

Reasons for the reluctance to disclose sexual abuse by middle childhood children

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Co-supervisor: Prof CC Wessels
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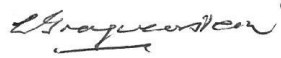
- ❖ The Almighty God for giving me strength and courage to complete this research
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- ❖ Prof Lesley Greyvenstein for the English language editing

LANGUAGE CERTIFICATION

LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that the English language editing of this dissertation by Ms S Gogela was done by Prof L A Greyvenstein.

Prof L A Greyvenstein was a member of the South African Translators' Institute, membership number: 1001691. She completed her primary, secondary and tertiary education, including a doctoral thesis, in English. She has done the English language editing of many proposals, dissertations, theses and scientific articles.



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STATEMENT

I, **Siphokazi Gogela** hereby state that the manuscript entitled:

Reasons for the reluctance to disclose sexual abuse by middle childhood children

is my own work.

.....
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.....
Date

SUMMARY

TITLE: Reasons for the reluctance to disclose sexual abuse by middle childhood children

Key words: Caregiver, children, disclosure, forensic social work, middle childhood, parent, reluctance, sexual abuse

Fighting sexual violence against women and children in South Africa is regarded as a priority. The **aim** of this study is to explore the reasons for the reluctance to disclose sexual abuse by middle childhood children. Some of the factors that were highlighted that cause the reluctance to disclose sexual abuse by middle childhood children were: threats made by the perpetrator, the relationship with the perpetrator, stigmatization and talking about sexual related matters were seen as a taboo.

The study reveals that there is lack of parental support especially when the perpetrator is a family member as they want to avoid embarrassment. It was also discovered that it is difficult for those parents who have unresolved issues of sexual abuse to handle their children's disclosure. The study further shows that people do not understand the justice process especially the bail conditions. They lose faith in the system especially when they see the perpetrator outside and they do not understand that the investigation is still in process. It was discovered that FCS (Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit) and FSW (Forensic Social Work) offices/environment should be better equipped and child friendly to put sexually abused children at ease.

It was indicated that parents should supervise their children at all times. Children should be assured that it is not their fault and they do not deserve to be sexually abused.

OPSOMMING

TITEL: Redes vir die onwilligheid om seksuele misbruik van die middelkinderjare kind bekend te maak

Sleutel terme: Bekendmaking, forensiese maatskaplike werk, kinders, middel kinderjare, ouer, seksuele misbruik, versorger

Die bekamping van seksuele misbruik van vroue en kinders in Suid-Afrika is 'n prioriteit. Die **doel** van hierdie studie is om redes te verken vir die onwilligheid om seksuele misbruik deur die middelkinderjare kind bekend te maak. Sekere faktore wat veroorsaak dat die seksuele misbruik deur die middel kinderjare kinders nie bekend gemaak word nie is uitgelig soos: dreigemente deur die oortreder, die verhouding met die oortreder, stigmatisering en die bespreking van seksuele aangeleenthede wat as 'n verbode onderwerp beskou word.

Hierdie studie het onthul dat om verleentheid te vermy, veral wanneer die oortreder 'n familielid is, daar 'n tekort aan ouerlike steun ervaar word. Indien ouers self onopgeloste sake rakende hulle seksuele misbruik het, is dit vir hulle moeilik om hulle kinders se bekendmaking van seksuele misbruik te hanteer. Die studie wys daarop dat persone nie die regsproses verstaan, veral die borg voorwaardes nie. Hulle verloor om hierdie rede hulle vertroue in die sisteem veral wanneer hulle die oortreder in die gemeenskap sien en nie verstaan dat die ondersoek nog in die proses van afhandeling is nie. Uit hierdie studie is dit duidelik dat die GKS (Gesinsgeweld-, Kinderbeskerming- en Seksuele Misdrywe-Eenheid) en FMW (Forensies Maatskaplike Werk) kantore/omgewing beter toegerus en kinder vriendelik moet wees om sodoende die seksueel misbruikte kind op hulle gemak te stel.

Daar is op gewys dat ouers toesig oor hulle kinders ten alle tye moet hou. Kinders moet verseker word dat dit nie hulle skuld is en hulle verdien nie om seksueel misbruik te word nie.

FOREWORD

The article format was chosen in accordance with regulations A.11.2.5 for the degree MA (Social Work in Forensic Practice). The article will comply with the requirements of the journal, *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk*.

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE AUTHORS

SOCIAL WORK/MAATSKAPLIKE WERK

The journal publishes articles, brief communications, book reviews and commentary articles already published from the field of Social Work. Contributions may be written in English or Afrikaans. All contributions will be critically reviewed by at least two referees on whose advice contributions will be accepted or rejected by the editorial committee. All refereeing is strictly confidential. Manuscripts may be returned to the authors if extensive revision is required or if the style of presentation does not conform to the practice. Commentary on articles already published in the Journal must be submitted with appropriate captions, the name(s) and address (es) of the author(s), preferably not exceeding 5 pages. The entire manuscript must be submitted, plus one clear copy as well as a diskette with all the text, preferably in MS Word (Word Perfect) or ACSII. Manuscripts must be typed, double spaced on the side of the A4 paper only. Use the Harvard system for references. Short references in the text: When word- for- word quotations, facts or arguments from other sources are cited, the surname(s), year of publication and the page number(s) must appear in parenthesis in the text, e.g. “...” (Berger, 1976:12). More details concerning sources referred to in the text should appear at the end of the manuscript under the caption “References”. The sources must be arranged alphabetically according to the surnames of the authors.

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SECTION A:

REASONS FOR THE RELUCTANCE TO DISCLOSE SEXUAL ABUSE BY MIDDLE CHILDHOOD CHILDREN

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Dr A.A Roux, Supervisor: North- West University, Potchefstroom Campus

Prof C.C Wessels: Co- Study leader: North- West University, Potchefstroom Campus

1 INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Sexual violence against women and children is a major problem in South Africa, which has been branded the 'rape capital of the world' (Pillay & Sargent, 2000:9; Spies, 2006:44). According to Jewkes *et al.* (2006:2950), a child is raped every four minutes in South Africa which means that the country has a particularly high prevalence of rape. Child sexual abuse occurs amongst all races, gender, age groups and cultures (Goosen, 2012:1). The crime statistics according to the SAPS Intranet of the Police in South Africa from 2004/2005 until 2012/2013 were reduced by 10.9% in nine years (SA, 2012/2013) according to the statistics of the past. (Overview RSA 2012/2013)

From a legal point of view sexual abuse is defined by the Criminal Law Sexual Offence Amendment Act 32 of (SA, 2007) as any person that engages a child (a person under the age of 18) in a sexual act without the child's consent. Sexual abuse, seen from a psycho-social perspective, occurs when someone with an advanced knowledge, age or power engages a more naive, vulnerable or weaker person into a sexualized relationship with or without the consent of the younger

person (Nel, 2003:7; Spies, 2006a:1). Child sexual abuse refers to contacts or interaction between a child and an adult when the child is being used for the stimulation of the perpetrator or another person when either of such mentioned persons is in a position of power and control over the victim (Spies, 2006a:1).

The Wikipedia Free Dictionary (2013:1) defines middle childhood as that it begins at around age seven or eight, approximating primary school age and ends around puberty, approximately age twelve, which typically marks the beginning of adolescence. In this period, children are attending school, thus developing socially and mentally. They are at a stage where they make new friends and gain new skills, which will enable them to become more independent and to enhance their individuality. Children during this age already understand what is happening with them and, therefore, experience sexual abuse as traumatic. Because they know what is happening to them, they often are embarrassed by the situation or feel responsible for the abuse and this may be the reason for them not wanting to disclose (Spies, 2006b:48). Fouché (2006:211) states that many sexually abused children never disclose because they are often silenced by threats, blame and bribery.

An integral part of sexual abuse includes the disclosure of sexual abuse. In the researcher's opinion, disclosure is often a process through which the victim is telling another person about the sexual abuse she or he has experienced. According to Smit (2007:2), the real incidence regarding sexual abuse of children in South Africa is uncertain because not all children disclose the sexual abuse to someone. Meyers and Milner (2007:2) note that the issue of sexual abuse is complex because of the "different discourses, labels and identities" which influence how people deal with sexual matters. Victims of sexual abuse are not always willing to share their secret with anyone until they gain trust in the person. In the researcher's practice experience in working with children that have been sexually abused, the disclosure of sexual abuse often is postponed. Hollely and Müller (2009:125) define disclosure as "a clinically useful concept to describe the process by which a child who has been abused gradually comes to inform the outside world of his plight". Sorenson and Snow (1991:3) describe disclosure of sexual abuse as a process with definable

phases and characteristics, and not as a single event. An understanding of how and under what circumstances a child discloses sexual abuse is critical.

