

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

SNEP 2 - JUNIOR

Editor:

Maja Mamula, Ph.D.

WOMEN'S ROOM



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the SVEP – 2 JUNIOR program

Sexual Violence – Educational and Prevention Program 2 – Junior (SVEP 2 – JUNIOR)



Zagreb, 2023.

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INTRODUCTION

The textbook *Sexual Violence Against Children: SVEP 2 – JUNIOR* was written and prepared under the project “Sexual Violence – Educational and Prevention Program 2 – Junior (SVEP 2 – JUNIOR)”. The sexual violence prevention program for higher grades of elementary schools was developed in response to the lack of systematic and continuous education on the topic of sexual violence, as well as the recognized needs and expressed interest of both educational institutions and students for more active work on the prevention of sexual violence.

In 2019, the Women’s Room developed a sexual violence prevention program for secondary schools (SVEP program). SVEP 2 – JUNIOR is a continuation of the work of the Women’s Room on developing preventive programs. Both programs were approved by the Ministry of Science and Education and the Education and Teacher Training Agency. The programs include three fundamental target groups: 1) teachers and expert school associates (such as school pedagogues, social pedagogues, psychologists, education rehabilitators) 2) parents and 3) students.

This textbook is intended primarily for expert school associates and elementary school teachers, providing basic information about sexual violence, indicators and consequences, prevalence, reasons why children remain silent about having survived violence, prejudices surrounding sexual violence, and legal perspectives. The textbook also contains sections on school procedures and documents important for the field of sexual violence, experiences acquired in implementing the SVEP 2 – JUNIOR program so far, and also sections on the importance and ways of involving parents in preventing sexual violence.

The textbook, in addition to the theoretical section, also contains the developed SVEP 2 – JUNIOR program, comprising a total of **eight prevention workshops** with relevant materials for students in higher grades of elementary school. The workshops were developed by a working group consisting of representatives of the Women’s Room (Maja Mamula, Ph.D., psychologist; Kristina Mihaljević, M.A. in Social Pedagogy; Josipa Tukara Komljenović, M.A. in Sociology) Center for Education, Counseling and Research – CESI (Nataša Bijelić, M.Sc.), the Incest Trauma Center – Belgrade (Dušica Popadić, psychologist, and Ljiljana Bogavac, M.D.) and external experts Dejana Bouillet, Ph.D., who is also a social pedagogue and Jelena Bičanić, social pedagogue.

For the individual grades of elementary school, emphasis is placed on the following topics: 5th Grade: Sexual Violence and Prejudices about Sexual Violence; 6th Grade: Convention on the Rights of the Child and Sexual Violence within the Family; 7th Grade: Cyber Sexual Violence and 8th Grade: Sexual Violence in Adolescent Relationships.

Given that quality prevention is not possible without parental involvement, an integral part of the SVEP 2 – JUNIOR program is the **video lecture for parents**, which provides key information about sexual violence as well as the importance and ways getting them involved in preventing sexual violence. Furthermore, the video lecture offers advice on ways in which parents can talk to their children about the topic of sexual violence and guidance on how to be supportive or what to do in case if their child has survived sexual violence.

The entire program, as well as the electronic version of textbook, is available on the website: <https://snep2junior.zenskasoba.hr/>.

The SVEP 2 – JUNIOR program has been implemented in 34 elementary schools (including 2 satellite schools) in 17 counties throughout Croatia. To better implement the program, two two-day specialized educations on sexual violence against children and on implementing sexual violence prevention programs for **64 teachers and** expert school associates were held. There were 48 lectures held on sexual violence for **1,476 parents** in schools. After these courses, 388 workshops of the SVEP 2 – JUNIOR program were conducted for **3,029 students**.

Silvija Ručević, Ph.D., a university professor, also conducted a **workshop impact assessment** which included testing before running the workshops and two tests after the workshops: one week and one month after completing the workshops. The results indicate an increase in the students' levels of knowledge and empathy, as well as the students being more informed about the available help and support possibilities. Furthermore, less support for most prejudice about sexual violence is noted.

The program was **reviewed** by Martina Ferić, Ph.D., university professor from the Laboratory for Prevention Research, Department of Behavioral Disorders, Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences, University of Zagreb, and Vesna Bilić, Ph.D., a university professor from the Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Zagreb.

Sexual violence against children is a serious problem to which society and its relevant institutions and state bodies do not pay necessary attention. Some of its forms are particularly unrecognized, both in the legislation and by relevant experts and the general public. Many public policies, documents, strategies, and protocols in Croatia highlight and emphasize the importance of sexual violence prevention programs. However, despite all efforts, there is no systemic and comprehensive implementation of sexual violence prevention programs in Croatia. Consequently, children lack the necessary information to help them recognize sexual violence, and they do not have information on whom they can turn to for help and support. Also, systemic training of education employees, parents, and other relevant stakeholders in preventing sexual violence is inadequate.

We believe this textbook and the prevention program developed for higher grades of elementary schools will help in combating sexual violence and create opportunities for the development of prevention programs at other levels of the education system, such as lower grades of elementary schools and kindergartens.

We want to thank all the authors who participated in drafting and developing this textbook, as well as working group members for developing the program, and who, through their personal enthusiasm, knowledge, and dedication, gave an outstanding contribution to developing the SVEP 2 - JUNIOR program.

Special thanks go to our partners, the elementary schools that joined the project at its inception, and 25 other elementary schools that participated in testing the program (Attachment 1) and recognized the importance and the need to work on preventing sexual violence.

Editor Maja Mamula, Ph. D.

Zagreb, March 2023.



1



**SEXUAL
VIOLENCE
AGAINST
CHILDREN**

1. SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

Maja Mamula, Ph.D., psychologist

Children have the right to a life free from fear and violence, full of care, security and love, as the foundation for a happy childhood and growing up.

According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989), ratified by the Republic of Croatia in 1991, children have rights and for their protection and enforcement is the responsibility of the child's family, legislative bodies, and the state through its institutions. The basic principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child are life without discrimination, regardless of its base (gender, language, skin color, religion, national and ethnic origin, development difficulties), the right to life and development in all aspects of life (physical, emotional, psychosocial, cognitive, social and cultural), where the child's well-being should be the basis and foundation for all decisions and actions that affect the child.

Unfortunately, children worldwide are exposed to unfavorable existential circumstances and situations that negatively impact them: from poverty, neglect and abuse in the family to various forms of violence they may experience at school or in public spaces, to war and war situations. Children can experience neglect and abuse from different people since they largely depend on the care and attention of others, primarily adults, due to their age.

Most countries have made much positive progress in protecting children and their rights. Many forms of violence against children have been recognized with clear and open discussions initiated. Some common, traditional practices, such as the physical punishment of children, remain unpunished in the national legislation of many countries.

However, despite all efforts, some forms of violence remain unrecognized. It can even be argued that society and the community where children live do not see or refuse to see the violence. One such form of violence against children is definitely sexual violence. We have seen, on occasion, noticeable resistance to addressing the topic, most often in the form of discomfort and fear. A key resistance is understanding that children, including young children, can be exposed to sexual violence. For decades, there has been widespread opinion among professionals that children possess a vivid imagination and invent all kinds of stories about abuse, and adults who confide in someone about the sexual abuse they survived in childhood were most often misdiagnosed and the violence dismissed due to the attitudes and belief in the so-called *false memories*. Many years of serious research, working with survivors, the development of theories, scientific and professional books and articles have helped to address the subject of sexual violence as relevant and an extremely important issue that needs to be systemically tackled. This has led to significant progress in this area in many countries, with key changes in legislation and the establishment of specialized services for working with child survivors of sexual violence (e.g., Barnahus as a model of a children's house). Also, the adoption of the Convention of the Council of Europe on the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, known as the Lanzarote Convention (Council of Europe, 2007), has been crucial in identifying the issue and defining the responsibilities and obligations of states in protecting children. The Republic of Croatia ratified the Lanzarote Convention in 2011.

Another indication that the problem of sexual exploitation and abuse of children has become more visible, and that systematic work continues to raise awareness and increase visibility of the problem, is marking the occasion of European Day on the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, held since 2015, declared by the Council of Europe. It is marked in European Union Member States each year on November 18.

WHAT IS SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

Understanding sexual violence requires first defining the key concepts. It has long been thought that sexual violence is an act of uncontrolled sexual desire and need, primarily involving physical contact (e.g., penetration), and physical violence or threats of violence must also accompany sexual violence. Therefore, the definition should begin with deconstructing the basic prejudices already present and defining sexual violence as an act of power and control, expressed in a sexual way, which is unwanted, for which no consent was given or was not given freely and knowingly. An act can be visual, verbal and/or physical; and the person experiences it (during or after) as a threat, humiliation, harm and/or assault. It may, and may not, involve threats, coercion and/or compulsion (Mamula and Popadić, 2018). Importantly, this basic and general definition of sexual violence should be expanded to include the specifics of sexual abuse of children.

According to the **Lanzarote Convention** (Council of Europe, 2007), child sexual abuse is defined through two fundamental aspects:

- Participating in sexual activities with a child who, in line with the relevant provisions of national law, is younger than the legal age for sexual activities.
- Participating in sexual activities with a child, in which coercion, force or threats are used or a position of **trust, authority or influence** over the child is abused, including sexual activities within the family or taking advantage of the child's particularly vulnerable situation in abusing the child, especially due to a mental or physical disability or a situation of dependency.

It should be noted that Croatia is one of eight European countries that has set the age limit for consent to sexual intercourse at 15 years of age (seven countries have set the limit at 14, seven at 16, two at 17 and one at 18) (Odeljan, 2018).

The **World Health Organization** (WHO, 2003) defines child sexual abuse as "the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violates the laws or social taboos of society." Child sexual abuse can be committed by an adult or another child or children, who, due to their age or stage of development, has a responsibility toward the child, the child's trust or power over the child.

The **National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children** (NSPCC, 2022), one of the most important and influential organizations for the protection of children from violence for 130 years, states that sexual violence against children is when a child or young person is sexually abused, forced or tricked into sexual activities. Children may not understand that what is happening is abuse or that it is wrong and may be afraid to tell anyone.

According to Townsend and Rheingold (2013), the **American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children** and the **United States Department of Health and Human Services** define child sexual abuse as: 1) any sexual act between an adult and a minor or between two minors if one has power over the second; 2) forcing or persuading a child to participate in a sexual act of any kind (with or without contact).

This definition also lists the following elements:

- Victims of sexual abuse include girls and boys aged 0 to 17 years.
- Child sexual abuse includes contact and non-contact sexual activities.
- Child sexual abuse includes any sexual act between an adult and a child, regardless of whether force or coercion is used.
- Child sexual abuse includes any sexual act between a young person (adolescent) and an adult who is significantly older, regardless of whether force or coercion is used.
- Child sexual abuse includes forced or coerced sexual acts between two children when there is a difference in age or power (peer abuse).
- Child sexual abuse does not include voluntary sexual activities between peers or between an older adolescent and a young adult.

The key element to understanding sexual violence is definitely **consent**. Consent that is given freely, of one's own free will and provided with an understanding of what that consent entails is the basis of any sexual activity. A child under the age of 15 cannot consent to sexual activities.

Consent has several key elements. First, a person should be mature enough (cognitively and emotionally) to understand what is expected of them and to what they are agreeing. Consent should be voluntary, given freely, without pressure, manipulation or persuasion. Also, the person should be conscious and not asleep or under the influence of alcohol or other intoxicants (Mamula, 2020).

When it comes to sexual activities, it is important to teach children and young people to understand that consent is key. Every person has the right to give or withhold consent at any time. When consenting to a sexual act (e.g., kissing), it does not mean consenting to all sexual activities. After giving consent, the person also has the right to subsequently decide to refuse to participate in the act or withdraw the consent. The basis for a healthy relationship and non-violence is respect for the other person's personal boundaries and respecting the giving or refusing of consent.

FORMS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

The sexual abuse and exploitation of children are complex and include many forms of behavior. Types of sexual violence are listed as different classifications and criteria, depending on the purpose. Legal categories are determined by legal provisions and differ from country to country. More information about how the Criminal Code of the Republic of Croatia recognizes crimes in this area is given in Chapter 9 *Legal Framework for Protecting Children from Sexual Violence Against Children*. Other classifications, common in defining forms of child sexual abuse for the needs of non-legal experts (e.g., mental health protection, educational system), as well as for the general public, are broader, more understandable and comprehensive. They are mainly based on the categorization of acts, for example, from sexual harassment to rape, or are divided according to whether they involve physical contact or not (Ferragut et al., 2021; Barth et al., 2013; Murray et al., 2014; NSPCC, 2022).

Forms of sexual violence against children not involving physical contact can occur face-to-face or online, and include inappropriate sexual comments, suggestions, offers, exposing children

to sexual activities, exposing children to pornographic materials, photography, recording, viewing or the distribution of materials that feature children in inappropriate positions, sexualized situations or videos of child sexual abuse, asking a child to create, show or share images or video materials of sexualized content, asking children to masturbate in front of the perpetrator, asking children to have sexualized communication via text messages or smartphones.

Forms of sexual violence against children that include physical contact include intentional sexualized touching of any part of the child's body, clothed or not (e.g., rubbing, caressing, kissing), asking the child to touch the perpetrator, penetration (vaginal, anal and/or oral) with the penis, parts of the body such as a finger or objects.

Other forms

In addition to the mentioned forms, other forms include child prostitution, trafficking of children for sexual exploitation, and systematic sexual exploitation of children in war conflicts.

Research shows that of all the different forms of sexual violence, the most common are exposing children to pornographic materials, unwanted fondling and demanding that the child touches the perpetrator, while sexual intercourse involving penetration is the rarest (Ferragut et al., 2022). However, it has also been found that most children survive more than one form of sexual abuse from the same or different perpetrators (Ullman, 2007).

WHAT IS IMPORTANT IN UNDERSTANDING SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

Sexual violence is gender-based violence

Sexual violence can be survived by any person, regardless of gender and age. However, it most often happens to **women and children** (Finkelhor et al., 1990; Rennison, 2002; Finkelhor, 2009; Black et al., 2011). It **disproportionately** affects girls, young women and women. **On the other hand**, most perpetrators of sexual violence are men.

The basis of sexual violence is inequality between women and men, negative attitudes toward women, discrimination, sexism and misogyny (Mamula, 2020). This is the key reason why sexual violence is surrounded by so many **prejudices and stereotypes**, most of which are aimed at shifting the responsibility from the perpetrator to the victim, as well as minimizing the significance and consequences of the violence survived.

Despite the fact that sexual violence is most often directed against girls, young women and women, victims can also be boys, young men and men. Moreover, although most perpetrators are male, this does not imply that all men are perpetrators (Mamula, 2007).

Sexual violence against children is very widespread

Children who have survived some form of sexual violence are all around us. Data from the Council of Europe indicate that **one in five children up to the age of 18 will survive some form of sexual violence**. This assessment is based on the analyses of the results of numerous

surveys conducted in European Union countries, statistical data from UNICEF, the International Labor Organization and the World Health Organization (Council of Europe, 2003; Lalor and McElvaney, 2010).

Due to the increase in cyber sexual violence in the last decade, we believe that these numbers on the prevalence of sexual violence will change. According to a large number of studies, one in two children has survived some form of cyber sexual violence (receiving inappropriate materials with sexual content, inappropriate sexual comments and offers, to including sexual grooming or recruitment) (Smahel et al., 2020).

Children rarely decide to confide in someone about the sexual violence they have survived

Despite common opinion, and unfortunately also misconceptions in professional circles that children invent and lie about sexual violence, the truth is that a child will most likely remain silent for years about their experience. Most victims of sexual violence **never report the violence they have survived**, neither immediately nor after the passing of time. Between **55% and 69% of people** who have survived sexual violence as children have not confided in anyone (London et al., 2008). Based on a meta-analysis of a large number of studies, Stoltenborgh et al. (2011) estimate that a minimal number of cases of sexual abuse of children are uncovered – only 18% for girls and 8% for boys.

There is a significant passing of time before disclosing violence

Research data in the United States of America (USA) and Canada indicate that in 70-75% of children survivors of sexual violence, five or more years pass before they tell someone what they have survived (Hebert et al., 2009). Read et al. (2006) state that the average time needed for children to confide in anyone about surviving sexual violence is **16 years**, while it should be borne in mind that a significant proportion of children survivors of sexual violence never confide in anyone during their lives.

Children do not lie about having survived sexual violence

Considering the extremely rare cases in which children do not tell the complete truth about having survived sexual violence, in my opinion it is worthy start accepting that children do not lie. As long as we protect ourselves with possible doubts and do not trust children, an exceptionally large number of children will remain silent and cope alone with their terrible, traumatic experiences.

The problem of proving child sexual abuse after a certain amount of time has passed is the lack of tangible evidence, ineffective investigations, and insufficient expertise of those who have to establish the facts, as well as the existence and ongoing overrepresentation of false reports. We should not forget that even in situations where no sufficient evidence is found to file a criminal charge and especially one resulting in a final guilty verdict, it does not mean that the child did not survive sexual violence or that the child was not traumatized by the survived violence. It just

means that at, the time of the report, there was NO EXISTING EVIDENCE to satisfactorily assist in prosecuting the perpetrator.

The relationship between a child victim and the perpetrator of sexual violence

Despite existing prejudices that most perpetrators of sexual violence against women and children are unknown to the victims, practice and research have long proven this false. Data from the US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (2018) indicate that **93%** of children who have survived sexual violence by age 18 knew their perpetrators. In **88%** of cases, the perpetrator was a man, in 9% of cases the perpetrator was a woman, and in 3% of cases the gender remained unknown. In 80% of cases, the perpetrators were parents, 6% were other relatives, 5% were *others* (brothers, sisters, unknown persons), and in 4% of cases unmarried partners of one parent.

PERPETRATORS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

As already mentioned, sexual violence is surrounded with numerous prejudices and false beliefs, one of which concerns who is or who can be a perpetrator of sexual violence against children. The prevailing opinion is that perpetrators are unknown persons, weirdos, psychiatric patients, extremely violent, stalking children from the shadows. This false belief has negatively impacted the ability to recognize sexual violence and believe the experience of a child who has survived it.

The perpetrator of sexual violence can be anyone. In most cases, the perpetrators of sexual violence against children are men. Perpetrators can also be women, especially younger ones (adolescent age), and data on their number varies from 2% to 11% (Cortoni et al., 2016; Ferragut et al., 2021).

The most common perpetrators of child sexual abuse are people close to the children, whom the child knows, such as family members, neighbors, teachers, coaches, priests, and people in constant contact with children. Perpetrators can also be other children, regardless of whether they are family members, friends, or acquaintances, who are slightly older than the child victim or those in a position of greater power. Research indicates that more than 90% of children know the perpetrator (Finkelhor, 2012; US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, 2018).

Specific features and behaviors do not reveal perpetrators – they look and behave like everyone else. The idea that perpetrators of sexual violence are exclusively **pedophiles** is widespread. This is also a representation that affects our perception of recognizing and understanding sexual violence. According to the medical classification specified in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM 5), people who have a pedophilic disorder, the so-called pedophiles, are persons who have repeated, strongly sexually arousing fantasies, sexual urges or behaviors that include sexual activity with a pre-pubescent child (generally 13 years and younger), and are most often men (American Psychiatric Association, 2014). Most perpetrators of crimes involving the sexual abuse and exploitation of children are not pedophiles but adult men in heterosexual relationships with adult women, whose most frequent victims are children within the family. The younger the child, the more likely it is that the perpetrator of sexual violence will

be a family member. People with a pedophilic disorder usually start committing sexual violence against children at an early age, and they have a greater number of victims. However, not all persons with a pedophilic disorder are perpetrators of sexual violence against children (Martijn et al., 2020).

Most perpetrators do not employ violence. In most cases, they use tactics manipulating the fact that they are known to the child, people they trust and/or people of authority. Hence, they take advantage of the trust and manipulate the child. Very often, they develop a special relationship of care and connection with the child over a long time, emphasize it, single the child out as special, reward it, and gradually sexualize the relationship from the usual, socially acceptable touches to sexual violence. In doing so, they convince the child that what the perpetrator seeks and wants is something normal and common and that the child will enjoy it. When the child refuses to participate in the sought activities, when there are indications that the child will confide in someone or just says so clearly, the perpetrator starts using threats or violence (Berliner and Elliott, 2002; Enyedy et al., 2018; Mamula, 2020).

The background is a vibrant blue with several abstract geometric elements. In the top left, there is a purple triangle with horizontal lines, a purple square with a dot pattern, and a purple triangle with diagonal lines. In the middle right, there is a green triangle with a dot pattern and a purple triangle with diagonal lines. In the bottom left, there is a brown triangle with horizontal lines, a red triangle with a dot pattern, and a purple triangle with diagonal lines. In the bottom right, there is a dark blue circle with a green number '2'.

THE PREVALENCE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

2

2. THE PREVALENCE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

Maja Mamula, Ph.D., psychologist

Most people think sexual violence against children is an extremely difficult and overwhelming problem, but that it rarely happens. They believe such form of violence is committed by unknown, dangerous perpetrators, but children are protected in their homes, schools, organized childcare and other activities (e.g., sports). All of this, unfortunately, contributes to failing to recognize sexual violence against children and inadequate reactions when children decide to open up and share their experience of violence they survived. In addition, numerous forms of sexual violence against children are not identified or not recognized as crimes which carry mandatory reporting to relevant authorities by all persons working with children.

The prevalence of sexual violence against children is extremely difficult to assess, mostly because there are significantly large differences in the number of cases reported to relevant institutions based on research data and concerning real, personal experiences.

In addition, there are significant differences noticeable in research data. A fundamental problem in determining the prevalence of sexual violence against children is the lack of a single definition, making it difficult to compare the results of global research. The next problem is the types of sexual violence researched - though some research includes only forms of sexual violence against children in which physical contact is present, others are more comprehensive and include sexual violence without physical contact and perpetrated in the digital environment. The next problem is the research methodology - whether the incident is self-reported by children, what the children's age is during the research, or whether it is self-reported by adults about sexual violence survived in childhood. There are other numerous methodological issues not mentioned here, but the main goal is to point out that the above-mentioned is a key reason why research data differ so much.

The basic problem in disclosing and/or reporting sexual violence against children is that they most often remain silent about having survived sexual violence for numerous reasons: fear that no one will believe them, they do not trust anyone enough to confide in them, fear of the perpetrator, a feeling of guilt often imposed on them by the perpetrator or fearing for other close people.

The key to understanding sexual violence in general and sexual violence against children is that it happens far more often than generally assumed.

Data from most research, as well as data from the Council of Europe (2003), state that:

One in five children up to the age of 18 has survived some form of sexual violence.

One in five women has survived attempted rape and/or rape.

This evaluation by the Council of Europe is based on an analysis of the results of numerous studies carried out in European Union countries, the United States of America and other countries that have invested in national studies on the prevalence of sexual violence against children, as

well as the results of studies by international organizations such as UNICEF and the World Health Organization (Council of Europe, 2003; Lalor and McElvaney, 2010).

Similar or correlating assessments are found in numerous recent and pioneering global studies. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention states that in the United States (USA), **one in four girls and one in six boys have been sexually abused** (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2005).

According to data from the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (2020), **one in four girls and one in 13 boys** in the US will survive sexual abuse in childhood.

According to the six largest national American studies on children aged 12 to 17, data indicate that between **10.7% and 17.4% of girls** and between **3.8% and 4.6% of boys** will survive sexual violence involving physical contact by the age of 18 (Townsend and Rheingold, 2013).

Data for the United Kingdom show almost the same results: **18% of girls** and **5% of boys** survived sexual violence in childhood (Radford et al., 2010).

Worldwide, **12.7% of children and the young** have survived sexual violence, of which **18% are girls** and **7.6% are boys** (Stoltenborgh et al., 2011).

In Croatia, the data do not differ from the global data. According to a national survey by the Zagreb Child and Youth Protection Center, **18.2% of children** will survive some form of sexual violence according to the milder criterion and **13.7%** according to the more stringent criterion (Buljan Flander, 2007).

As stated in Chapter 1, *Sexual Violence Against Children*, different forms of sexual violence vary in frequency. One in five children will survive some form of sexual violence, most often sexual harassment and sexual violence through modern technologies, which are forms of sexual violence occurring more often than contact forms of sexual violence, including rape (Smahel et al., 2020; Ferragut et al., 2022).

Grigentyte and Lesinskiene (2018) state that 56% of young people survived sexual harassment at school, of which 76% were girls and 18% were boys. While an equal number of them survived verbal sexual harassment (62%), differences appear when the harassment is non-verbal (79% of girls and 38% of boys) or when it involves physical touch (61% of girls and 30% of boys).

Regarding sexual violence through modern technologies, in the past ten years, the way children use digital technologies has changed, the time spent on the Internet has doubled, and the age at which children start using digital devices is getting lower (Smahel et al., 2020). Research conducted in 2020, in which children aged 9 to 12 years participated, showed that one in five children experienced cyber violence, committed or witnessed cyber violence (Hinduja and Patchin, 2021). The older the children are, the more likely they are to survive cyber sexual violence. The American National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (UNICEF, 2021) states that in 2020 it received 21.7 million reports related to online content of the sexual abuse and exploitation of children, representing an increase of 700% compared to the period from 2013 to 2017.

Data from the Council of Europe on sexual violence against adults have been confirmed in numerous other studies. For example, Black et al. (2011) state that **1 in 5 women** and **1 in 71 men** will survive rape during their lifetime. Smith et al. (2018) state that **1 in 5 women** will survive rape or attempted rape during their lifetime in the USA.

It is important to note that data from all studies indicate that children and young people are the most frequent victims of various forms of sexual violence. Almost 70% of all reported cases of sexual violence involving physical contact (e.g., rape, unwanted fondling) involved children aged 17 and under (Snyder, 2000). Such data are also observed in Croatia. The analysis of data

on reported cases of sexual violence in Croatia conducted by the Women’s Room (Mamula et al., 2011) over a period of 10 years shows that the most frequent victims of all forms of sexual violence are children up to 14 years of age (32%) and children up to 18 years (30%).

Despite the mentioned research data on the prevalence of sexual violence, the number of reports to relevant institutions remains extremely low.

According to official data from the Ministry of the Interior, in Croatia, in the last ten years, between 700 and 1224 crimes against sexual freedom and sexual abuse and exploitation of children were reported annually. Chapter 17, “Crimes of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children,” was introduced into the Criminal Code in 2012, so data on the number of reported crimes of sexual abuse and exploitation of children have been monitored since 2013. There has been a continuous increase in the number of reported crimes of sexual abuse and exploitation of children (Mamula, 2022), as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Number of reported cases of sexual violence (Chapter 16 and Chapter 17 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Croatia) in the period from 2013 to 2022

Year	Chapter 16		Chapter 17	
	Crimes against sexual freedom		Crimes of sexual abuse and exploitation of children	
	Total	Women (%)	Total	Little girls and teenage girls (%)
2013.	350	96%	359	89%
2014.	350	96%	359	89%
2015.	436	94%	448	85%
2016.	444	97%	566	86%
2017.	370	97%	458	88%
2018.	324	93%	523	288%
2019.	425	94%	748	81%
2020.	343	94%	533	85%
2021.	440	95%	784	83%
2022.	446	95%	687	83%

Source: Ministry of Internal Affairs of Republic of Croatia

Table 1 shows that according to **Chapter 16** of the Criminal Code *Crimes Against Sexual Freedom* **324 to 446 crimes are reported**, of which, in 93% to 97% of cases, the victims are women. According to **Chapter 17** of the Criminal Code *Crimes of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children* **359 to 784 crimes are reported** annually, of which **81% to 88% of the victims are girls**.

