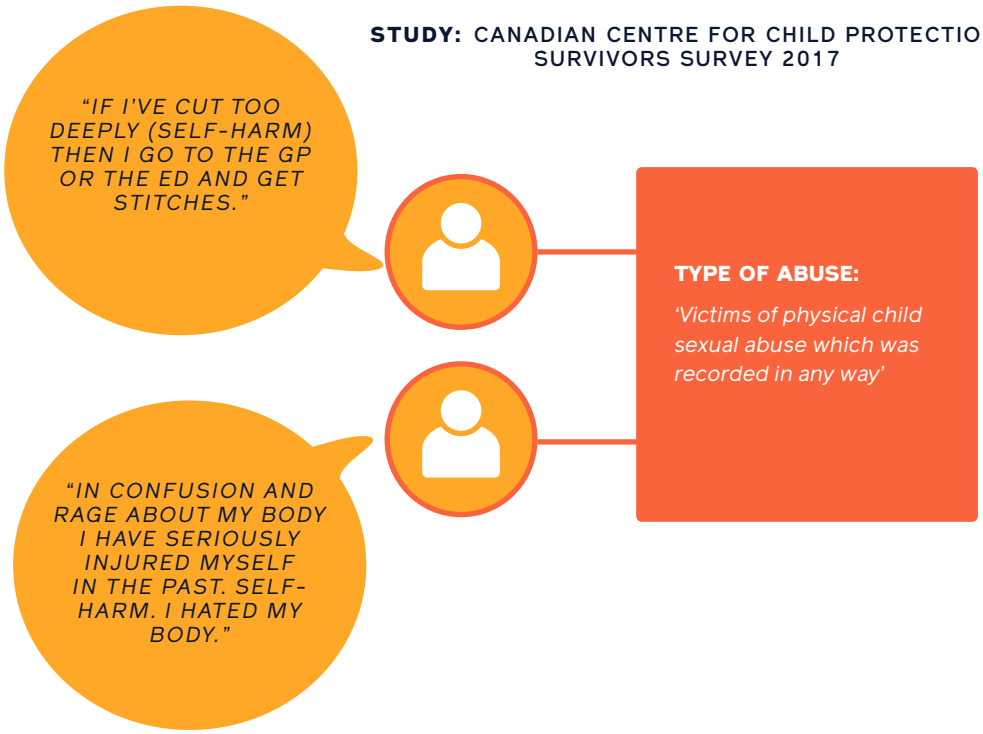
Self-destructive behaviour

Studies have consistently identified a higher prevalence of self-destructive behaviors among children who have experienced sexual abuse than children who have not. Self-destructive behaviors refer to the range of injurious acts without intent to die such as cutting, burning, hitting and self-strangulation as well as those with intent to die such as drinking toxic chemicals, overdosing, self-mutilation, and suicide. In a prospective study of 1,000 adults who had experience child sexual abuse, Yates, Carlson, & Egeland, 2008 found that child sexual abuse predicted recurrent injuring later in life. Furthermore, they found that among those engaging in recurrent injuring, motivations were more likely to be intrapersonal (for example "to get away or escape bad feelings," "to punish yourself" or "to control emotional pain" rather than interpersonal motivations, such as "to shock, impress, or get back at others."