The child will be given counselling and the perpetrator would be taken to task (Fouché, 2006:211). This unfortunately is not always the case. The researcher experienced that the children are often not believed after disclosure but blamed for the consequences of the disclosure. Children are therefore, understandably reluctant to disclose abuse (Cronch *et al.*, 2006:196).

According to Olafson and Lederman (2006:35-36) and Lamb *et al.* (2008:196), other variables also affect disclosure patterns such as maternal or parental support, relationship to perpetrator, age, gender, culture, severity and duration of abuse, dissociation, post-traumatic stress and modesty. Children may also not disclose due to their close relationship with the perpetrator, fear of negative consequences for themselves and the family, especially when yielded to request of secrecy. Children may also lack adequate communication skills to report an event and to provide the necessary details. Not recognising an action as improper, cultural issues pertaining to sexuality, threats made by the perpetrator, fear of being stigmatized, or blamed, self-blame, fear of rejection and lack of parental support are amongst some of the other reasons cited by the literature as to why children do not disclose sexual abuse.

According to project Harmony (Anon, 2013a:1), reasons why children do not want to disclose may be:

- Victim's feelings of shame.
- Passive behaviour of the child. They suffer from low self-esteem.
- Fear of being away from home.
- Fear of being responsible for breaking up the family.
- Fear of losing the family.
- Threats to the child such as taking him/her away to a children's home.
- They did disclose abuse but received no assistance.
- Fear that they may get into trouble.

Social workers specializing in the field of forensic assessments assist children that have been abused. Their role is to conduct forensic assessments, to compile court

reports and to testify in courts of law, to gather facts to support or dispute an allegation by providing an opportunity for children to report as much accurate information as they can in their own words. They should remain neutral and objective (Saywitz *et al.*, 2007:222). Social workers specializing in forensic assessments are there to assist children in the disclosure of sexual abuse but if the children are reluctant to disclose it makes their roles difficult as they will not have a standing ground on which to base their cases.

The researcher is a forensic social worker and has been working with victims of child sexual abuse in Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape Province. The researcher has noticed that at the Family Violence Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit more cases of abuse are reported by girls than by boys in their middle childhood. Mathews *et al.* (2013:6) point out that sexual abuse of boys is not a new phenomenon, yet globally very little is known about the nature and extent of sexual violence against boys. In South Africa sexual abuse of boys has mainly been investigated in prison settings. Boys that have been sexually abused experience the same feelings as sexually abused girls (Catanach, 1992, cited in Spies, 2006b:52). The boys usually are ashamed, blame themselves and see it as a form of weakness and they lack supportive families, which impacts negatively on their ability to disclose that they have been abused. When children are reluctant to disclose and/or do not disclose sexual abuse it impacts negatively on the role of the social workers specializing in forensic assessments.

In conclusion social workers know there are cases where children do not want to disclose the sexual abuse. Fouché (2006:211) notes that in a “perfect world”, when a child discloses his or her sexual abuse, they would be believed and protected, but this unfortunately is not always the case as children are not always believed after disclosure of the sexual abuse. If a child is not convinced that he or she would be protected, the child will most likely not disclose. If social workers specializing in forensic assessments have better understanding of various factors that impact negatively on the child's ability to disclose, they will be better equipped to put the necessary measures in place in an attempt to assist the child through the process of disclosure. Social workers will further be better equipped to identify possible risk factors that play a role in non-disclosure.

The above information constitutes the following research question:

- *What are the reasons why children in middle childhood are reluctant to disclose sexual abuse in the Eastern Cape?*

2 AIM OF THE RESEARCH

The objective of the research is to explore and describe why middle childhood children in the Grahamstown area are reluctant to disclose sexual abuse.

3 CENTRAL THEORETICAL ARGUMENT

If forensic social workers in the Eastern Cape know the reasons why children in middle childhood are reluctant to disclose sexual abuse, the social workers will be able to empower the children during the disclosure process how to disclose the sexual abuse.

4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research was of a qualitative nature (Fouché & Delpont, 2011:63). According to Morse (2003) cited in Botma *et al.* (2010:182) qualitative methodology is used for example when little is known about the topic, the research context is poorly understood or the nature of the problem is not clear.

4.1 Literature review

Fink (2005:3) defines a literature study is "a synthetic, explicit and reproducible method for identifying, evaluating and synthesizing the existing body of completed and recorded work produced by researchers, scholars and practitioners". A literature review took place in the beginning of the research aiming at contributing to a clearer understanding of the nature and meaning of the research problem that has been identified (Fouché & Delpont, 2011:134). A literature control was also conducted after data collection had taken place.

The researcher conducted a thorough analysis of the literature regarding disclosure of sexual abuse, middle childhood children and factors that influence disclosure of sexual abuse in South Africa as well as other countries. Fouché and Delpont

(2005:127) portray a literature review as a scrutiny of all relevant sources of information. National and international journals and texts were used to warrant accurate and sufficient information and findings. Relevant and accredited scientific works in the form of books and articles were utilized. The literature is aimed at further assisting professionals in understanding the dynamics underlying children's failure to disclose sexual abuse.

Data-bases consulted: Ebsco Host, Google Scholar, ERIC, South African journals, Social Sciences Index, The Nexus – RGN database for current and completed research in South Africa, Index of South African Magazine articles and the Catalogue – Ferdinand Postma Library, North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus.

4.2 Research design

The qualitative approach was used (Creswell, 2007:37). Qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to collect data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study. They are concerned with understanding rather than explanation, with naturalistic observation rather than controlled measurement (Fouché & Schurink, 2011:308).

Exploratory research was used because little was known about the reasons for the reluctance to disclose sexual abuse by middle childhood children and the researcher wanted to explore and identify the reasons for the reluctance to disclose sexual abuse by middle childhood children (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:95). For any research the selection of an appropriate research aim for study is crucial in enabling the researcher to arrive at valid findings, comparisons and conclusion (Kumar, 1999:16).

4.3 Research method

Research method refers to data gathering, data analysis and ensuring rigour in research (Botma *et al.*, 2010:199).

4.3.1 Sample

There are two guided principles, according to Morse and Field (1995) cited in Botma *et al.* (2010:199) in qualitative sampling, namely appropriateness (to identify participants that can best inform the research) and adequacy (enough data to develop a full and rich description of the phenomenon) (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:29).

➤ Population

The research was done in the Eastern Cape at the Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit (FCS) which includes Grahamstown, Cradock, Port Elizabeth, Uitenhage, Umtata and King William's Town. Grahamstown, Cradock, Port Elizabeth, Uitenhage, Umtata and King William's town are situated in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. The population that the researcher used were the social workers that are specializing as forensic social workers in the Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit where they are assessing sexually abused children. The researcher also involved parents from the same towns as mentioned above whose children were in middle childhood (seven to twelve years) and did not want to disclose the sexual abuse and who were from the researcher's caseload.

➤ Sampling method

A purposive sampling method was conducted in the Eastern Cape. This type of sampling was chosen because the participants that were selected had an understanding of the research (Creswell, 2007:125). Silverman (2000:104) further explains that purposive sampling allows the researcher to choose a case because it illustrates some feature in which the researcher is interested, and in terms of its relevance to the study. Patton (1990:378) supports the use of purposive sampling and states that purposive sampling should search for samples that are likely to be knowledgeable and informative concerning the phenomena about to be investigated. The assessment of sexual abused children is part of the daily work of the researcher and, therefore, the researcher wanted to know what the reasons were why children do not want to disclose the sexual abuse. The "what" question constitutes an exploratory study (Fouché & Delport, 2011: 95).

➤ **Inclusion criteria**

- Forensic social workers from the Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit (FCS) from Eastern Cape.
- Parents from the researcher's caseload that gave written consent to be part of the research from the same towns as mentioned above and whose children are in middle childhood (seven to twelve years) and do not want to disclose the sexual abuse.
- The forensic social workers as well as the parents were able to speak and understand English. If not, the researcher used an independent translator that could understand and speak the language. An independent translator was used to interpret for the parents. In social work practice the use of translators is allowed as long as the translator agrees to maintain confidentiality. The translator signed a declaration of confidentiality.