REASONS FOR NOT REPORTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE

As already pointed out, sexual violence is one of the most serious crimes least reported among adults and children. Many victims will not even confide in anyone about their experience, let alone report the sexual violence they survived (London et al., 2008; Stoltenborgh et al., 2011).

According to numerous global studies and estimates, for each reported rape, there are between 15 and 20 unreported cases, depending on the type of sexual violence and the perpetrator. There are many reasons for the small number of reported cases: relevant institutions but also close persons mistrusting a victim's experience, stigmatization, a long and difficult process of proving the crime, and the lack of relevant support services (Mamula, 2007).

In general, we can say that there are three basic categories of reasons for not reporting sexual violence: 1) psychological reasons of the survivor of sexual violence, 2) insufficient support for victims, and 3) the fear of reporting to relevant institutions, as well as fear of court proceedings (Mamula, 2005; Mamula, 2020b).

Some of the psychological reasons are fear of the perpetrator (threats directed to the victim's life and body and her close ones), fear of reactions by family and other close persons (e.g., disbelief, rejection, ridicule, blame), fear that even after confiding in someone, the victim will not receive help and support, not knowing the system and lack of information about where to turn for help, failure to recognize certain forms of violence as crimes that can be reported. There is also the fact that we live in a society where there are numerous prejudices against victims of sexual violence, involving blame, which certainly influences the victim's decision to confide in someone or to report the violence.

Insufficient support for victims is attributed to two factors. One is certainly the lack of specialized services that provide timely and comprehensive help and support in one place, such as accompanying the victim to relevant institutions in the status of a confidential person when reporting violence, psychological and legal counseling, psychotherapy, and support during the entire court proceedings and similar. The key is that such specialized services are staffed by professionals specialized for handling sexual violence cases. The second factor is the level of education, readiness and empathy of experts working in relevant institutions. It has been shown that the probability of reporting decreases significantly when the first reaction is negative or when encountering mistrust, suspicion, or rude or inappropriate behavior (Ahrens, 2006).

The fear of reporting and prosecuting violence is the fear of reporting to the police, the fear the survivor will be subjected to suspicion and disbelief and that they will not be met with understanding and empathy. When adding to that the fear of long and demanding court proceedings, countless repeating testimonies of traumatic experiences, fear of an unpredictable outcome of the proceedings and very low sentences for perpetrators, it becomes clear that very few persons decide to report violence.

Numerous other reasons are also noticeable among children, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, *Disclosing Sexual Violence*.

UNWILLINGNESS TO HELP AND FOCUS ON FALSE REPORTS

When a case of sexual violence against a child is opened, what is first noticeable is the desire, empathy and willingness to help the child victim. However, something else is also apparent – a significant amount of disbelief, suspicion and concern that reports of sexual violence, both from children and persons close to them (e.g., mothers), are false and fabricated. Sometimes doubt seems more dominant than the need to help and protect the child. These attitudes are present not only in society as a whole but also among persons to whom relevant institutions assign the task of handling reports, processing violence, and protecting victims, despite the fact that more than 40 years of systematic research indicates that the percentage of false reports is extremely low.

According to current data, false reports of sexual violence against children are extremely rare. It is estimated that there are only 1.5% to 8% of false reports, with adults or adolescents most often responsible (Everson and Boat, 1989). The same authors in an earlier study (1986) state that cases of sexual violence against children with definite and objective evidence of abuse are the exception rather than the rule. In most cases, there are no witnesses, while physical evidence can be found in less than 15% of cases (Kerns, 1981; according to Everson and Boat, 1986). For this reason, understanding the significance and role of a child's disclosure and testimony about the violence survived is important, as well as the need to believe children and their testimony (Oates et al., 2000).

Child sexual abuse is difficult to prove, especially after a significant amount of time has passed, when there is no more substantive evidence, and the level of expertise in working with children and conducting investigations is not on an adequate level. These reasons do not prove reports to be false, but rather show the inability to find sufficient evidence to file criminal charges.

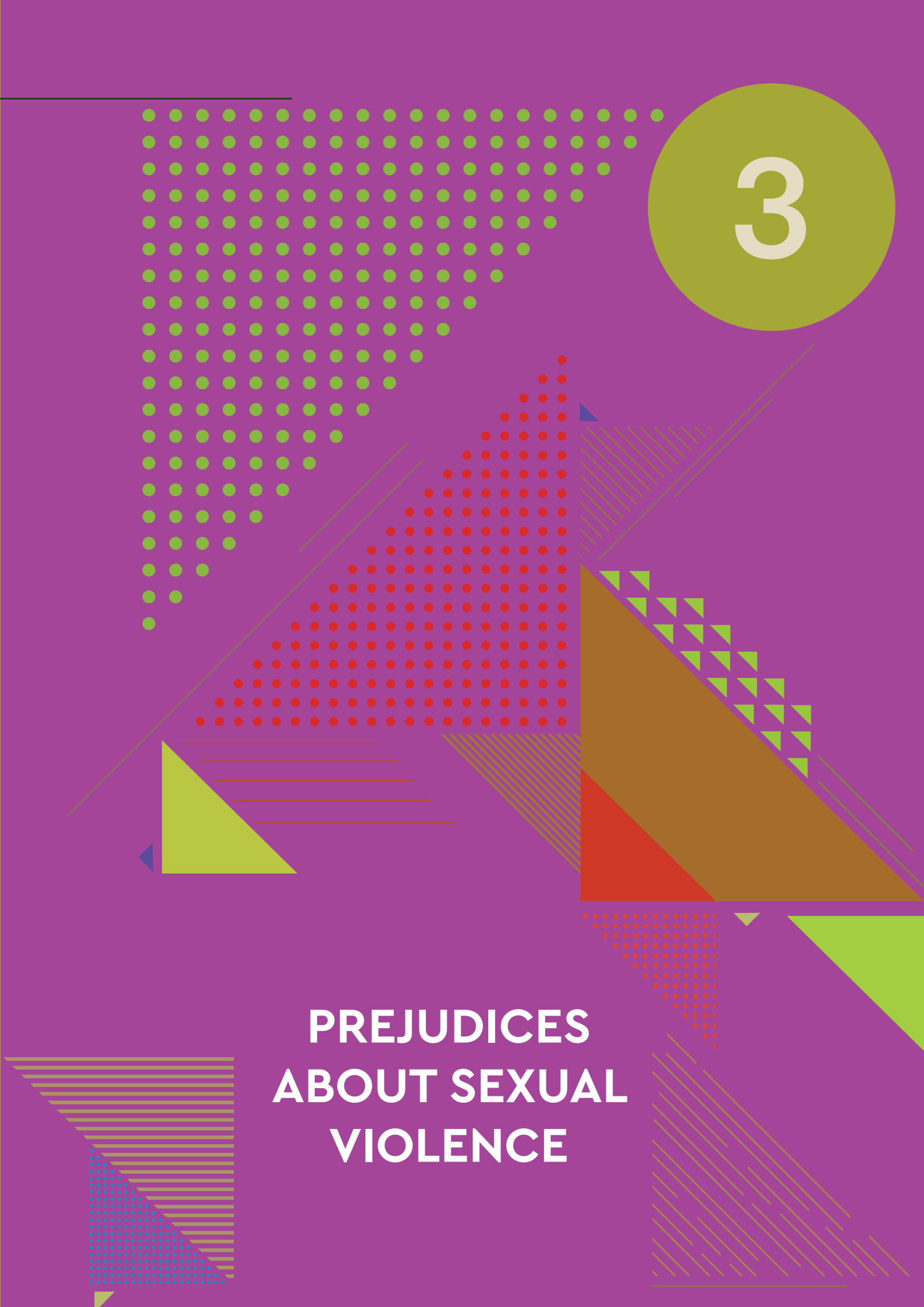
According to available data and given the extreme difficulty in proving sexual violence against children, there should be a greater concern that children who have survived sexual violence remain unprocessed due to suspicion and problems in proving a case rather than concerns about untrue reports. Due to 2% to 8% of cases, suspicion cannot be the basic approach and reaction towards more than 90% of children or adults close to them who report sexual violence.

Disbelieving women's and children's experiences comes from deep-rooted patriarchal social attitudes, which unfortunately have been transferred also to the actions of persons assigned to relevant bodies and institutions. Respecting the principle of presuming innocence and necessity of precaution in preventing innocent persons from going to prison does not exclude the obligation of all stakeholders within the system to treat victims with special consideration. Nor are they relieved of respecting each individual victim's differences and needs so that reporting sexual violence and subsequent court proceedings are least traumatic and afford justice for victims.

Jones et al. (2021) believe that there exists a fear of falsely reporting sexual violence against children that is widespread in society. Their experiment showed that persons who exhibit a higher level of fear on the instrument called "Scale of Fear of False Accusations" scale are less likely to believe in accusations of child sexual abuse. The data further indicated that men have a higher level of fear of false accusations than women, and gender differences in terms of this fear come out from a tendency of men to less believe allegations of abuse than women.



3



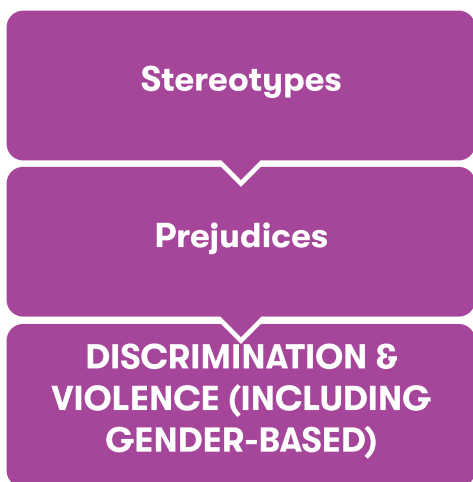
**PREJUDICES
ABOUT SEXUAL
VIOLENCE**

3. PREJUDICES ABOUT SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Kristina Mihaljević, M.A. social pedagogue

Understanding the reality of sexual violence in general and sexual violence against children requires understanding and raising awareness of the prejudices surrounding this topic.

Stereotypes are an overly simplistic, often inaccurate and hard-to-change images we have of a person or persons belonging to a particular group. They are an integral part of prejudices, which represent unjustifiably negative attitudes. **Prejudices** are usually hard to change and are based on erroneous beliefs. **Discrimination** refers to behavior influenced by or based on prejudice. It refers to the unfair treatment of persons considered to belong to a particular group of people. Such behavior arising from prejudice can lead to varying degrees of unfair acts of discrimination. These procedures can vary from milder ones, e.g., prejudiced conversation and avoidance of some people, to more extreme ones, such as genocide or violence (Bogavac and Popadić, 2016).



Prejudices about sexual violence refer to **incorrect beliefs about sexual violence, victims and perpetrators**. Most of the prejudices related to sexual violence stems from deep-rooted attitudes related to gender roles and gender inequality. Rigid **gender roles and gender inequality** at all levels of society and the patriarchal system are the primary causes of male violence against children and women (Mamula, 2020).

It is important to understand **gender stereotypes** (e.g., which traits we attribute to girls and women, and which to boys and men) and the ways in which we support them in everyday life, as well as the attitudes we have concerning gender roles because our reactions to them determine how we behave towards child and adult survivors of sexual violence. (Bates et al., 2019).

Regarding sexual violence, gender stereotypes are often expressed through **rape myths**. Myths about rape are incorrect but widespread beliefs about rape, rape victims and rapists (Burt, 1980; Lonsway and Fitzgerald, 1994; according to Bates et al., 2019). Rape myths include inherent expectations about how young men, or girls and women should behave in different situations (especially in relation to sexual activity) and the consequences they face if they deviate from these expectations. The main characteristic of rape myths is to minimize the problems, crimes and the perpetrator's responsibility and perpetuate the victim's guilt for surviving victimization. Believing prejudices about sexual violence has a negative correlation with believing victims. That is, **the more we believe in prejudices about sexual violence, the less we believe victims** and the more inclined we are to blame them, whether they are children or adults (Cromer and Goldsmith, 2010). Furthermore, prejudices influence denying the prevalence of sexual violence, affect the ability to provide assistance and support to survivors of sexual violence, and deter

victims from disclosing and/or reporting sexual violence. Supporting prejudices about sexual violence minimizes the seriousness of the committed act of sexual violence and shifts the blame from the perpetrator to the survivor of sexual violence.

Just as rape myths deny and/or justify sexual violence against women, the same happens when it comes to prejudices about sexual violence against children – they **contribute to denying this issue or justifying sexual violence against children** (Cromer and Goldsmith, 2010). This factor is one of the reasons why children never confide in anyone or disclose the survived violence only after a long period of time.

Figure 1. Five categories of prejudices about sexual violence against children (Cromer and Goldsmith, 2010)

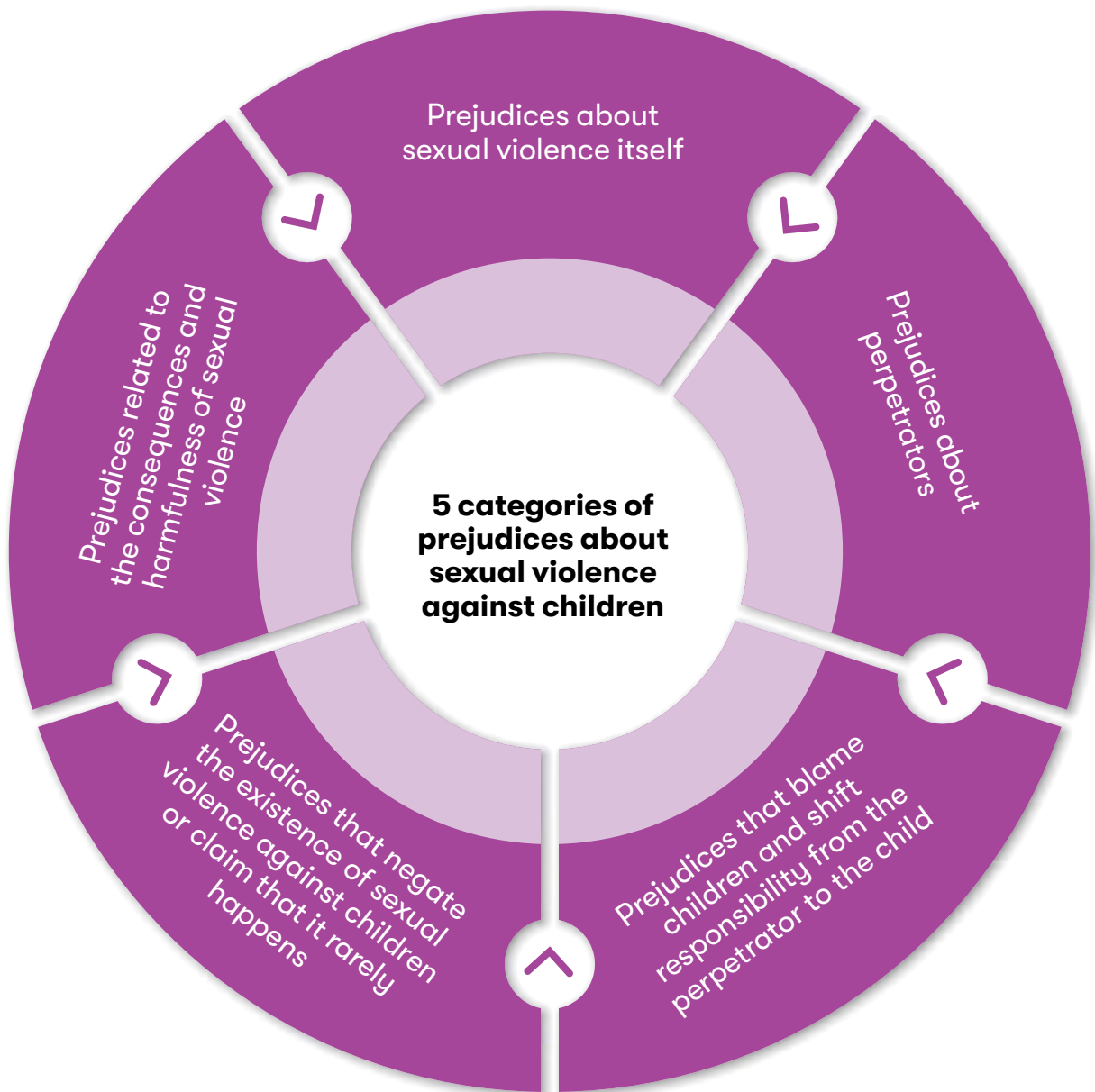


Table 2 shows the most common prejudices about sexual violence, including prejudices about sexual violence against children.

Table 2. Most common prejudices about sexual violence (according to Mamula, 2020)

Prejudices	Facts
PREJUDICES THAT NEGATE THE EXISTENCE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE	
<p>Sexual violence is not a common problem, and children are rarely victims of sexual violence.</p>	<p>According to the Council of Europe (2017), one in five children will survive some form of sexual violence by the age of 18.</p> <p>According to the Council of Europe (2003), one in five women (20%) will survive an attempted rape or rape in their lifetime.</p> <p>According to the World Health Organization (2021), one in three women will survive physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner or sexual violence from another person in their lifetime.</p> <p>The fact that most cases are unreported and unrecognized does not mean that sexual violence does not exist.</p>
PREJUDICES ABOUT SEXUAL VIOLENCE ITSELF	
<p>Sexual violence against children occurs only in families of lower socio-economic status.</p>	<p>Incest and sexual violence against children can occur in any family, poor or rich, educated or uneducated. Just as there is no profile of the perpetrator or victim, there is also no profile of the family in which sexual violence occurs.</p>
<p>Most rapes occur in dark and deserted streets, in the night.</p>	<p>Rape, like other forms of sexual violence, occurs statistically equally during the day and at night. It rarely happens in deserted streets and parks. More than 50% of cases occur in the perpetrator's home, the victim's home, or their shared home (Heenan and Murray, 2006).</p>

<p>It can't be called rape when the persons know each other.</p> <p>(When the two go out on a date, there's no question of rape.)</p>	<p>Most perpetrators of sexual violence are persons the victim knows. In 93% of cases, children know the perpetrator of sexual violence.</p> <p>In adolescence, nine out of ten cases of sexual violence are perpetrators partners/former partners (UNICEF, 2017). Rape is rape, regardless of the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator. Everyone has the right to change their mind, especially about sexual activities. Some form of sexual contact is not an open invitation to a sexual act. And in cases where the victim and the perpetrator have previously had sexual relations, it does not entitle the perpetrator to force the victim to have sexual intercourse through manipulation, pressure, coercion, threat or violence.</p>
<p>There is no rape in marriage.</p>	<p>A married woman is not the property of the man with whom she is in a marital relationship or cohabitation. Any sexual activity without consent is sexual violence and a crime.</p>
<p>If a child or adult I know has survived sexual violence, I am convinced they would tell me right away.</p>	<p>Many children and adults who have survived sexual violence will either never or not for a long time disclose to anyone that they have survived sexual violence, nor will they report it to the police.</p> <p>Between 55% and 69% of persons who were child survivors of sexual violence did not confide in anyone about it at the time (London et al., 2008).</p> <p>Research data in the U.S. and Canada indicate that for 70-75% of children who had survived sexual violence, at least five years had passed before they told someone about it (Hébert et al., 2009).</p> <p>It is estimated that only 8% of cases of sexual violence against boys and 18% against girls are detected (Stoltenborgh et al., 2011). On average, 10 to 16 years pass from abuse to disclosure, and the duration of silence for children varies from one month to 56 years (Read et al., 2008).</p> <p>As many as 91% of women who had survived rape did not tell anyone at the time the violence was perpetrated against them, let alone report it (Kelly, 2001). Research in Croatia shows that 95% of women have not reported attempted rape/rape (Mamula, 2006).</p>

PREJUDICES ABOUT PERPETRATORS

Perpetrators of sexual violence are most often unknown persons.

The perpetrators of sexual violence are most often **known to children**.

They use the **power, trust and authority** to hurt children.

In 93% of cases, children know the perpetrator of sexual violence (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, 2018).

Perpetrators of sexual violence are most often:

- Members of the immediate and extended family - father, uncles from both sides...
- Persons of trust – coach, teacher, family friend, neighbor...
- School friend
- Acquaintance

When it comes to adults, the most common perpetrators of sexual violence are **current or former intimate partners**. **In more than 70% of cases, the victim knows the perpetrator and trusts the perpetrator** (partners, friends, acquaintances) (RAINN, 2019).

The perpetrators of sexual violence against children are pedophiles.

Pedophilia and the committing sexual violence against children may not be and are often not synonymous. There is a widespread opinion that perpetrators of sexual violence are solely pedophiles. It is also an image that affects our perception of recognizing and understanding sexual violence.

The perpetrator of sexual violence against a child may or may not be a pedophile, just as a pedophile may or may not be behaviorally guided by their impulses (Martijn et al., 2020).

The term pedophile is often mistakenly used in the general population for every person who sexually abuses children, while in reality **only a minority of perpetrators of child sexual abuse meet the diagnostic criteria for pedophilia** (Seto, 2008).

Rapists are easy to identify: they are lunatics who are easy to spot by appearance and behavior.

There is no profile of a perpetrator; **anyone can be a perpetrator of sexual violence**. Rapists come from all socio-economic classes, and racial and national affiliations. They cannot be identified by a specific way of dressing or behaving.

<p>Rape is the result of an extremely strong sexual desire that cannot be controlled.</p>	<p>The main reason for sexual violence is power – dominating and controlling another person. Sexual violence has nothing to do with sexuality, but like physical, psychological and other types of violence, it is only a tool that the perpetrator uses to exercise power and control over another person.</p> <p>Forcing someone to engage in sexual activity against their will is an act of violence and aggression. Supporting the prejudice that men are weak in controlling their drives and impulses only supports the story of the woman-provoker’s guilt.</p>
<p>When a guy pays for a date, it’s normal to expect sexual intercourse</p>	<p>It does not matter if someone paid for a drink or gave an expensive gift – that was a personal choice. No one is obliged to “repay” a drink or a gift with unwanted sexual intercourse. Sexual intercourse is not owed to anyone. Coercion to have sexual intercourse after a paid date is sexual violence.</p>
<p>PREJUDICES ABOUT VICTIMS</p>	
<p>Rape victims are most often attractive young women.</p>	<p>The belief that only young and attractive women can be raped stems from the myth of rape due to sexual need and attraction. Sexual violence is a crime stemming from power and the need for control, and rapists choose victims whom they perceive as vulnerable or over whom they have power. Any person can be raped, regardless of physical appearance, age, manner of dress, social status or manner of behavior.</p>
<p>Women provoke rape due to the way they dress or behave.</p>	<p>Most women are convinced that they cannot be raped because they are careful about their behavior and how they dress. Sexual violence is an act of power and control and has nothing to do with how someone dresses or behaves. Victims of sexual violence are children, persons who wear burqas, elderly people – clothing and behavior have nothing to do with sexual violence! This prejudice contributes to blaming victims of sexual violence and shifting responsibility for the violence committed from the perpetrator to the victim!</p>

<p>If a woman is not seriously physically injured, it is unlikely she was raped.</p>	<p>The absence of visible injuries is often perceived as not physically defending oneself and therefore consenting. This approach ignores threats and fear, which often block the victim. In addition, some victims knowingly give in to reduce the risk of injury and death. The normal and most common reaction to sexual violence is freezing from fear. This reaction is the body's natural physiological answer to stressful, frightening or dangerous events in order to defend itself.</p> <p>When it comes to children, perpetrators rarely need to use physical violence because they have the child's trust, authority and power over the child.</p>
<p>The fact that a girl in a relationship has already agreed to sexual relations means that she has to agree to each subsequent time.</p>	<p>Consent to a particular sexual activity given once is not consent to any other sexual activity at other times. Consent must be verified and obtained for each sexual activity!</p> <p>Sexual activities express mutual desire and respect, not expectations, pressure and coercion. A person can change their mind anytime during sexual activity, and the partner must respect this.</p>
<p>One cannot classify something as an act of sexual violence when it occurs after consuming alcohol or drugs.</p>	<p>When someone is under the influence of alcohol or some other addictive substance, it is not a call for violence. A person under the influence of such substances is not able to provide a key element for sexual activity – consent.</p>
<p>Women often falsely accuse men of rape.</p>	<p>Women do not lie about rape; Moreover, women rarely report rape for a number of reasons. According to the FBI, the number of false reports of rape and sexual assault is no higher than the number of other falsely reported crimes (theft, burglary, attempted murder) and is 2% of such cases (Heenan and Murray, 2006; National Sexual Violence Resource Center, 2015).</p>
<p>Children often lie that they have survived sexual violence.</p>	<p>Research shows that children tell the truth in 98% of cases (O'Donohue et al., 2018). Disclosing having survived sexual violence is an act of trust, which is not at all easy. Children rarely disclose sexual violence to get attention or get someone in trouble – if your child discloses to you that they have survived sexual violence, it means that they trust you and believe that you will help and protect them. How you approach the child, and the situation can change their life – so approach with absolute trusting the child with absolute trust and do everything to protect them because that is your responsibility! Sometimes children are accused of lying if they disclose having survived</p>