STUDY: HAMILTON-GIACHRITSIS, HANSON, WHITTLE, & BEECH, 2017



STUDY: CANADIAN CENTRE FOR CHILD PROTECTION, SURVIVORS SURVEY 2017

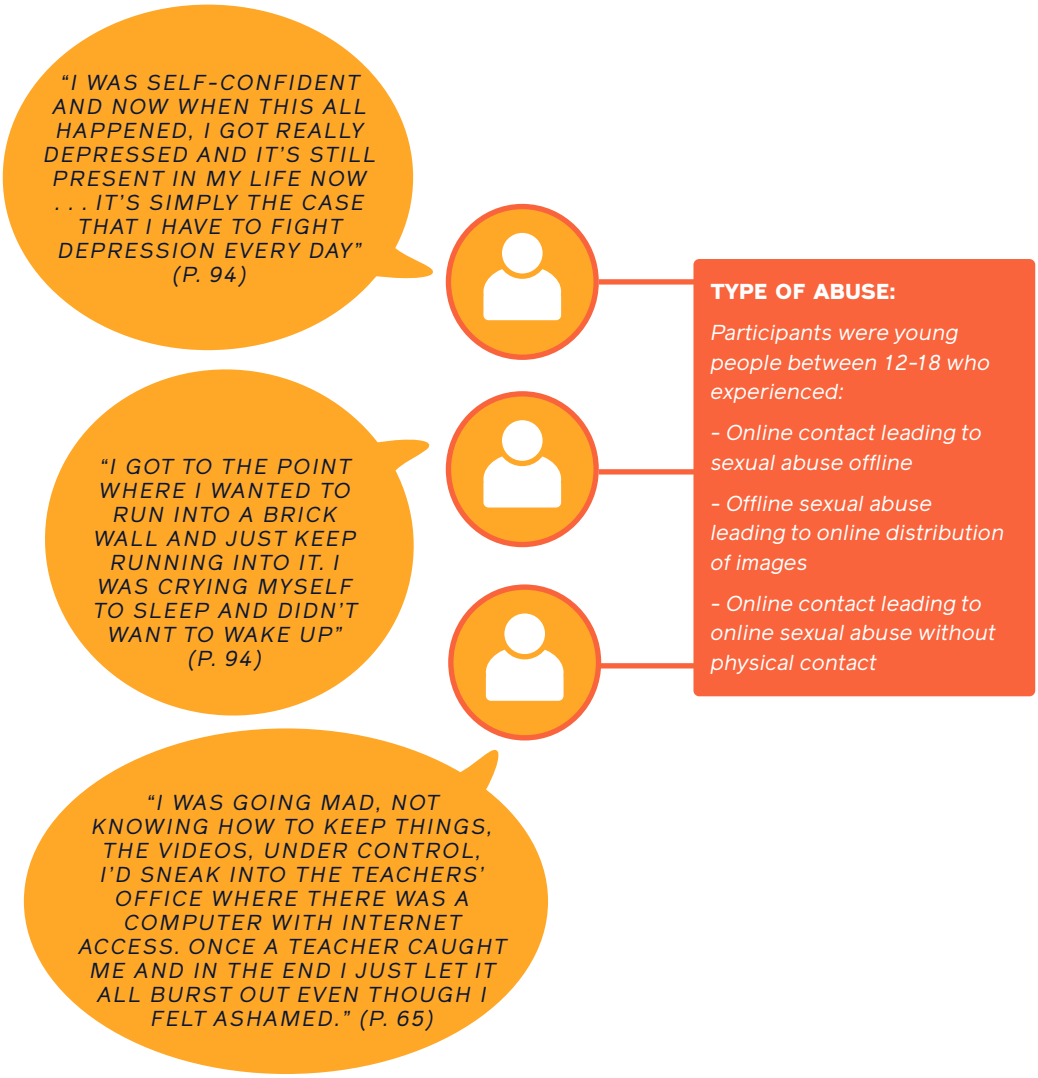


Anxiety and Depression

There is a well-founded causal relationship between child sexual abuse and development of psychopathological disorders such as anxiety and depression. Adults who report being abused as children exhibit more post-traumatic stress symptoms, cognitive distortion, emotional distress (including depression and anxiety disorders), eating disorders, sleep disorders, substance abuse, and avoidance (Chen et al. 2010; Nanni et al. 2012). Maniglio (2010) conducted a systematic review of reviews and found that child sexual abuse was a significant risk factor for both depression and anxiety disorders. Likewise, in their meta-analysis of child maltreatment, Li, Arcy & Meng (2016) found that among studies examining the effect of sexual abuse on psychopathology, children who experienced sexual abuse were 2.66 times more likely to develop depression or anxiety in adulthood than those without

such experience. The article proceeds to conclude, based on the adoption of a population attributable fractions method that more than half (58.59%) of depression and anxiety cases worldwide are attributable to childhood maltreatment, including sexual abuse.

STUDY: QUAYLE ET. AL, 2012

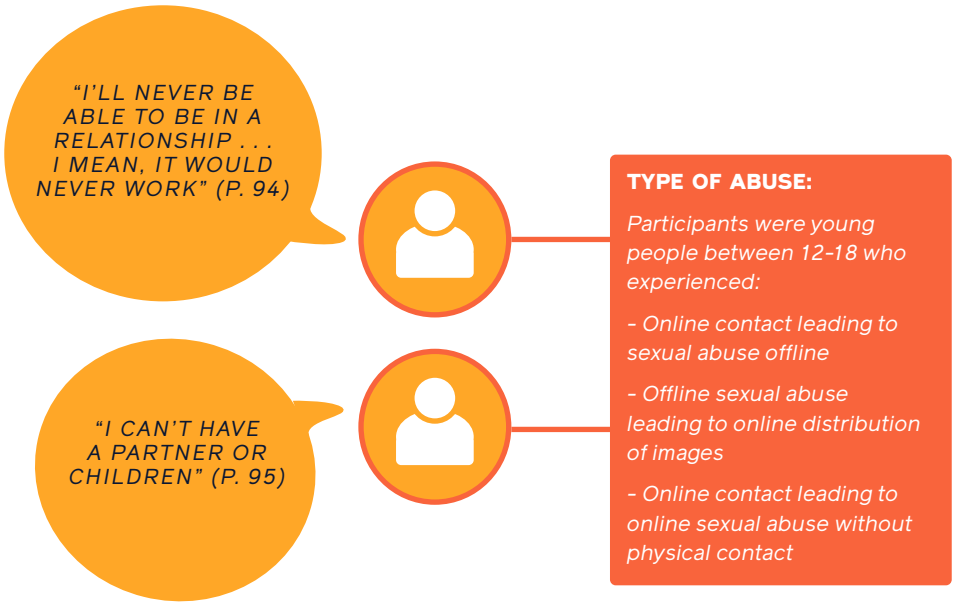


Relationship Difficulties/Avoidance

Child sexual abuse can have a profound effect on victim-survivors' ability to form and/or maintain positive relationships. In their prospective study, Coleman & Widom (2004) established that male and female victims of child sexual abuse reported higher rates of cohabitation, walking out, and divorce than counterparts in a control group. Abused and neglected females were also less likely than females in comparison groups to have positive perceptions of current romantic partners and to be sexually faithful (Colman & Widom, 2004). More recent systematic reviews have reinforced this finding, identifying higher levels of insecure attachment among victim-survivors, reduced likelihood of marrying and increased

likelihood of divorce and marital dysfunction (MacIntosh & Menard, 2021; Labella, Johnson, Martin, Ruiz , & Shankman, 2017; Vitek & Yeater, 2020). The systematic reviews also find higher levels of relationship difficulty in the child-parent dyads, identifying that victim-survivors of CSA are more likely than comparison groups to have different attitudes towards child-rearing and to have difficulties functioning in a parental role (MacIntosh & Menard, 2021; Labella, Johnson, Martin, Ruiz , & Shankman, 2017; Vitek & Yeater, 2020).