➤ **Sample size**

The sample size was:

- The five forensic social workers from the Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit (FCS) of Eastern Cape which includes Grahamstown, Cradock, Port Elizabeth, Uitenhage, Umtata and King William's Town.
- Two parents from the caseload of the researcher whose children are in middle childhood (seven to twelve years) and do not want to disclose the sexual abuse that signed the written consent forms were also included in the research until data saturation has been reached.

4.3.2 Data collection

For the purpose of this study a qualitative approach was used. The self-report data gathering method was used (Botma *et al.*, 2010:133). This simply means to ask people about themselves in relation to the study variables. This includes specific aspects such as knowledge, perceptions and information that cannot easily be observed or measured.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researcher herself with the participants in order to collect the richest data possible (Greeff, 2005:296). The interview according to Greeff (2011:342) "is a social relationship designed to

exchange information between the participant and the researcher". Interviewing the participant involves not only a description of the experience but also a reflection on the description. The interviews were organized around areas of particular interest, while still allowing considerable flexibility in scope and depth. Babbie and Mouton (2001:53) stated that a basic individual interview is an interview which allows the object of the study to speak for him/her rather than to provide respondents with a battery of their predetermined hypothesis-based research questions. The main aim with the semi-structured interview, according to Greeff (2010:297), is to gain a detailed picture about the object of study such as the reasons for the reluctance to disclose sexual abuse by middle childhood children.

Semi-structured interviews can last for a considerable amount of time and can become intense and involved, depending on the particular topic. With the semi-structured interview the researcher had a set of not more than 7 predetermined open questions on the interview schedule for the parents and 6 open questions for the social workers. The interview was guided by an interview schedule and not dictated by it (Greeff, 2005:296). According to Monette *et al.* (2005:178), an interview schedule provides a researcher with a set of predetermined questions that might be used as an instrument to collect the data. These interview schedules were aimed at affording the respondents an opportunity to explain what they truly felt.

The interview schedule was pre-tested by the experts from the small research group in the Department of Social Work who are knowledgeable regarding the interview schedule construction as well as forensic social work. The experts evaluated the face-validity and construct validity (Botma *et al.*, 2010:137). The schedule was pre-tested by two social workers and two parents who were not part of the research to determine the clarity of the questions. After the schedule was pre-tested, adjustments were made to the schedule.

Audiotape recordings were made during each interview with the consent of the social workers and the parents. The main task according to Monette *et al.* (2005:79), is to record the responses of the respondents. Rubin and Babbie (2005:457) state that a tape recorder is a powerful tool because it allows the interviewer to keep full attention focused on respondents. Extensive field notes by the researcher directly after the interview were written (Greeff, 2005:298).

4.3.3 The role of the researcher

- The researcher obtained permission from the commanders of Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit (FCS unit) because social workers specializing in forensic assessments are attached to the FCS unit. (**Annexure 1**)
- The interviews with the parents were in the office of the researcher.
- The interviews with the social workers were in the office of the social workers.
- The place and time of each interview was scheduled with the participants.
- The aim of the research was explained to the participants before they gave their consent.
- The researcher obtained written consent from each participant. (**Annexure 2**)
- The data were collected and recorded. Permission was obtained from the participants for tape-recording the interviews.
- The researcher wrote detailed reports after each interview.

4.3.4 Data analysis

All the audio tape recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed using the coding process which means organizing the data into words, phrases, sentences or images into categories and labeling the categories with a term based on the language of the participant. The researcher used Creswell's (2009:184) qualitative analysis approach after he incorporated Tesch's (1990) approach cited in De Vos (1998:343-344) into 3 steps which entails collection of qualitative data, analysis into themes and reporting of the themes (Botma *et al.*, 2010:224).

4.4 Ethical aspects

According to Grasso and Epstein (1992:118), Mitchell and Jolley (2001:138-139) and Strydom (2005:57-67), ethical issues in social research are principles that are intended to define the rights and responsibilities of social work researchers as well as practitioners in their relationships with one another and other parties such as employers, research subjects and clients.

The research proposal was approved by the AUTHeR Research Unit of the Faculty of Health Sciences of the Potchefstroom Campus of North-West University. Written permission **NWU-0027-09-A1** was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the

Faculty of Health Sciences of the Potchefstroom Campus of North-West University for the main research project Forensic Social Work Practice. **(Annexure 5)**

The researcher took into consideration the following ethical aspects when conducting the study according to the viewpoint of Strydom (2005:59):

- **Informed consent**

According to Grinnell and Unrau (2008:37), people must be afforded the opportunity of choosing whether or not they want to be part of research or not. Nobody should ever be coerced into participating in a research project, because participation must be voluntary. The researcher explained all possible information such as the goal of the investigation; the expected duration of the participant's involvement; the procedures to be followed as well as the advantages of the investigation to the participants. They were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

- **Anonymity and confidentiality**

One of the concerns of families where sexual abuse took place was that of their anonymity. Anonymity and confidentiality places a strong obligation on the researcher. The participants needed to be assured of the confidentiality of the information gathered and of the fact that their identities would not be used in the research report. In this study the research findings did not reflect the names or identifying characteristics of the actual participants. The researcher's report after each interview ensured that the information provided remained confidential.

The researcher informed the participants that the information will be kept confidential. The researcher gave a number beforehand to each participant such as participant 1, participant 2 etc. or participant A or B in advance, instead of using their names to maintain confidentiality.

The data were kept safe in a locked fireproof cabinet in the researcher's office. The researcher has a safe pin code on her computer. The data will be stored for three years (Botma *et al.*, 2010:18-19).

- **Avoidance of harm to respondents, and debriefing**

In this research the participants were informed about the potential impact the study may have. The participants were aware that the information desired was of a personal nature.

Debriefing was provided after sessions. It was the researcher's responsibility to assist the respondents in dealing with emotional and psychological issues that might arise, especially concerning the sexual abuse of the child. Salkind (2000:38) believes that the easiest method for debriefing respondents is discussing the feelings of the respondents immediately. Strydom (2005:66) stresses the importance of rectifying misconceptions that may arise in the minds of the respondents.

5 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness as Botma *et al.* (2010:232) define it, as four epistemological standards namely truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality. Truth value, consistency and neutrality were used as criteria to assist the value of findings according to the standards, strategies and applied criteria to ensure trustworthiness in the summary by Botma *et al.* (2010:232-234).

FIGURE 1: STANDARDS, STRATEGIES AND APPLIED CRITERIA TO ENSURE TRUSTWORTHINESS

Epistemological standards	Strategies	Application
Truth Value	Credibility	<p>The researcher ensured that prolonged engagement was applied by establishing self-rapport with participants during the semi-structured interviews.</p> <p>Field notes were written directly after each interview with the parent/caregiver and the child.</p> <p>The researcher made use of a co-coder as well as member checking.</p>

Consistency	Dependability	The parents of the child and social workers were checking the data (member checking) used in order to get fair and independent opinions.
Applicability	Transferability	Selection of the sample was clearly described. Saturation of data came from the sources in the study.
Neutrality	Confirmability	Field notes made by the researcher were comprehensive and were available for auditing.

6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

6.1 Language

The researcher utilized the Social Worker who is attached at Cradock FCS Unit who is specializing in Forensics to interpret during the interviews that were conducted with the parents of the victims. The interview sessions were conducted in English and the parents of the victims are Xhosa speaking.

6.2 Availability of respondents

One of the respondents did not honour the appointment as planned. The researcher kept on contacting the respondent and ended up rescheduling the appointment.

7 TERMINOLOGY

7.1 Caregiver

Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act, 2007 (Act No 32 of 2007) defines a care giver as “any person who, in relation to a person who is mentally disabled, takes responsibility for meeting the daily needs of or is in substantial contact with such person”.

7.2 Child

Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act, 2007 (Act No 32 of 2007) defines a child as a person under the age of 18 years, or with reference to section 15 and 16, a person 12 years or older but under the age of 16 years, and “**children**” has a corresponding meaning.

7.3 Disclosure

Hollely and Müller (2009:125) define disclosure as “[a] A clinically useful concept to describe the process by which a child who has been abused gradually comes to inform the outside world of his plight”.

