The Prevalence of Sexual Abuse in Institutions

Results from a Representative Population-Based Sample in Germany

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Prevention efforts need to target institutional settings where adults work with children.
Results gained from hotline data

• Data of 4,740 victims of sexual abuse

• Besides the family (N=1,853), institutions (N=1,138) were the second most settings where the abuse had taken place (Fegert et al., 2013)

• The nature of institutional structures may be conducive for sexual abuse to take place (Spröber et al., 2014)

• The necessity of more research and gaining more knowledge about sexual abuse became obvious and was also mentioned at the hotline:

„I think it´s important that this topic gets more scope in society. It´s great that there is scientific supervision.“

„I would like you to publish a study when you have more information. A study like yours may help to examine the topic more differentiatedly.“
Background: Prevalence of sexual abuse

- Internationally:
  - Overall prevalence of sexual abuse around 12% (Stoltenborgh, van Ijzendoorn, Euser, & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 2011)

- Germany:
  - 12.6% child sexual abuse, 1.9% severe child sexual abuse (CTQ, Häuser et. al, 2011)
  - 12-month prevalence: 1.2% females, 0.6% males (Allroggen et al. 2016)
Background: Prevalence of sexual abuse in institutions

→ Much less known about prevalence of sexual abuse in institutions
  - Focus on sexual abuse in general
  - Sexual abuse assessed in specific populations

Findings:
  - 0.38% general population (14-60 years) (Stadler, Bieneck, & Pfeiffer, 2012)
  - 0.3% (11-17 years) – 0.6% (18-24 years) representative survey (Radford et al., 2011)
  - 0.15% of attempted or completed rape at school (Averdijk, Müller-Johnson, & Eisner, 2011)
Procedure

• Data collection between March and May 2015

• Representative survey of N=2,513 individuals

• Random Route Approach

• Inclusion criteria:
  – At least 14 years of age
  – Sufficient German skills
Measures

Questions about:

- Type of sexual abuse in institutions (Hands-On, Hands-Off, forced sexual Intercourse)

- Type of institution/Leisure activity (school, child welfare institution etc.)

- Relation to perpetrator (peer, staff of the institution)
74. **Hat Sie schon einmal jemand in einer Einrichtung sexuell belästigt?**

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**weiter mit Frage 75**

**weiter mit Frage 79**

<table>
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<th>Frage 75: In welcher Einrichtung oder welchem Verein war das?</th>
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<td>Anderes, und zwar:</td>
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**Frage 76: Was ist passiert?**

| Anderes, und zwar: |

**Sie können mehrere Angaben machen**

- ein Mann hat sein Geschlechtsteil entblößt
- Sie wurden aufgefordert das Geschlechtsteil eines anderen zu berühren
- Sie wurden an intimen Körperstellen angefasst
- Anderes, und zwar:
79. Hat Sie schon einmal jemand in einer Einrichtung mit körperlicher Gewalt oder unter Androhung von Gewalt gegen Ihren Willen zum Beischlaf (Geschlechtsverkehr) oder benschlafähnlichen Handlungen gezwungen oder versucht, Sie dazu zu zwingen?

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weiter mit Frage 80

weiter mit Frage 83

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80. In welcher Einrichtung oder welchem Verein war das?

Sie können mehrere Angaben machen

- Schule
- Internat
- Heim
- Pflegefamilie
- Klinik
- Sportverein
- Chor
- kirchliche Freizeiteinrichtung (katholisch)
- kirchliche Freizeiteinrichtung (evangelisch)
- Pfadfinder
- Anderes, und zwar:

  [Leerfeld für Beschriftung]

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81. Waren der oder die Täter ungefähr gleich alt wie Sie?

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82. Waren der oder die Täter Aufsichtspersonen, bzw. gehörten sie zum Personal der Einrichtung?

