

National Child Sex Abuse Prevalence Study & the Tracking cases of sexual offences and maltreatment against adolescents through the criminal justice & child welfare systems

PROF. LILLIAN ARTZ , PROF. CATHERINE WARD, PATRICK BURTON, LEZANNE LEOSCHUT, RESHMA KASSANJEE AND DR AISLING HEATH.



GENDER, HEALTH & JUSTICE RESEARCH UNIT (UCT)

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY (UCT)

THE CENTRE FOR JUSTICE AND CRIME PREVENTION

PHASE 1: The Optimus Study on Child Abuse, Violence and Neglect in South Africa

Child Abuse, Violence & Neglect in South Africa

Optimus Study on Child Sexual Abuse and Maltreatment in South Africa* interviewed 9717 adolescents (ages 15-17) about their experiences with physical, emotional and sexual abuse, as well as neglect.

- Synopsis of sexual offences to follow.

*Artz, L., Ward, C., Burton, P., Leoschut, L. Kassanje, R. (2016)



Optimus Study South Africa: Technical Report

Sexual victimisation of children in South Africa
Final report of the Optimus Foundation Study:
South Africa
May 2016



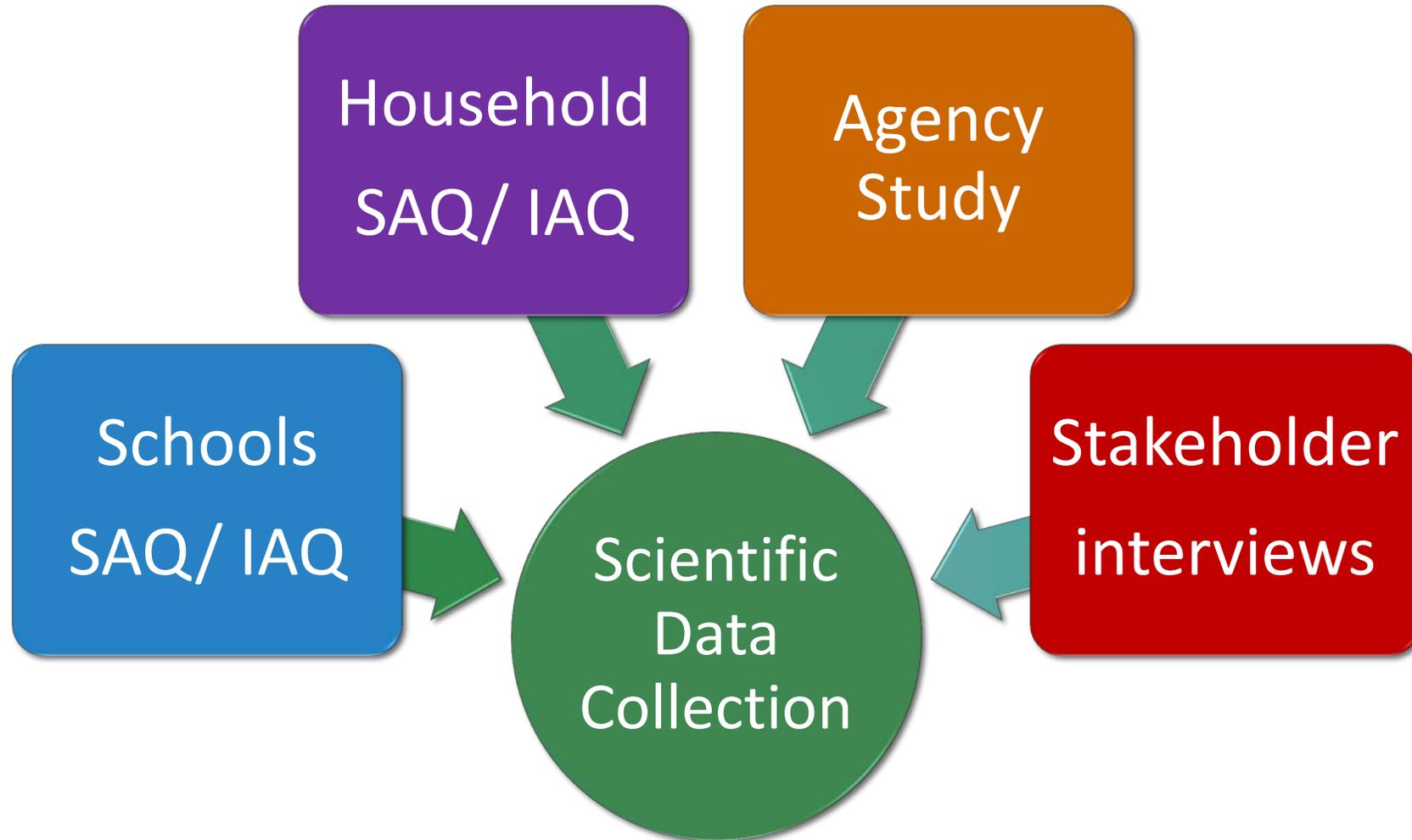
Objectives

- Deliver an **evidence-base** for effective intervention
- Foster **political commitment** through governments taking ownership of results
- Contribute to **understanding of intercultural variations** in prevalence and dynamics in order to improve the understanding of cross-cultural risk and protective factors
- Improve the **science and methodology** involved in the epidemiology of CSA