7.4 Forensic social work

Forensic social work according to the South African Council for Service Professions (2010:1) is a “specialized field of social work that focuses on the interface between society’s legal and human systems and characterized by the social worker’s primary function of providing expert testimonies in courts of law with the primary client being the judiciary system”.

7.5 Middle childhood

The Wikipedia Free Dictionary (2013:1) defines middle childhood as that it begins at around age seven or eight, approximating primary school age and ends around puberty, approximately age twelve, which typically marks the beginning of adolescence.

7.6 Parent

Free Online Dictionary (2013:1) defines a parent as one who begets, gives birth to or nurtures and raises a child, a father or a mother. Children’s Act, (Act No 38 of 2005) defines a parent in relation to a child, includes the adoptive parent of a child, but excludes-

- the biological father of a child conceived through the rape of or incest with the child’s mother,
- any person who is biologically related to a child by reason only being a gamete donor for purposes of artificial fertilization, and

- a parent whose parental responsibilities and rights in respect of a child have been terminated.

7.7 Sexual abuse

Children's Act, (Act No 38 of 2005) defines sexual abuse as:

- sexually molesting or assaulting a child or allowing a child to be sexually molested or assaulted;
- encouraging, inducing or forcing a child to be used for sexual gratification of another person;
- using a child in or deliberately exposing a child to sexual activities or pornography or,
- procuring or allowing a child to be procured for commercial sexual exploitation or in any way participating or assisting in the commercial sexual exploitation of a child.

8 RESEARCH RESULTS

The results of the study will be discussed according to the themes followed during the interview schedule. Six main themes with some subthemes are distinguished and used to focus on the aim of the study. Results were compared to the literature on the subject.

8.1 Profile of the participants

The five forensic social workers from the Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit (FCS) of Eastern Cape which includes Grahamstown, Cradock, Port Elizabeth, Uitenhage, Umtata and King William's Town and two parents from the caseload of the researcher whose children were in middle childhood (seven to twelve years) and did not at first want to disclose the sexual abuse but later did, were included in the research. The researcher referred to social workers as participants 1 to 5 and to the parents as participants A and B.

8.1.1 Age and gender of the participants

TABLE 1: AGE AND GENDER

Respondent number	Age	Female
1 (Social worker)	41-50	1
2 (Social worker)	41-50	1
3 (Social worker)	41-50	1
4 (Social worker)	31-40	1
5 (Social worker)	31-40	1
A (Parent)	51-60	1
B (Parent)	31-40	1

The table above indicates that there were 7 participants and all were females who participated in the research. From the five social workers, three (3) participants were between the ages of 41-50, two (2) participants were between the ages of 31-40, one (1) participant was between 51-60 and the other one was between ages 31-40 years. The FCS Units that were chosen are comprised of female social workers practising forensic social work. In practice it seems that more female social workers are doing forensic assessments in this area.

8.1.2 Qualification of participants

The participants were requested to provide the following information regarding their qualification:

TABLE 2: QUALIFICATIONS

N=7

Respondent number	Diploma	Degree	Master Degree
1(Social worker)		1	Busy studying
2 (Social worker)		1	
3 (Social worker)		1	
4 (Social worker)		1	Busy studying

5 (Social worker)		1	
A (Parent)		Abet	
B (Parent)		Matric	

Five (74.4%) participants have a Degree in social work and two of them were busy pursuing their Master Degree in Forensic Practice at North-West University on the Potchefstroom Campus. One (14.3%) of the primary caregivers attended Abet classes and the other one (14.3%) has Grade 12.

8.1.3 Experiences as a social worker

TABLE 3: WORK EXPERIENCE OF SOCIAL WORKERS

Respondent number	Social Work Experience (Child sexual abuse cases)	Social Work Experience (Forensic Practice)
1(Social worker)	4 years, 3 months	4 years, 3 months
2 (Social worker)	5 years	5 years
3 (Social worker)	3 years	5 years
4 (Social worker)	5 years	4 years
5 (Social worker)	5 years	7 years

According to the above table all social workers have experience in child sexual abuse cases as well as in forensic assessments.

9 Themes and sub-themes obtained from the interviews

The researcher used semi-structured interviews guided by a schedule of predetermined questions to gather the data. After the completion of the interviews the researcher identified six main themes with some subthemes that can be summarized as the following:

TABLE 4: THEMES AND SUBTHEMES

Theme 1: Reasons for reluctance to disclose	Subtheme 1: Language Subtheme 2: Culture Subtheme 3: Beliefs Subtheme 4: Fear
Theme 2: The perpetrator's contribution towards reluctance to disclose.	
Theme 3: The primary caregiver's contribution toward the reluctance to disclose.	
Theme 4: The contribution of awareness programmes towards the reluctance to disclose	
Theme 5: The contribution of the social worker towards the reluctance to disclose	
Theme 6: Promotion of awareness regarding the importance of reporting child sexual abuse.	
Recommendations regarding the reluctance to disclose.	

9.1 THEME 1: Reasons for the reluctance to disclose sexual abuse by middle childhood children

Fouché (2006:211) states that many sexually abused children never disclose. According to Ulmann cited in Spies (2006b:48), reasons for sexually abused children reluctance to disclose can be that they have been threatened after disclosing; they may be ashamed by the abuse; they feel responsible for the abuse. Threats by the perpetrator; relationship to the perpetrator; socialisation; position of the perpetrator (in cases where the perpetrator is a breadwinner, teacher, priest at church and/or prominent community leader); fear of the consequences; lack of trust in caregivers to take action and/or to protect them; boys fear of being stigmatized as homosexual; lack of faith or trust in the police, social workers and justice system, may all be other reasons for not wanted to disclose the sexual abuse. The participants identified the following reasons:

Subtheme 1: Language vocabulary

According to Swerdlow-Freed (2013:1), the child's vocabulary, especially when talking about sexual acts in middle childhood is not as sophisticated as that of an adult. If the child's language is different from the interviewer, according to Faller (2007:170), this difference can cause a significant barrier to accurate communication between the child and the interviewer or any other person.

According to participants 1 and 4 in terms of language, some children who are sexually abused do not have the vocabulary to explain what happened to them meaning they have limited vocabulary. There are barriers to telling, like not knowing what words to use, or not knowing how to bring it up in conversation. Participants 2 and 5 indicated that the language of children at this stage is fully developed and they are aware that it is wrong to be involved in sexual activities. Participant 3 indicated that children think that if they disclose the incident they would be blamed. Participant A and B stated that the child is afraid to tell because the mother will beat her, secondly they are afraid of the perpetrators due to the fact. The following are some of the participant's reactions:

"Some children do not have the vocabulary to explain what happened to them. So it is difficult for them to explain the sexual abuse because of their limited vocabulary concerning the incident that happened to them." [P1] [3]

"They don't have the language to explain what happened to them. To talk about sexual matters is regarded as a taboo."[P4]

"Although the language of children at this age is fully developed their vocabulary about the sexual abuse is limited." [P2] [P5]

"The children are unable to tell what happened to them."[PB]

Sub theme 2: The role of culture

According to Fontes (2005:2-3), there are different levels in the ecological system when considering child abuse. These levels include the home/family, ethnic culture, proximal social systems (neighbourhood, school, peer group) wider social systems (state, national politics) and multicultural orientation. Culture is, according to Abney

(2002:477), “a set of beliefs, attitudes, values, and standards of behaviour that are passed on from one generation to the next.” Paine and Hanson (2002:275) indicated that children raised within cultures espousing collectivistic value orientation as one of several differences that might influence one’s willingness to disclose, for instance they may be more hesitant to disclose their abuse due to heightened concerns regarding the negative impact their disclosure will bring upon their family or ancestors. All the respondents stated that to talk about sexual issues is regarded as a taboo in terms of their culture. Children listen when old people are talking about disgrace, so in their minds to disclose sexual abuse will be an embarrassment. Culture as well as racial differences can form barriers between the sexually abused child, the interviewer as well as the offender. People accused of sexually abusing a child will assert according to Faller (2007:169), that a given practice is acceptable in their country of origin or culture but interviewers should not take these explanations at face value but rather try to determine whether these allegations are consistent with the cultural practice.