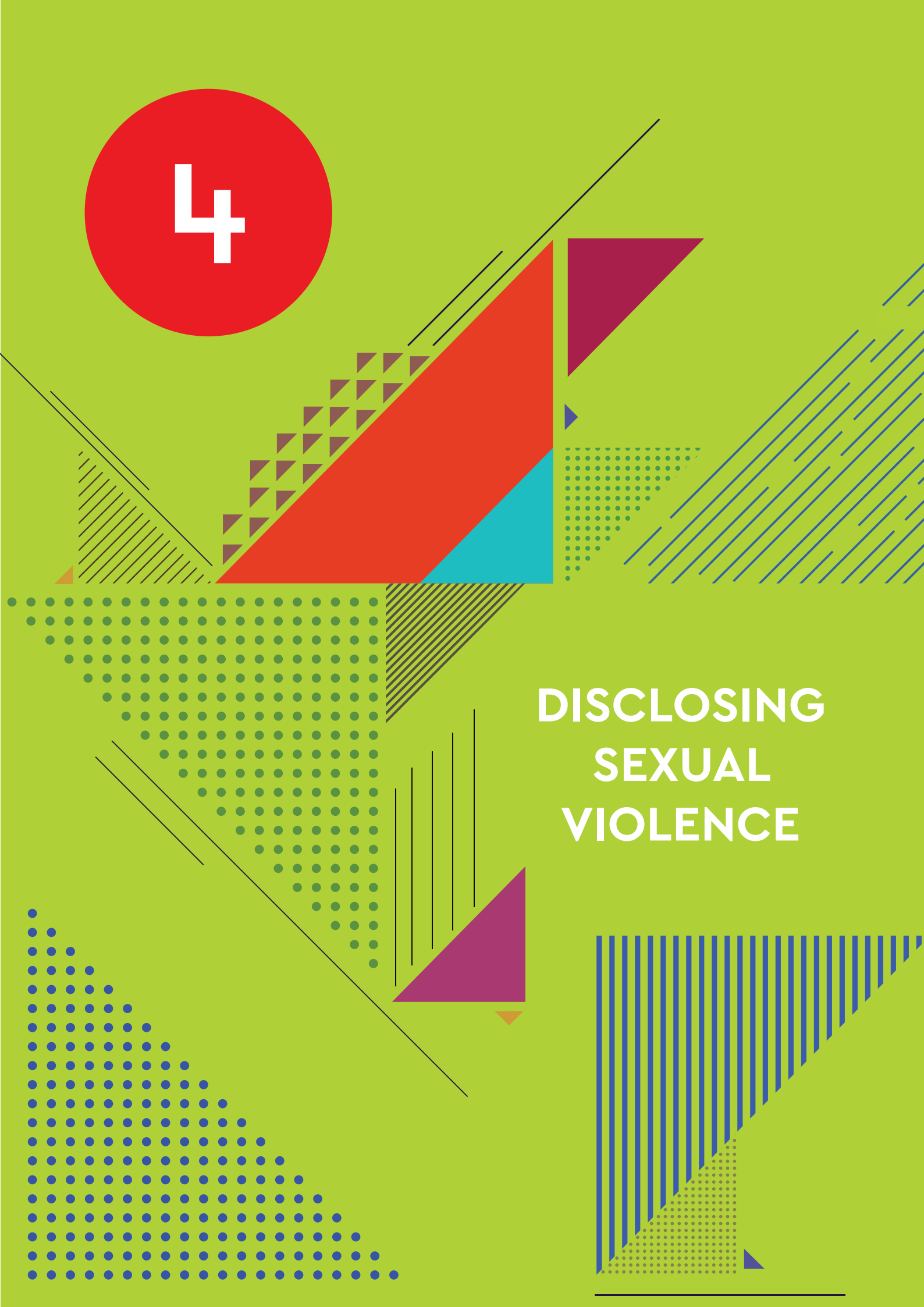
	<p>sexual violence and then take back what they have said. This situation does not mean that they lie, but that they feel a lot of pressure and responsibility for the disintegration of the family, causing stress for their parents, etc. Withdrawing what they have disclosed is most often an attempt to “normalize” things for themselves and their family. They should be supported in such case, trust their experience of having survived sexual violence and do everything to protect them; this is the responsibility of every adult!</p>
<p>Sometimes the victim is to blame for sexual violence.</p>	<p>Children and adults are never to blame for having survived sexual violence; the responsibility lies solely with the perpetrator!</p> <p>The absence of visible injuries is often perceived as not physically defending themselves and therefore giving consent. This approach ignores threats and fear, which often block the victim. In addition, some victims knowingly give in in order to reduce the risk of injury and death. It does not mean they gave consent to the perpetrator. Each survivor of sexual violence did the best they could and knew in order to survive.</p>
<p>Men cannot be victims of sexual violence.</p>	<p>Men can also be victims of sexual violence, and according to data, one in seventy-one men will survive rape in their lifetime (Black et al., 2011) and one in six boys will survive some form of sexual violence before the age of eighteen (Finkelhor, 1990). Of the total number of children who have survived sexual violence between the ages of 12 and 17, 8% of the victims are boys, and when it comes to children under the age of 12, boys are victims in 26% of cases (Snyder, 2000).</p>
<p>Young men and men always want and are always ready for sexual relations.</p>	<p>This prejudice stems from the gender stereotype, that is, the expectation that young men always want sexual relations and that they continually think about it.</p> <p>Young women and women, just like young men and men, think about sexual activities and equally enjoy such activities when they have appropriate, caring and attentive partners. The occasional lack of desire for sexual relations or expressing emotions is not a lack of “manhood”, but quite the opposite. Young men and men sometimes simply do not want sexual relations and are not ready for them. Young women and women, young men and men should learn to be free from socially imposed roles and live according to their own desires and needs.</p>

<p>Sexual abuse can lead a child to identify as a member of the LGBTQ+ community.</p>	<p>A child’s sexual orientation and/or gender identity are neither the cause nor effect of abuse. Sexual violence has long-term consequences on a child’s life and health, but in no way affects their sexual orientation or gender identity. It has been proven, however, that children who survive sexual violence have a higher risk of various psychological disorders (anxiety, depression, traumatic reactions and disorders, including PTSD stress, and eating disorders), behavioral problems, poor performance in school, abuse of addictive substances in later life, and many other consequences. It should be noted that children who identify as LGBTQ+ are at higher risk of being targeted for abuse (Darkness to light, 2021).</p>
<p>PREJUDICES RELATED TO THE CONSEQUENCES AND HARMFULNESS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE</p>	
<p>Talking about surviving sexual violence only makes the situation more difficult.</p>	<p>Allowing a person to speak openly about their experience in a safe and protected environment is an important step in the recovery process. It helps reduce feelings of guilt and breaks the vicious circle of silence about violence. Also, a child or adult should never be forced to talk about their experience of violence. Everyone needs their own time, manner and process in order to talk about it.</p>
<p>A survivor of sexual violence can never recover.</p>	<p>Recovery from having survived sexual violence is possible.</p> <p>Recovery is possible with the love of close people and professional help and support.</p>
<p>It can’t happen to me!</p>	<p>Unfortunately, sexual violence can happen to everyone, regardless of age, socio-economic status, religion, city or place where they come from. There is no profile of a victim of sexual violence – they can be babies, the elderly, people with disabilities, LGBTIQ persons, men.</p>

Understanding and recognizing the prejudices surrounding sexual violence is an indispensable step in disseminating accurate information, supporting survivors of sexual violence and working on preventing sexual violence. Each of us is prejudiced, but the topic of sexual violence requires raising awareness of such prejudices to respond to the needs of survivors of sexual violence adequately and to make sure that our prejudices do not affect our judgments when it comes to child and adult survivors of sexual violence.



DISCLOSING SEXUAL VIOLENCE



4. DISCLOSING SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Maja Mamula, Ph.D., psychologist

It has been repeatedly pointed out in the various chapters that sexual violence against children is very common, but rarely recognized and reported to relevant institutions. In most cases, children, as well as adult victims of sexual violence, do not confide in anyone about their experiences for a long time, let alone report it to officials.

Most victims of sexual violence **never report violence they survived**, neither immediately, within a period of several weeks to several months, nor after several years, which leads to uncovering only a minimal number of cases, i.e., only 18% of girls and 8% in boys (Stoltenborgh et al., 2011). One of key obstacles in understanding the problem, recognizing, reporting, and sanctioning sexual violence are widespread **prejudices about sexual violence**. These prejudices learned through socialization and evident in stories, humor, jokes, media articles, and also in the practice of prosecuting sexual violence, always lead in the same direction: doubting the victim's testimony and/or experience, minimizing the violence survived, diminishing the responsibility of the perpetrator and shifting responsibility and guilt to the victim. Such prejudices and attitudes, as well as the lack of professional advancement for all who work with victims of sexual violence, have direct implications where victims of sexual violence find it difficult to confide in someone, let alone report sexual violence.

DISCLOSURE OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

The widespread perception or even myth is that children, when sexually abused by someone, immediately confide in an adult and immediately get the necessary protection and help.

These expectations highlight a deep ignorance and misunderstanding of sexual violence. First of all, even the vast majority of adults, who know how and can take care of themselves, will not confide in anyone, at least not for a long time, while the probability that they will report the violence to relevant institutions is minimal. The expectation by adults that an abused child immediately reacts and confides in someone completely ignores the child's position, dependence, subordination and helplessness in relation to the perpetrator (Mamula, 2020b).

Before we mention in whom children most often confide and the most common reactions, clarifying the term **disclosure** is crucial. Choosing a completely appropriate word in the Croatian language is difficult; hence the terms: *disclosure*, *confiding*, and *uncovering*¹ are found in the professional literature. Two aspects of the term should be highlighted: *disclosure* does not refer to reporting the violence survived to relevant institutions but *confiding* in a close (adult) person or friend. Second, the term *confessing* occasionally found and/or heard in talks even by experts is erroneous. The child has nothing to confess! Only perpetrators of sexual violence must confess to their deeds.

¹ Further in the chapter, the terms *disclosure* and *confiding* will be used as synonyms.

Children disclosing sexual violence they have survived is best understood not as an act but as a process that depends on relationships and interactions with others and may extend over a long time (Allnock et al., 2019).

Understanding the disclosure of survivors of sexual violence requires considering several key factors:

1) Only a small number of children disclose their experience of sexual violence

Contrary to general belief, most children never immediately confide in or seek help from someone after surviving sexual violence. Research and data from practice indicate that a large number of children remain silent about their experience, deny that it ever happened or confide in someone (even several times), after which they later deny that anything happened and deny everything they said (London et al., 2003; London et al., 2008). It is estimated that less than one in four victims of childhood sexual abuse confide in someone immediately after surviving abuse (Paine and Hansen, 2002).

According to global research, it is estimated that up to one in three children confide in someone about surviving violence. When they do, it is most often a friend (40%) and not an adult whom the child trusts (parents, teachers and similar), leaving the case unreported and unprocessed, as well as the child remains unprotected (Broman-Fulks et al., 2007).

2) Delaying disclosure of having survived sexual violence

The next problem is that, in most cases when children do confide in someone, it is not immediately after surviving violence. They usually do so after waiting several days, weeks, months, and even up to several years (London et al., 2003; Ullman, 2007; Hébert et al., 2009). Read et al. (2006) state that the average time for children to confide in someone is 16 years. We must also not lose sight of the fact that there are children who have never, even in adulthood, confided in anyone.

Surveying adults who have survived childhood sexual abuse indicates even more defeating data. A study from Sweden surveying women who survived sexual abuse in childhood shows that 32% of them disclosed the violence they survived in childhood (before the age of 18), while the majority (68%) confided in someone only in their adulthood (Jonson and Lindblad, 2004). The timespan for disclosure of sexual violence varied up to as much as 49 years, with an average of 21 years. Research from Ireland states that half of the research participants (47%) who survived sexual abuse in childhood never told anyone about it and only confided their experience to someone for the first time as part of the conducted research (McGee et al., 2002, according to McElvaney, 2013).

The choice and decision by young people whether to confide in someone after surviving sexual violence, within what period of time and to whom, has significant implications for recovery. Young people who confide in someone within a month of surviving violence have a lower risk of suffering a major depressive episode and developing behavioral problems. Moreover, children who confided in their mothers had a significantly lower risk of developing traumatic reactions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Broman-Fulks et al., 2007).

3) Factors influencing a child's decision to disclose survived violence

Many factors play a role for a child in deciding whether to confide in someone and on delaying disclosure, but one of the main reasons is the **relationship between the child and the perpetrator**. Children who have survived sexual violence from someone outside their family or unknown to them are more likely to confide in someone about such experiences (Smith et al., 2000; London et al., 2003). As Alaggia and Kirshenbaum (2005) state, "The more attached victims are to the perpetrator, the less likely they are to confide in someone about the sexual violence" (p. 228).

The next significant factor is the **gravity of the violence survived**. Priebe and Svedin (2008) investigated the variables that influence the willingness of adolescents to confide in someone about sexual violence they have survived. On a large sample of young people, they obtained data that 65% of girls and 23% of boys survived some form of sexual violence. The reason for such a high prevalence can be found in the methodology – adolescents have better memories of childhood experiences than when research is conducted on adults. The next significant factor is that a very high number of young people (81% of girls and 69% of boys) confided in someone about their experience. However, in most cases, it was their peers (40%), while only 8% talked to a professional, and about 7% reported the violence they survived to the police or a social welfare center. However, their research shows that they most often confided about forms of sexual violence of less gravity (e.g., teasing, sexual harassment). The graver the abuse, the less likely they were to confide in someone, especially family members. For young women, they found that a lower willingness to confide in someone is influenced by the following factors: sexual abuse involving contact, abuse that happened once, known perpetrator and unsupportive parents. For boys, the decision to confide in someone was found to be influenced by the school they attend, living with both parents and perceptions of parents as overprotective or unsupportive.

Among the important factors for understanding the disclosure of sexual violence, the reasons children decide to do so are certainly important. Thus, Manay and Collin-Vézina (2021) state that young women seek emotional support by confiding in friends more often. Young men are far less likely to confide in anyone, and when they do, they have practical reasons – they are looking for protection and access to services.

4) The disclosure process

Children can open up and confide about their experiences in different ways. Allnock et al. (2019) state that some children may disclose directly, while others choose indirect ways. For instance, they may say, "I don't want to go to Grandpa's anymore," or use terms used by the perpetrator, such as talking about "secrets" or "their special games," or adult language that is not usual or is inappropriate for the child's developmental level. The same authoresses state that some children deliberately disclose abuse to stop it and/or protect themselves, their brothers, sisters or other children. Some children may be forced or encouraged by a third party (e.g., because the child was both a victim and a witness at the same time, and another child confided in someone, or the teacher's encouragement to talk to the child due to poor performance at school), while some children during the time of growing up learn and recognize that what they survived was abuse (e.g., after a workshop on the prevention of sexual violence at school).

5) In whom do children confide

Authors Manay and Collin-Vézina (2021) compared numerous studies from 1990 to 2017. The analysis shows that in most cases, children first confide in their peers (friends) and parents, although large differences between the studies were found: from 5% to 68% of children first confided in their peers, while from 24% to 77 % first confided in their mothers. It is least likely (less than 15%) that children will turn to other adults, be it teachers, police, or doctors. In the decision on whom to confide in, a significant age factor can be observed – younger children more often confide in their parents, the most often their mothers, while older children significantly **more often confide in their peers and hide the survived violence from adults.**

Professionals who work with children should keep in mind that each child can try to confide in someone, but certain groups of children face additional obstacles due to their gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, disability, which deters them from making a decision (Allnock et al., 2019; Sullivan and Knutson, 2000).

6) Other people reactions to a child's disclosure of survived sexual violence

A child's readiness to fully open up, in order to receive help, ultimately depends on the adult's reactions to the child opening up and the story shared about the violence survived.

Contrary to expectations and with an emphasis on caring for and protecting children, Roesler (1994) states that children who confide in someone about the sexual abuse they have survived face difficult and unpleasant reactions more so than adults who confide in someone about the sexual abuse they survived in childhood. The same author states that a negative reaction from the first person in whom a child confides has various negative implications, including the mental health and well-being of the child –graver traumatic symptoms develop and, more often, post-traumatic stress disorder and dissociation. Therefore, an adult's reaction after a child has confided in them is extremely important not only for the fundamental protection of the child but also for protecting the child's mental health and preventing traumatic disorders and other psychological problems in adulthood.

Negative reactions to children confiding about survived sexual violence seem to be the rule rather than the exception. Elliott et al. (2022) report that nearly three-quarters (73%) of children described initial reactions to confiding in someone as negative, including confusing and rejecting the victim (33%), disbelieving the victim (29%), or experiencing some type of revenge or violent reaction (10%). Children most often confided in non-violent family members about surviving abuse (66%), in friends (17%), as well as in officials and professionals who provide professional support (12%). Unfortunately, the children most often reported negative reactions from family members.

Disbelieving the child and negative reactions include various behaviors such as accusing the child of lying, accusing the child of making everything up, or being manipulated by someone else (e.g., the other parent) with false stories. Instead of providing help and support, this betrayal and abandonment of the child push the child deeper into self-blame, self-hatred, alienation and re-victimization (Summit, 1983).

Dworkin et al. (2019) found that negative reactions to disclosure and confiding about abuse, especially those involving controlling, harassment and a change of attitude towards the victim, are associated with a higher level of psychological disorders.

Inappropriate, unsupportive responses negatively impact the child seeking help in the future

and further disclosing the abuse, undermining the child's sense of self-efficacy and reinforcing feelings of guilt and isolation (Ahrens, 2006; Allnock et al., 2019).

At the same time, for children who experienced appreciation and understanding, the act of confiding had a therapeutic role and alleviated a feeling of isolation due to the survived abuse (Easton, 2020).

7) The effect of disclosure on the child and on persons close to the child

Disclosing a traumatic experience by a child should be understood primarily as a cry for help, but also as an act of courage and trust expressed in you.

Disclosure can be extremely demanding for a child, a trigger for re-living the traumatic experience with both short-term and long-term effects on the child's emotional well-being (Allnock et al., 2019). That, of course, is not a reason not to create the opportunity for the child to confide, but rather an indicator that both the child and their family will need additional attention and support.

Just as different reasons can encourage a child to disclose sexual violence, there are also different emotional reactions, some closely related to re-living the traumatic experience. Some children may feel relief, and others sadness, anger, rage, guilt and shame (Foster and Hagedorn, 2014). After disclosing the abuse, a period described as re-intensifying traumatic symptoms may occur, such as re-living the trauma in dreams (nightmares) or while awake. Children may become more restless and unable to relax and calm down. Another reaction may be that they no longer want to talk about what they survived, thus avoiding any interaction and conversation about the survived violence. During this time, the child should be given more attention, care and support, and be there for the child.

Children who have negative reactions to disclosing their experience are not only more likely to refrain from reporting the case, but also undergo negative consequences concerning their mental health, leading to traumatic disorders, anxiety, depression and low self-esteem (see Chapter 8 *Indicators and Consequences of Sexual Violence against Children*).

In addition to the confiding child, it can be expected that parents and family members have intense and negative reactions. The likelihood of negative reactions increases when the perpetrator of sexual violence is someone within and/or close to the family (Allnock et al., 2019; Elliott et al., 2022). Negative reactions from others to such disclosures are detrimental to children's well-being and may deter them from making further disclosures.

Importantly, the whole family (non-violent members) should also receive help and support in properly assisting the child; it is important not only for protecting the child and mental health but also during the process of reporting and processing the crime (Ullman, 2002). Some children may withdraw everything they have said and do not want to talk about what they survived, even when corroborating evidence on survived violence exists. This withdrawal of disclosure and report is more common among younger children, where non-abusing parents (most often the mother) are not supported or when the perpetrator is a close family member (Elliott & Briere, 1994; Malloy et al., 2007).

8) The role of teachers and expert school associates

The teachers are professionals in whom children will most often confide; however, the process of opening up can be aided or hindered by how other professional has treated the child (Allnock et al., 2019).

Many children want to confide in their teacher that they trust. However, research and practice show that children want teachers themselves to notice some of the signals they are expressing, such as self-harm, poor school results, eating disorders, isolation and withdrawal at school, getting the teacher to react and invite the child for a talk (Alaggia, 2004; Alaggia, 2010).

At the same time, teachers face numerous problems in recognizing and reporting sexual violence against children. Two-thirds of teachers in the US are unfamiliar with possible signs and symptoms of child abuse, as well as the protocols for reporting sexual abuse. These same teachers also believe they will not receive the necessary institutional support when reporting the matter (Kenny, 2004). Moreover, as many as 24% of school teaching staff have never received written or verbal instructions on reporting sexual violence, although they are obliged to report it. According to the same national study, as many as 25% of cases of sexual violence against children detected by professionals who do not work in child protection services remain unreported despite the legal obligation to do so (Sedlak et al., 2010).

A child confiding, opening up and sharing the experience can be traumatic for the child and have a short-term and long-term impact on the child's mental health. **Therefore, it is extremely important to put the child first and provide them with the necessary help and support** (Allnock et al., 2019; Popadić, 2020).

WHY CHILDREN REMAIN SILENT ABOUT SURVIVED VIOLENCE

Children often remain silent about surviving sexual abuse for several reasons: fear that no one will believe them, that something bad will happen to them, self-blame, shame, and fear of harming the family (if the perpetrator is a family member) or the perpetrator.

Perpetrators of sexual violence against children employ various manipulative tactics, including grooming to gain the child's trust and possibly that of the family to gain the best possible access to the child. This includes nurturing a special relationship with the child, paying special attention to the child, including gifts and trips, fulfilling the child's wishes and needs that the family or friends cannot fulfill, emphasizing the child as special and therefore singled out, and treating the child as if older. Over time, these tactics include turning the child against close adults and the family, isolating the child, demanding that secrets be kept, and imposing feelings of guilt and responsibility (Gillespie, 2004; Craven et al., 2006).

In professional literature, there are numerous **key reasons why children remain silent about surviving sexual violence**, supported by decades of research. In the book, *Sexual Violence Against and Among Children and Youth* (Mamula, 2020), eight of the most common reasons are listed.

1. The child is unaware it is sexual abuse

Most abusers take their time to gain the child's trust and attention, and the most often it is a person already in a position of trust, who has power and authority over the child (e.g., a family member, teacher, coach...). Abuse usually begins with touches that the child does not recognize as abuse and which are otherwise socially acceptable (e.g., patting or tickling), and over time, as the child gains more trust, the touching becomes sexualized (van Dam, 2001 according to van Dam et al., 2015). Without knowing at all what kind of touching is allowed and not allowed, unfamiliar with the *Underwear Rule* and similar important insights, younger children will not recognize that they are victims of sexual abuse. Even when feeling that something is "wrong,"

the child does not know the terms (words and concepts) used to describe it and does not comprehend sexualized context.

There are situations and forms of violence not traumatizing for children at a specific moment as they do not comprehend them, nor are they aware that what just happened is a form of violence, e.g., a perpetrator who masturbates in front of a child or exposes a child to pornographic content at an early age.

2. The child does not remember abuse

A common reaction to traumatic experiences is repressing. Many children, especially when abused at the youngest age, forget and repress traumatic experience and traumatic memories (Loftus et al., 1994; Williams, 1994). These memories can remain forgotten for a long time and reappear at any time, often due to external triggers such as a similar situation, watching TV programs that include sexual abuse, attending sexual violence prevention workshops, or a person resembling the abuser. Memories can suddenly appear when a child or young person feels safe enough or when they no longer have to repress their memories as a coping mechanism with the survived traumatic event.

3. The child thinks it is their fault for the sexual abuse

Many children feel that they caused or somehow contributed to the abuse, led by the abuser's strategy of shifting the blame and responsibility to the child. Self-blame and shame are the key reasons for silence (Alix et al., 2019; McElvaney et al., 2022). Some children believe that sexual violence is a form of punishment, that some of their actions caused the abuse, "they deserved it for some reason" (Berliner and Elliott, 2002). All of it adds to the fact that the child may never confide in someone.

4. The child's uncomfortable feelings about themselves due to the survived violence

Children may feel a range of uncomfortable feelings about themselves due to the violence they have suffered. They may feel guilt, fear, shame, and self-disgust, all of which stem from surviving sexual abuse (Allnock et al., 2019; McElvaney et al., 2022). They think there is something in them that led to the violence (see more in the chapter 8 *Indicators and Consequences of Sexual Violence*).

5. The child thinks no one will believe them or does not trust anyone enough to confide in them

One of the biggest fears that sexually abused children harbor is that no one will believe them, and that no one will not stand by them, or they simply do not trust others to confide in them. This feeling may stem from the child's earlier bad experiences when they asked for help in the family or from other adults for another problem that they found difficult. It can also stem from general perception of relationships within the family (Ahrens, 2006; Elliott et al., 2022). Accordingly, the child feels that remaining silent is the safest option. A powerful tactic by the abuser is to explain and convince the child that telling anything to anyone is just not worth it because no one would believe the child anyway, or the abuser convinces the child that the child will be accused of what happened (Jeglic, 2022).

A child can feel an atmosphere of mistrust towards other victims, both in their family and in the wider community, based on films, newspapers, and reactions of the surroundings to similar cases.

6. Fearing what will happen if they confide in someone

Perpetrators of child sexual abuse often use tactics to cause fear in children. This approach is explicit, involving threats of what they will do to the child or a person close to them, or it is implicit by telling stories that give “lessons,” destroying toys that “talk too much” and similar. The perpetrator reinforces the child’s fear by saying that if they confide in someone, they will be taken away from their family and never again see the persons they love. Perpetrators use these tactics and behaviors in order to continue the abuse undetected (Jeglic, 2022). Children remain silent about the abuse, fearing that disclosure will lead to graver consequences than repeated abuse.

7. The child does not want to hurt the person they love

In over 90% of cases, the child knows the abuser, who is often a trusted person and an authority. In addition to negative emotions, a child can also feel love, closeness, and care towards the abuser. When the abuser is a family member, the child sees that the abuser has close and warm relationships with other people who are important to the child (e.g., the mother, brothers and sisters). Some abusers intimidate the child by saying that telling someone their “secret” will cause big problems, the abuser will have to leave forever, they will never see each other again, or something terrible will happen to them (McElvaney, 2013). If the abuser is a family member, the child fears the family may disintegrate, and the perpetrator may go to prison.

8. The child sexual abuse accommodation syndrome

Summit (1983) defined child’s typical reactions to sexual abuse as the *Child Sexual Abuse Accommodation Syndrome*. He believes this is a normal reaction of a child who, without help and protection, endeavors in a personal way and within own capacities to survive the perpetrated violence. The model was developed to improve understanding and acceptance of the child’s position in the complex dynamics of sexual abuse. According to the author, accommodation consists of five stages of reactions to sexual abuse:

1. A sense of secrecy
2. A sense of helplessness
3. The child falls into entrapment and adapts to the sexual abuse (considering the secrecy and inability to confide in someone, the child’s only option is to learn to accept the situation in order to survive)
4. Delayed disclosure of the abuse,
5. Withdrawing everything said about the survived abuse when experiencing inadequate reactions from adults.

When considering the most common reasons why children remain silent about the survived violence and that only some children confide in someone immediately after survived violence, it is exceptionally important to emphasize the role and importance of adequate reactions on the side of everyone working with children. This situation requires an openness to various signals from the child, which may indicate they are surviving violence. It is important to respond on them readily, encourage the child to confide, listen to them with great attention, hear, understand and do everything possible to help the child and stop the violence immediately while also providing the child with adequate protection, help and support.



**THE GROOMING OF THE
CHILD AND MANIPULATING
THEIR FEELINGS WITH
INTENTION TO COMMIT
CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE WITHIN
THE FAMILY**

5

5. THE GROOMING OF THE CHILD AND MANIPULATING THEIR FEELINGS WITH INTENTION TO COMMIT CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE WITHIN THE FAMILY

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Take the time to get to know all your students. One in five is a child/young person who stepped into your school already having an experience of sexual abuse and the most often it took place within a family (SVEP, 2020).

Read firstly *Sexual Violence in the Family* available at <http://www.zenskasoba.hr/seksualno-nasilje-edukacijski-i-prevencijski-program/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Sexual%20Violence%20among%20and%20against%20Children%20and%20Youth.pdf> (Popadić, D. "Sexual Violence in the Family Against Children and Youth." In: Mamula (ed.) *Sexual Violence Against and Among Children and Youth*. Women's Room. 2020)

INTRODUCTION

Grooming is a process that "involves the offender building a relationship with a child, and sometimes with their wider family, gaining their trust and a position of power over the child, in preparation for abuse." (CEOP, UK, 2022). The purpose of the preparation can be sexual abuse and exploitation, radicalization or exploitation of a child to commit crimes.