STUDY: QUAYLE ET. AL, 2012

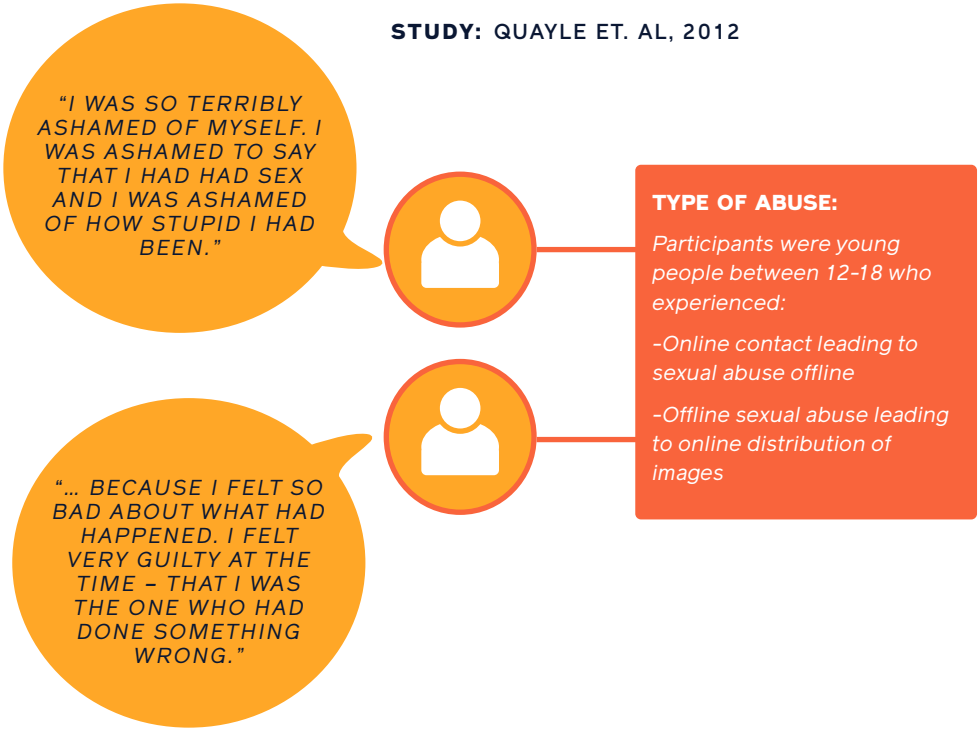


Shame

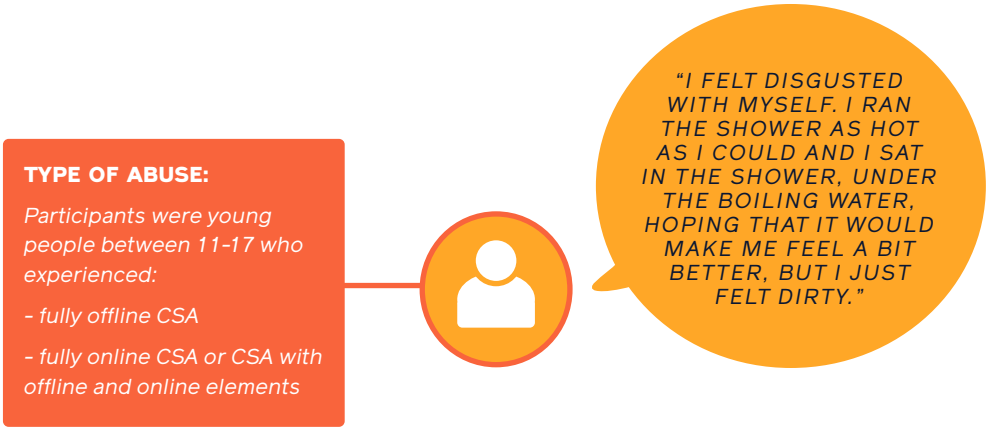
Shame associated with CSA is very common and can be intensely painful and destructive to one's sense of self and place in the world (MacGinley, Breckenridge, & Mowll, 2019). It is distinguishable from guilt in that guilt is a negative assessment of behaviour, whilst shame is a negative assessment of the self (Lewis, 1971). So, whilst a guilt response would be 'I have *done* something wrong', the shame response would be "I *am* wrong'. Shame is both a debilitating effect of CSA and moderating variable of other effects of CSA, especially revictimization and negative psychological wellbeing (MacGinley, Breckenridge, & Mowll, 2019). As an isolated effect of CSA, shame can influence victim-survivors to adopt maladaptive views of themselves such as: believing that they have brought the abuse on themselves or that they do not deserve to be loved (Filipas & Ullman, 2006). The centrality of shame in moderating other effects of CSA has been identified across many studies. Specifically, there is evidence that shame moderates the impact of: sexual re-victimisation in adulthood (Arata, 2000); body surveillance and alexithymia (Watson, Mattheny, Gagne, Brack, & Ancis, 2013); suicidal ideation (Kealy, Spidel, & Ogrodniczuk, 2017; Milligan & Andrews, 2005; You, Talbot, He, & Conner, 2012);

self-harming behaviors (Milligan & Andrews, 2005); dissociation (Talbot, Talbot, & Tu, 2004); body-related trauma (Dyer, Feldman, & Borgmann, 2015); poor mental health (Rahm, Renck, & Ringsberg, 2013) and anxiety and depressive symptoms (Willie et al., 2016).