The following responses regarding the role of culture in the reluctance to disclose the sexual abuse of a child were received from five of the participants:

“They (children) believe that the elderly are doing the right thing and therefore they believe the elderly because some of them teach or tell children that these things (sexual abuse) are supposed to be done to her or him and they (children) don’t see a need to report it to anyone.” [P1]

“In terms of culture children listen when old people are talking about disgrace (sexual abuse), so they end up not telling what was happening.” [P3] [4]

“Children are afraid to talk about sexual abuse because we as parents at home do not talk with our children about sexual related matters. Even when sexual abuse occurred children are afraid to tell because the mother will beat her.” [PA]

“It is regarded as a taboo if you talk about sexual issues.” [PB]

Sub theme 3: People will not believe them

According to Fouché (2006:211), when a child disclosed the child should be believed, be giving assessment, counselling and the perpetrator taken to task. This

according to her, is not always the case as children are not often believed after disclosure of sexual abuse. All the participants indicated that children are afraid that no one will believe them including their parents. They think adults are not going to believe them and according to them they believe that the adult is doing the right thing. Parents sometimes find it difficult to believe the child especially if they do not have that supportive relationship with the child or a good relationship with the child. Parents will feel that the disclosure is just a story or the child is making up a story. The results of children who disclose the sexual abuse and who are not believed by adults such as parents and caregivers, later recant their allegations. According to the Sanford Health Dakota Children's Advocacy Centre (2013:1), approximately 23% of children recant their allegations of sexual abuse largely as a result of familial dealt influences rather than a result of false allegations. Younger children are more likely according to the centre to recant. According to London *et al.* (2008), cited in Goodyear-Brown (2012:101), "most recent literature review that delay, lower disclosure rates, and recantation may occur when a close relationship to the perpetrator and a lack of family support are present".

The following responses were received from six of the participants:

"Children are afraid that they won't be believed by adult people including their parents." [P1] [4]

"They believe that no one will believe them and that would cause conflict in the family if it is a familial issue." [P3] [P5]

"It may happen that the child is sexually abused by the father or brother. Some of the parents when the children are disclosing the sexual abuse will tell their children to close their mouths." {PA]

"They are afraid that the elders won't believe them." [PB]

Subtheme 4: Impact on the family

When sexual abuse occurred in a family, the members mostly experience a high degree of emotional pressure to maintain the secret in the family and this may lead to the non-disclosure of the sexual abuse (Crosson-Tower, 2005:175-176). Kinnear (2007:22) indicated that many things can happen to a child and the child's family

when sexual abuse is believed to have occurred for example: the child may be removed from home; the perpetrator may be arrested; the child may feel responsible for breaking up of the family; family members may feel embarrassed.

Sexual abuse of a child affects the whole family in some way or another. According to Elliott and Carnes (2001:320), “the sexual abuse of one’s child is often a highly stressful and disruptive experience, it is not surprising that parents frequently experience significant distress following disclosure.” According to Spies (2006a:13), in cases of arrest and the consequent disclosure of sexual abuse the family may suffer many losses such as a loss of financial means due to the imprisonment of the father and or breadwinner. One response received from participant A in this regard was:

“The child thinks that should he or she disclose the member will be removed from the family by being arrested and if the alleged offender is a breadwinner at home the whole family will be affected.” [P1]

9.2 THEME 2: The perpetrator’s contribution towards reluctance to disclose

A question was asked to the participants about the role of the perpetrator toward the reluctance of the middle childhood child to disclose the sexual abuse. The following responses were received from the participants:

“The relationship between the child and the alleged perpetrator may be a relationship of a father and a daughter or son or any family member. The perpetrator may make some threats or some admonitions against the child that he or she must not tell and if they tell anyone, the perpetrator will kill the child.” [P1]

“The perpetrator is threatening children not to tell because they will then kill the child or the mother and these things are happening to them as well.” [P3] [P4]

“Most of the time the perpetrator makes threats to the child and because of his position of authority as an adult, the child believes the threats and chooses not to disclose. In some instances the perpetrator uses his position in the family where he is the breadwinner to force the child into non-disclosure.” [P5]

“We see that children are killed after being raped so they are afraid that these things will happen to them as well. The abusers also use their position of authority as an adult, the child believes the threats and chooses not to disclose. In some instances the perpetrator uses his position in the family, where he is the breadwinner, to force the child into silence/non-disclosure”. [PA]

“The perpetrator bribes the child with gifts. For instance the perpetrator would say to the child “I will kill you or I will kill your mother or brother”. [P2] [PB]

The above mentioned answers the participants gave are happening in many cases of child sexual abuse. The child, according to Spies (2006a:13), may be blackmailed by moral threats not to disclose the sexual abuse and a well-known example is where the perpetrator threatens the child that he or she will be responsible for many things such as the disintegration of the family unit. All the participants indicated that most of the time the perpetrator makes threats to the child. Kinnear (2007:4) stated that the threats may include killing an animal in front of the child and telling her that same thing awaits her if she does not cooperate, threatening to abuse other siblings in the family or suggesting that the family will be broken up if the child tells anyone.

Grooming and bribing of the victim by the perpetrator also happened for instance they buy the children gifts that they know these children like or what their parents are not able to afford. The child becomes familiar with the perpetrator because he portrayed to be like a friend or a very warm and supportive person to the child. Mitchell *et al.* (2012:1) defines grooming as “actions deliberately aimed at establishing an emotional connection and trust with a child or young person in order to increase the likelihood of them engaging in sexual behaviour or exploitation. Grooming may also include threats or bribes, which persuade the child or young person that it would be impossible to ask for help”.

In the whole principle of secrecy, the perpetrator or the abuser will tell the child that what they are doing is a secret between the two of them. The child would want to keep the secret because she/he was told by an adult and they listen to the adults. Kinnear (2007:16) indicated that the abuser will make comments to ensure silence and obedience from the child such as *“this is our little secret; don’t tell your mother,*

it would kill her". The perpetrator misuses the child's vulnerability and willingness to please, making the child to feel responsible for the acts.

9.3 THEME 3: The parent's contribution towards reluctance

A question was asked "*how do parents contribute towards the reluctance to disclose the sexual abuse of the middle childhood child*". Respondent 1, 2, 3 and A indicated that parents have a tendency of not believing their children when telling them about the sexual abuse. Their responses were the following:

"The problem with the parents is that they do not believe their children when telling them about sexual abuse. Sometimes they know about sexual abuse and they pretend as if nothing happened because they are protecting their husbands and their marital relationships". [P1]

"In some families, parents tend not to believe these young ones because the children at times do not say something in a convincing manner which makes the parents not to trust them. Other parents are over strict and they do not talk at all about sexual abuse". [P2]

"It's the way parents are talking to the children about rape as if the children wanted to be abused, they tend to blame the children instead of blaming the person who is in authority because he knows what he is doing to the child". [P3]

"Some parents do have a contribution because when the child tells the parent, the parent will tell the child to keep quiet, or sometimes the parent knew about the incident. The perpetrator sometimes is close to the family so the parent keeps on telling the child not to talk about the matter". [PA]

According to Elliott and Carnes (2001:316), a substantial part of non-offending mothers disbelieved their children's allegations and responded with rejection and blame. Maternal belief does not necessarily ensure supportive or protective responses and many mothers "who exhibit ambivalent responses are nonetheless able to take actions to protect their children (Elliott & Carnes, 2001:316).

Parents should always offer their children all the support that they need. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (2009:2) indicates that the parent should

be supportive, in the sense that he/she should stay calm because if he/she is hearing that the child has been sexually abused, it may trigger powerful emotions of situations experienced in the past. If the parent becomes upset, angry or out of control, this will only make things more difficult for the child to disclose. It was further stated that the parents should believe their children and let them to know that he/she is not to be blamed for what happened.

The parents may not understand why the child did not tell them when it happened for the first time so they become angry or not want to give the child the support if they found out that the child has confided in somebody else. Sometimes parents know about the sexual abuse and they pretend as if nothing happened because they are protecting their husbands and marital relationships. Parents want to prevent sometimes the embarrassment and stigma the allegations will bring to the family, for instance they will discourage the child to open up or tell the truth. Goodyear-Brown (2011:4) indicated that the circumstances and the way the child is treated after disclosure of the sexual abuse has a great impact on the level of stigma and how the child feels. For example if the child is not believed after telling or is blamed for such activity, he will likely experience a higher degree of stigma. If the family's circumstances change for the worse, the child may blame him or herself because they connect the problem with their disclosure. Olafson and Lederman (2006:35) adds that in some cases the child was dissuaded from disclosing the abuse to family members who do not believe the child and wanted to prevent shame and embarrassment to the family.