Sexual grooming of a child can happen anywhere: in public, online, in the family, in different settings where the child frequents (e.g., in an institution or organization involved in sports, artistic and other activities that the child attends, in kindergarten, school, church, and the other). Child sexual abuse offenders exist in all spheres of life. Their grooming can last for a shorter or longer period, from a few days to years of manipulating the child's feelings.

Here, we focus our full attention on the grooming of the child, where the offender intends to commit sexual violence in the family, bearing in mind European and global statistical data showing that when looking at all spheres of a child's life, child sexual abuse occurs most often within the family. For the offender to sexually abuse a child, three components are necessary for him to own: the child's trust, authority over the child, and physical access to the child. The role of parent meets these prerequisites to a maximal extent. Children trust their parents the most and are mostly completely dependent on them. For predators among parents, their own children are the most accessible to them. The offender can be a wonderful person in other people's eyes and a sexual abuser at the same time. Both facts can be true. This is a complex truth and a child, or later a young person, may never be able to untangle this situation within themselves. Sexual abuse within the family usually lasts for several years.

It is not at all simple to assess how widespread the child sexual abuse is, and the same can be said about the prevalence of sexual grooming of children.

The target and victim of sexual grooming and sexual abuse can be any child regardless of age, sex, race or socio-economic status. They are mostly girls.

A child does not choose into which social group is born, dominant or marginalized. A child's belonging to any marginalized social group solely implies the greatest responsibility of the dominant social group and helpers within it to recognize, mitigate the risk and react adequately to protect the child. It is of a key importance to avoid prejudices that stigmatize a child survivor of sexual abuse.

Before a child sexual abuse offender it is especially vulnerable a child who grows up in an environment that does not help them build self-esteem and self-confidence and positively self-evaluate themselves. Such an environment can be found in a rich or low-income family, among highly educated adults or those with lower education, from any profession, in high official positions, public figures or not - the common denominator is that the family and immediate environment do not encourage the child. These children are precisely targeted by offenders and especially when the offender is also a family member, he is a part of the child's upbringing, knows the child and the child's environment well, and the child's sources of strength and limitations when the child would seek help. A child who has already experienced any form of neglect and abuse is an easy target for a new or old perpetrator.

Especially vulnerable are children in the social welfare system, children with developmental disabilities are exposed to multiple risks, as are children who explore their identity and sexuality online. The child starves for positive validation and this makes them vulnerable and may become a victim of sexual violence.

Children are a vulnerable social group that is subject to risk. Through grooming, the offender builds a relationship with the child intending to sexually abuse them and manipulates the child and the persons around them so that the child does what the offender demands.

The role of the helpers is to first learn in-depth about sexual grooming and the child sexual abuse, the warning signs and strategy of grooming the child, and at least crisis intervention. Then, they are mandated reporters of both the suspicion or the knowledge of grooming and abuse of the child at the same time to police, state attorney's office, social welfare center.

Regardless of whether you are in a private or professional position, **your power FOR the child is to establish communication with the child that they will carry on throughout life as a model for healthy relationship.**

Offender manipulates child's feelings

A child will rarely disclose a trusted adult the reality of being subjected to grooming by offender because the signs are not obvious but hidden. Mostly, the child does not know and is not aware that it is grooming because the offender invests in presenting grooming as something completely ordinary and normal. The offender presents to the child the grooming as something that happens also to other children and later the same representation builds around sexual abuse.

The child trusts the offender, often recognizes the relationship with the offender as caring, enjoys the attention received, the time the offender devotes to them, sometimes receiving gifts and the like, which is a bribe and is just one of the offender's tactics. The offender often demands that the child does not tell anyone about their relationship. Sometimes this ban is an alarm for the child that there is a bad secret. The child is afraid to jeopardize this relationship in any way. The child is afraid of the offender.

From the position of an adult, whether you are part of the child's private environment or in a professional role, paying attention is important to see whether the child is, for example, hiding information about how they spend their time. If you are unsure how the child spent their time and they do not give you a clear answer; if the child has money, clothes and other items for which they provides no clarity where the items come from (or received from a person who is a father figure, (in practice, the most common offender); you may not recognize this as a warning sign "because it goes without saying."). If the child consumes drugs or alcohol, spends too much time on the Internet or is afraid to use Internet platforms. If the child has sudden changes in behavior, seems absent, anxious or depressed (or any other manifestation that differs from the child's usual behavior). If the child uses sexual terms which you do not expect them to know and/or problems arise related to the child's sexual health as well as mental health in general.

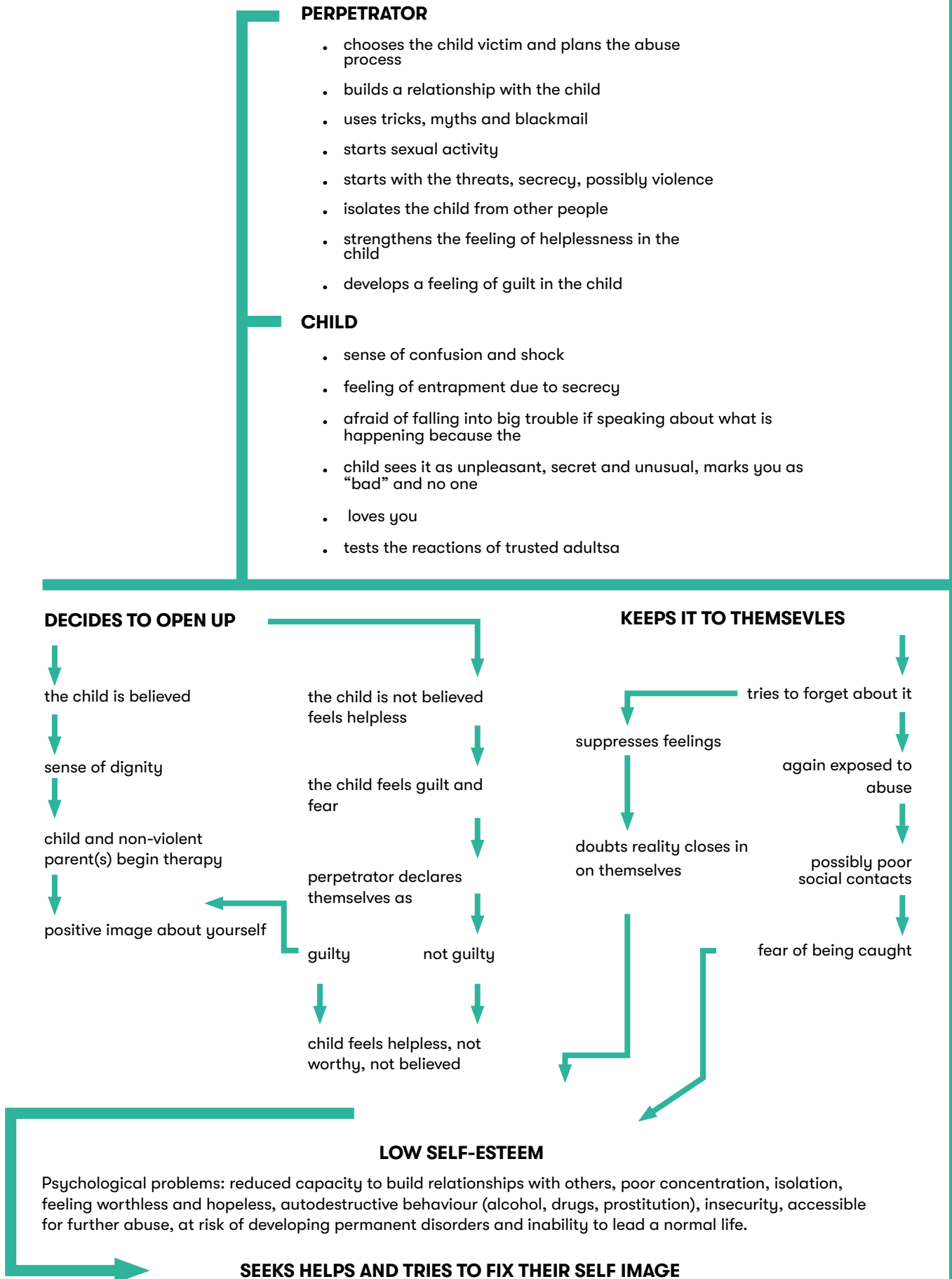
The child is confused and worried about what the offender will do if they speak out. The child does not want the offender to get into trouble and is loyal to him. The child feels that by disclosing will disappoint offender and will not know how to forgive themselves if that happens. The child blames themselves for "participating" in the relationship and feels as "a part" of the abuse. These complex feelings are fertile ground if confronted with the offender's threat that upon disclosure, the child will be slandered, defamed, and discredited, i.e., smearing of child survivor. The child is overwhelmed by shame to be able to share with someone what is happening to them, cannot even find the right words to describe the violent sexual acts to which they are subjected. These feelings are often enforced by explicit or implicit messages from the offender, such as "if you tell anyone, something bad will happen to me or another family member." For the abuse inflicted, in this way the offender shifts the responsibility to the child/young person.

On account of all this, the child feels that seeking help is not an option.

ALWAYS remember that many child survivors of sexual abuse (and of grooming as its preparation) do not show any warning signs. In both these processes, the child learns not to show their feelings through behavior or in any other way. This is the way for the child to survive sexual violence. Because of this, the environment may recognize the child's behavior as a perfect functioning, not attracting any attention and not a reason for the child's environment to harbor any worries. In reality, a child, and later as a young person, often express their immeasurable feeling of loneliness by saying, "no one really saw me."

And once you recognize the warning signs, that is an encouragement for action to protect the child adequately. Paradoxically, this moment can also bring you much sadness because noticing a warning sign often means that sexual grooming or sexual abuse has already happened. In short, it is as though upon noticing a certain warning sign, you have touched on the consequences of the ongoing crime.

Figure 2. THE PROCESS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE BY A KNOWN PERSON



OFFENDERS ARE SKILLED IN LYING AND DECEIVING THE CHILD AND THE CHILD'S ENVIRONMENT

Offenders are skilled at lying and, in the context of grooming, they lie and deceive the child. They lie about their motives, intentions and goals.

If you are not violent person, they are always a few steps ahead of you. It may be that you do not have the repertory out of which you could assume that someone's behavior is dishonest and with an intention of child sexual abuse or keeping secrecy that a child is being sexually abused. For most helpers, there was no opportunity to learn about this topic when growing up and later in life. You did not have the chance to learn the warning signs. Also, you may have incorrectly interpreted warning signs as "typical childish or teenage behavior." All this means you might feel "you can't even imagine" that someone is sexually abusing a child. Everything starts with your personal attitude about whether you believe the child is sexually abused. Personal attitudes in the interest of the child cannot be "replaced" by any education. Right attitudes are the ground beneath your feet in the field of sexual violence. Training can only supplement right attitudes and in their common denominator is trusting the child's statement about the sexual grooming and/or sexual abuse. Sometimes the child sexual abuse will be recognized by the child or adult who have a personal experience of violence and then it is an imperative for us to believe the doubt or knowledge conveyed to us.

The reasons mentioned above for not recognizing the sexual grooming of a child, as well as later sexual abuse, are the key cards played by the offender. His activities against the child are chosen way of behaving and planned action. The offender carefully plans his steps, he is often not in hurry at all, the goal is important for him and that is to control the child's life. Sexual violence is a means for the offender to establish control over the child's life. The offender takes advantage of the numerous prejudices existing in society and which concern the family, some of which are: "family and home are the safest place for a child," "sexual violence in the family is a very rare phenomenon," "children are loved most by their parents and would never be sexually abused them", "sexual violence happens "only in dysfunctional families,"" (and then it is often incorrect and unjust emphasis on marginalized social groups instead of re-learning it) "one should not reveal problems outside the home and family." Supporting these prejudices and many others completely favors the offender.

A grooming strategy includes the following tactics:

1. Establishing trust,
2. Establishing a position of power,
3. Secrets (and lies), and
4. Manipulation.

The offender's grooming strategy focuses not only on the child, but the family, and the child's other surrounding, too. Offender's grooming targets the immediate and wider family, that is, persons whose words carry weight in the family, at the moment of possible doubt or knowledge that the child is exposed to grooming and/or abuse. For example, depending on which family member is the offender, sometimes the offender needs your approval to be alone with the child.

Therefore, each of us can become the offender's "target group" - who wants, for his own interest, to convince us they are correct - presenting themselves as a positive person, building a positive relationship with you when observing from outside. The offender's **goal is to gain your trust**. Consequently, you may become exactly the person who, when the doubt or knowledge of grooming or abuse is disclosed, will be the one who says, "I know him personally, he would never do such a thing, he is wonderful..." Every time you support an attitude that helps the offender, it means he has skillfully and successfully carried out his "job" of grooming you. By not recognizing these strategies and tactics, you actually go hand in hand with the offender.

When it comes to a offender whose occupation is working with children, they will use similar techniques with work colleagues in order to build a positive image in the collective. And in this complex situation, and for the child's sake, do not become an observer. Many children have said they felt no public support for their experience of sexual violence.

The behavior of the offender who uses strategies of grooming the child for the purpose of sexual abuse includes patterns that may at first glance be interpreted as beneficial for the child but very quickly often become isolating and frightening for the child. It is a tactic of establishing power. **Once trust is established, the offender moves on to establish power** by exploiting the relationship of trust in order to isolate the child from other family members and friends. The offender's goal is to make the child dependent on himself. It is not difficult to imagine how much easier the "job" is when the offender is in the role of a parent on whom the child is most often completely dependent. The establishment of power and control over the child results in the child believing that they have no choice but to do whatever the offender asks.

Secrets serve to frighten and control the child. Sometimes they are the reason for blackmailing the child, the source of the child's shame or guilt. It is very often the case that the specific construct imposed by the offender lies in the very center of these feelings of the child and referring to that the child has "participated" and "collaborated" in the grooming/abuse. Each of these complex feelings stops the child from recognizing and disclosing sexual violence happening to them. When the offender carefully manages to keep the secret that they have abused one child, they will often move on to the next child, and so on. It does not necessarily mean that the first case of grooming/abuse of a child you know about is the first ever by that offender. If not arrested, the offender has no reason to stop with sexual abuse.

Manipulating the child's feelings involves tactics that are not easily recognizable. The offender presents themselves as an approachable person sharing the child's interests and who is liked. He will test the child by praising them, making them feel important, repeatedly telling the child that the offender loves them and in the manner of getting the child feel obligated to reciprocate the offender's feelings. The offender tests the child by persuading them to do inappropriate or violent acts, using reverse psychology, such as "I'm not sure, I think you're too young," or strategic withdrawal, such as "it's just an idea, depends fully on you whether you want to," giving the child the impression of being in control of that situation (Lorenzo-Dus et al., 2016). Manipulating a child's feelings results in the child feeling trapped for keeping a bad secret.

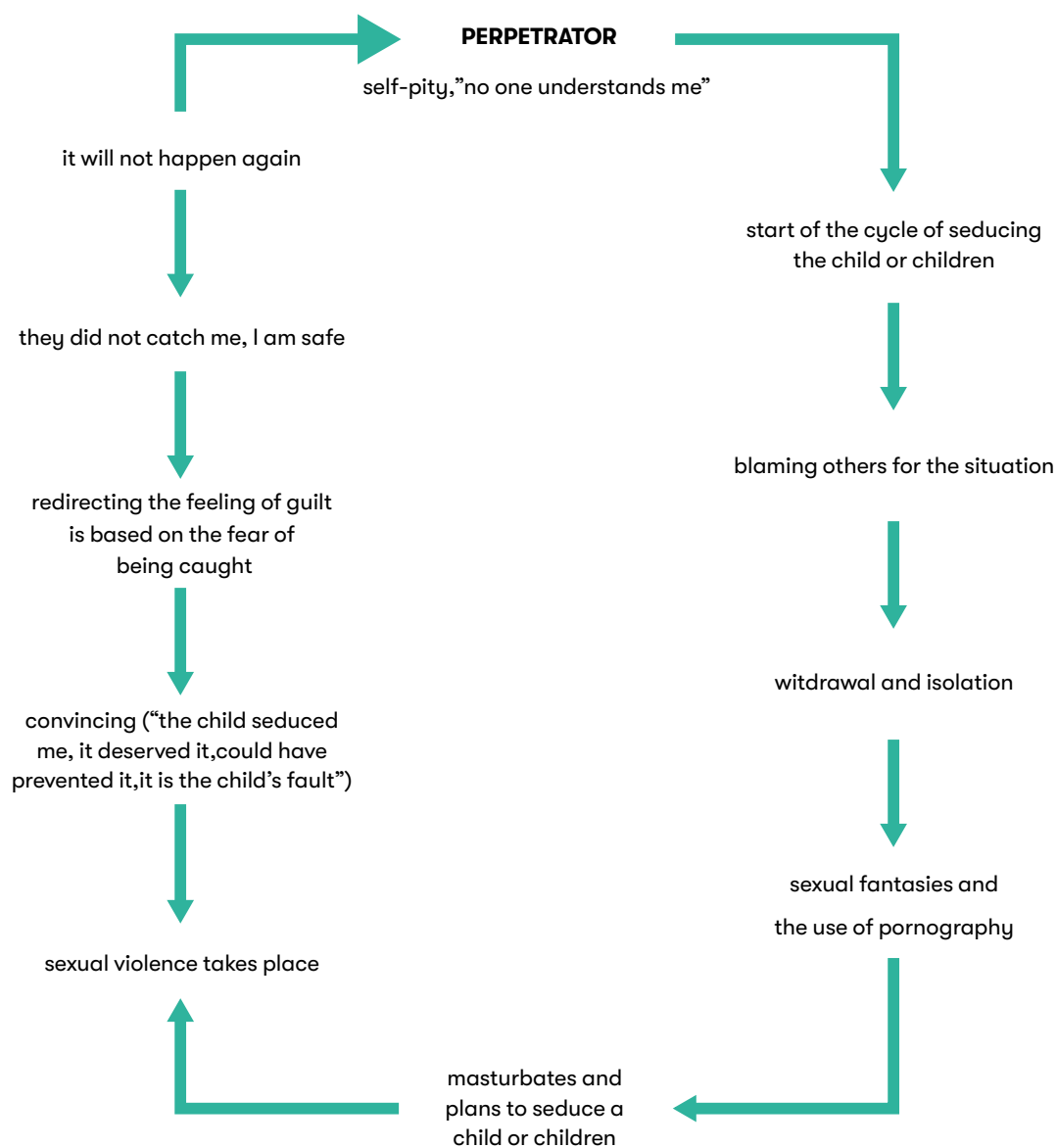
In modern times, **online grooming techniques** are engaged, where threats by offenders to publish online sexually explicit content involving the child or sharing the content with other predators are common. These tactics shift the blame onto a child/young person. Online platforms also aid the offender in getting to know the child and their interests by following the child's profile and posts and then using this information to build a relationship with the child. When the child in the virtual world is exposed to public comments that make them extra vulnerable or show that the child has low self-esteem, the offender will additionally "feed" himself on this and abuse this information to get closer to the child. A vulnerable child becomes even more vulnerable.

The offender hides their real intentions and eventually manages to win the child’s trust, after which he misuses this trust. The offender expects the child to respect and love him as a trusted person - and he teaches a child so. The child does not understand that they are a victim of sexual grooming (and later sexual abuse) because of perceiving the groomer/abuser as a trustworthy person. Later in the life of the child/young person, exactly this double bind appears to cause long-term consequences and directs recovery after surviving sexual trauma.

Within the grooming process, the offender devotes time and attention to the child, for example, taking the child on trips or other activities that mean something in the child’s life, giving them advice, and showing understanding for the child’s different life situations. Children exposed to grooming sometimes say that the offender was the first ever to understand and care about these conversational topics (NSPCC and O2, UK, 2016).

In other words, the offender pretends to be someone they are not.

Figure 3. THE CIRCLE OF SEXUAL ABUSE



Note: The schematic shows possible steps, where each individual case contains a certain combination of the steps.

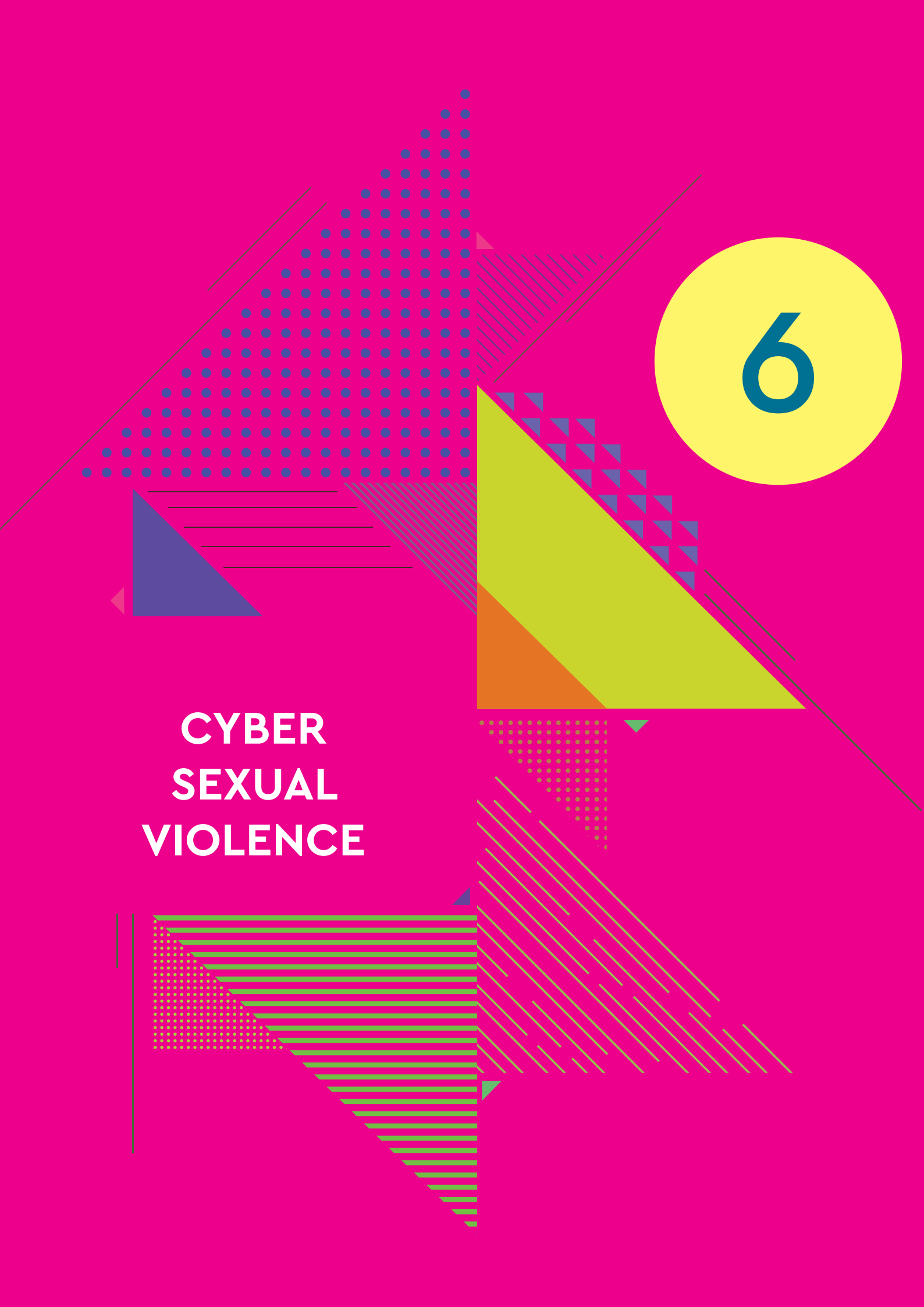
THERE IS ONLY ONE CONCLUSION – REPORT IT!

First and foremost, teach the child what sexual grooming and sexual abuse are. In that way, equip the child to recognize this experience and tell a trusted adult.

Sexual grooming of a child by an offender is preparing the child for sexual abuse, which is illegal. If you have a doubt or knowledge of abuse, even if unsure – report it. You do not have to be “sure”; it is your legal obligation to pass the information (doubt or knowledge) on to others in the system whose task it is to establish the facts. Report the case to the police. It is not your responsibility to prove whether it is sexual grooming or sexual abuse of a child; leave that to the police and the state attorney’s office, whose mandate it is. Bearing in mind that we live in a culture with very low awareness of the prevalence of child sexual abuse, and knowledge about this topic, practice shows that it is hardly possible you will have a doubt or knowledge of sexual grooming and sexual abuse of a child without any basis. Take yourself seriously. From a private and professional position, take seriously your authority as an adult who can help a child. If you are in a helping profession, take your professional authority seriously.



**CYBER
SEXUAL
VIOLENCE**



6. CYBER SEXUAL VIOLENCE

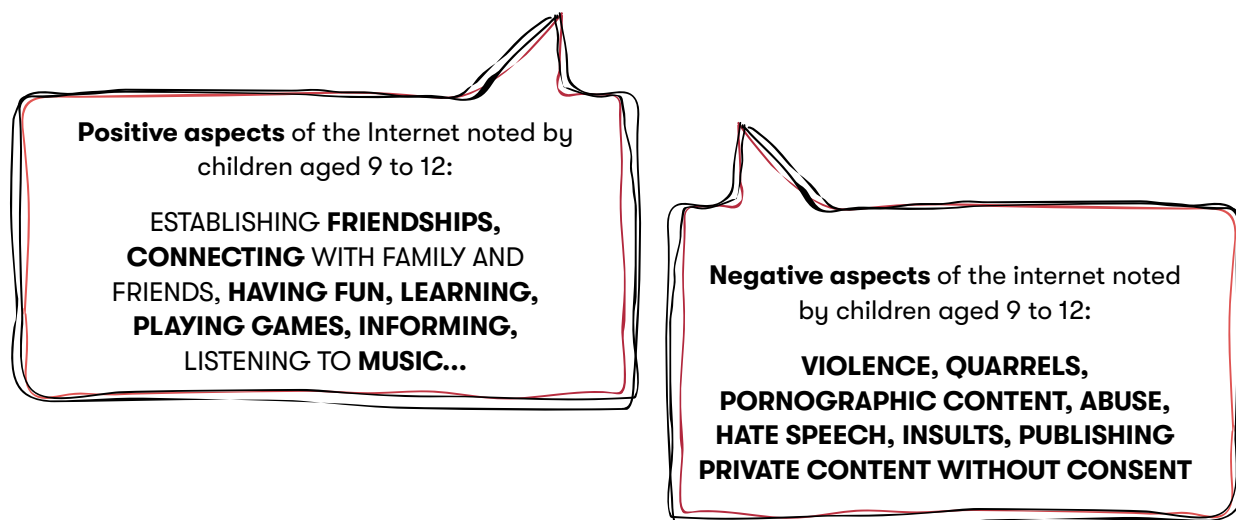
Kristina Mihaljević, M.A. social pedagogue

CHILDREN AND THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

The rapid spread and development of digital technologies have changed the lives of children. **The Internet has become an indispensable and important part of their everyday life.** Over the past ten years, the way children use digital technologies has changed, the time spent online has doubled, and the age at which children start using digital devices is decreasing (Smahel et al., 2020). The HR Kids Online survey (Ciboci et al., 2020) found that **the majority of children aged 9 to 17 have access to the Internet whenever they want or need it** and that almost all children (92.7%) own a device to access the Internet, while more than 60% of them have a profile on social media or a website.