STUDY: QUAYLE ET. AL, 2012



STUDY: HAMILTON-GIACHRITSIS, HANSON, WHITTLE, & BEECH, 2017



Attributes of Online Child Sexual Exploitation Which Moderate Impact

The consensus from available literature strongly suggests that there are distinct attributes of abuse commonly seen in online child sexual exploitation which are not evident in CSA (Hanson E., 2017). There is insufficient evidence to conclusively determine if these attributes produce unique impacts on survivors however emerging evidence appears to support a moderating effect hypothesis. That is, the unique abuse attributes of online child sexual exploitation moderate the severity and nature of psychosocial impacts upon victim-survivors. The following section summarizes the attributes of abuse associated with online child sexual exploitation and the specific moderating effect on psychosocial impact which have been observed. Each attribute is accompanied by verbatim quotes from survivors to demonstrate the moderating effect of the abuse attribute.

1. Increased level of deception

Commonly in online child sexual exploitation cases, perpetrators will employ tactics of coercion through the grooming process or through threats in order to manipulate victim-survivors into participating in the images (Hanson E., 2017). Victim-survivors can also be constructed as consenting or enjoying the abuse. This is often achieved through manipulating victim-survivors to smile or appear happy during the abuse or by adding captions which imply that the victim-survivors is enjoying the abuse in some way (Hanson E., 2017). It is understood that perpetrators often deceptively construct the abuse materials in such a way as to increase

their pleasure whilst minimizing their guilt and discomfort. The moderating impact of this abuse tactic is that it significantly increases victim-survivor guilt, self-blame, and internalization of the abuse about their perceived active participation and 'consent'. Furthermore, the deception of victim-survivor participation in the abuse can decrease likelihood of disclosure and increase feelings of self-blame and powerlessness (Hanson E., 2017).

"I thought 'I can't go to the police with a film where I'm smiling. They will just say I have myself to blame.'" (Quayle et al., 2012, p. 57)"

"People in school had asked me, 'why did you carry on with it when he gave you a choice, it wasn't like he forced you?', so I'd be asking myself the same question, I did have a choice so why am I talking to the police about it." (Hamilton-Giachritsis, Hanson, Whittle , & Beech, 2017)

2. Increased accessibility with increased control

The intersection of child sexual abuse with online communications platforms and technologies which is inherent to online child sexual exploitation has profound implications for the accessibility of abuse (Hamilton-Giachritsis, Hanson, Whittle , & Beech, 2017). In traditional CSA, access to abuse of victim-survivors is limited by a number of factors including needing to arrange contact and the barrier formed by activities which may physically separate perpetrators from children such as school time, work or recreational activities. Comparatively, given the 24/7 nature of online platforms and technologies, perpetrators can access victim-survivors with greater ease, higher frequency, and less barriers to conducting the abuse (Hamilton-Giachritsis, Hanson, Whittle , & Beech, 2017). This increased level of access provides perpetrators with an increased level of control over victim-survivors. This has significant ramifications for impacts of abuse given that the greater the level of coercion and directing of the abuse remotely, the lesser it appears that victim-survivors can correctly assign blame for the abuse (Hanson E., 2017).

> *"What he used to control is me, like, not going to sleep. Sometimes he'd make me stay up all night...I didn't do any schoolwork. I was falling asleep. I think a couple of teachers commented on how tired I looked." (Hamilton-Giachritsis, Hanson, Whittle, & Beech, 2017)*

3. Self-objectification

Sexual abuse and exploitation is intrinsically connected to the denigration of victim-survivors humanity through debasing their identity to be purely defined by the abuse and exploitation of their body, most commonly their genitalia (Quayle et. al., 2012). The process of constructing someone's worth in the exploitation of their body inculcates a sense of objectification in the victim-survivor's self-esteem and self-view. Although this is pertinent to all sexual abuse, it is argued that the use of film equipment, videos and photography may enhance the salience of objectification in the survivor's mind (Hanson E., 2017). The notion that their body is at the disposal of another's viewing pleasure heightens shame and self-objectification, both of which contribute to difficulties later on. In the case of online child sexual exploitation, objectification occurs not only by one or more identified abusers within a certain time and place, but by an indefinite amount of potential abusers, across the world in the past, present and most concerningly the future (Hanson E., 2017).

'It feels worthless, difficult ... mostly. I like start crying ... I mean I remember all the times I have had sex and all the times I have been filmed. I remember most of it.' (Quayle et al., 2012, p. 94)

"I have been told that my pictures are the most popular on the Internet. How can so many people delight in the horrible things that happened to me?" (CRCVC, 2007)

4. Permanency of abuse materials

One of the most profound impacts that is distinct to online child sexual exploitation is the permanency of abuse materials including videos and images (Hanson E., 2017). Whereas traditional CSA usually comprises of abuse which is time-bound, online child sexual exploitation and similar forms of abuse involve the creation of abuse content which is uploaded, downloaded, and embedded into online storage in a perpetual cycle (Hamilton-Giachritsis, Hanson, Whittle , & Beech, 2017). For victim-survivors, the realization to the fact that images or videos may be continuously available and accessed by other perpetrators can lead to a sense of ongoing re-traumatization. Furthermore, it can enhance a sense of hopelessness, fear and uncertainty about the lack of a definitive end to the abuse (Hamilton-Giachristis, et al., 2020). Victim-survivors can experience hypervigilance associated with the fear of coming across their abuse material online and can become preoccupied with anxiety about who may be viewing the abuse material. Even where material is deleted from sections of the internet, the potential threat of someone re-uploading the material can inhibit recovery efforts and exacerbate a sense of re-victimisation (Hamilton-Giachristis, et al., 2020).