What are we exploring? The child's exposure to violence

- Sexual abuse
- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect
- Violent crime (e.g., robbery, theft, assault)
- Cyberbullying*
- Witnessing violent incidents
- Exposure to family violence

Research Methodology



The importance of interview location & method

- ❑ The **location of the interviews** (i.e. home or school) seemed to impact on the information disclosed by the participants.
- ❑ Greater disclosure, and thus, higher prevalence rates for the child sexual abuse and maltreatment variables **were observed for most interviews conducted within schools** when compared to household interviews.
- ❑ Further to this, disclosure rates were also influenced by **the interview method** – with higher disclosure rates being observed in the self-administered questionnaires when compared to the interviewer-administered questionnaires.

Study Findings



Child Sexual Abuse and maltreatment

- Whether adolescents had been exposed to:
 - Coerced (unwanted or by force) and consensual sexual touching,
 - Exposure to intimate body parts or pornographic images
 - Sexual harassment
 - Penetrative and non-penetrative sexual intercourse (actual or attempted),

... by or with an adult or similar aged peers.

Child sexual abuse and maltreatment

- ❑ Of the young people interviewed in schools, 35.4% - **one in every three young people** – had experienced *some* form of sexual abuse at some point in their lives.
- ❑ Of those interviewed in households 26.3% – **more than a quarter** – had experienced some form of sexual abuse.
- ❑ This means that a total of **784 967** young people in South Africa have been the victims of sexual abuse by the age of 17 years
- ❑ **12 abused** children may be sitting in your child's **classroom**
- ❑ **20** will be sitting in an average **school bus**.

Child sexual abuse and maltreatment

- ❑ The differences between males' and females' reported rates of abuse **were not as stark as anticipated.**
- ❑ The mean age at which girls first experienced sexual abuse was 14, while boys typically reported their first experience to be at the age of 15 years. (Min age 1)
- ❑ In the **school survey**, boys (36.8%) were found to be slightly more likely than girls (33.9%) to report *some* form of sexual abuse, however:
 - ❖ **girls** were more likely to experience **forced and penetrative sexual abuse**, and other forms of sexual abuse that involve contact with the abuser (contact abuse)
 - ❖ **boys** were more likely to report **forced exposure to sexual acts** and material (non-contact abuse)

Differentiating different 'forms' of abuse

- ❑ Remarkably difficult to 'grade' sexual abuse in terms of its perceived severity
- ❑ Highly subjective and situational:
 - ❖ threat of rape (no-contact) vs physical contact
- ❑ Range of factors which influence the degree to which one might experience **non-contact and contact sexual abuse** as more or less threatening or abusive:
 - ❖ *any previous personal history* with the person committing the act (and the perceived likelihood of a sexual offence being committed);
 - ❖ *personal, social, cultural or religious norms* surrounding the acceptability of such behaviour;
 - ❖ *the relationship dynamics of the parties*, including authority or influence;
 - ❖ *the perceived manifestation of the incident* (whether an uninvited touch will result in further or 'more serious' sexual abuse or not); and
 - ❖ *the extent to which one sees themselves as empowered or disempowered* to handle the incident.

Touching by a known or unknown adult

The schools SAQ produced an **11.3%** prevalence rate of young people who had experienced sexual touching by a *known or unknown adult* in their lifetime.

- **Gender:** Males (10.6%) and females (12%)
- **Urban and rural rates were similar:** 11.2% (urban) and 11.5% (rural).
- **By unknown adult:** 5.5% reported that sexual abuse perpetrated by an unknown adult: 5.9% of females and 5.1% of males

Lifetime Prevalence

- ❑ **1 in 5** young people who had experienced *sexual abuse by a known adult*, had this experience more than once and **1 in 10** had experienced this four or more times.
- ❑ **Half of young people** who experienced *sexual abuse by another child or adolescent* reported this occurring more than one time.
- ❑ **Two thirds** of young people who reported having been sexually abused, had a *sexual experience with an adult* more than one time.
- ❑ **One fifth** of young people who have been sexually abused, have experienced some form of *sexual harassment* four or more times.