The digital environment offers many benefits to children, including educational and creative content, and opens up the opportunity for social interactions. It also brings great risks, such as cyber violence and cyber sexual violence.

Figure 4. The positive and negative aspects of the digital environment (Childnet International, 2020):



CYBER VIOLENCE (CYBERBULLYING)

Children's participation in online activities increases with age. This participation in online activities facilitates interaction with other people, leading to committing and experiencing various forms of electronic violence.

Children encounter harmful and illegal content, behavior, contacts and risks online. The risks to which children are exposed in the digital environment fall into two groups: 1) **content-related risks** and 2) **risks related to unwanted contacts** (Ciboci, et al., 2020). Children say they are concerned about exposure to harmful content (self-harm, suicide, violence, hate speech, sexual violence, risky challenges) and the ease of accessing such content (European Commission, 2020).

Given that children in lower grades of elementary school already experience various forms of harassment and cyberbullying, educating them as early as possible for their own protection about the digital environment is important.

Cyber violence or cyberbullying is intentional and repeated harm using computers, cell phones and other electronic devices (Hinduja and Patchin, 2021). The damage can be manifold and caused to other people by sending messages and audio-visual recordings via the Internet and social media. Such behavior aims to hurt, upset or adversely affect another person or group of persons who cannot protect themselves from such actions. This form of violence can occur on websites (social media, forums, chat rooms) and using various other electronic means (messages, e-mail, comments) (Cakić, Hodak Kodžoman and Velki, 2013).

Although cyber violence or cyberbullying is similar to violence in a non-digital environment, it nonetheless has specific characteristics (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Main features of cyberbullying are (Giumetti et al., 2014):



Research conducted in the Republic of Croatia (Ciboci et al., 2020) shows that **children use the Internet daily**, communicate with strangers and **never or rarely talk to their parents about the dangers** of the Internet and what to do if experiencing violence. Research conducted by the

Women's Room in the upper grades of elementary schools (Tukara Komljenović and Mihaljević, 2018; Mihaljević, 2019) shows that **97% of children have access to the Internet** using computers and mobile phones in the home and/or school and that **one in three children accesses the Internet without parental supervision**.

A survey conducted in 2020 involving children aged 9 to 12 found **that one in five children experienced cyberbullying, committed or witnessed cyberbullying** (Hinduja and Patchin, 2021).

Children experience, commit and witness numerous forms of cyberbullying committed using different methods (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Methods of cyber violence (cyberbullying) (Willard, 2004; according to Li, 2010):



Increased Internet and social media use have led to an **increase in cyberbullying and cyber sexual violence**. Children are increasingly exposed to sexual violence via electronic devices, which takes on new forms and methods, and technology gives perpetrators easier access to victims. The U.S. National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (UNICEF, 2021) received 21.7 million reports on online content related to child sexual abuse and exploitation in 2020, an

increase of 28% compared to 2019 and an increase of 700% compared to 2013-2017. Research by EU Kids Online (2020) shows that **more than 40% of children in Croatia have seen unwanted sexual content** online. As the age of the child, exposure to sexual content increases (**up to 70% of children**). Furthermore, the number of online images displaying child sexual abuse worldwide almost doubled in the period from 2017 to 2019 and has increased further during the COVID-19 pandemic (European Commission, 2022). Digital technologies have paved a new path for sexual violence, to which children are increasingly exposed. Given the availability of content and speed and ease of information exchange, sexual abuse and exploitation of children on the Internet have become a global problem (Vejmelka and Jurinić, 2020). Protecting children from electronic sexual violence requires ensuring they have relevant information about safety in the digital environment.

CYBER SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Cyber sexual violence is any sexual violence linked to the Internet (Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, 2012).

Online child sexual abuse and exploitation are among the most severe forms of child abuse in the digital environment. It is when an individual or group exploits an imbalance of power to deceive, manipulate, and/or force a child into sexual activity via the digital environment (Greijer and Doek, 2016). Child sexual abuse, in a broad sense, includes all forms of child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse online. In these forms of online child abuse, child sexual abuse and exploitation material are produced, distributed and used. Modern trends in online child sexual exploitation include misusing materials children have produced and shared using modern technologies. When referring to sexual abuse and exploitation of children on the Internet, the term child pornography should not be used, as the word pornography implies consent that does not exist in the case of sexual exploitation of children (Vejmejkja and Jurinić, 2020).

Online sexual abuse and exploitation of children include (Craven et al., 2006):

- Unwanted sexual comments,
- Publishing and/or forwarding intimate images and recordings without the consent of the person,
- Spreading rumors relating to a person's sex life,
- Making images or videos of child sexual abuse available,
- Satisfying lust in front of children,
- Luring children to satisfy sexual needs,
- Involving children in pornographic activities,
- Introducing children to pornography.

We point out the terms and most common forms of cyber sexual violence, which is important to understand:

Sexting and abusive sexting	<p>The term should be understood when working with children, especially adolescents. Sexting refers to sending, receiving or forwarding sexually suggestive or explicit content (images, messages, video materials). Sexting occurs most often among people in a relationship and most often in adolescence. It often looks like harmless flirting, but it should be remembered that once sent, content can be forwarded by someone else and controlling what happens to that content is impossible. Research shows that 14.3% of children send and 23% receive sexually suggestive or explicit content (Hinduja and Patchin, 2022).</p> <p>Sexting is voluntary when it is consensual (consented) content sharing, as opposed to abusive sexting, meaning sharing that content with others without the person's consent.</p>
Cyber sexual harassment	<p>Writing or sending unwanted comments and images that cause fear, discomfort and humiliation. It is most often directed at girls, young women and women. Examples of this form of violence are unwanted messages and images of sexual content, jokes and comments on someone's sexuality or their physical appearance.</p>
Sextortion	<p>A form of online blackmail involving threats. The perpetrator most often threatens to publish and/or forward images of the victim's sexually explicit content if they refuse to continue to engage in sexual activity.</p>
Revenge pornography	<p>A form of electronic sexual violence that occurs after a young woman (or man) ends a relationship, and the ex-partner shares their (or joint) intimate images and videos online without their knowledge and consent. The perpetrator intends to shame and humiliate the victim. The perpetrator is often the person the victim trusts or trusted, with whom the victim has shared an intimate relationship or was married. It can also happen in other types of relationships (e.g., from a boyfriend with whom the girl (or boyfriend) corresponded but were never together) (B.a.b.e., 2022).</p>

Understanding cyber sexual violence requires familiarity with the term **cybergrooming**. Cyber grooming is the process of getting to know and bonding (gaining trust) by the sexual predator, most often an unknown person using a false identity, with a child with the aim of sexual abuse. The process involves accessing the child, gaining the child's trust, and keeping the communication secret to prevent disclosure. Often everything is done with the aim of continuing sexual abuse outside the digital environment (Craven et al., 2006; according to Škrtić, 2013).

People approach children by **contacting** them on social media, instant messaging, chat rooms, forums or online gaming platforms, impersonating and establishing a friendly and confidential relationship. In order to establish such a relationship, perpetrators:

- Manipulate (e.g., “I’m the only friend you can trust.”)
- Lie (e.g., “I’m 12 years old too, and I know you feel like no one understands you.”)
- Frequently converse and demand secrecy (e.g., “Don’t tell anyone about me because they’ll forbid us to talk, and you certainly don’t want that.”)
- Be courteous and flatter (e.g., “You’re so special and different; You’re so mature for your age.”)

After the child begins to **trust** them, they start **sending messages with sexually explicit content**, and soon after images, then **demanding two-way communication** (e.g., “Send me a picture of your breasts, no one will know, and you’ll make me happy”). If the child **refuses to send** their pictures, exchange messages containing sexual content or refuses to continue communicating, sexual blackmail and threats begin (e.g., “If you don’t send me what I asked for, I’ll tell your parents everything/I’ll post everything online/I know where you live”) (Whittle et al., 2014). Children who experience this form of violence are afraid to confide in other adults, feel they are in a hopeless situation, are afraid of revenge, and therefore continue with the unwanted communication, but also meeting up face to face, which leads to sexual violence beyond the digital environment.

The extent of online child sexual abuse and exploitation is difficult to estimate accurately, considering that “there are currently about 100,000 websites worldwide that contain content displaying child sexual abuse” (Ministry of the Interior, 2017).

Recent research for Croatia (Smahel et al., 2020) on the population of children aged 9 to 17 years has indicated the following:

- **One in three children has communicated online with a person they have not met in a non-digital environment.**
- The older the child, the more frequent online communication with strangers.
- More than 2/3 of the children have seen sexual images or video materials without intending to do so.
- One in four children between the ages of 15 and 17 have found themselves face to face with a person they met online.

According to data from the Croatian Ministry of the Interior, 25-35% of children have been exposed to online sexual content. The same data show that one in five children who use the Internet has received a proposal or request of a sexual nature, confirming that cyber sexual violence is a growing problem in Croatia (Ministry of the Interior, 2017).

The results of a survey conducted by Women’s Room (Mihaljević, 2019) on a sample of 6th, 7th and 8th grade students from 11 elementary schools show that **one in three children accesses the Internet without parental supervision** and that one in four parents has no knowledge of which websites their child visits and/or with whom their child corresponds. Furthermore, **one in**

six children has corresponded with strangers, one in ten has received intimate photos of other persons, and one in ten children has met face-to-face with an unknown person.

Perpetrators of cyber sexual violence can be persons known and unknown to children, and the perpetrators can groom a child with the intention of sexually abusing them outside the digital environment.

The **perpetrator's motivation** can be (Odeljan, 2018):

1. Sexual violence against children that does not involve physical contact (e.g., exposing children to pornographic material, photographing, filming, viewing and/or distributing materials on which children are in inappropriate positions),
2. Sexual violence against children involving physical contact (e.g., touching a child, asking the child to touch the perpetrator, penetration),
3. Obtaining content for the purpose of further exploiting the child for some form of profit.

Perpetrators may limit themselves to obtaining sexually explicit content of their own creation, sexual content recorded by the perpetrator with or without the victim's consent, and recordings of the sexual abuse of a child (EC3 – Eropol, 2015; according to Odeljan, 2018).

A 2021 survey of children aged 13 to 17 found that **14.4% of children abused someone online** (Hinduja and Patchin, 2021). In the same age group, 31% of children alleged knowing a peer who created a fake profile and sent pictures and messages with sexually explicit content, 23% witnessed their peers creating photos with sexual content showing persons of their age who did not agree to it or were unaware that they were being photographed. It is also worrying that 10% of children have experienced sexual threats and blackmail, while 31% have witnessed these situations. The same survey shows that 54% of perpetrators committed this form of violence as a joke, 52% to hurt another person, 47% to get revenge on their ex-partner, and 45% to gain the respect of their friends (Childnet International, 2019).

The conclusion based on these data is that children often participate as passive **observers** in situations involving cyberbullying or cyber sexual violence and they encourage such behaviors among their peers. Observers have significant power because their actions can encourage or discourage perpetrators of cyber sexual violence and influence children surviving it to receive the necessary help. Children should be taught all the ways they can actively stand up for victims of cyber sexual violence – they can defend them, stop sharing content, not laugh or mock them, preserve evidence and notify an adult, thus becoming support to their friends, and peers who have survived such violence. There are numerous reasons why children do not react in these situations – they think it is a hassle, they are afraid of becoming victims themselves and that something bad will happen to them. It is important to encourage students not to stop the violence alone but with the help and support of friends and notify adults (Hinduja and Patchin, 2021).

Understanding the gender dimension is crucial when discussing cyberbullying and cyber sexual violence. It is **gender-based** sexual violence and is partially committed, assisted or fully committed using Internet communication technologies, and most often experienced by young women (B.a.b.e., 2022). Although young men also experience cyber sexual violence, young women experience it more often and are more often blamed for survived violence (Childnet International, 2019).

Exposure to any form of violence, including cyber sexual violence, has numerous consequences on a child's social, psychological and physical health. The figures 7 and 8 below list **indicators** suggesting when a child may be experiencing or is committing cyberbullying and cyber sexual violence, and also the **consequences** of these forms of violence.

Figure 7 and 8. Indicators and consequences of cyber sexual violence

7

Indicators suggesting that a child is experiencing or committing cyberbullying and/or cyber sexual violence:

- Mentioning unknown persons,
- Placing greater importance on activities and persons on the Internet,
- Greater amount of time spent on the Internet compared to previous periods,
- Complaints from parents that they cannot “distance” their child from computers, mobile phones and the Internet,
- Showing nervousness when not being able to use the phone or Internet,
- Closing webpages, chats and/or hiding mobile phones in front of other persons,
- Avoiding talking about computer and Internet use,
- Avoiding using mobile phones, tablets and computers, especially when a message is received,
- Stressing when reading messages or receiving different content,
- A lot of new contacts on the mobile phone and/or social media,
- Deleting user accounts or opening multiple new accounts,
- Withdrawing into oneself,
- Frequent mood swings,
- Impaired physical health,
- Poorer academic results in school.

8

Consequences of experiencing cyberbullying and cyber sexual violence:

- Avoiding going to school and participating in school and extracurricular activities,
- Poorer academic results in school,
- Less interaction with the environment and peers – social exclusion,
- Stigmatizing and labeling,
- Psychosomatic consequences (headaches, abdominal and back pains, digestion problems),
- Physical consequences,
- Psychological consequences (anxiety, anger, sadness, loneliness, feeling of unworthiness, depression, low self-confidence, poor self- image),
- Behavioral changes (consumption of narcotics),
- Self-harm,
- Attempted suicide and actual suicide.

Every person cope with violence they have experienced in their own way, and the consequences are felt at the moment when it occurs, immediately after, but also a significant time after it has ended. The consequences and form in which the consequences appear are a normal reaction to violence. What is important to remember is that cyberbullying has consequences just like violence in any other environment!

PROTECTION FROM CYBER SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND REPORTING IT

Children are exposed to various forms of cyber sexual violence every day. Developing the skills and knowledge how to use the Internet safely is necessary, including recognizing violence, dealing with it if occurs, and reporting it.

If you are **employed in an educational institution** and suspect a child is surviving cyber sexual violence, you are obliged to follow the given Protocol on the Procedure in Cases of Sexual Violence² (see Chapter 10 *What to Do in Case of Sexual Violence*) and other laws and regulations, with the aim of protecting the child.

Online reporting of violence

*** Police**

- * Online reporting to police - red button <https://redbutton.gov.hr/online-prijava/7>

- * **Safer Internet Center** - <https://csi.hr/hotline/>

- * Most websites have safety instructions and the ability to report unwanted content. Whether the content will be removed depends on the rules of the individual website/ community.

Trust the child, do not blame them and be supportive!

A child is never to blame for surviving cyber sexual violence; the responsibility lies solely with the perpetrator!

Schools and other educational institutions should take a proactive role in preventing cyberbullying and cyber sexual violence that promotes zero tolerance to all forms of violence but also ensures children acquire the knowledge and skills in order to recognize violence and what to do in such situations.

² Protocol on the Procedure in Cases of Sexual Violence (Official Gazette 70/2018)

INSTEAD OF A CONCLUSION – THE IMPORTANCE OF PREVENTING CYBER SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND THE ROLE OF SCHOOLS AND PARENTS

The greater role of the digital environment in children's lives shows the importance of **teaching children** how to use the Internet and communication technologies safely, where such technologies also offer opportunities and benefits for education, leisure, access to information and the ability to participate in decisions that affect them (Council of Europe, 2020). Also, **many adults lack the knowledge** (and/or time) to keep up with children's activities in the digital environment. Therefore, adults should learn about the technologies and let the children teach them because they are the best experts for what they are doing and what happens to them in the digital environment. Addressing this topic and pointing out the issues is important because the digital environment is part of children's everyday life, and violence is an integral part of the environment. Unfortunately, children are often put into dangerous situations in the digital environment or indulge in them, ignoring the dangers.

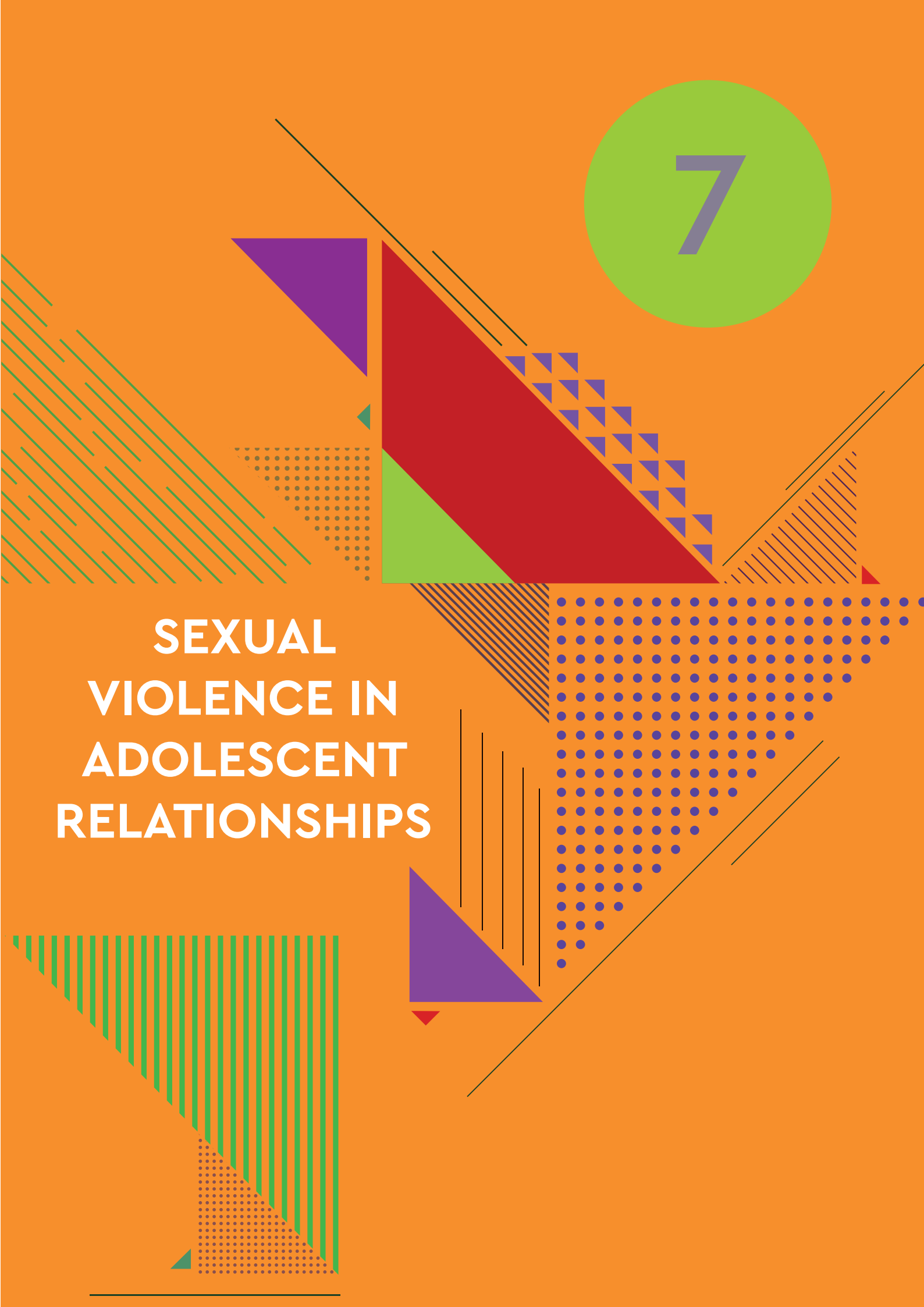
The European Commission (2022) has adopted a new **strategy for the rights of the child in the digital environment**³ to protect and empower them online, and it is up to adults to ensure that for children. Cyber sexual violence against children is a growing and global problem. Parents, educational institutions, civil society organizations and institutions have to create an environment in which children can openly discuss this issue and be actively involved in its prevention. Parents and other adults should be able to talk openly with children about all possible online dangers **without judging and blaming the child** for the situation in which they may find themselves. Given that children most often confide in their peers about experiencing cyberbullying, children should be taught how to support victims and the importance of notifying adults, who have the duty to do everything to stop the violence.

A digital environment is a place that offers a multitude of opportunities for children, and it should become a place where

³European Commission. Communication from the Commission to The European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - A Digital Decade for children and youth: the new European strategy for a better internet for kids (BIK+). 2022



**SEXUAL
VIOLENCE IN
ADOLESCENT
RELATIONSHIPS**



7. SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN ADOLESCENT RELATIONSHIPS

Nataša Bijelić, M.Sc.

During **adolescence**, young people begin thinking about relationships or entering relationships and learning how to build one. For some, this represents the beginning of forming good and healthy relationships; but this is not always the case. During this period, for the first time, young people often encounter different types of violence in a relationship. Most young people learn about relationships from their environment, adult relationships in their lives, social networks, television, movies or friends. Also, **traditional, patriarchal attitudes about partner relationships** still prevail in our society. This is supported by research, where 69% of participants believe that *a man should make the first step when meeting a woman and that it is natural for a man to have a leading role in a relationship with a woman*, with which 58% of respondents agree (Tomić-Koludrović et al., 2018).

Therefore, young people entering a relationship for the first time may have difficulty recognizing the characteristics of a quality relationship and lack the skills and knowledge to establish a quality partner relationship. Research conducted in Croatia indicates a **high prevalence of violence in relationships among young people**. For example, 70% of participants have experienced violence in a relationship (Hodžić, 2007). As for sexual violence in a relationship, 6% of young people stated that they experienced unwanted touches and kisses in a relationship, 3% experienced coercion into sexual activities, and 5% stated that, despite refusing, they were forced to send to the person with whom they are in a relationship, photographs of their naked body or intimate parts of their body or were photographed against their will (MindBridge Consulting for CESI, 2018). Data show that the most often the victims of sexual violence in relationships are young women (Leemis et al., 2022; Barter et al., 2021; Korkmaz et al., 2020; Kieselbach et al., 2015). Data for the United States show that 1 in 9 young women and 1 in 36 young men have experienced sexual violence in a relationship in the past year (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020).

Fear, shame, lack of awareness, mistrust and lack of relevant information and resources are the main reasons why adolescents try to solve the problem of violence in relationships mostly on their own and rely on their own capacities and skills to end a violent relationship eventually, most often deciding not to report the violence to adults nor seeking help and advice from outside one's peer group (Hodžić, 2007).

Adolescent relationships imply different gender dynamics and unequal power shuffle in a relationship, which are associated with gender-stereotypical roles and expectations. **Gender roles** are tied to what society considers appropriate and expects from young women/women and young men/men. **Gender stereotypes** represent generalized beliefs about typical characteristics that we associate with women and men. Examples of gender stereotypes associated with men are aggressiveness, insensitivity, independence, and strength, while women are associated with passivity, sensitivity, tenderness, and caring. In addition to gender stereotypes, we also associate **gender norms** with ideas about what women and men should be and how they should

behave. These norms are adopted at an early age, and in adolescence, they can have a negative impact on the well-being and health of young women and men. For example, a young woman may not be able to tell her partner if she wants sexual contact and, if she does, when and how it should happen due to the traditional understanding that men are the ones who should decide and women should listen, or it is the woman's "duty" to satisfy a man sexually. For this very reason, a young woman may feel that she does not have the strength or the right to say no if her partner urges her to engage in sexual activity or intercourse. On the other hand, gender norms require young men to be sexually experienced, active, and demand and initiate sexual activities, even though they may not want to or are not ready.

Traditional gender norms consider sexual activity (initiative) a male characteristic and sexual passivity a female characteristic. The stereotypical male gender role in adolescence may imply perceiving young women as sexual objects and exerting pressure and force to achieve sexual interaction with a young woman. In contrast, the stereotypical female gender role implies acceptance of male control and decision-making in sexuality. It follows **that traditional gender roles imply an unequal relationship of power and an unequal position of young men and women in relationships, possibly leading to various forms of violence in relationships**. The display of power in a relationship is noticeable when one person in a relationship behaves against the wishes of the other person and has greater control over decision-making in the relationship or over the behavior of the other person in the relationship.

Harmful behaviors in a relationship, which can later develop into various forms of violence, are often misinterpreted by young people as romantic gestures. Controlling behaviors are perceived as romantic and protective behaviors, i.e., as a sign that a person is desired and/or loved. Beliefs or **myths about romantic love** that say love is strong enough to overcome all problems, jealousy is a sign of love, or each of us has only one "soul mate" affect what is considered desirable in a relationship and can lead to acceptance of violent behavior as an expression of love and affection. For example, jealousy due to socializing and spending time with friends can be experienced as "proof" of love. Ultimately, it can result in the control and isolation of a person from friends and family. Equally, urging sexual activity can be understood as evidence of infatuation and closeness.

Relational violence refers to a repetitive pattern of behavior and an attempt by abusive partners to gain or maintain power and control in a relationship. Sexual violence in a relationship refers to behaviors that pressure and force a person into any form of unwanted sexual activity. It can also refer to behaviors that affect a person's ability to control sexual activity or the circumstances in which sexual activity takes place. **Sexual violence in a relationship** includes unwanted touching, fondling, kissing; unwanted sexual comments directed at a person, their body or sexuality; sexual insults; unwanted rough and/or violent sexual activity; refusing to use condoms or limiting access to contraception; preventing a person from using contraception; sexual activity with a person who is under the influence of alcohol, other intoxicants or is unconscious or asleep; persuasions, threatening, pressuring a person to consent to sexual activity; forcing a person to send sexually explicit messages or photos of their private parts; attempted rape and rape. Sexual violence in a relationship is usually not an isolated event but appears together with other forms of (emotional or physical) violence.

Abusers can be very adept at balancing abuse with caring behavior to maintain a relationship. At the same time, they are careful and can ensure that their violent behavior is not seen in public in order to isolate the person from the support of family and friends.

Although, in most cases, sexual violence occurs in heterosexual relationships, it should be pointed out that it **can happen in all relationships regardless of the person's gender identity and sexual orientation**. For example, violence in same-sex relationships can be difficult to recognize due to prevailing gender stereotypes that sexual violence between two women is not possible, or that men are less emotional, so emotional violence does not affect them. Also, seeking help can be difficult due to homophobic attitudes.

Unequal power relations, gender-stereotypical expectations and roles in an adolescent relationship, as well as beliefs about relationships and romantic love, influence the giving or withholding of consent or make it difficult. **Any sexual activity must be based on consent; otherwise, it is sexual violence**. Sexual consent means that a person agrees to participate in a sexual activity freely, voluntarily and without any pressure, coercion or threat. According to the Criminal Code of the Republic of Croatia, the age of sexual consent is 15 years, and cases where the age difference is not greater than 3 years are not considered a crime.