"I know that these pictures will never end and that my virtual abuse will go on forever. Usually when someone is raped and abused, the criminal goes to prison and the abuse ends. But since [he] put these pictures on the Internet, my abuse is still going on. Anyone can see them. People ask for them and are still downloading them. Day after day." (CRCVC, 2007)

"I know it's somewhere, technology doesn't go does it, you can delete it, but it's never fully deleted, so it'll probably be out there somewhere." (Hamilton-Giachritsis, Hanson, Whittle , & Beech, 2017)

5. Reach of images

Unlike traditional sexual abuse or commercial sexual abuse wherein sexual abuse is often confined to location, a people group or a relationship, online child sexual exploitation comprises of abuse which is not bound to a single location or a single perpetrator. Perpetrator-constructed abuse materials stretch not only across time (permanence) but also across social space (reach) (Hanson E., 2017). In contrast to circumstances in which abusers faces or names are embedded within the traumatic memory, intrinsic to the trauma of online child sexual exploitation is the ambiguity of perpetrators. Survivors can experience hypervigilance, watchfulness, and anxiety about who has watched their abuse and whether they will recognize them. Furthermore, survivors can experience preoccupation with the context, motivations and functions of the abusers viewing.

'I don't know what's out there and I don't know who's watching and I don't know what people are doing regarding to me and whether anyone's planning anything, that's what it makes me feel bad.' (Hamilton-Giachritsis, Hanson, Whittle, & Beech, 2017)

'One victim discussed with me her insomnia, years after the abuse had ended because she was aware that videos were on the internet. She described walking around her house looking out the windows many nights. When I asked her what she was searching for, she replied that she was looking for the people who would be looking back in at her.' (Cooper, 2012)

6. Deceit about the abuser

The online world affords more anonymity and opportunity for perpetrators to disguise their identity, personality, and motives (Hamilton-Giachritsis, Hanson, Whittle , & Beech, 2017). Deception and manipulation are used to disguise grooming and abuse as something normal and desirable until the victim-survivors is at a point at which he or she is trapped often

by virtue of the manipulated attachment and dependency on the offender (Quayle et al., 2012). The increased level of deception and manipulation associated with online child sexual exploitation and similar forms of abuse further exacerbates control dynamics and can make it more difficult for victims-survivors to recognize the abuse (Hamilton-Giachristis, et al., 2020). Furthermore, deception through the grooming process can increase the likelihood of victim-survivors seeing themselves as self-enacting the abuse and diminish chances of disclosure (Hamilton-Giachristis, et al., 2020).

"Within a week, we were, like, in what I considered to be a relationship and, erm, first of all, it started off just normal, as any, like, relationship would, just telling each other we loved each other and stuff, and then it turned into, erm, he would force me to send pictures to him (Hamilton-Giachritsis, Hanson, Whittle , & Beech, 2017)"

"I feel like I can't look at myself as a good person because of everything that happened. Of course I'm going to blame myself because I put myself in lots of these situations, I feel like even no matter what I do now, there's always a background of you did a bad thing. So I think I do think less of myself." (Hamilton-Giachritsis, Hanson, Whittle , & Beech, 2017)

Resilience as a moderator of impact

Though *majority of the research has traditionally examined* the negative consequences of child sexual abuse, there is an appreciable and growing body of research which has investigated positive psychosocial change as a result of trauma. This is commonly known as resilience (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1991) or post-traumatic growth (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). The dynamic developmental process in which individuals are able to attain positive adaptation within the context of significant threat, severe adversity, or trauma is conceptualized as resilience (Toffey, Eisen, & Smarz, 2019; Domhart, Munzer, Fegert, & Goldbeck, 2015). Several studies have reported rates of resilience among child sexual abuse victim-survivors, with estimates varying from 10%-25% (Walsh, Dawson, & Mattingly, 2010), 20%-44% (Dufour, Nadeu, & Bertrand, 2000) and 10%-53% (Domhart, Munzer, Fegert, & Goldbeck, 2015). Resilience researchers have consistently identified two distinct variables that predict the outcome of a person's response to adversity (Cooley, Thompson, & Wojciak, 2017; Kolar, 2011; Lietz, Julien-Chinn, Gieger, & Piel, 2016). These are known as 'risk' and 'protective' factors (Ciccetti & Garmezy, 1993). Resilience is predicated on the relative presence of risk and protective factors (see Figure 1) (Lietz, Julien-Chinn, Gieger, & Piel, 2016). That is, fewer risk factors and greater protective factors increase the likelihood of a positive outcome following trauma (Lietz, Julien-Chinn, Gieger, & Piel, 2016). Given this causal relationship, the following section summarizes the available literature regarding which protective and risk factors most significantly shape resilience in the context of CSA.