Nature of abuse: known adult

NATURE OF ABUSE	Schools (IAQ)	
	Male	Female
By a Known Adult		
Person/s used physical force (pushing, grabbing, hitting or threatening with a weapon)	11.5%	57.7%
Weapon was used	0%	39.0%*
Verbal threats were used	4.3%	26.7%
Victim felt threatened	9.5%	36.8%
Incident was part of a traditional, cultural practice or initiation	0	2.8%
Victim was promised something in return for the act (alcohol, drugs, transport, food, housing, money etc.)	11.5%	10.0%
Victim received what was promised	33.3%	28.6%
Victim was under the influence of any drugs or alcohol	7.7%	1.4%

*16.7% of cases that a gun was used, in 16.7% of cases that a knife was used and in 5.6% of cases that another object (bottle-neck) was used.

Weapons or Threats: Unknown Adult and Peers

By Another Child or Teen	M	F
Person/s used physical force (pushing, grabbing, hitting or threatening with a weapon)	9.4%	47.1%
Weapon was used	0	13.3%
Verbal threats were used	0	27.8%

By an Unknown Adult	M	F
Person/s used physical force (pushing, grabbing, hitting or threatening with a weapon)	16.7%	53.6%
Weapon was used	0	40.0%
Verbal threats were used	20.0%	30.8%

Other forms of maltreatment and victimisation

- ❑ Neglect: 12.2% of children had experienced this in their lifetime
- ❑ Physical abuse: 34.8%
- ❑ Emotional abuse: 16.1%
- ❑ Exposure to family violence: 31.4%
- ❑ Other victimisation:
 - ❖ 65.2% experienced direct victimisation
 - ❖ 63.4% experienced indirect victimisation



Other consequences associated with sexual abuse

- ❑ Problems with schoolwork (abuse by unknown adult): 20.4%
- ❑ Injuries (abuse by known adult): 29.9%
- ❑ High risk sexual behaviour: 37.4% (compared with 9.9% of children who have not been abused)
- ❑ Risky substance use: 43.2% (compared with 17.8% of children who have not been abused)

Other risk factors

- ❑ **Sleeping density:** 10% higher risk for sexual abuse
- ❑ **Parents hospitalised:** 1.5 – 2.0 times higher risk
- ❑ **Substance Abuse:** Parents using drugs or alcohol: 2.2 – 3.4 times higher risk
- ❑ **Vulnerable populations:** Young person is disabled: 1.5-2.1 times higher risk
- ❑ **Good relationship with parents,** and parents monitor them: 0.9 the risk of other young people

PHASE 2: Tracking Reported Cases of Abuse

- During the process of interviewing respondents for the *Optimus Study on the Sexual Victimization of Children in South Africa**, the research team identified 228 adolescents who reported experiencing physical, emotional and sexual abuse, as well as neglect.



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UBS Tracking Study: Findings