For most young people, learning about sexuality involves information from often unreliable and inaccurate sources such as the media and popular culture, where the message is that sexual activities are something that happens “spontaneously” and “without words” and that “talking about it kills romance.” Hence, it is all the more necessary to emphasize the need for communication with the partner and the importance of consent. Consent to sexual activity requires continuous communication before, during and after sexual activity, as this creates respect for personal boundaries, which in turn leads to a positive and pleasant experience.

Consent can be verbal or non-verbal (e.g., gesture, facial expression, body position, look, act, etc.). Consent must be given voluntarily, freely and without coercion or threat; it must be given consciously, which means that the person is not under the influence of alcohol or other intoxicants or is not asleep; it must be specific and flexible, which means that it is given for a specific sexual activity and can be withdrawn at any time; it must be given with certainty and enthusiasm and must be informed, which means that the person must know what all they are agreeing to is, and this may include having information about the protection methods they will use. Consent is rarely discussed and is mostly taken for granted. Therefore, it is exceptionally important that young people learn and understand the concept of consent, as this can contribute to preventing various forms of sexual violence.

Prevention of sexual violence in adolescent relationships requires informing and teaching schoolgirls and schoolboys about the topic as well as empowering them to recognize risks, seek help and report abuse and violence. Working on preventing gender-based violence requires questioning the attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, assumptions and language that contribute to the culture of violence (i.e., the normalization of violence) and helping young people develop strategies to oppose it. It is important to build skills that will enable young people to recognize sexual violence, ask for help or support someone experiencing violence, and achieve quality relationships that include mutual consent to sexual activities, respect for personal boundaries, autonomy and privacy of the partner.

A prerequisite for working on prevention is having aware, motivated, and educated teachers and expert school associates who are able to recognize different forms of gender-based violence, react in these situations, and are familiar with procedures and protocols. A very important aspect of prevention in schools is proactivity and interest, i.e., “giving a hand” to students and creating an atmosphere of open communication, trust and safety, because then young people will perceive school staff as people they can turn to for help and support in cases of violence.

The background is a vibrant blue with several abstract geometric elements. In the top left, there is a pattern of light blue dots arranged in a grid that tapers to the right. In the top right, there are vertical green lines of varying heights, with a small orange triangle at the top right corner. In the center, there is a red triangle pointing downwards, with a small orange triangle above it. Below this, there are several vertical yellow lines. In the middle left, there is a pattern of yellow dots arranged in a grid that tapers to the right. In the bottom left, there is a red circle containing the number 8. In the bottom right, there are diagonal green lines. In the center, there is a large green triangle pointing downwards, with a small orange triangle above it. In the bottom right, there is a red triangle pointing downwards. In the middle right, there is a pattern of yellow dots arranged in a grid that tapers to the right. In the bottom right, there is a pattern of diagonal green lines.

INDICATORS AND CONSEQUENCES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

8

8. INDICATORS AND CONSEQUENCES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

Maja Mamula, Ph.D., psychologist and Andrea Domitrović Šmida, M.Psych.

This chapter covers three key topics: 1) what **factors increase the risk** for children to encounter sexual violence, 2) what **indicators** suggest a child may have survived or is surviving sexual violence, and 3) what all types of **consequences** are that sexual violence leaves on a child.

FACTORS THAT MAY INCREASE THE RISK OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Risk factors should be viewed with caution. On one hand, they provide additional knowledge and information about what requires more of our attention. At the same time, these factors do not imply that children at increased risk will also survive sexual violence. No child is completely safe from becoming a victim of sexual violence. However, there are certain characteristics of the child (gender, age, personality traits), family characteristics (who lives in the household, misuse of addictive substances) and conditions in which the child lives (poverty, war conflicts) that increase the risk.

International and domestic literature present certain factors that increase the risk of sexual violence among children and youth. Here we will single out those confirmed in numerous studies as key factors requiring additional attention.

Sex of the child

The most common victims of sexual violence are girls, young women and women. Pioneering research into child sexual abuse by Finkelhor (1994) stated that girls and young women are five times more likely to be abused than boys. Data on the proportion of girls abused vary based on the research, as well as the country, but it generally indicates that girls and young women make up more than 80% of victims of sexual violence (WHO, 2003; Heenan and Murray, 2006; Black et al., 2011; Breiding et al., 2014; Assink et al., 2019). A significant link with age is observed in boys – the younger they are, the greater the risk of sexual violence. Snyder (2000) states that boys under the age of 12 make up a quarter of sexual abuse victims (26%), and the proportion decreases as they grow up, so between the ages of 12 and 17, they account for 8% of victims.

Age of the child

Regardless of age, children are at increased risk of sexual violence. Finkelhor (1994) states that children between the ages of seven and thirteen are at the greatest risk of sexual abuse. Putnam (2003) states that the average age of reported child sexual abuse is nine years.

According to international and domestic analyses and research, children and youth are most often victims of various forms of sexual violence. In nearly 70% of all reported cases of sexual violence involving physical contact, the victims are children younger than 17 years of age, with 20% of children sexually abused before the age of eight (Snyder, 2000).

In Croatia, the data are no different – children younger than 18 years of age make up 62% of victims of reported cases of sexual violence (Mamula et al., 2011).

Structure and characteristics of the family

An important risk factor for children is with whom they live. Research shows that a child living with two biological parents is at a lower risk of sexual abuse than a household with a stepfather or stepmother or with a single parent (Sedlak et al., 2010; Assink et al., 2019). According to the same authors, the risk increases enormously for children living without parents (foster children), meaning they are ten times more likely to be sexually abused. The risk is greatest for children living with a single parent who has a partner, increasing the risk by 20 times.

Sexual abuse in childhood, in most cases, is not the only form of violence but is most commonly linked with other forms of abuse or neglect. Children living in families where there is a low level of interconnectedness and support, low parental education, parental unemployment and poverty, where parents are absent or addicted, and families where violence is present are at significantly higher risk of sexual violence (Perez et al., 2013; Assink et al., 2019).

Previous experience of sexual and other forms of violence

The professional literature systematically highlights the link between sexual violence against children and other forms of abuse (multi-type maltreatment, polyvictimization) (Finkelhor et al., 2007; Price-Robertson et al., 2013). Children exposed to violence most often suffer **multiple forms of violence simultaneously**, where one form of violence contains other forms. For example, sexual violence against children can simultaneously include emotional violence (e.g., devaluation, shifting blame to the child), psychological violence (e.g., manipulation, blackmail, threats) and physical violence (e.g., hitting).

Furthermore, the data suggest that multiple victimization experiences accumulate in individuals and individual environments (Price-Robertson et al., 2013). Finkelhor et al. (2007) state that children who have been abused in a domestic environment may be more exposed to bullying and that children who have been sexually abused have an increased risk of repeated sexual victimization. Children who witness or are victims of other forms of violence are significantly more likely to be sexually abused (Turner et al., 2010).

Adults who experienced sexual violence in childhood as well as in adulthood have a significantly higher risk of repeated victimization from sexual violence (Arata, 2002; Classen et al., 2005; - Fargo, 2009).

Based on a meta-analysis of 72 studies, Assink et al. (2019) indicate that the most significant risk factor of sexual violence is previous sexual victimization of the child and/or other family members, including sexual abuse of sisters and brothers, but also all other forms of victimization of the child and family members.

Characteristics of the child

Certain characteristics of a child can be risk factors for sexual violence. Esposito and Field (2016) state that children with lower self-esteem and self-confidence, and quieter and calmer but also curious and open children, may be at higher risk of sexual abuse. Davies and Jones (2013) indicate that impulsive children, those with emotional difficulties and who are emotionally demanding, as well as children with learning difficulties, are at higher risk of sexual abuse.

The increased risk may also be affected by the child's sexual orientation and/or gender expression, which is not accepted in the community and is labeled as negative due to widespread homophobic and transphobic prejudices (Coulter and Rankin, 2017).

Children with developmental disabilities – children with physical disabilities, intellectual disabilities and mental health disorders – are particularly at risk (Davies and Jones, 2013; Assink et al., 2019). According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2012), children with developmental disabilities have a threefold risk of victimization due to their dependency on adults, learned obedience and difficulty communicating about lived experiences, as well as distrusting their words, which makes potential disclosure particularly demanding.

Other risk factors

In addition, a number of other factors greatly increasing the risk of sexual victimization should be taken into account, such as children **belonging to marginalized groups**, those exposed to discrimination by the dominant group by birth (e.g., children of different race and ethnicity groups).

A family's and community's **poor socio-economic situation** in which the child lives also increases the risk. Saddle and others (2010) state that children in households from a low socio-economic status are three times more likely to be identified as victims of abuse, while children living in rural areas are almost twice as likely to be identified as victims of child sexual abuse.

Children living in **areas of war conflict** and/or post-war areas are at a significantly higher risk of sexual abuse, which is attributed to the breakdown of common peacetime protective structures and also the use of sexual violence as war acts (Ward and Marsh, 2006; Sedlak et al., 2010). Among the children at risk are particularly children who are separated from their families, unaccompanied children who lack protection, children in detention and children with disabilities. Child soldiers also fall into this category.

Another extremely important risk factor is **gender inequality** in society, which is associated with all forms of violence against women (Yodanis, 2004). Adopting and fitting into stereotypical gender roles of the “real” man or “real” woman is associated with greater acceptance of justifiable attitudes toward sexual violence and perpetrators and a higher risk of sexual violence (Chapleau and Oswald, 2014).

INDICATORS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Indicators are **warning signs** that a child has been or is still exposed to sexual violence. Very often, what we see as an indicator is also a consequence that has already occurred. There is a whole range of overlapping between indicators and consequences of sexual violence.

Indicators can be visible on the body and physical changes. As a rule, they are less frequently present because the perpetrator (especially sexual violence in the family) carefully ensures that no physical evidence is left behind him. Most visible and noticeable indicators relate to the child's psychological status and functioning, as well as changes in behavior.

However, the first and most important prerequisite in recognizing sexual violence is the belief that children are exposed to sexual violence and that it can happen to any child. Unfortunately, this is precisely the critical point because most people want to believe this is impossible and does not happen to persons close to them or students for whom they care and are responsible. That is why they ignore the problem, reject the possibility, marginalize, minimize or completely deny the existence of the problem (Mamula, 2007; 2020c). Besides acquired attitudes and prejudices about sexual violence, another reason for the behavior is the fear of what to do next, how to protect the child, whom to notify. It is exceptionally important to properly train all persons in the educational system to recognize sexual violence, provide basic assistance to students and report the perpetrated violence.

As already stated in Chapter 4, *Disclosing Sexual Violence*, children who have survived or are surviving sexual violence, in most cases, do not confide in anyone or may perhaps confide about survived violence to a friend. Expectations by adults that children will immediately confide in an adult after surviving violence are unrealistic and occur extremely rarely, as it completely ignores the child's position and helplessness in relation to the perpetrator (Mamula, 2020b). The adult needs to be trusted for the child to disclose the violence survived. These circumstances are key to increasing the likelihood of a child experiencing a problem confiding in you. Also, reactions can trigger certain changes in children (e.g., withdrawal, exclusion from everything around them, poorer academic results), raising suspicions about the child facing perhaps an extremely difficult situation or violence, and on account of which, the child should receive help with no delay.

Four main groups of indicators can divert attention and indicate possible sexual violence (Mamula, 2020c). A child or young person can **initiate a story on their own** and confide in someone. Confiding can be completely unexpected, triggered by an external event (e.g., a sexual violence prevention workshop or a conversation about a book or film including the elements of sexual violence). These experiences in practice are the rarest. If a child intends to confide in someone, they will most likely not do it all at once, providing a complete story – in most cases, disclosure is a process. What is more likely is that the child “offers” a statement, does something to provoke your reaction and draws attention to themselves. Sometimes **physical indicators** are noticeable, especially immediately after surviving violence. **Psychological and behavioral indicators** indicate other forms of survived violence and traumatic experiences. In any case, they are listed here to help identify a suspicion exactly of sexual violence. Paying attention to the child and trying to determine the causes of these changes is important while not excluding the possibility of sexual violence.

In doing so, it is crucial to bear in mind that some children do not show any of the mentioned warning signs and manage to hide the sexual abuse they have survived. One of the basic things a child learns during sexual abuse is not to show their feelings so that no one sees their feelings and that no one finds out what is happening to them because the offender has intentionally “trained” them to keep a secret (Popadić, 1995; Popadić, 2020).

Physical indicators

As noted, in most cases, physical indicators are not the first sign of suspicion because they are not visible or do not exist.

They can be immediately visible after surviving violence (e.g., torn clothes, blood) and, as such, immediately raise suspicion and provoke reactions.

Physical indicators appearing after some delay (e.g., sexually transmitted diseases) mostly remain unrecognized. One of these that rarely cause suspicion of sexual violence is juvenile pregnancy.

Figures 9 and 10. Examples of immediate and postponed physical indicators of sexual violence (Mamula, 2020c)

IMMEDIATE INDICATORS

- Blood on clothes
- Torn or bloody clothes
- Bruises, wounds and injuries on the body (especially in the genital area)
- Problems with walking
- Inability to sit still (pain in the lower abdomen and/or genitals)

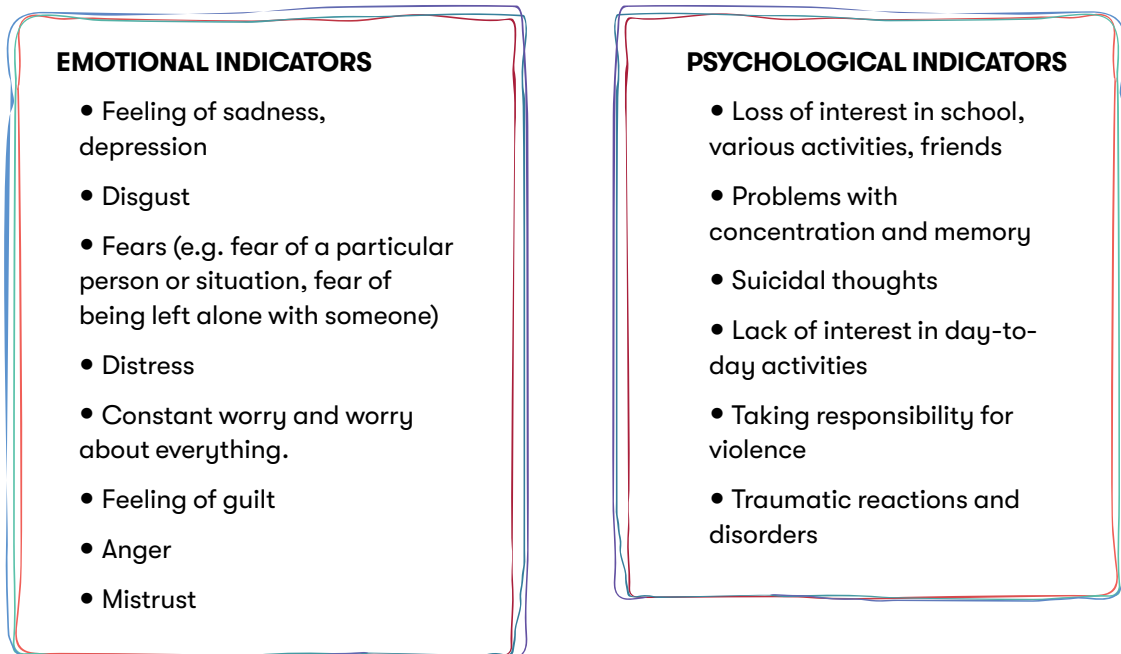
INDICATORS APPEARING OVER TIME

- Frequent urinary tract infections/pain when urinating (e.g., often asking to go to the toilet)
- Pain, itching and burning of the genitals, discharge, genital bleeding
- Sexually transmitted diseases, genital infections, infections of the anal area
- Blood on underwear and clothes
- Pregnancy/miscarriage
- Numerous injuries and scars on the body (different time of infliction)
- Abdominal pain and gastrointestinal problems
- Signs of self-harm to the body
- Chronic complaints that have no justifiable physical reasons (e.g., fatigue, insomnia, headaches, other somatic disorders)

Psychological and emotional indicators

They are maybe the largest group of indicators that may indicate a child has been exposed to some form of violence and/or they have survived it.

Figures 11 and 12. Examples of emotional and psychological indicators of having survived sexual violence (Mamula, 2020c)



Behavioral indicators

This group of indicators is most easily noticeable in the school environment, especially when they are directly related to school and school performance (Mamula, 2020c):

- Confiding about surviving violence to a friend or close person
- Changes to usual patterns of behavior
- Changes in physical appearance and hygiene habits
- Poor grades, suddenly dropping a year
- Absence from (all) school activities
- Refusing to go to school or continue schooling
- Child's refusal to speak (choosing silence)
- Regression
- Substance abuse

- Sleep disorders (sleeping during classes, insomnia, nightmares)
- Chronic eating disorders (anorexia, bulimia)
- Incontinence or bedwetting
- Self-harm
- Panic attacks
- Behaviors with a goal to draw attention to oneself
- Difficulty maintaining control and outbursts to a seemingly insignificant event
- Poor social skills
- Withdrawing, isolation
- Attempted suicide
- Age-inappropriate sexual behavior
- Knowledge and vocabulary about sexuality, sexual relations, body parts inappropriate for the child's age, expressed through drawings or verbally
- Rebelliousness, running away from home, behavioral disorders

CONSEQUENCES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Having survived sexual violence leaves numerous consequences on one's behavior, physical and mental health, including psychological and psychiatric disorders and suicide (Elliott et al., 2022).

The consequences felt by children who have survived sexual violence can be listed using different models, and one of the most famous is the **classic traumagenic dynamics model of sexual abuse** defined by Finkelhor and Browne (1985):

- 1. TRAUMATIC SEXUALIZATION** – a process in which a child's sexual development is threatened due to surviving sexual abuse, which during the child growing up and in adulthood manifests itself as various sexual difficulties, a negative experience of sexual identity and similar.
- 2. STIGMATIZATION** –through the experience of sexual violence and disclosure, shame and guilt become integrated into the child's self-image, which consequently influences a negative self-image and self-worth in the child; the consequences are manifested in a negative self-image and self-worth (Batool and Abdahi, 2017).
- 3. FEELING OF BETRAYAL** – in relation to the perpetrator, to persons who could have noticed but failed to react and in relation to those who reacted negatively on disclosure of the sexual violence.
- 4. HELPLESSNESS** – connected with a feeling of betrayal because the abuse destroyed the child's sense of self-efficacy, their desires and needs.

The basic categories of consequences of sexual violence are **physical, psychological, social and consequences visible in behavioral change**. Each of these categories of consequences differs in **duration**. Hence, we talk about **immediate** (short-term) and **chronic** (long-term) consequences (Mamula, 2020).

PHYSICAL CONSEQUENCES

Physical consequences may occur already immediately after surviving sexual violence. The most common are injuries to the genital area, various (defensive) injuries to the body, suffusion, physical pain and sensitivity of body parts. With the passing of time, physical consequences can further develop into psychosomatic complaints and chronic diseases, which are more difficult to directly link to having survived violence.

The physical consequences of sexual violence are manifested in the following (WHO, 2003; Maniglio, 2009; Perez-Fuentes et al., 2013):

- Injuries (suffusion, scratches, fractures, disability)
- Injuries to the genital organs
- Impaired reproductive health
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Unwanted pregnancy
- Psychosomatic complaints – such as cardiovascular diseases, skin diseases, chronic conditions (e.g., chronic pelvic pain syndrome)

PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

The psychological consequences are numerous and, in **intensity and duration**, more prevalent than other consequences (Amado, 2015; Hillberg et al., 2011; Zoldbrod, 2015). They can occur immediately after surviving traumatic experience of sexual violence but may also be delayed:

- 1. Immediate psychological consequences:** intense fear, feeling threatened, state of shock, denial, helplessness, confusion, shame, guilt, and sadness.
- 2. Chronic psychological consequences:** acute stress reaction, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety-depressive states, suicidal thoughts, distrust of others, impaired self-image and low self-esteem, impaired sexual health, difficulties with family, friends and/or partner relationships.

The development and level of psychological consequences are affected by numerous aspects, such as the prior degree of importance of the perpetrator in the child's life, the duration of the violence, the number and type of violent events, (non)disclosure of violence, the degree of support from close adults.

Betrayal trauma theory describes the devastation, i.e., the intensity of psychological consequences, based on the degree of perpetrator's importance and role in the victim's life (Freyd, 1996). This theory says that, in cases where the perpetrator played an important role in the life of the child, such as a family member in whom the child trusted, surviving sexual violence has more devastating consequences on mental health, a greater risk for repeated victimization of the victim, as well as consequences on the child's physical health (Bulik et al., 2001; Edwards et al., 2012). A child who survives sexual violence within their own family is characterized by a sense of guilt and being torn apart over disclosing what they have survived (Malloy et al., 2007). Sexual abuse in childhood is a betrayal of trust during the child's critical developmental stages, often in primary relationships, leading to difficulties with controlling emotions, developing attachment, and sense of self-worth (Courtois and Ford, 2009; according to Coyle et al., 2014).

When talking about longer-lasting psychological consequences, the results of the conducted meta-analysis (Amado, 2015) show a 70% greater likelihood of developing certain internalized psychological difficulties, ranging from chronic conditions to developing clinical condition that corresponds to diagnostic criteria for depression or specific phobia. While psychological difficulties affect both women and men who have survived sexual violence in their childhood, women are at higher risk of developing anxiety disorder and depression. Also, rape survivors have a significantly higher risk of developing a diagnosis of depression or anxiety disorder (Amado, 2015). The feeling of helplessness and betrayal in children who have survived sexual violence leads to depression and suicidality. Research shows that 32% of sexually abused children have attempted suicide in adolescence, and 43% have considered suicide after surviving sexual violence (Plunkett et al., 2001).

A comparison of conducted meta-analyses (Hillberg et al., 2011) shows that having survived sexual violence in childhood is a risk factor for developing psychopathological disorders. In addition, the child exposed to sexual violence creates negative associations related to touch and physical contact and can interpret their own physical sensations as dangerous or threatening (Zoldbrod, 2015).

A deeper understanding of the psychological consequences requires obtaining an overview of the phases that occur over time after having survived acute sexual violence to the passing of a longer period of time.

Sexual violence is a traumatic experience

A traumatic experience is an event that transcends the boundaries of ordinary human experience and is extremely difficult, unpleasant and overwhelms all the existing capacities of a person to cope with the experience (Mamula, 2007). Events we call traumatic pose a danger to one's own life or another person's life, and exposure to and witnessing violence is also a life-threatening experience (DSM V, 2014).

Reactions to a traumatic event are numerous and can include shock, horror, numbness, helplessness, sadness, pain, and the feeling that what happened is not true. The victim may not remember the traumatic event entirely or only in some detail. Reactions occur on the emotional, cognitive, physical and behavioral planes, where the severity of the reaction depends on several factors such as personal factors (e.g., age, previous life experiences), factors related to the trauma (e.g., who is the perpetrator, duration of the traumatic experience, degree of fearing for one's life, amount of injuries), and environmental reactions (e.g., support level, level of accusations, disbelief and rejection) (Mamula, 2005; Mamula 2020c).

It should be emphasized that there is no right or wrong way to react to a traumatic experience. Each person reacts to a traumatic experience in their own way, and no matter how they feel, they are entitled to it – for them it is the only right and normal (Mamula, 2020c).

Sexual violence trauma-related shame

In modern literature, an increasing number of studies deal with feelings of shame felt by persons who have survived sexual violence in childhood, as a specific consequence of survived violence and a factor significantly contributing to the onset of psychological problems and reducing the likelihood of disclosing survived violence, and which is a demanding feeling to process in psychotherapeutic work (McElvaney et al., 2021).

Research (DeCou et al., 2019; Wetterlöv et al., 2020) shows a significant correlation between having survived sexual violence and feelings of shame, and that more than 75% of female university students who survived sexual violence said they felt shame due to the violence they had survived.

The feeling of shame associated with childhood sexual abuse leads to suicidal thoughts, and misuse of addictive substances, and is a risk factor for re-victimization. Among survivors of sexual violence, shame is associated with feelings of powerlessness, insufficiency, self-blame, disclosure, humiliation, as well as the belief that they are somehow guilty of surviving the violence and/or they will be stigmatized and labelled for having survived sexual abuse (Bhuptani and Messman, 2021).

Research conducted by Lev-Wiesel et al. (2016) shows that 68% of young people cited shame as one of the main three factors that led to their decision to disclose sexual violence (the other two factors were fear and fear of the perpetrator). Nondisclosure of sexual violence related to shame significantly influences development of PTSD symptoms (Negrao et al., 2005).

The basic reactions to having experienced trauma are acute stress disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder (DSM V, 2014), including certain overlapping symptoms, where the basic difference is the period of duration.

Acute stress disorder – is considered a normal reaction to a traumatic event. It occurs during the traumatic event or immediately after, and the purpose of the reactions is to mitigate the impact of the traumatic event. It usually lasts from a few days to several weeks, and is characterized by:

- Imposition (disturbing and intrusive memories of a traumatic event, appearing without control, disturbing dreams, flashbacks – a feeling that the person is reliving the trauma, intense psychological suffering)
- Decreased and negative mood (inability to experience positive/pleasant emotions)
- Dissociative symptoms (altered sense of reality and/or self, inability to recall the basic elements of trauma)
- Avoidance (a person tries to avoid anything that reminds them of the trauma – memories, thoughts, feelings, as well as any external reminders, including talking about the traumatic experience(s))
- Hypervigilance symptoms (sleep difficulties, irritable behavior, overreactions to sudden stimuli, problems of concentration).

Post-traumatic stress disorder – It is related to remembering the traumatic event and its immediate consequences, and is characterized by reactions that last a longer period of time since the person survived the traumatic event or it may be delayed. It is manifested in the following symptoms:

- Imposition, dissociative reactions, intense and prolonged psychological suffering, physiological reactions to internal or external stimuli related to the traumatic experience
- Avoiding everything (e.g., place, smells) reminiscent of a traumatic experience
- Negative changes in cognition and mood (excessively negative beliefs or expectations of oneself and others, distorted understanding about the causes and consequences of the traumatic event, feelings of emotional alienation, feelings of separation from others)
- Prominent changes in vigilance and reactivity (irritability, tantrums, reckless or self-destructive behavior, overreactions to sudden stimuli, difficulty concentrating, sleep problems).

Complex post-traumatic stress disorder

The latest version of the International Classification of Diseases ICD 11 (WHO, 2018) includes the diagnosis of complex post-traumatic stress disorder (CPTSD). In addition to the PTSD symptoms, complex PTSD contains three additional groups of symptoms:

- Difficulty regulating emotions
- Negative self-image
- Difficulties in relationships (family, friends, partners)

Diagnosing PTSD or CPTSD requires focusing on the symptoms present, where the type of traumatic experience may be a risk factor for each of these disorders.