According to **participant 5**, the socio-economic status of the family can sometimes make it easier for the perpetrator to "buy" the family's silence for example giving the family money. Poverty contributes, according to Van Niekerk (2006:103), enormously to the sexual vulnerability and sexual abuse of children. These circumstances may lead to the perpetrator who pays the family to keep the secret.

Participant B indicated that parents may not have resolved their own history of abuse and victimization. For many women who were abused or have a history of sexual abuse it is difficult for them to handle a disclosure of sexual abuse involving their children. Feelings of guilt and painful memories will surface after a disclosure (Spies, 2006c:62). Families often try to keep the matter as private for instance they

tend to discuss it within the family. According to Crosson-Tower (2005:175-176), family members experience a high degree of emotional pressure to maintain the secret of sexual abuse. There are many reasons why family members want to keep the secrets.

Participant 4 indicated that parents do not spend time with their children so there is a communication breakdown. Steven Covey cited in Brooks (2008:421) has developed seven habits of highly effective families and he emphasised positive communication, as one of these habits. The other habits are understanding others points of view, making plans to improve relationships, taking action to create the kind of relationships one wants, as well as doing enjoyable activities with family members.

9.4 THEME 4: Fear regarding the consequences of disclosure

A question was asked “Why do you think that sexually abused children in middle childhood fear the consequences of disclosure?” The following responses were received from participants:

“They think that the alleged offenders will be removed from the home by being arrested or even the child in a case of intra-familial abuse they will also be removed to the safe places so that they cannot be in contact with the perpetrator and sometimes they think that they won’t be believed by the elders including their parents”. **[P1]**

“They are going to cause conflict within the families or they are going to be killed by the perpetrators as they threaten to kill them for instance a 27 year old came to my office, she disclosed that she was abused at the age of 5 years and she is having a burden on her shoulders. Asking her why you didn’t report the case, she said the person who sexually abused her is a cousin so she didn’t want the aunt to have conflict with him. Another example, I had an 8 year old in my office recently, she managed to disclose the incident through drawings that we were doing. I asked her to draw all the family members and then ask her which one does she love most and the one she didn’t like and why. She indicated that she loves her sister and the other one is ugly. I asked her why the other one is ugly; she reported that she did things to

me. The disclosure was partial; she didn't have intentions to tell. She tells because of the techniques I used". **[P3]**

"Sometimes they fear that they will be punished if they tell and also they fear how their peers will see/view them (stigmatization). They believe the people and they are groomed". **[P2]**

"Sometimes they fear that they will be punished if they tell and also they fear how their peers will see/view them (stigmatization)". **[P4]**

"They fear that the perpetrator might carry out his threats. Sometimes they fear how their peers will view them because in some communities rape and sexual abuse carries a stigma especially to the boys". **[P5]**

"Children are afraid to tell because they are afraid that their mothers and sisters will beat them so they ended up not knowing what their reactions will be after they reported the incident". **[PA]**

"Children are afraid of stigmatization if they tell and they are afraid of how their friends/peers will see/view them. Boys are taught to be strong." **[PB]**

Children do not want to get into trouble with their families or be blamed for what happened. They think that they might face punishment and rejection by family and others (Spies, 2006:48), for instance children are reluctant to tell because they are afraid that their mothers and sisters will beat them so they ended up not knowing what the reactions will be after they report the incident. They fear that the alleged perpetrator might carry out his threats. They also fear how their peers will view them because in some communities sexual abuse and rape carries a stigma especially to the boys. They fear that they will be stigmatized as homosexual because they usually want to know that they are the stronger sex. According to Faller quoted by Paine and Hanson (2002:275), boy's reluctance to disclose emanates from the fact that boys are socialized not to reveal doubts, weaknesses and fears, and the fact that since most of the abusers are male, boys have the additional taboo of homosexuality to overcome if they tell. The embarrassment and shame for being involved with the adult or somebody that is much older than them on sexual level will also make children reluctant to disclose.

Children also fear that they will be punished or there will be negative consequences once they disclosed. They think that the alleged perpetrator will be arrested and/or the child will be removed to a place of safety. Children are concerned about the perpetrator and not always about themselves. According to the participants the following must be done to make sexually abused middle childhood children at ease to disclose the sexual abuse:

“Talking about these things even before children experience such incidents, these things need to be discussed by parents at home and the issue of sexual abuse need to be part of curriculum at school for children in middle child hood. These children also need to be engaged in programmes like Love Life which will introduce them on Life skills which will teach them about facts of life”. **[P1]**

“By using interviewing techniques that are suitable for the needs of the child situation so that she/he can be able to disclose freely about the incident”. **[P2] [3]**

“To communicate with children about the important things in life. The parents need to be encouraged and educated about that. Children should be assured that it’s not their fault and they do not deserve to be sexually abused.” **[P4]**

“Parents should have a positive healthy relationship with their children. When a child comes with information to a parent, she/he should be assured that the parents will believe them. Parents should always offer their children all the support that they need”. **[P5]**

“The parent should be calm when they talk with the sexually abused children because if your voice is high the child would be scared to talk for instance here in my house when something happened children are reluctant to talk to me so I ask my older daughter to speak with her siblings and find out what happened.” **[PA] [PB]**

From these results it is obvious that parents play a very important role in the disclosure process and especially how to communicate with the child. According to Anon (2013b:1), parents should do the following:

- tell the child you believe him/her;
- support the child also in disclosure process;
- tell the child that you will support him/her;

- let the child know you love them;
- give them time to talk at their own pace;
- make time to talk to your child, and
- allow your child to tell how they feel.

The sexually abused child has the right to be interviewed by a professional such as a social worker who has the knowledge, qualification, appropriate training and skills to communicate with children and the objectivity to assess children (Fouché, 2006:217).

9.5 THEME 5: The role of the social worker

A question was asked what the participants think the social worker needs to do to prevent the reluctance of middle childhood children to disclose the sexual abuse. The following answers were received:

“I don’t think it’s supposed to be only the social workers who have to do something. I think the parents at home, the teachers at school, the community members and the leaders of religion have a vital role to play so that their children can be at ease to talk about these things because in our culture our children learnt that talking about sexual related things is not accepted at home especially if you are a young child, so they end up not free to disclose. So if parents, teachers, leaders of religion and community members can teach and train their children as young as 4, 5 years and above up to this middle age childhood if they can train and talk about these things making their children free to talk about sexually related incidents”. [P1]

“By explaining the reasons to the child why children do not want to disclose the incident so that she can be free if one of the reasons mentioned is the one that makes her to be afraid”. [P3]

“Interview the children in a child friendly environment that is suitable for children (eg. with no interruptions like people/cars making noise). Use the interviewing techniques when interviewing children; spend time suitable for the child’s age group/attention/concentration span.” [P4]

“The social worker should build a strong rapport with the child. It is also important not to promise the child what you cannot deliver. The social worker should always be honest, truthful and keep promises made to the child”. [P5]

“The social workers should talk with the children in a certain manner that would make the child disclose like not talking loudly, play with the child because we as parents have a tendency of becoming harsh to the kids so the kids won’t tell their parents”. [PA]

“Social workers know how to talk to the children so that they can talk about sexual abuse.” [PB]

Some participants indicated that it is the role of the parents, teachers at school and community leaders to teach children at an early stage from 4 years up to middle childhood about sexually related matters. In the isiXhosa culture according to the researcher’s experience as an isiXhosa speaking person children are not allowed to talk about sexual related matters but now it is high time that they must be trained. It is important for social workers to help isiXhosa speaking parents to talk about sexual abuse. According to Motshegoa (2011:20-21), as well as the NCY Administration for Children’s Services (2010:34), it is important for social workers to support the family in disclosing the sexual abuse and to lay charges against the perpetrator. Social workers have to educate families not to keep child sexual abuse as a secret and teachers on how to handle abuse cases (Delpont, 2010; Motshegoa, 2011).

Creating a strong relationship with the child is central to any assessment of the social worker with the child (Goodyear-Brown, 2012:128). The social worker needs to convey a warm and interesting relation with the child when dealing with the child through posture, eye contact, the tone of her voice and general conduct (Goodyear-Brown, 2012:106). Children need to be fully informed as to what will happen during the interview as well as explain the whole process after disclosing (Faller, 2007:70). Developing a child friendly method of accessing services is important. It is also important not to promise the child what you cannot deliver. The social worker should always be honest and trustworthy. Social workers should also have a way of talking to the children that would make them disclose sexual abuse for instance not to raise

the tone of voice because we as parents have a tendency of becoming harsh to the children (Fouché, 2006:207-213).