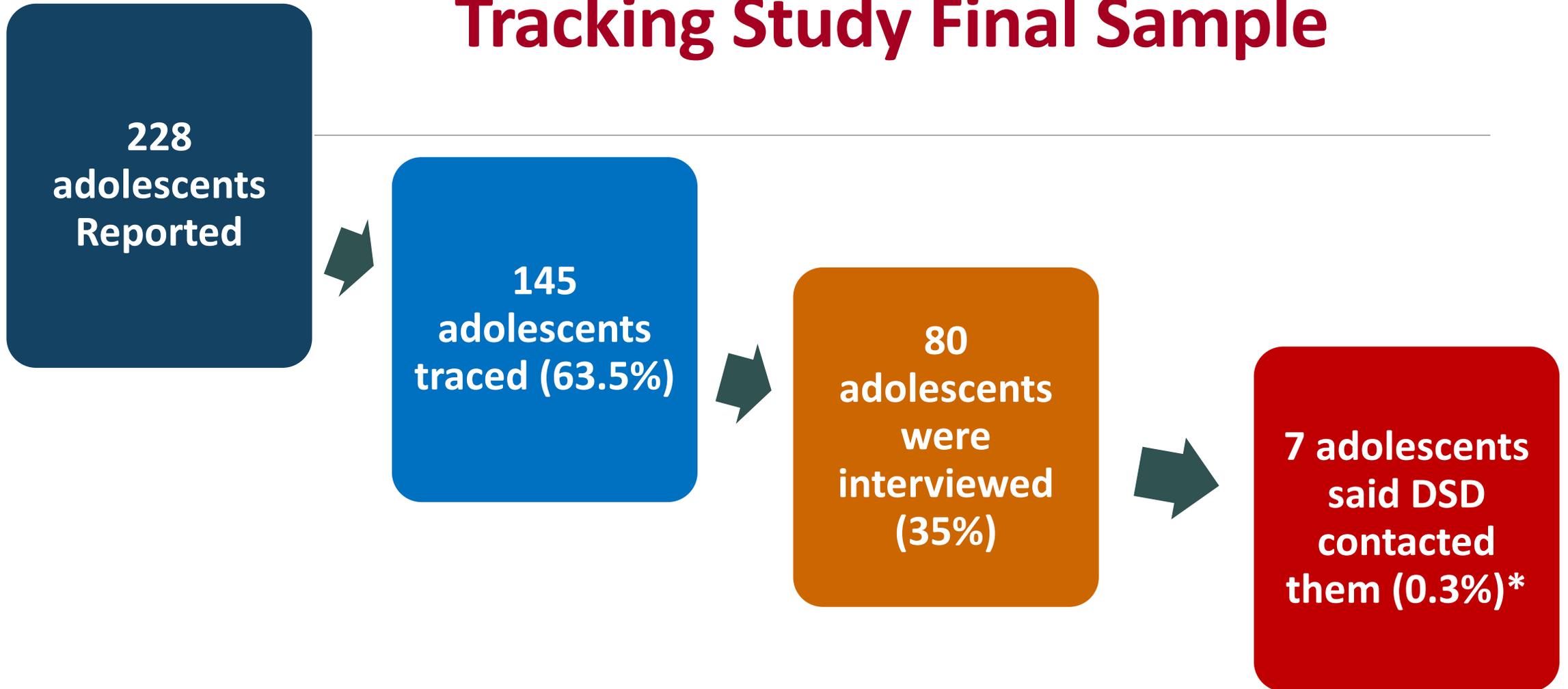
Types of maltreatment reported across the sample (n=228)

Type of Maltreatment			
		Frequency	%
Valid	Physical abuse	125	54.8%
	Neglect	11	4.8%
	Sexual abuse	72	31.6%
	Physical and neglect	12	5.3%
	Sexual and neglect	8	3.5%
	Total		228

UBS Tracking Study: Phase 1 Telephonic

No. of Cases reported	Subscriber unavailable/ wrong number/ voicemail	Telephone numbers that were answered / resulted in contact with a person	No. of cases we could contact adolescent on and spoke to them	No. of completed interviews
228	195	17	16	12
100%	↓ 85.5%	↓ 7.5%	↓ 7%	↓ 5.3%

Tracking Study Final Sample



* (0.3% of reported cases, 4.8% of those traced, 9% of those interviewed)

UBS Tracking Study: Findings (n=7)

Number of agency interviews

No. Of times	SAPS/ police officer	DSD	Teacher
Once	0	4	0
Twice	0	1	0
Three times	0	1	0
Four times	1	0	1
More than 5 times	0	1	0

Procedures followed

Procedures followed	Yes	No	Don't know
Interview your parents or guardian?	6	1	0
Did they give you a case number?	1	6	0
Was they accused arrested?	1	6	0
If arrested, did they inform you of arrest?	1	4	2
Did they inform you of them getting bail?	1	4	2
Did they inform you of their bail conditions?	1	4	2
Offered / referred to counselling?	3	4	0
Offered legal assistance or legal support?	0	7	0

UBS Tracking Study: Findings

When asked what kind of advice or help they felt was most useful to them, they responded as follows:

- “How to deal with problem in future, what steps must I take and how behave during this period”.
- “Told me what to do next time when facing similar problems”.
- “Must respect the elders and they must respect me too, and I must report any kind of abuse in future”.
- “They told me they would submit a report but I don't remember to who or what was the report for”.
- “Just knowing they were there was helpful”.
- “How to face such challenges in future and how to deal with it”.
- “It helped make peace and stability among the family”.

UBS Tracking Study: Findings

Did you find their assistance helpful?	Count
Yes	3
No	3
Don't know	1

The primary source of **dissatisfaction** came from inaction and also a lack of follow up after the initial contact with respondents explaining that they were not given correct numbers to contact the social workers on.

When asked what about the process had made them unhappy with the assistance provided they responded:

- “They took my mother's side”.
- “No feedback, no help to me”.
- “I did not get time to fully express myself”.
- “They only took the guardian's contact details”.

Conclusions

- More **places of safety**?
- The **creation of a database of shared information**?
- The **referral system need to be improved** – standardised systems need to be put in place?
- There is a need for a **full-time child protection unit** within DSD
- The **methods that the DSD uses to trace children** and follow-up with them need to be considered carefully – e.g. social workers based at schools?