Based on their results, Cloitre et al. (2019) state that the development of complex post-traumatic stress disorder is influenced by the number of traumatic events experienced, i.e., multiple experiences of trauma, the victim's own psychological resilience and the surrounding support system a person had after surviving the trauma. Also, complex PTSD is associated with more intense consequences for the person and occurs as a result of prolonged traumatic experience and is attributed to a significantly impaired psychological well-being, as well as the presence of two or more health problems (comorbidity). When referring to complex PTSD, cumulative traumatic experiences in childhood, especially having survived sexual violence by parents and caregivers, lead to the more frequent onset of symptoms that meet the criteria for complex PTSD compared to PTSD (Cloitre et al., 2019).

Both of these disorders are characterized by causing significant suffering or impairment in social, occupational or other areas important for the functioning of a person (Palic et al., 2016).

From the many years of experience the Women’s Room has acquired, specifically at its Center for Victims of Sexual Violence, as well as literature, it is clear that persons who have survived sexual violence are most often exposed to suspicion, disbelief, blame, misunderstanding and consequently lack of support and rejection by persons close to them and their community, including professionals from relevant institutions. This is one of the key reasons why the prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder is very high among children, young people and adults who have survived sexual violence (Coid et al., 2003; Yuan et al., 2006). In most other existential traumatic situations (e.g., death of a close one, car accident), the immediate environment, the so-called social network, is activated and seeks in all ways (directly or indirectly) to provide assistance and support to the traumatized person. It could be said the social network “coagulates” and persons connect in these situations. When a person has survived sexual violence, the opposite happens most often – their surrounding doubts the person has survived sexual violence and places blame on the person and due to the prejudices people have about sexual violence they withdraw (Mamula, 2020c).

NOTICEABLE BEHAVIORAL CONSEQUENCES

Psychological consequences are also manifested in changes in the behavior of the child and young person. Changes in the usual behavior of a child are often attributed by the environment to developmental changes in adolescence while not attaching sufficient importance to the changes in that the child may have survived sexual violence. Numerous consequences of sexual violence are also noticeable in behavior, and some of them are characteristic and need special attention (WHO, 2003; Maniglio, 2009; Yuan et al., 2006, Al Odhayani et al., 2013; Aydin et al., 2016):

- Problems with schooling (falling grades, falling school performance, running away from classes, dropping out of further education)
- Auto-destructive behaviors (misuse of addictive substances, self-harm such as cutting, burning, risky behaviors, including attempted suicide and suicide)
- Problems in coping with everyday routines
- Sleep disorders
- Eating disorders
- Aggressive behavior
- Inadequate knowledge or detailed knowledge of the sexual activity and sexual intercourse expressed through drawings or verbally, and inconsistent with the child’s age
- Uncharacteristic behavior implying some form of sexual behavior, inconsistent with the child’s age
- Consequences on sexual health

SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES

The consequences of sexual violence are evident in that the child is differently perceived by their environment. Because of numerous prejudices in today's society, where the responsibility for sexual violence is attributed to the victim, the severity and significance of surviving sexual violence are lessened, and the victim is blamed. Also, the child's testimony disclosing the sexual violence is not trusted or is stigmatized by close persons and the environment. Some victims exhibit behaviors such as **rejection** and **isolation** from society, and after getting blamed by them for having survived sexual violence, the message to the child is that what they have survived is something that should not be talked about but forgotten. These environmental behaviors deepen the **stigmatization** of the child, and they often remain **abandoned, rejected and lonely**, contributing to an impaired self-image (Plunkett et al., 2001; Ullman and Brecklin, 2002; Batool and Abdahi, 2017).

A child who is found to have survived sexual violence is often attributed with traits only on the basis of the experience they have gone through and thus **labeled** by society.

Some children suffer these consequences as a result of "keeping secrets" and not disclosing their experience of sexual violence, whereupon the child remains alone and not understood. However, these social consequences are also present in cases where the child has confided about surviving sexual violence, but persist due to a lack of understanding from the environment about the seriousness and severity of the experience of sexual violence. Negative reactions of the environment after disclosing the survived experience only confirm the child's fear which stems from emotional blackmail messages the child received from the perpetrator.

As already mentioned, children who have survived sexual violence experience different consequences. Regardless of the development and intensity of the described consequences of having survived sexual violence, practice convincingly shows that **recovery is possible**. Along with professional help in working through traumatic experiences, for the child is the support of close people from the community immensely important, which acts as a protective factor in recovery and has the purpose to empower the victim while mitigating the consequences. It is crucial that all adults are willing to recognize the warning signs, trust the child and provide the adequate support and protection.

9. LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR PROTECTING CHILDREN FROM SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Anamaria Droždan-Kranjčec, LL.M.

Current criminal legislation, including Croatia's legislation, invests significant efforts in harmonizing national criminal systems with international and European legal instruments to protect children from sexual violence. Today, at the international level, there are documents incorporating provisions for protecting children from sexual violence and protecting children from committed such acts in the digital environment.

International legal framework

A fundamental human right of victims of serious crimes (e.g., rape) is the right to an effective investigation. This right is guaranteed by the **European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms**.⁴ If a person has been deprived or restricted of the rights guaranteed in the Convention (Articles 2, 3, 5 and 8), the state must conduct an effective investigation, i.e., effective criminal proceedings. The European Court of Human Rights has set standards regarding this effectiveness, i.e., defined what is necessary for an effective criminal investigation or criminal proceedings: adequacy and comprehensiveness of the investigation, independence and impartiality of the investigator, urgency and transparency of the investigation, involvement of the victim and the obligation to undertake criminal prosecution when indicated by the investigation results (Đurđević, 2014).

The provisions of Article 34 of the **Convention on the Rights of the Child**,⁵ dated 1989 stipulate the obligation of states as parties to protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse. For this purpose, the states as parties are obliged to implement all national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent a) the inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity, b) the exploitative use of children in prostitution or any other unlawful sexual practices, and c) the exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials. It stipulates that the States as parties are obliged to ensure comprehensive measures (legislative, administrative, social and educational) to protect children from any form of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or abandonment, abuse or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while the child is being looked after by the parent(s), legal guardian(s) or some other responsible person entrusted with the care of the child.

The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography⁶ was adopted in 2000 to fulfill and implement the provisions of the Convention. In the preface of the Optional Protocol, there is concern over the increasing availability of child pornography on the Internet and other developing technologies. It also states that many particularly vulnerable groups, including girls, are at greater risk of sexual exploitation and that girls are disproportionately represented among sexually exploited persons.

⁴ *Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms* (Official Gazette, 18/97, 6/99, 14/02, 13/03, 9/05, 1/06, 2/10, 13/17)

⁵ *Conventions on the Rights of the Child*. Accessed on: https://gov.hr/UserDocImages/Moja%20uprava/Konvencija_o_pravima_djeteta_UN.pdf

⁶ *Act on the Ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography* (Official Gazette 05/2002)

One of the key legal documents aimed at protecting children from sexual abuse and sexual exploitation, including the perpetration of these acts through information and communication technologies, is the **Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children Against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse**,⁷ also known as the Lanzarote Convention. The Republic of Croatia is one of the forty-six-member states of the Council of Europe that has signed and ratified the Convention (Council of Europe, 2023). The main objectives of the Lanzarote Convention are to prevent and combat sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, to protect the rights of child victims of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, and to promote national and international cooperation in combating sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children. The Lanzarote Convention is a comprehensive international document aimed at the prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation of children, which includes and defines all sexual crimes against children, the prosecution of perpetrators and the protection of children who have survived any form of sexual violence. Articles 18 to 23 of the Convention list punishable forms of sexual violence against children:

- * Sexual abuse,
- * Offenses concerning child prostitution,
- * Offenses concerning child pornography,
- * Offenses concerning the participation of a child in pornographic performances,
- * Corruption of children,
- * Solicitation of children for sexual purposes.

The Lanzarote Convention is the first international legal instrument demanding the criminalization of child recruitment for sexual purposes (*grooming*). Given the increase in this crime, the perpetration of which is facilitated by information and communication technologies, the Lanzarote Convention serves as a key tool by which states commit to protect children from this form of sexual violence and prosecute the perpetrators of this crime. The Convention places great emphasis on prevention, that is, the obligation of states to ensure that children during primary and secondary education receive information about the risks of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, as well as ways to protect themselves, adapted to their developmental abilities. Furthermore, the state must ensure measures for training and raising awareness of the protection and rights of children among persons who are in regular contact with children in the sectors of education, health, social protection, justice and the police, as well as in areas related to sports, culture and leisure activities. An important provision of the Lanzarote Convention stipulates that states are obliged to adopt the necessary legislative or other measures in line with their national legislation to ensure that the conditions for access to professions, in which work practice involves regular contact with children, guarantees that candidates for these professions have not been previously convicted for acts of sexual exploitation or abuse of children.

According to the law of the European Union, **Directive 2011/93/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of Europe of 13 December 2011 on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography**,⁸ which mainly reflects the approach of the Lanzarote Convention, seeks to harmonize the minimum criminal sanctions of the Member States for various crimes of child sexual abuse (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and Council of Europe, 2015).

⁷ Act on the Ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children Against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Official Gazette, 11/2011)

⁸ Directive 2011/93/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2004/68/JHA OJ L 335, 17/12/2011

The Directive establishes minimum rules for determining crimes and sanctions in the area of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children, child pornography and soliciting children for sexual needs.

Using modern technologies to commit various forms of punishable behavior against children is one of the biggest challenges of modern criminal legislation. The wide availability of information and communication technology has also resulted in an increasing number of cases of child sexual abuse. This situation has led to the need to expand criminal-law protection and the use of information and communication technology for grooming in committing serious crimes of sexual exploitation and abuse of children (Škrtić, 2013).

The 1997 **Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime**⁹ prescribes provisions for preventing child pornography. The Republic of Croatia ratified the Convention in 2002. The provisions of Article 9 of the Convention stipulate that each party shall adopt legal and other measures necessary to criminalize the following intentional unauthorized acts: 1) producing child pornography for the purpose of its distribution through a computer system, 2) offering or making available child pornography through a computer system, 3) distributing or transmitting child pornography through a computer system, 4) procuring child pornography through a computer system for oneself or for another person, and 5) possessing child pornography in a computer system or on a computer-data storage medium.

Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)7 of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on Guidelines to Respect, Protect and Fulfil the Rights of the Child in the Digital Environment was accepted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 4 July 2018 in Strasbourg. The Council of Europe recommends that Member State governments revise legislation, policies and practices to ensure the implementation of international and European conventions and standards. These Guidelines identify four areas of concern for the healthy development and well-being of children in the digital environment, including but not limited to the risks of the following:

- sexual exploitation and abuse, solicitation for sexual purposes (grooming), online recruitment of children for the commission of criminal offences, for participation in extremist political or religious movements or for trafficking purposes (contact risks);
- the humiliating and stereotyped portrayal and over-sexualization of women and children in particular; the portrayal and glorification of violence and self-harm, in particular suicides; humiliating, discriminatory or racist expressions or apologia for such conduct; advertising, adult content (content risks);
- bullying, stalking and other forms of harassment, non-consensual dissemination of sexual images, extortion, hate speech, hacking, gambling, illegal downloading or other intellectual property infringements, commercial exploitation (conduct risks);
- excessive use of digital content, sleep deprivation and physical harm (health risks).

National legal sources

The Republic of Croatia is a party to numerous international documents, which, together with national legislation and strategic documents, form the legal framework for protecting children from sexual exploitation and abuse, including protecting children in the digital environment.

⁹Act on Ratification of the Convention on Cybercrime (Official Gazette 9/2002))

The Commission's report to the European Parliament and the Council on the assessment of the extent to which member states have taken the necessary measures to comply with Directive 2011/93/EU of 13 December 2011 on the combatting sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography has determined that the Republic of Croatia has harmonized the national legislation with the Directive, prescribed a range of punishments in line with the requirements of the Directive, ensured that the statute of limitations for criminal prosecution for crimes of sexual abuse and exploitation begins from the age of majority of the victim, and that it invests in forensic equipment, but also in the education of police officers through training, specialist courses and seminars, whereby all available equipment and tools are available for the investigation of these crimes (Odeljan, 2019).

The **Criminal Code of the Republic of Croatia**¹⁰ in Chapter XVII stipulates crimes of sexual abuse and exploitation of children that are aligned with the provisions of the Lanzarote Convention:

- Sexual abuse of a child under the age of fifteen (Art. 158)
- Sexual abuse of a child over the age of fifteen (Art. 159)
- Gratification of lust in front of a child under the age of fifteen (Art. 160)
- Luring children to satisfy sexual needs (Art. 161)
- Child pimping (Art. 162)
- Exploitation of children for pornography (Art. 163)
- Exploitation of children for pornographic performances (Art. 164)
- Introducing children to pornography (Art. 165)
- Serious crimes of sexual abuse and child exploitation (Art. 166).

Based on these mentioned acts, it is evident that the legislator took into account the important provisions of international documents in defining sexually punishable behavior detrimental to children, the provisions of substantive law in terms of determining and defining the concept of a child as a person under the age of 18, as well as all forms of offenses that can be classified as sexual abuse and exploitation of children, include the recognized and carefully separated specifics of pornography (Banovac et al., 2019).

In the Croatian legal system, a child as a victim of a crime has greater procedural rights than adult victims of crimes. In addition to the general catalog of rights that belong to victims of all crimes, prescribed by Article 43 of the **Criminal Procedure Act**,¹¹ a child as a victim of a crime also has the rights prescribed by Article 44 of the Criminal Procedure Act:

- A plenipotentiary covered by the state budget,
- Confidentiality of personal data,
- Exclusion of the public.

¹⁰ *Criminal Code of the Republic of Croatia (Official Gazette 125/11, 144/12, 56/15, 61/15, 101/17, 118/18, 126/19, 84/21)*

¹¹ *Criminal Procedure Act of the Republic of Croatia (Official Gazette 152/08, 76/09, 80/11, 121/11, 91/12, 143/12, 56/13, 145/13, 152/14, 70/17, 126/19, 126/19, 130/20, 80/22)*

In addition to the catalog of general rights, victims of crimes against sexual freedom have the following rights (Article 44, paragraph 4 of the Criminal Procedure Act):

1. To talk to a counselor before questioning, at the expense of public funds,
2. Access to a plenipotentiary at the expense of public funds,
3. That they are interrogated by a person of the same gender in the police department and state attorney's office, and that, if possible, they are interrogated by the same person if re-examined,
4. To withhold answers to questions not related to the crime and, if referring strictly to the personal life of the victim,
5. Demand that they be examined via an audiovisual device,
6. Confidentiality of personal data,
7. Demand the exclusion of the public from the hearing.

All relevant authorities are obliged to treat the child as a victim of a crime with special consideration, bearing in mind age, personality and other circumstances, to avoid harmful consequences for the child's upbringing and development. When handling cases involving a child victim, the relevant authorities must be primarily guided by the child's best interests. If the person's age is unknown, it shall be assumed that the person is a child if there is a probability that the victim is under eighteen.

Article 18 of the Lanzarote Convention states that each state party independently determines the age limit below which it is forbidden to engage in sexual activities with a child. The Republic of Croatia has set the age limit for consent to sexual intercourse at 15 years of age.

The **Juvenile Courts Act**¹² stipulates high standards in treating children who have survived sexual abuse. The juvenile courts try perpetrators of crimes against children as referred to in Chapter XVI, "Crimes Against Sexual Freedom," and Chapter XVII, "Crimes of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Against Children," of the Criminal Code. Cases involving criminal-law protection of children are handled by juvenile police officers, juvenile investigators and state attorneys for juveniles. The summon to the child to testify is sent through the parents, and the provisions on forced appearances before the courts and punishment if refusing to testify do not apply to children.

Questioning children in criminal proceedings in national systems differs with the age of the child. The Criminal Procedure Act (Article 292) and the Juvenile Courts Act (Article 115) describe differences in questioning a child witness under the age of 14 or 16, and a child who has reached the age of 14 or 16, and the child that has not reached the age of 18. Particularly important is the provision stipulating that children are questioned once, and only in exceptional circumstances can they be questioned again, but only in the same special manner as prescribed in the mentioned legal provisions. A confidential person can be present with the child during the questioning. Though the way children are examined in criminal proceedings is well regulated, research data highlight certain practical problems: inadequate premises for examining children, insufficient time to prepare children for testimony, the need to standardize the role of experts for examining children and the necessary protocols for the task (Droždan-Kranjčec, 2023).

¹² *Juvenile Courts Act (Official Gazette 84/11, 143/12, 148/13, 56/15, 126/19)*

When conducting an individual needs' assessment of victims of crimes (Article 43.a of the Criminal Procedure Act), the assumption is always that special protection measures must be applied in the case of children, determining which special protection measures should be applied (e.g., a special method of questioning; using communication technology to avoid visual contact with the perpetrator, exclusion of the public from the hearing; questioning by a person of the same sex, if possible; in case of repeated questioning, the same person conducts the questioning; accompaniment by a confidential person; including confidentiality of personal data).

For certain crimes committed against children, the statute of limitations begins from the age of majority of the victim (Article 82, paragraph 3 of the Criminal Code). Criminal prosecution does not have a statute of limitations for serious crimes of sexual abuse and exploitation of a child (Article 81, paragraph 2 of the Criminal Code).

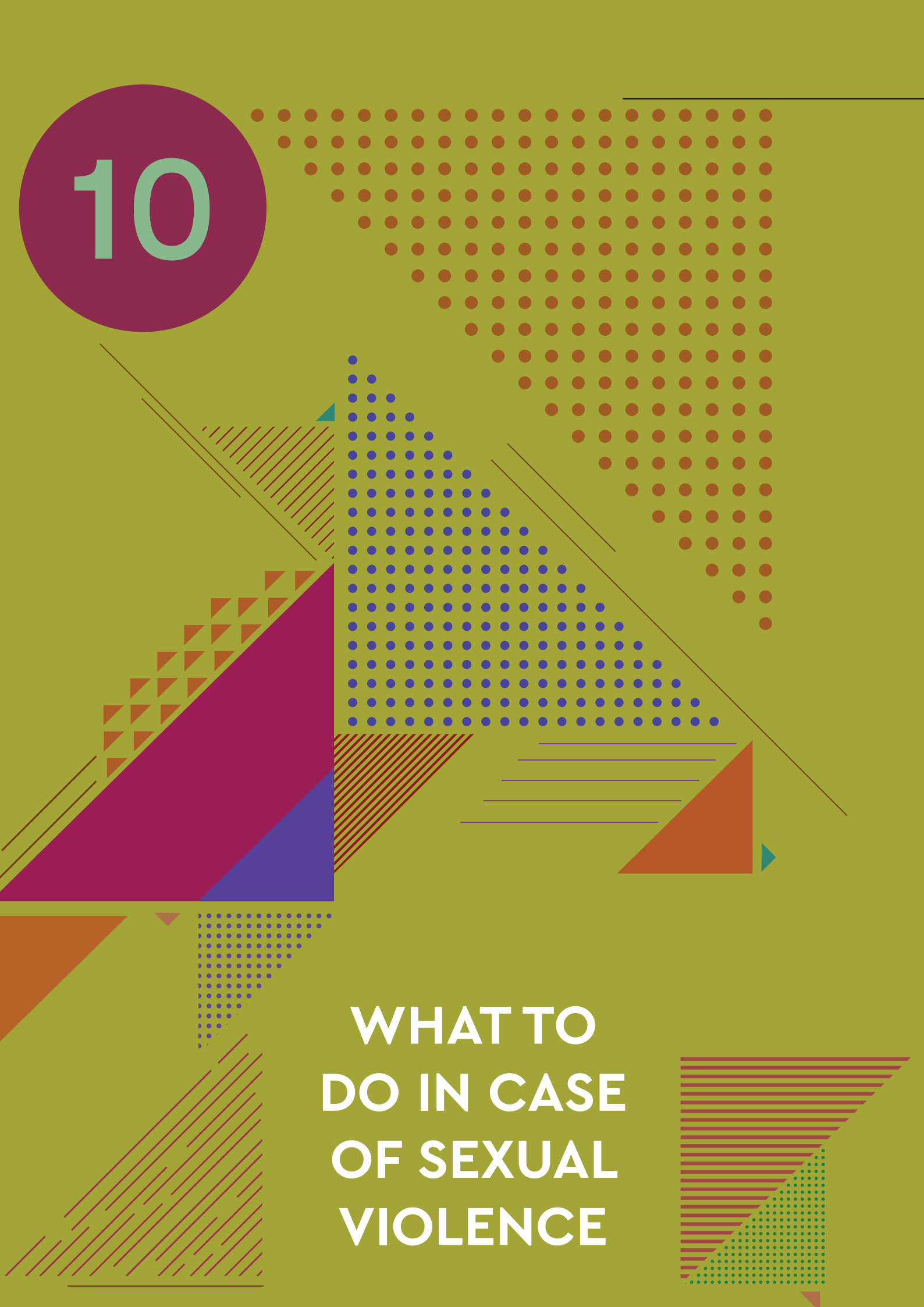
In addition to the international and legislative framework for the protection of children from sexual abuse and exploitation in the Republic of Croatia, there are by-laws and public policies on the protection of children from sexual abuse and exploitation, including the protection of children in the digital environment. The most important documents adopted by the Croatian Government are the **National Plan for Children's Rights in the Republic of Croatia for the Period 2022-2026**,¹³ the **National Plan for Combating of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment for the Period Until 2027**,¹⁴ the **Protocol on the Procedure in Case of Abuse and Neglect of Children and the current Protocol on the Procedure in Case of Sexual Violence**.

¹³ *Plan for the Rights of the Child in the Republic of Croatia for the Period 2022-2026 and Action Plan for the Rights of the Child in the Republic of Croatia for the Period 2022-2024 (Official Gazette 55/2022)*

¹⁴ *Decision on the Adoption of the National Plan for the Combating of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment for the Period Until 2027 and the Action Plan for the Suppression of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment for the Period Until 2024 (Official Gazette 156/2022)*



10



**WHAT TO
DO IN CASE
OF SEXUAL
VIOLENCE**

10. WHAT TO DO IN CASE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Anamarija Drožđan-Kranjčec, LL.M., Kristina Mihaljević, M.A. social pedagogue

PROTOCOL ON THE PROCEDURE IN CASE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

To define clear procedures and provide immediate, compassionate, gender- and culturally-sensitive, comprehensive assistance and support to victims of sexual violence, the Protocol on the Procedure in Case of Sexual Violence¹⁵ (hereinafter: the Protocol) was drafted. The Croatian Government adopted the first Protocol in 2012, drafted at the initiative and based on proposals from many years of work at the Women's Room, which developed the first Protocol on the Procedure in Case of Sexual Violence in schools back in 2004. It was an integral part of education on sexual violence for professional staff at educational institutions.

The Croatian Government's Gender Equality Office is mandated with coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the Protocol and reports on the results to the Government in the biennial report on the implementation of the National Policy for Gender Equality.

Given the ongoing need to comply with new national and international regulations, the Protocol is periodically revised, and so far, we have updated the versions adopted in 2014 and 2018. In 2022, the drafting of a new Protocol began, which is not only an update in line with legal amendments but also the drafting of a more comprehensive Protocol. It is important to check which current Protocol is in force by visiting the Ministry of Science and Education website and the websites of other relevant state bodies.

The Protocol contains:

- a. The obligations of relevant authorities and other stakeholders in detecting and combating sexual violence and providing assistance and protection to persons exposed to sexual violence.
- b. The forms, manner, and content of cooperation between relevant authorities and other stakeholders in detecting and combating sexual violence and providing assistance and protection to persons exposed to sexual violence.
- c. Final provisions prescribing actions in line with the activities referred to in the Protocol.

In addition to the obligation to report any suspicion of sexual violence to relevant institutions, **all educational institutions** must prescribe internal documents with the procedures for receiving reports of sexual violence and the procedures for acting upon these reports.

¹⁵ Protocol on Handling Sexual Violence (Official Gazette 70/2018)

ACTIONS BY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN LINE WITH THE PROTOCOL

Employees of educational institutions are to report **suspicions of sexual violence**. These necessary actions are important because employees do not conduct “investigative actions.” They do not summon a suspected perpetrator for questioning to determine the grounds of the suspicions and do not require the child to provide evidence or bring someone in to testify about what happened. The relevant authorities (police and state attorney’s office) perform these actions as mandated by Law, whereas employees of educational institutions, as repeatedly pointed out, are to report suspicions of sexual violence.

OBLIGATIONS TO COMPLY WITH THE PROTOCOL

1. MANNER OF TALKING WITH THE CHILD

In line with the Protocol, employees at educational institutions must take all measures to stop and end any ongoing violence against a child. The child is spoken to calmly, preferably by a professional, in a way adapted to the child. The child is not questioned but allowed to describe the event in the way and to the extent they prefer. The adult talking with the child must inform the child in an understandable way to them of further necessary actions, especially the fact that the adult is obliged to report any violence to the relevant authorities and explain further established procedures to the child. Every institution must ensure the child does not report the respective event a number of times.

2. OBLIGATION TO REPORT SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND PROTECTIVE MEASURES FOR THE CHILD

Immediately upon receiving information about suspected sexual violence that the child may have survived, the institution’s director, as the person responsible, without a delay reports the suspected sexual violence to the relevant authorities. Furthermore, the Protocol stipulates additional obligations if the child needs urgent medical help and taking emergency measures for the child’s safety and protection. It also stipulates obligations for the head of the institution if the perpetrator of sexual violence is an employee of the institution.

3. PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT

The Protocol stipulates the obligation imposed on educational institutions to inform the child victim and persons who care for the child with opportunities for non-institutional and institutional assistance and support for the child.

4. HANDLING INCIDENTS OF PEER VIOLENCE

Particular provisions stipulate how to handle cases of peer violence and the need to get crisis intervention teams involved for the purpose of providing professional support to other children at the educational institution.

5. OBLIGATION TO REPORT INCIDENTS

The Protocol stipulates the obligations of educational institutions regarding the procedure for reporting suspected sexual violence against a child and the obligation to inform the relevant ministry (if the violence was committed at an educational institution under the Ministry of Science and Education via the web form for reporting violent behavior on the website of the Ministry)¹⁶, the Ombudsperson for Children and the competent doctor.

Detailed obligations of actions and the roadmap according to which all educational institutions are obliged to act are available in the current Protocol.

¹⁶ Available at: <https://app.mzos.hr/evidencijanasilja>

HOW TO TALK WITH A CHILD IN CASES OF THE DISCLOSURE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE OR SUSPICION OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Children most often disclose sexual violence to their parents, friends or teachers (read more about the disclosing sexual violence in Chapter 4).

Your response and reaction to disclosures of sexual violence is an important step in stopping violence and protecting the child from further violence. When a child discloses sexual violence, they seek and want help – but the first reaction they receive will affect the child’s ability to seek further help and recover from the traumatic experience. **It is an honor if the child chooses you and confides in you** because it means that they trust you and that you are the person they trust (Bogavac, 2006). Do not betray that trust.