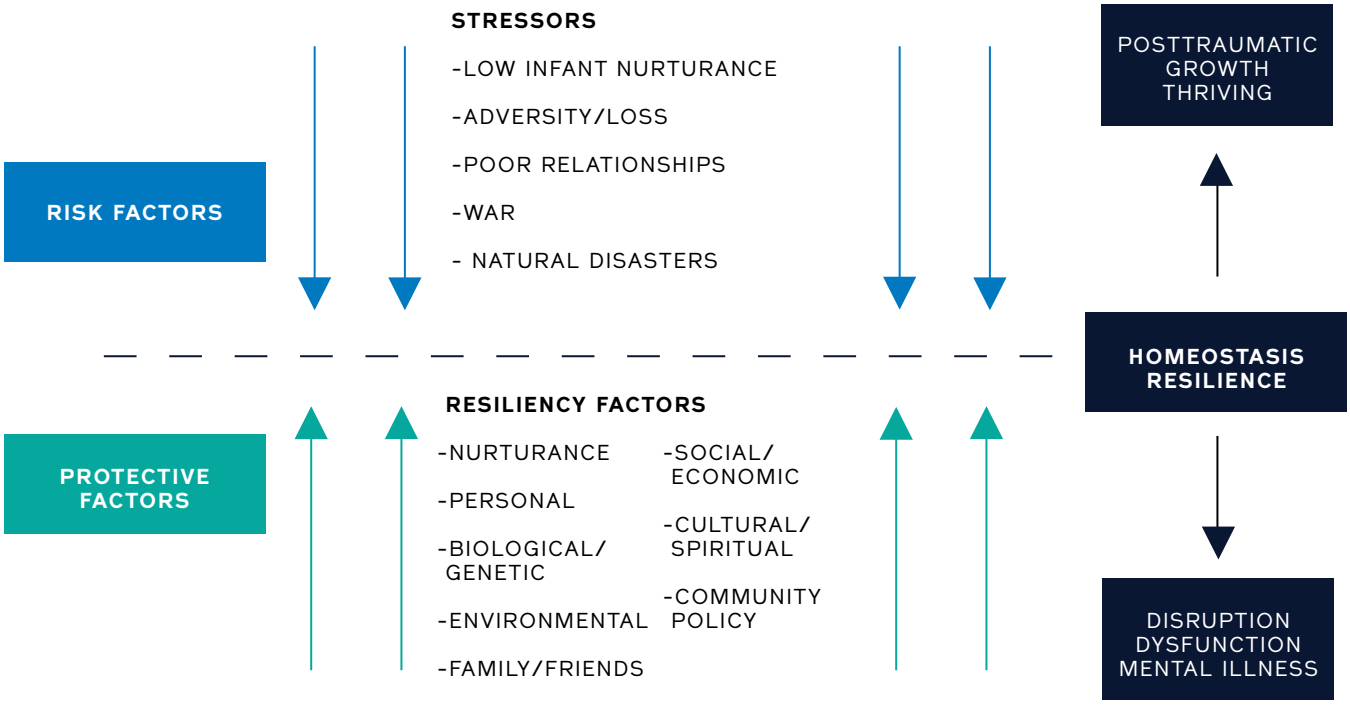


FIGURE 1: HERMANN, H., STEWART, D., DIAZ-GRANADOS, N., BERGER, E., JACKSON, B., & YUEN, T. (2011). WHAT IS RESILIENCE? CANADIAN JOURNAL OF PSYCHIATRY, 56, 258–265.

Risk and Protective Factors Influencing Resilience

Analysis of risk and protective factors is commonly organised with respect to two broad categories: *individual factors* and *environmental factors* (Domhart, Munzer, Fegert, & Goldbeck, 2015). There are many individual factors which have been identified as possible contributors to the development of resilience. These include but are not limited to: personality traits (openness, extraversion, and agreeableness); internal locus of control; mastery; self-efficacy; self-esteem; cognitive appraisal; intellectual functioning, social attachment; positive self-concept and; spirituality (Afifi & MacMillan, 2011; Haskett et al., 2006; Heller et al., 1999; Herrman et al., 2011). Additionally, there are a wide range of environmental factors which are intrinsically connected to resilience. These include but are not limited to: social support from family, peers, teachers, or other significant adults; family coherence; good parenting skills; stable caregiving and; good parental relationships (Afifi & MacMillan, 2011; Haskett et al., 2006; Heller et al., 1999; Herrman et al., 2011). Despite the multiplicity of potential contributors to resilience, there is growing consensus that some risk and protective factors are more influential than others. The following section summarizes the factors which have had the strongest support in evidence for explaining how children may avoid negative effects (resilience) or manifest positive effects (post-traumatic growth) after experiencing CSA. Furthermore, each of the following factors can act as either a risk or protective factor to building resilience, depending upon whether it is lacking (risk factor) or there is sufficient presence of the variable (protective factor).

Social Support (Environmental)

Very few systematic reviews have been conducted to determine which protective factors have a greater influence on resilience than others. Notwithstanding, the three systematic reviews which are available have independently corroborated that social support plays a critical role in protecting children against the deleterious effects of sexual abuse and child maltreatment more broadly (Domhart, Munzer, Fegert, & Goldbeck, 2015; Dufour, Nadeu, & Bertrand, 2000; Meng, Fleury, Xiang, Li, & D'Arcy, 2018). Social support is broadly conceptualized as receiving some type of supportive intervention (either material, emotional, moral, or psychological) from family, peers, teachers or other significant adults (Dufour, Nadeu, & Bertrand, 2000). Examples include positive peer influence, caring from a teacher or other adults, support from a child welfare caseworker and caring from religious or spiritual community or leader (Domhart, Munzer, Fegert, & Goldbeck, 2015). Social support has been found to moderate the impact of child maltreatment, including CSA, through strengthening interpersonal relationships, reducing aggressive behaviors and reducing vulnerability to depression and psychopathology (Domhart, Munzer, Fegert, & Goldbeck, 2015; Hermann, et al., 2011; Meng, Fleury, Xiang, Li, & D'Arcy, 2018). Finally, the type of social support most effective for victim-survivors has been found to be correlated with the victim-survivors developmental stage. Consequently, there is consensus that children depend on support within the family domain (non-offending parents and family members), adolescents depend on support within the community domain (peers, friends and teachers) and adults depend upon support within the companion domain (spouse or close friend) (Domhart, Munzer, Fegert, & Goldbeck, 2015; Meng, Fleury, Xiang, Li, & D'Arcy, 2018).