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Measures

- Did anyone ever sexually harass you within an institutional setting?
  - In what type of institution did the incident take place?*
    - Day school
    - Boarding school
    - Residential child welfare institution
    - Foster family
    - Hospital
    - Sports club
    - Choir
    - Catholic-affiliated recreational facility
    - Protestant-affiliated recreational facility
    - Scouts
    - Other: please specify _______________________
  - What happened?*
    - A man exposed his genital to you
    - You were asked to touch someone else’s genitals
    - Someone touched your genital or breast **
    - Other
  - Was the perpetrator about the same age as you?
  - Was the perpetrator a caregiver or a member of the institution’s staff?
Measures

- Did anyone in an institutional setting ever force or try to force you, using physical violence or the threat of violence, to perform sexual intercourse or other sexual acts against your will?
  - In what type of institution did the incident take place?*
    - Day school
    - Boarding school
    - Residential child welfare institution
    - Foster family
    - Hospital
    - Sports club
    - Choir
    - Catholic-affiliated recreational facility
    - Protestant-affiliated recreational facility
    - Scouts
    - Other: please specify
      ____________________________
  
  - Was the perpetrator about the same age as you?
  
  Was the perpetrator a caregiver or a member of the institution’s staff?
Participants

- Representative survey of N=2,513 individuals
- 2,437 Adults (18-99 years)
- 76 Adolescents (14-17 years)
- Mean Age: 48.8 years (SD=18.1, range=14–94)

[Pie chart showing gender distribution: 55.5% male, 45.5% female]
Results

• Overall **3.1%** of the adults and **6.6%** of the adolescents report sexual abuse in institutions

• Women more vulnerable than men:
  – Sexual abuse ever: OR=6
  – Hand-On: OR=4.4
  – Hand-Off: OR=5.4
  – Forced sexual Intercourse: OR=9.3
Results: Adults

Forced sexual Intercourse

- Frauen: 0,8
- Männer: 0,2
- Mean: 1,7

Hand-On

- Frauen: 3,9
- Männer: 0,8
- Mean: 3,9

Hand-Off

- Frauen: 1,2
- Männer: 0,3
- Mean: 1,2

Erwachsene (N=2437)
Results: Adolescents

- Adolescents only report Hand-On acts

![Bar chart showing Hand-On acts among adolescents (N=76).]
Results: Perpetrators, institutions

- Perpetrators:
  - Adolescents name peers as perpetrators
  - Adults report about 50% peers and staff of the institution or caregivers as perpetrators

- Institutions: Most common places for hand-on sexual abuse and forced sexual intercourse are:
  - Schools
  - Sports clubs
  - Residential child welfare institutions
Results: Co-Occurring Violence in Institutions

- 28.75% also report other types of violence in institutions (83% female, N=19)
Results: Co-Occurring Violence in Institutions

- **Places of the incidents:**
  - Day Schools (N=17)
  - Residential child welfare institutions (N=3)
  - Foster Family (N=2)

- **Perpetrators:**
  - Peers: N=13
  - Caregivers: N=8
Potential trends over time: Comparing age cohorts

Breakdown into four age cohorts:

- 14–30 years
- 31–50 years
- 51–70 years
- >70 years
Potential trends over time: Hands-Off and Hands-On abuse in institutions

Hands-Off

no significant differences between cohorts

→ **stability** over time
Potential trends over time: Forced sexual intercourse in institutions

no significant differences between cohorts but a slight decrease → in line with German official crime statistics\(^1\) and international studies\(^2\)

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Limitations

- Sexual abuse in institutions assessed retrospectively
- random-route approach excludes people currently residing in institutions
- Assessment of “sexual harassment” → personal judgement
- not explicitly ask only about experiences that had occurred in childhood
Conclusions

• Abuse in institutions seems to account for a substantial portion of cases of sexual abuse in general

• Despite the high prevalence rate a wide range of institutions and leisure activities seem to have effective prevention strategies and are safe

• Victims of sexual abuse in institutions are likely to have experienced other forms of violence as well

• Prevention and intervention strategies that address both sexual and physical abuse in institutions are needed

• Ongoing monitoring to determine whether the measures in place for prevention and interventions are effective