9.6 THEME 6: Promotion of awareness regarding the importance of reporting child sexual abuse

A question was asked whether the participants think adequate awareness is promoted regarding the importance of reporting child sexual abuse. The following answers were received:

“No, I think the stakeholders or anyone who is dealing with the child abuse or children who have been abused including parents, teachers and leaders of religion have a big role to play to educate the children about the disclosure of such incidents of sexual abuse. To make children closer to them and tell them all the truth about sexual abuse”. [P1]

“It seems that there is no adequate awareness because the children at this stage are supposed to know that it is not their fault to be raped and, therefore, they must feel free to report without believing the perpetrators threats”. [P2]

“Yes, even the media is assisting but the problem is the final result that comes from the court that de-motivates the children and family members to be reluctant to report the abuse. Bail is the one that de-motivates people because they do not understand it. The person who got bail, will go to the family and tell them that “you see I’m out and the family is unaware that there are still investigations that have to be conducted” [P3]

“It is promoted in calendar days (for instance when there will be events like the child protection week) and it’s supposed to be promoted daily. Even in our homes we do not encourage children to report anything. Awareness campaigns are only done at schools sometimes”. [P4]

“Yes, community awareness programmes are conducted, children at school are taught about the importance of disclosure and the media also advertises it. Some of the government departments do visit schools to conduct awareness campaigns to children”. [P5]

“Other parents tell their children that if they go out at night they will be raped, even if you walk in a place where they are not used to play in, you can get raped. It’s important for the parents to tell their children about the dangers of coming home late, walking at night and they should tell them that by 19h00 children should be at home. It is important that at all times parents should supervise their children and know where they are”.

“Some parents tell their children if they go at night they will be raped and if they play far from home. It is important for parents to supervise their children at all times”.

[PB]

From the data received it is obvious that some participants felt that there is adequate awareness and others felt there is not adequate awareness regarding the importance of reporting child sexual abuse. The increase of child sexual abuse also within the middle childhood age group in communities is an indication of inadequate awareness and prevention programmes. The stakeholders dealing with sexually abused children including doctors, nurses, teachers, social workers and leaders of religion as well as parents need to address the abuse and they are also responsible to report suspicions of child maltreatment (Giardino, 2007:7). In research done by Delport (2010:34) she came to the conclusion that teachers have a great influence on reporting the sexual abuse as well as the disclosure thereof. According to her, teachers need more training in the handling of sexual abuse in order for them to be better equipped to refer the disclosure of sexual abuse.

Although the media, social workers and police encourage people to report the abuse, people according to the participants appear not to have faith in the system that is supposed to protect them and prosecute the perpetrators. The problem according to participants is the final results that come from the court that demotivates the children to be reluctant to report because they do not understand bail especially when they see that the perpetrator is released on bail and is back to the community.

Adequate awareness according to participants is conducted in schools where children are taught about the importance of disclosing. Prevention strategies according to Meyers (2011:20), are most effective when they focus on a clearly

defined target population with identifiable risk factors such as isiXhosa speaking parents and children. This awareness is promoted in the calendar (when there will be events such as child protection weeks) whilst it is supposed to be promoted daily. Although there are awareness programmes in school, according to Delport (2010:3), there will be still children that do not want to disclose. According to Cronch *et al.* (2006:196), sexual abuse “is often a very private, embarrassing and shameful topic to discuss and many children are unlikely to ever tell their story”.

10 RESEARCHER’S OBSERVATION

10.1 Talking about sex is regarded as a taboo

In isiXhosa culture it is difficult to talk about sex. If a person talk about it he or she is naughty and learn about it from friends. Even adults are not keen to talk about sexual related issues.

10.2 Stigmatization

Child sexual abuse carries a stigma. If a person is sexually abused, people will label that person.

10.3 Embarrassment

Talking about sex is regarded as an embarrassment. How can we help the victim to speak out about sexual abuse if we regard talking about it as an embarrassment?

10.4 Violation of personal space

People regard talking about sexual related matters as a personal issue. They believe that it happens in the bedroom and stays there.

11 SUMMARY

- From the data received it is obvious that children have limited vocabulary to explain what happened and they may not understand that the act was inappropriate.
- In terms of gender, it was discovered that boys are more reluctant to disclose sexual abuse because boys regard themselves as stronger than girls in terms of

masculinity. Intra-familial abuse and the child's relationship with the alleged perpetrator has a negative effect in terms of disclosing the abuse, children take a long time to disclose the abuse or do not disclose at all.

- Threats made by the perpetrator also affect the child's disclosure. The relationship between the child and the perpetrator also has a negative impact in the child's disclosure especially if the perpetrator is related to the child. The perpetrator bribes and grooms these children to gain their trust and children get confused because they think that the perpetrator loves and gives them support they do not get from their families whereas the perpetrator wants to win them.
- The offices where the interviews are conducted with sexually abused children should be better equipped and be child friendly to make the children feel at ease.
- Because of fear of negative consequences, children do not want to cause trouble within the family. They think that the abuser will carry out his threats and harm his/her family for instance "I will kill your mother if you tell anyone". Children think that they will be removed from home and be placed in a place of safety or the alleged perpetrator will be arrested.
- Parental support is lacking especially if the child disclosed the abuse to someone outside her/his family. It was discovered that it is difficult for a parent who was also a victim of sexual abuse to handle the child's disclosure. Sexually abused children think that it is their fault and they blame themselves for what happened.
- The process that would be followed after the child has made a disclosure should be explained to the child in a way the child could understand it.
- It was highlighted in the study that the FCS (Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences) units should employ more female staff because girls are more comfortable to talk with females and the cases they receive are more girls than boys.
- Ongoing training of personnel staff that deals with child sexual abuse cases was also highlighted. The research showed that the justice system is failing the people and that causes them to be reluctant to go forward and report. It was also indicated that people do not understand bail.

12 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Parents should start to talk about sexual related matters with their children so that they are able to report sexual abuse when it occurs. If people regard talking about sexual related matters as an embarrassment, how can children in middle childhood speak out about sexual abuse.
- Parents especially the isiXhosa speaking parents, should discuss sexual issues with their children in order to prevent them from being sexually abused.
- Parents should support their children and have a positive relationship with them. They need to build their relationship with their children through communication.
- FCS (Family Violence, Child protection and Sexual Offences Unit) and FSW (Forensic Social Work) office environment should be child friendly to make children feel at ease.
- FCS (Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences Unit) should employ more female staff because their caseload comprises more girls than boys and girls are more comfortable to talk to females than males.
- Social workers should build a strong rapport to gain trust from the child and they should adequately explain the process that would be followed after disclosure.
- Sexual abuse should be included in the school curriculum and children should be involved in Life skills programmes such as Love Life.
- Parenting programmes should be conducted to equip the parents on how to handle child's disclosure, that would reduce non reporting of child sexual abuse cases and increase the conviction rate.
- To encourage the investigating officers that are attached to FCS (Family Violence, Child Protection and Sexual Offences) Units, to explain Bail conditions so that the complainants can have an understanding and to provide the complainants with the progress of the case.
- On-going training should be provided to social workers and the police on how to deal with children that are reluctant to disclose sexual abuse.
- Social workers doing assessments with sexually abused children need to have a post graduate degree in forensic social work. Without specialised training the social worker is not fully equipped to provide the necessary assessment to the sexually abused child as well as expert testimonies in court after the assessment of the sexually abused child.

13 CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that there are many reasons why sexually abused children in middle childhood do not want to disclose their sexual abuse. Reasons may be that these children do not have the vocabulary to explain what happened to them. In some cultures talking about sex is regarded as a taboo and if children talk about it they will get a hiding. It is rare to talk about sexual abuse even if it's known within the family.

Parents play an important role in whether the child will disclose or not. Parents will act as if the abuse did not happen whereas on the other hand the child is suffering. Intra-familial abuse is regarded as a family matter, meaning it has to be discussed within the family not outside because parents want to protect their families from shame and embarrassment.

Another reason for not disclosing the sexual abuse is children are afraid that no one will believe them, even not their primary caregivers. The children are afraid that if they disclosed many bad things will happen such as that they will be removed from home or the breadwinner will be put into jail. The grooming of the perpetrator also plays a vital role in the disclosing of the sexual abuse of the child. The perpetrator in some situations makes threats to the child such as that he/she will kill their dog if the child does not cooperate.