Family Cohesion (Environmental)

Numerous studies and systematic reviews have also corroborated the significance of family cohesion in ameliorating the negative impacts of child sexual abuse (Domhart, Munzer, Fegert, & Goldbeck, 2015; Hermann, et al., 2011; Meng, Fleury, Xiang, Li, & D'Arcy, 2018). It is evident that the strength, stability, and cohesion of a child's family unit is one of the most foundational influences upon resilience (Hermann, et al., 2011). Although disruption to a child's family unit through CSA perpetrated by a family member inevitably impacts resilience, other family members or constructions of family (i.e foster care) can contribute significantly to the empowering of resilience. This finding supports the vast body of evidence which has identified causal links between attachment and later life functioning (Twait & Rodriguez, 2004), parental relationships and adult functioning (Hermann, et al., 2011) and early childhood experiences and prospective psychosocial wellbeing (Anda, Felitti, Walker, Whitfield, & Bremner , 2006).

Education (Individual)

Engagement, competence, and attitude towards education has been recurrently demonstrated to have a primary effect on resilient outcomes among children and adolescents (Domhart, Munzer, Fegert, & Goldbeck, 2015; Toffey, Eisen, & Smarz, 2019). Persistent engagement in school (Williams & Nelson-Gardell, 2012), certainty about one's educational plans (Edmond, Auslander, Ezle, & Bowland, 2006), achieving a stronger academic performance, and having positive feelings toward school (Hyman & Williams, 2001) have all been found to correlate with increased levels of resilience in adolescent samples. In a systematic review of resilience among survivors of CSA, the authors reported that "Our review found the best-established protective factor on an individual level to be education." (Domhart, Munzer, Fegert, & Goldbeck, 2015, p. 488).

Self-Concept (Individual)

There is strong evidence to suggest that self-concept, otherwise understood as an individual's belief about themselves and perception of their intrinsic worth and acceptance by others (Kernis & Paradise, 2002), is intrinsically connected to producing resilient outcomes (Toffey, Eisen, & Smarz, 2019). This is largely predicated by the intrinsic connection between self-concept and two foundational elements in how people respond to adverse experiences: appraisal and coping (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1991). Research consistently identifies that what a person thinks about themself (self-concept) shapes how a person feels about themself (self-esteem) (Sowislo & Orth, 2013). These in turn determine how a person makes sense of the world (appraisal) and responds to adversity (coping) (McCubbin & McCubbin, 1991). Research finds therefore, that young people with low levels of self-esteem are more likely to experience hopelessness and depression both of which are characterised by diminished coping resources and negative appraisal (Orth, Robins, & Roberts, 2008). Conversely, victim-survivors of CSA who report high levels of self-esteem are more likely to achieve resilient outcomes such as strong interpersonal relationships and assertion of safe sex practices (Lamoreux, Palmieri, Jackson, & Hobfoll, 2012)

Implications for Intervention Planning

The multi-faceted psychosocial impacts of online child sexual exploitation have far-reaching implications for the way in which interventions are planned and delivered for victim-survivors. Social work practitioners and professionals engaged in providing services to online child sexual exploitation victim-survivors during recovery may benefit from considering the following implications for intervention.

Reducing the impact and Threat of Abuse Images Circulating

One of the most profound barriers to victim-survivors healing from the trauma of online child sexual exploitation is the ongoing availability of their abuse materials online (Hamilton-Giachristis, et al., 2020). The realization to the fact that abuse materials may be continuously available and accessed by other perpetrators can lead to a sense of ongoing re-traumatization, hopelessness, fear and uncertainty about the lack of a definitive end to the abuse (Hamilton-Giachristis, et al., 2020). During the intervention planning, steps should be taken to explore whether the abuse materials can be removed. This will likely involve collaboration with both global law enforcement and actors within the tech industry. Practitioners responding to the abuse should consider how to actively work with global watchdogs such as the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) or the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF).

Address Self-Objectification and Body Esteem

Sexual abuse and exploitation is intrinsically connected to the denigration and objectification

of a victim-survivors body. Online child sexual exploitation involves the use of film equipment, videos and photography which are likely to enhance the salience of objectification to victim-survivors. Furthermore, due to the online nature, objectification occurs not only by one or more *identified* abusers within a certain time and place, but by an indefinite amount of *potential* abusers, across the world in the past, present and most concerningly the future. Based on these factors, interventions should explicitly address self-objectification and body esteem through multiple approaches. One promising approach to helping young people relate positively to their body is developing their appreciation of their body's functions and how their body sustains them in a diversity of ways (Hanson E., 2017). Body appreciation and connection are also enhanced through creative, sensory, and movement-based activities (e.g., dance, yoga, cooking, gardening) conducted mindfully, and meditations focused on body appreciation and acceptance (Hanson E., 2017).