In conclusion, people towards whom the child discloses the allegations of sexual abuse have the responsibility to believe the child, support the child and report the matter to the relevant professional people. Only then can the prosecution of the perpetrator begin.

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SECTION B: ANNEXURES

ANNEXURE 1: LETTER GRANTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT SAPS

G.P.S. 002-0222

SAP 21

SUID-AFRIKAANSE POLISIEDIENS



SOUTH AFRICAN POLICE SERVICE

Verwysing Reference	11/3/1
Navrae Enquiries	Colonel Ngum NT Ms. Keka V
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**GENERAL RESEARCH AND CURRICULUM
DEVELOPMENT
HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT**

**PRIVATE BAG X 177
PRETORIA
0001**

Major S Gogela
16 Braamfischer Road
Durban
4001

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH ON THE REASONS FOR RELUCTANCE TO DISCLOSE SEXUAL ABUSE BY MIDDLE CHILDHOOD CHILDREN (7-12 YEARS OF AGE)

1. It is with pleasure to inform you that the Research Technical Committee situated in the Division: Human Resource Development has granted you permission to conduct research within the South African Police Service.
2. The research to be conducted has to be in line with the topic presented, which is, "*Reasons for reluctance to disclose sexual abuse by middle childhood children (7-12 years of age)*".
3. Furthermore, the permission for research conducted in the South African Police Service relies on the fact that the Provincial/Divisional Commissioner in which Province or Division the research is to be conducted has granted the researcher due access.
4. You are therefore required to furnish the Research Committee with the copy of your final research report.
5. Good luck in the endeavour of your studies.


MAJOR GENERAL
SECRETARY: RESEARCH COMMITTEE
DIVISION: HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT
LL GOSSMANN

DATE: 2013-08-07

ANNEXURE 2: WRITTEN CONSENT OF PARTICIPANTS

RESEARCH TITLE: Reasons for the reluctance to disclose sexual abuse by middle childhood children

RESEARCHER: Siphokazi Gogela MA Social Work: Forensic Practice) Student

SUPERVISOR: Dr AA Roux

DECLARATION:

I-----hereby declare that I was invited to voluntary participate in the above mentioned study and that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time during the process.

I give my permission that the interview be recorded and understand that the recording will only be made available to the researcher and her study leader. The recorded interview will be used to interpret and analyze data and will be destroyed afterwards.

Purpose: To explore the reasons for the reluctance to disclose sexual abuse by middle childhood children.

Confidentiality and anonymity: The identity of the participant will be kept confidential and the findings of the study will be published in the Social Work Journal.

Possible advantages: The research will assist the Social Workers working in child sexual abuse environment to be able to understand the reasons why children in middle childhood are reluctant to disclose sexual abuse, to know which techniques to use with non-disclosing children, the conviction and prosecution rate will increase.

SIGNATURES:

PARTICIPANT:

_____ **DATE:** _____ **PLACE:** _____

RESEARCHER:

_____ **DATE:** _____ **PLACE:** _____

WITNESS:

_____ **DATE:** _____ **PLACE:** _____

ANNEXURE 3: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE WITH SOCIAL WORKERS

ANNEXURE 3: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE WITH SOCIAL WORKERS

RESEARCH TITLE: Reasons for the reluctance to disclose sexual abuse by middle childhood children

INTRODUCTION

- The undersigned social worker is conducting a research on the reluctance of middle childhood children to disclose sexual abuse.
- The results obtained from the research will be used so that the social workers practicing forensic will be able to know which techniques to apply during the interview session to prevent reluctance to disclose sexual abuse.

IDENTIFICATION PARTICULARS

1. TABLE 1: AGE OF PARTICIPANTS

AGE	FEMALE	MALE
20-30		
31-40		
41-50		
51-60		
Above 60		

2. HIGHEST QUALIFICATION OF PARTICIPANTS

Diploma	Degree	Master degree	Doctors degree	Other (specify)

3. Experience as social worker in cases of child sexual abuse.

4. Experience as a social worker **specializing in Forensic social work?**

DISCLOSURE OF SEXUAL ABUSE

5. In your experience, give reasons why children in **middle childhood** are reluctant to disclose sexual abuse according to you?

(Such as language, culture, beliefs, etc.)

6. In your experience, how does the perpetrator contribute towards reluctance to disclose the sexual abuse in middle childhood?

7. In your experience, how do parents contribute towards reluctance to disclose the sexual abuse in middle childhood?

8. Do you think adequate awareness is promoted regarding the importance of reporting child sexual abuse especially in middle childhood? Motivate your answer

9. Why do you think that sexually abused children in middle childhood have fear regarding the consequences of disclosure? Motivate your answer

10. What do you think needs to be done to make sexually abused children at ease?

11. What do you think can the social worker do to prevent the reluctance of children in middle childhood to disclose the sexual abuse?

Thank you for your cooperation.

Ms S. Gogela
Master student in Social Work: Forensic Practice
North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus

ANNEXURE 4:

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE WITH PARENTS OF SEXUALLY ABUSED CHILDREN

RESEARCH TITLE: Reasons for the reluctance to disclose sexual abuse by middle childhood children

INTRODUCTION

- The undersigned social worker is conducting a research on the reluctance of middle childhood children to disclose sexual abuse.
- The results obtained from the research will be used so that the social workers practicing forensic will be able to know which techniques to apply during the interview session to prevent reluctance to disclose sexual abuse.

IDENTIFICATION PARTICULARS

1. TABLE 1: AGE OF PARTICIPANTS

AGE	FEMALE	MALE
20-30		
31-40		
41-50		
51-60		
Above 60		

2. HIGHEST QUALIFICATION

.....

DISCLOSURE OF SEXUAL ABUSE

3. In your experience give reasons why children in middle childhood are reluctant to disclose sexual abuse according to you? (such as language, culture and believes)

4. In your experience, how does the parent contribute towards reluctance to disclose the

sexual abuse in middle childhood?

5. Do you think adequate awareness is promoted regarding the importance of reporting child sexual abuse especially in middle childhood? Motivate your answer

6. Why do you think that sexually abused children in middle childhood have fear regarding the consequences of disclosure? Motivate your answer

7. What do you think needs to be done to make sexually abused children at ease?

8. What do you think can the social worker do to prevent the reluctance of children in middle childhood to disclose the sexual abuse?

Thank you for your cooperation.

Ms S. Gogela
Master student in Social Work: Forensic Practice
North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus

ANNEXURE 5: ETHICAL PERMISSION



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT

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Ethics Committee

Tel +27 18 299 4850
Fax +27 18 293 5329
Email Ethics@nwu.ac.za

2009-09-25

Dr.C Wessels

ETHICS APPROVAL OF PROJECT

The North-West University Ethics Committee (NWU-EC) hereby approves your project as indicated below. This implies that the NWU-EC grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the project may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Project title	The development and evaluation of programs and a protocol in Forensic Social Work															
Ethics number:	N	W	U	-	0	0	0	2	7	-	0	9	-	A	1	
	Institution		Project Number				Year			Status						
	<u>Status:</u> S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation															
Approval date:	12 August 2009					Expiry date:	11 August 2014									

Special conditions of the approval (if any): None

General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, please note the following:

- *The project leader (principle investigator) must report in the prescribed format to the NWU-EC:*
 - *annually (or as otherwise requested) on the progress of the project,*
 - *without any delay in case of any adverse event (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the project.*
- *The approval applies strictly to the protocol as stipulated in the application form. Would any changes to the protocol be deemed necessary during the course of the project, the project leader must apply for approval of these changes at the NWU-EC. Would there be deviated from the project protocol without the necessary approval of such changes, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.*
- *The date of approval indicates the first date that the project may be started. Would the project have to continue after the expiry date, a new application must be made to the NWU-EC and new approval received before or on the expiry date.*
- *In the interest of ethical responsibility the NWU-EC retains the right to:*
 - *request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project;*
 - *withdraw or postpone approval if:*
 - *any unethical principles or practices of the project are revealed or suspected,*
 - *it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the NWU-EC or that information has been false or misrepresented,*
 - *the required annual report and reporting of adverse events was not done timely and accurately,*
 - *new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.*

The Ethics Committee would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your project. Please do not hesitate to contact the Ethics Committee for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely

Prof Amanda Lourens
(chair NWU Ethics Committee)