Create Safety Amidst Ongoing Trauma

One of the fundamental assumptions in trauma healing work is that establishing safety is the first essential perquisite of commencing intervention or else recovery from trauma can be compromised (Van der Kolk, et al., 2005). In the case of online child sexual exploitation, a survivor's safety is intrinsically connected to their experience of abuse through the exploitation of their bodies through images and videos (Martin, 2016). Given these abuse materials are produced, shared and reshared online; their abuse is in many ways permanently accessible to a borderless audience. Social workers in the Martin (2016) study shared a deep ambivalence about how to create safety in the present when the survivor may be fearful about the future of their seemingly perpetual abuse. Effective interventions for victim-survivors of online sexual exploitation of children must take into consideration the ongoing trauma, hypervigilance, fear and shame which is produced by the likelihood of their images being circulated continuously online. Interventions must seek to establish a sense of safety even whilst images may be still circulating (Hanson E., 2017) This may include developing new and adaptive conceptualizations of the images, for example, they can be thought of as images separate from oneself, communicating only something about the offender and not the young person (they are the abuser's fantasy and deception).

Addressing Cognitive Distortions

Given the severity of deception and control which is inherent to online child sexual exploitation, it is considered essential that interventions address cognitive distortions through the implementation of cognitive processing. Cognitive processing seeks to help victim-

survivors address the trauma-related beliefs or thoughts about themselves. It helps them to name the distortions, such as “It is my fault”, or “I was a willing participant” and provide more accurate and adaptive ways of understanding the abuse (Hanson & Wallis, 2018). Traditionally, cognitive distortions are addressed through questioning assumptions and drawing attention to more accurate understandings such as “the man who abused me was unsafe, but not all men are” (Hanson E., 2017). One of the key barriers to this approach with online child sexual exploitation is the ongoing threat of revictimization through circulating abuse materials (Martin, 2016). Fear and hypervigilance about being abused again through their abuse being accessed cannot wholly be addressed through cognitive processing, due to the plausible reality of this happening (Martin, 2016). Despite this, it is likely that a range of maladaptive thought patterns related to the abuse materials can be effectively dealt with through the application of cognitive processing.

Conclusion

This literature review has employed a comparative examination of existing research which has studied the impacts of CSA and OSEC respectively. One of the first findings of the review is the scarce amount of research which has been conducted to examine the impacts of OSEC on victim-survivors. There is clearly a need to increase efforts to determine more accurately what the specific impacts of OSEC are on victim-survivors. Conversely, there is a rich and long-standing body of research examining the impacts of CSA on victim-survivors. In support of the burden of literature, this review found that there are inextricable links between the experience of CSA and a range of negative psychosocial outcomes for victim-survivors (MacGinley, Breckenridge, & Mowll, 2019). These include but are not limited to: sexual difficulties (Noll, Trickett, & Putnam, 2003); revictimization (Noll, Horowitz, Bonanno, Trickett, & Putnam, 2003); self-destructive behaviour (Yates, Carlson, & Egeland, 2008); anxiety and depression (Maniglio, 2010); relationship difficulties/avoidance (MacIntosh & Menard, 2021) and; shame (MacGinley, Breckenridge, & Mowll, 2019). In order to determine co-occurrence of impacts among victims-survivors of online child sexual exploitation, studies were solicited which interviewed survivors directly to provide first-hand accounts of the impact of online sexual abuse on their life. Notably, when first-hand accounts were compared with the impacts of CSA, there was a high degree of corroboration between the two. Indeed, all of the impacts identified in the literature from victim-survivors of CSA co-occurred among victim-survivors of online child sexual exploitation (Hanson E., 2017). This review thus provides evidence to suggest that there is significant similarity between the impacts of CSA and the impacts of online child

sexual exploitation. Conversely, the available literature also provided sufficient evidence to indicate that there are a range of distinct impacts of online child sexual exploitation which do not co-occur among victim-survivors of CSA. These include but are not limited to: increase levels of deception; increased accessibility with increased control (Hamilton-Giachritsis, Hanson, Whittle, & Beech, 2017); self-objectification (Hanson E., 2017) permanency of abuse materials (Hamilton-Giachristis, et al., 2020); reach of images (Hanson E., 2017) and; deceit about the abuser (Quayle et al., 2012).

The implications of the findings of this review can be categorized into two areas. Firstly, this review suggests that increased investment in empirical research which examines the impacts specifically of online child sexual exploitation upon victim-survivors is greatly needed. In the absence of evidence which can clearly and robustly measure the impacts of online child sexual exploitation, future research will continue to need to rely upon evidence from other fields of research (Hanson E., 2017). Whilst this is a suitable strategy in the interim, it is not best practice and those working in the field would benefit greatly from more applied and directly relevant research. Secondly, this review has implications for practitioners working directly with survivors and those involved in intervention planning. Specifically, this review indicates that interventions with victim-survivors of online child sexual exploitation must incorporate strategies to proactively address the availability of images on the internet (Hanson E., 2017). Although this may seem out of the scope of traditional interventions, it is evident that the ongoing accessibility of abuse materials on the internet poses a key threat to recovery efforts and can undermine therapeutic interventions (Martin, 2016). Furthermore, given the higher levels of deception and self-objectification involved in online child sexual exploitation, it is likely that interventions which specifically address cognitive distortions (unhelpful though patterns) and actively target shame will be more effective than other interventions (Hanson E., 2017).

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