In case of suspected sexual violence or the disclosure of sexual violence (when a child confides in surviving or having survived sexual violence), schools are required to act according to the Protocol on the Procedure in Cases of Sexual Violence. You will find guidelines for talking to a child if sexual violence is discovered, which can help you act in the child’s best interests.

WHAT TO DO WHEN A CHILD DISCLOSES SEXUAL VIOLENCE (ACCORDING TO HUNTER, 2011)

1. LISTEN TO THE CHILD AND SUPPORT THEM

If the child has decided to tell you that they have survived or are still surviving sexual violence, you should support them at the moment they disclose it. The child has decided to disclose sexual violence because they trust you and believe you will help them. Try not to be distracted by needing to know exactly the “right” thing to say. So long as you listen and offer support, the child benefits from talking to you. Importantly, you should do everything to protect the child and stop the violence. Your role is not to investigate what happened and how – that is the role of the police. Your most important role is to support the child.

2. ENSURE A SAFE PLACE AND GIVE THE CHILD YOUR FULL ATTENTION

A child may not always choose the best time or place to talk about what happened to them. If conversing in a noisy place (e.g., a classroom or school hallway), ask the child if you can go somewhere else where you can better hear them and where nothing will disturb you during the conversation. Let the child know that you want to give them your full attention. Respect the child’s wishes as to where is the best place to talk, as some places can be reminders of having survived sexual violence (e.g., while the child is alone in a quiet, isolated place with an adult).

HOW NOT TO REACT

- **Disbelief** (“What kind of silly things are you talking about.”)
- **Anger** (“I told you nicely not to go there...”)
- **Denial** (“Don’t make up stories.”)
- **Doubt** (“That happened... Is something like that at all possible?”)
- **Shock** (“Terrible! What do we do now?”)
- **Self-blame** (“It’s my fault, I should’ve been better watching over you/I should’ve known...”)
- **Confusion** (“What are you saying? I don’t understand.”)

3. STAY CALM

Inevitably, child disclosure of sexual violence can incite intense feelings in an adult listening to the child’s experience. You must remain calm and patient so the child knows you are listening to them and will help them. If a child becomes aware of your feelings and agitated state, you should tell them that the child is not the cause. Explain to them that you are upset and sad because some adults hurt children, even though they should care for and protect them. Your feelings are not the child’s responsibility, and they must not feel worried about how you feel. In the given box (right), *How Not to React*, you can read about some of the most common **wrong reactions** by adults to children’s disclosures of sexual violence.

4. DON’T GIVE PROMISES YOU CAN’T FULFILL

Given that child abuse, especially sexual abuse, relies on secrecy, the child might ask you to promise that anything they tell you stays between you and them; it will be your secret. Children who survived sexual violence at a very early age learn to hide what is happening to them. It is a basic survival mechanism because they fear the consequences for themselves and other family members, fear the perpetrator, or fear for the perpetrator (i.e., if they are a parent or close person, they love them despite the abuse). Perpetrators often threaten the child saying something bad will happen to them or their loved ones, or that the child will be placed in a foster family, the perpetrator will do something to the child or his parents or siblings if the child discloses the sexual violence to anyone.

Never promise the child that what they tell you will remain solely between you and them. You can say that you cannot promise everything they confide in you will remain a secret, but you will do your best to protect them. Calm the child and make it clear to them what they can expect from you, i.e., help and support.

5. CLEARLY EMPHASIZE TO THE CHILD THAT CONFIDING IN YOU IS A GOOD STEP

Thank the child for confiding in you, and make clear that it is good that they did so and that you are not angry with them because you will now do everything you can to protect them. Children fear the consequences of disclosing sexual violence, i.e., what will happen to them, their family, to the perpetrator, and believe that the perpetrator’s threats will come true. For example, suppose the perpetrator of sexual violence is the child’s father, and the parents separate after the sexual violence was disclosed. In that case, the child may feel guilty and experience other consequences that disclosure brings onto the family. It is of the utmost importance to point out to the child that you trust them and that the perpetrator is solely responsible for the sexual violence committed.

6. LET THE CHILD SAY AS MUCH AS THEY CAN, GIVE THEM TIME AND DO NOT RUSH THEM

Keep in mind and accept that the child will only disclose as much as they deem acceptable at that time and acknowledge their courage and strength to talk about survived sexual violence. Children find disclosing sexual violence an extremely difficult experience that traumatizes them again. Allow the child to take as much time as they need. Some children will not want to talk much about the sexual violence they have survived and will want to quickly resume regular activities, while others will want to talk longer and more about it. Importantly, do not rush the child and make it clear to them that you have as much time as needed. Some children will not directly disclose the sexual violence they survived but indirectly, which can last several days or longer. During this time, you can occasionally tell the child carefully and compassionately that you want to hear everything they have to tell you; you are there for them whenever they are willing to do so. The child should have control over the process of disclosing sexual violence because the main characteristic of sexual violence is the loss of control over their body, feelings and life. Importantly, you should accept the disclosure of sexual violence in the manner and under the conditions of the child. A child can be gently encouraged with questions such as: “Can you tell me more about this?”. However, it is best not to pressure the child and ask for details they have not been ready to reveal. Though the child needs to be in control, this approach must be balanced in line with their safety and the safety of other children. If the child does not disclose sexual abuse, but you suspect such violence has occurred, follow the Protocol on the Procedure in Cases of Sexual Violence and take the necessary steps to protect the child.

7. LET THE CHILD TELL YOU THEIR EXPERIENCE IN THEIR OWN WORDS AND DON'T INTERROGATE THE CHILD

Bear in mind that children have their way of describing their experiences. If you want to clarify something or cannot figure out what the child is saying, paraphrase it. Do not assume you and the child are thinking exactly the same thing. Do not ask suggestive questions, interpreted as putting words in the child's mouth. Allow the child to use their own words, as this is necessary to reduce their discomfort. Let the child know that it is acceptable to use the words they know or want, in the way they want, to say whatever they need to say. By no means, question the child or ask them to repeat the story to you several times, as this may create the impression that you doubt what they said and do not believe them. The only question you need to ask is, “What did he (the perpetrator) tell you would happen if you told someone?”. Frequently, most threats are unfounded, and it is necessary to explain to the child that they will not happen (Bogavac and Popadić, 2016). All questions should be relatively general and aimed at obtaining information so know what to do next to protect the child. If you overdo the questioning, it may have unintended consequences in all subsequent steps, i.e., when reporting sexual violence and court proceedings, because the child's testimony can be distorted due to your unnecessary questioning. Remember – you do not determine what and how it happened; you support the child and need to do everything to protect them.

8. TELL THE CHILD WHAT YOU INTEND TO DO NEXT

The child must be familiar with all the steps you have to take after they have disclosed the sexual violence to you. When explaining to the child what you are going to do next, ensure that they understand you and understand the purpose of it all, e.g., they will be questioned by the police to protect them and stop the violence. Explain to the child that they will have to talk about survived violence with other people (social services, police) and that you will

support the child through it. Let the child know they can always ask you what happens next and explain all the steps as often as necessary. Tell the child what persons you need to inform about what you have been told, and do not spread information to persons who do not need to know. Ensure the child is familiar with all the steps that follow, as this can make the process less intimidating and help the child regain power and safety.

9. DO NOT JUDGE THE PERPETRATOR IN FRONT OF THE CHILD AND DO NOT CONFRONT THE PERPETRATOR

Remember, it is not your job to investigate what happened; it is the job of the police and the justice bodies. Your role is to support and protect the child. You definitely should not confront the perpetrator or talk to them about what the child has disclosed to you – this is also the task of the police. Moreover, your confrontation with the perpetrator poses a risk to the child's safety.

Bear in mind that in 93% of cases of sexual violence, children know the perpetrator. Common perpetrators are family members (father, stepfather, grandfather and similar), and children have a close relationship with them, which often includes love. You should condemn the perpetrator's behavior, not the person himself – if you condemn the person, the child will be confused and feel guilty for loving that person. Perpetrators are manipulative, and many children are blamed for surviving sexual violence, so be careful not to cause additional guilt in the child.

Your reaction and response to a child disclosing sexual violence may be critical to the child's safety and recovery from sexual violence. In the case of suspected sexual violence, if an adult does not take adequate legal steps, this may expose the child to further risk of sexual violence and prevent the child from receiving adequate help and support.

Important:

- Listen and support the child
- Reassure the child they did the right thing coming to you
 - Trust the child and do not blame them
 - Do not make promises you cannot keep
- Act according to the Protocol on the Procedure in Cases of Sexual Violence and report the violence
- Continue to support the child

WHAT TO DO WHEN SUSPECTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Some children want to confide in their teacher or an expert school associate they trust. However, research and practice suggest that children want these people to notice certain behaviors and words, i.e., signs the child sends. These signs include self-harm, poor school performance, eating disorders, isolation, and reclusiveness at school. The child wants them expert school associate to respond to the signs and invite the child for a talk (Alaggia, 2004; Alaggia, 2010).

Also, children may encounter other obstacles in disclosing sexual violence due to various developmental difficulties, gender, ethnicity, and/or sexual orientation (Allnock et al., 2019).

The most important step in recognizing child sexual abuse is an awareness that it exists – you will not detect it if you do not believe it exists (Bogavac and Popadić, 2016).

If, **due to the child's behavior, words or drawings, you suspect the child is surviving sexual violence**, the following steps should be undertaken:

1. Talk with the child


In conversing with the child, **follow the conversation guidelines set out in the previous chapter** for cases when the child alone discloses sexual violence. Remember to create a safe environment for the child, carefully choose the time and place to talk, and avoid speaking in front of someone who might cause harm. Be aware of the tone of your voice because if you start a conversation in a serious tone, you could scare the child, and they are more likely to give you answers that they think you want to hear instead of the truth. Talk directly to the child, and tell them that you are worried because you have heard, seen, and noticed something indicating that the child is surviving something extremely difficult and bad. Talk to the child using their vocabulary, listen to the child, and let them speak freely. Let the child know that you are not blaming and judging them; make sure they know they are not in any trouble but that you are talking to them because you are worried and want to protect them. If the child does not confide in you, that's fine; let them know you are there for them and that you are open to talking and explaining all the steps you have to take next, i.e., you need to report the SUSPECTED sexual violence (RAINN, 2023).

2. Act according to the current Protocol on the Procedure in Cases of Sexual Violence and REPORT ANY SUSPICION OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE.

3. If you suspect one of the parents is the abuser, do not call them in for a talk, but call the other parent.

4. Support the child before, during and after reporting the sexual violence.

Sexual violence against children is a crime, and it is your legal obligation to report suspicion or knowledge of such a crime. You have to do everything to protect the child and stop the violence – **there is no stopping violence without police intervention (Bogavac and Popadić, 2016).**



**IMPORTANCE OF
SCHOOL PROTOCOLS
AND DOCUMENTS IN
COMBATting SEXUAL
VIOLENCE AND
PROTECTING CHILDREN**

11

11. IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL PROTOCOLS AND DOCUMENTS IN COMBATTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND PROTECTING CHILDREN

Gordana Filipović, LL.M.

LET'S PROTECT CHILDREN FROM SEXUAL VIOLENCE BY ADULTS IN SCHOOLS

Sexual abuse and exploitation of children are one of the most serious violations of children's rights. It takes different forms, from severe violations, such as rape, exploitation in prostitution and pornography, and pimping, to what is often considered milder in the public eyes, such as sexual touching, sexual harassment, grooming, exhibitionism, child pornography, and other. It is always a terrifying experience for a child and often scars them for life.

Sexual violence and abuse occur in almost all segments of a child's life, including where a child should feel the safest – in their home and school. Sexual abusers of children are usually people the children know and trust.

It is the task of society to protect children from sexual abuse, create a safe environment for children, prevent abuse, ensure consistent and effective punishment of abusers, and help the child recover from such violence. The **Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention)** requires Member States to take preventive measures and protect children. The main preventive measures include carefully assessing, employing, and training people who work with children and also ensuring that children are aware of the risk of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse and how to protect themselves. Effective prevention includes: improving regulations and policies, establishing child protection strategies, developing codes of conduct, training professionals who work with children, and empowering parents and children.

Having monitored this area, the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children has warned for years that the current legal framework in Croatia and its inadequate application in practice do not guarantee children sufficient protection from sexual abuse, as shown by numerous examples we encounter.

IMPROVING THE LAWS

The Act on Education in Primary and Secondary Schools bans employing persons convicted of certain crimes, including sexual offenses¹⁷ or employing persons against whom criminal

¹⁷Article 106 of the Act on Education in Primary and Secondary Schools: (2) Employment in school institutions cannot be established by a person against who has been convicted of crimes against life and body, against the Republic of Croatia, against the judiciary, against public order, against property, against official duty, against humanity and human dignity, **against personal freedom, against sexual freedom, sexual abuse and exploitation of children**, against marriage, family and children, against the people's health, against general security, for forgery...

proceedings are pending. It also stipulates mandatory termination of employment in the event of a final conviction for crimes after gaining employment and **mandatory checks** on whether persons employed at schools fulfill this condition, but in practice, this check is often not fully carried out. The possibility of an existing impediment to gaining employment at school should be double-checked based on the so-called “**police certificate**” (certificate of impunity) confirming that no criminal proceedings are pending against the person in question (obtained through an e-citizen application or from the municipal court by the applicant) and a “**special certificate**” from the Criminal Records¹⁸ of the Ministry of Justice which the employer must, by official duty, request by submitting the official form.¹⁹

The legislation requires the verification of future employees for the protection of children; however, in a number of other instances, it does not set a sufficient level of protection. For example, the legislation does not stipulate conviction for sexual harassment as an impediment to working in schools based on the Gender Equality Act, the Anti-Discrimination Act, and the Protection Against Domestic Violence Act. It also fails to regulate situations of suspicion where a person has committed a sexual offense to the detriment of a child, the investigation is still ongoing, and criminal proceedings have not yet formally begun. The legislation also does not cover certain unprofessional and unethical behavior towards children, which is not characterized as a crime or is deemed not to comprise elements for conducting criminal proceedings.

Namely, not all sexual abuse leads to criminal prosecution and conviction of the perpetrator, especially for “milder forms” such as sexual harassment, because the State Attorney’s Office sometimes abandons criminal prosecution due to the “insignificance” of the crime. In that case, the abandonment of criminal prosecution does not mean that the person suspected of having committed a sexual offense against a child is acquitted and unjustly accused, but rather it is a decision undertaken by judicial authorities to not spend resources on conducting the proceedings. Refraining from criminal proceedings or taking a long time to decide whether to press charges makes it impossible to activate the protection mechanism provided by the regulations, such as suspension of the employee or termination of employment.

However, regardless of the judiciary’s reaction, zero tolerance for any inappropriate, unprofessional, and endangering behavior by adults toward children must be upheld in schools. This fact is especially true in the case of improper actions, such as unwanted sexual touches, lewd comments, and gestures, causing discomfort and anxiety in children and making them feel bad at school.

“The court considers as credible the testimony of the minor victims who described the behavior of the computer science teacher who called them “beauties, dolls, hot items,” stroked their legs above the knee and their hair during class, touched their shoulders and backs, some of them had their buttocks touched or pinched; and when working with the mouse, he put his hand over theirs, causing them discomfort and shame...” (from the rationale for the court decision)

Lustful, innuendo, inappropriate looks directed at breasts or buttocks, improper movements, and attention are unacceptable at school.

¹⁸ Criminal records are maintained for physical and legal persons who have been convicted of crimes in the Republic of Croatia, as well as citizens of the Republic of Croatia and legal persons with headquarters in the Republic of Croatia for crimes that have been convicted outside of the Republic of Croatia, if the information has been delivered to the Ministry of Justice.

¹⁹ More information can be found on the website of the Ministry of Justice <https://pravosudje.gov.hr/UserDocImages/19780>. All additional information can be obtained Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 9-11 am by telephone on 01 3714 224, 01 3714 228 01 3714-213

An example from practice: “During class, the teacher harassed the female students with his behavior – body movements and facial expressions – when they would bring their homework to him to check or during tests, he directed his gaze at *their bodies, especially breasts, crotch, and buttocks, on account of which they felt humiliated, harassed and intimidated.*”

This behavior by adults towards children in school often goes unpunished because sexual harassment is rarely prosecuted. It is all the more important to ensure that persons of authority in schools react promptly to such incidents. In the case of sexual harassment of children at school, if there is no reaction towards the perpetrator, the children are left to their own– exposed, ashamed, and discouraged from reacting and seeking protection. They suffer and withdraw into themselves, and the person who is the cause of their stress continues without suffering the consequences of improper behavior, sometimes causing harm to generations of children.

CHILD PROTECTION MECHANISMS

Unfortunately, we often witness situations in which schools renounce their responsibility in taking measures to protect students by shifting responsibility to judicial bodies and waiting for the court’s decision on a guilty verdict. Acting in line with the Rules of Procedure in Cases of Sexual Violence is often reduced to notifying all the relevant authorities and waiting for their reaction, with no protection of the child victim at school or preventing such improper behavior towards other children.

Behavior involving sexual harassment of students must be the basis for reviewing legal, employment and ethical responsibility of persons who work with children and the basis for termination of employment, regardless of the actions undertaken by judicial authorities. Schools must be a place where children feel safe and protected. This obligation arises from the Act on Education in Primary and Secondary Schools²⁰ and is regulated by the Ordinance on Actions by Educational Workers in School Institutions in Taking Measures to Protect the Rights of Students and Reporting Any Violation of These Rights to the Relevant Authorities.²¹ The Ordinance obliges taking measures to prevent violence, the treatment of victims of violence and the treatment of violators of students’ rights.

Hence, internal regulations (work regulations, code of ethics, employment contracts) should direct educational institutions to create the legal basis for preventing persons whose behavior endangers children from coming into contact with children, regardless of prosecution and conviction, as required by the Lanzarote Convention. Internal regulations should prescribe the procedures and consequences of unacceptable behavior by employees at the school institution, as it is obliged to do when it comes to protecting adult employees at the school.²² In line with the Labor Act’s

²⁰ Article 70 states “Teachers, lecturers, teaching associates and other workers in school institutions are obliged to take measures in protecting the rights of students and immediately report any violation of these rights, especially physical or mental violence, sexual abuse, neglect or careless treatment, abuse or exploitation of students, to the principal of the school institution, who is obliged to report the matter to the social welfare institutions, i.e., another relevant authority.”

²¹ Article 3 states “Protection of students’ rights is performed by:

- preventing violence between students, between students and employees of the school, between students and other adults;
- reporting a violation of the students’ rights to the professional bodies of the school institution;
- reporting a violation of the students’ rights to relevant authorities outside the school;
- the actions of the professional bodies of the school institution towards the victims of violence;
- the actions of the professional bodies of the school institution towards those who violate students’ rights;
- the actions of the school institution in cooperation with relevant authorities outside the school institution towards victims of violence;
- the actions of the school institution in cooperation with relevant authorities outside the school institution towards violators of students’ rights.

(2) School institutions are obliged to care in helping students exercise their rights.

(3) School institutions are obliged to especially care in helping students exercise their rights in instances involving any form of violence, sexual abuse, harassment, formational neglect, negligent actions, abuse and exploitation...

²² Article 134 of the Labor Act

provisions on protecting workers' dignity, the employer is obliged to investigate complaints and, if determined to be founded, take all necessary measures to prevent a continuation of harassment or sexual harassment. When it comes to sexual harassment of children, these procedures should be clearly defined and aimed primarily at protecting the child and their dignity.

Principals of educational institutions have a special responsibility. It is their duty to check that persons employed at the school fulfill employment conditions and are subject to misdemeanor offenses if failing to do so (the penalty ranges from 265–660 EUR).²³ Principals are obliged to take preventive measures, ensure a safe environment for children, check employees who come into contact with children in the educational institution, not only in the teaching process and regular school activities but also in other circumstances outside of school, especially school sports (extracurricular) activities.

It has happened that principals have refused to take responsibility for sexual violence perpetrated by adults against children on school premises, premises rented out for sports or arts activities, for learning foreign languages, and the like. Parents who enroll their children in such activities legitimately expect the school to guarantee their children's safety. The work of associations that often organize activities with children, such as sports clubs, is not subject to supervision or prior verification of persons who come into contact with children as part of these activities (except for persons who are subject to verification based on the Act on Volunteering). Before concluding a contract, school principals should request that the organization renting school premises for activities with children provide evidence of previous convictions of persons carrying out the respective activities.²⁴

In addition, sometimes, the school believes that it is not required to react in any way to sexual harassment or violence between children outside the school. Consequently, the schools place doubt on its educational function and responsibility as the second most important factor of socialization and child protection.

PREVENTION AND EMPOWERMENT

Prevention programs should be ensured for children, teaching them the types of adult behavior that can endanger them and how to protect themselves. This approach empowers them to report violence and for the subsequent procedures. From preschool age, children should become familiar with the dangers of sexual assault and possible forms of protection. The education should also include parents and employees of educational institutions to help them recognize the signs of children being exposed to violence and learn how to react to such situations.

Encouraging children to report sexual violence without ensuring that adults react adequately to reports means betraying the child.

After the violence is reported, adults and especially professional school services, are responsible for preventing re-victimization of the child on account of the reactions and behavior of others at school, and support from adults and peers in the school environment is provided. **Peer support** is important in the recovery of a child who has experienced violence, but the process requires professional guidance from expert school associates to help children not exceed their limits and capabilities or take on too much responsibility and to ensure adequate care for the mental health of the children peer-helpers.

²³ Article 151 of the Act on Education in Primary and Secondary Schools

²⁴ In some cases, when establishing employment or entrusting work entailing regular contact with children, the employer must, with the consent of the person for whom the data is requested, request the issuance of a special certificate containing the data referred to in Article 13, paragraph 4 of this Act (Art. 14, para. 2 of the Act on Legal Consequences of Convictions, Criminal Records and Rehabilitation).

12. THE ROLE OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONVENTION ON THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AGAINST SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND SEXUAL ABUSE IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Svea Kučinić, M.Sc., educational rehabilitation

The Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention) places great emphasis on preventing sexual violence against children, which is the duty of all adults in society, including adult employees in the health, social services and judiciary sectors. The focus of this chapter is on the role of the Lanzarote Convention in the education system.

The Republic of Croatia signed the Lanzarote Convention in 2007, ratified it in 2011, and it entered into force on 1 January 2012. Nevertheless, the Lanzarote Convention is still not sufficiently utilized as a key document for protecting children against sexual violence, which all educators must know about.

When it comes to the role of the Lanzarote Convention in the education system, there are three important areas of activity within it to which state signatories are obliged to pay attention and introduce the necessary changes to protect children from sexual violence:

- **Recruitment, training, and raising awareness of persons working in contact with children (Article 5)**
- **Education for children (Article 6)**
- **Reporting suspicion of sexual exploitation or sexual abuse (Article 12)**

Although educators should become familiar with the full text of the Convention, the articles below focus specifically on the education system and necessary clarifications:

- **Article 5 – Recruitment, training, and raising awareness of persons working in contact with children**

1. Each Party shall take the necessary **legislative or other measures to raise awareness of the protection and rights of children among persons who are regularly in contact with children in the education**, health, social protection, judicial and police sectors, as well as in areas related to sport, culture and leisure activities.

2. Each Party shall adopt the necessary **legislative or other measures to ensure that the persons referred to in paragraph 1 have adequate knowledge about the sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, of the means for recognizing such acts and the possibility referred to in Article 12, paragraph 1** (*Reporting suspicion of sexual exploitation or sexual abuse*).

EXPLANATION/APPLICATION IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM: States signatories are obliged to ensure that all persons in the education system who are in regular contact with children have an adequate level of knowledge about sexual violence against children in order to be able to recognize various forms of sexual violence and report suspected sexual violence. Legislative measures adopted for this purpose include the National Plan for the Combating of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment for the Period 2022-2027, the Protocol on the Procedure in Case of Sexual Violence and the Action Plan for the Prevention of Violence in Schools for the Period 2020-2024, which explicitly or implicitly mentions the prevention of sexual violence in the following paragraphs:

- *It is necessary to continue **improving the existing prevention programs** and develop new ones that effectively respond to all types of violence: physical, psychological or emotional, sexual and increasingly present online violence.*
- *The data speaks of a significant presence and so-called **sexting** among our students in receiving, sending, and passing on their own and other people's explicit sexual content. There is a defeatedly low level of awareness of this violent form of behavior, and additionally worrying is its link to blackmail and the fact that not all educators know about it.*
- **Prevention programs and projects** must also include the prevention of **gender-based violence**, homophobic and transphobic violence, and ensure that schools implement programs to prevent gender-based violence, i.e., **violence in adolescent relationships**. The **professional advancement of teachers** should include **programs and projects for education and sensitization on the topic of gender-based violence** and offer preventive programs and projects to combat violence in adolescent relationships (...).

Another important element are sexual violence prevention programs, which should be systematically implemented throughout the education system. Although there are several verified prevention programs aimed at the prevention of violence in adolescent relationships, such as the Gender Equality Awareness Raising Against Intimate Partner Violence (CESI – Center for Education, Counseling and Research), when it comes to sexual violence prevention programs, currently only the CAP program (Child Abuse Prevention)²⁵ is on the list of verified programs, directed at preschool and school-age children, and programs by the Women's Room, SVEP and SVEP 2 – JUNIOR program, directed at the first three grades of secondary school and higher grades of elementary school. Despite these two programs, the basic problem relates

²⁵ The CAP program was created in the USA in 1978 and although applied in Croatia since 1999, the program that does not take into account cultural differences, but is based on American cultural norms.

to the inadequate systemic implementation (e.g., the decision of the school whether or not to implement the sexual violence prevention program), the level of readiness and competence of teaching staff for its implementation, continuity of implementation, and so on.

3. Each Party shall adopt the **necessary legislative or other measures**, in accordance with its internal law, to ensure that the **conditions for access to professions requiring regular contact with children and to ensure that candidates for those professions have not been previously convicted of acts of child sexual exploitation or sexual abuse**.

EXPLANATION/APPLICATION IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM: Although Croatia has the Act on the Legal Consequences of Conviction, Criminal Records and Rehabilitation (Article 13, paragraph 4), special regulations on employment in the education system, as well as the Directive on Combating the Sexual Abuse and Sexual Exploitation of Children and Child Pornography, which is one of the ways of protecting children and stipulates checking for previous convictions, in practice, significant failures and challenges persist when it comes to complying with the above article. The Ombudsperson for Children states in the 2021 Work Report that there is “[...] *misunderstanding as to the difference between the so-called certificate of impunity and criminal conviction records of the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration. While the certificate of impunity, which can be obtained at the municipal court or from the e-citizens system, proves that no criminal proceedings are pending against the person, the certificate of criminal convictions record is only evidence that the person has not been convicted with a final judgment, which is a condition for working with children according to certain special regulations.*” Educational institutions, when employing persons, generally require a certificate of impunity but not criminal conviction record to prove that a person has not previously been punished for crimes on account of which they should no longer work with children, including crimes of sexual abuse and exploitation of children.

- **Article 6 - Education of children**

Each Party shall adopt the **necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that children, during primary and secondary education, receive information on the risks of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, as well as on ways to protect themselves, adapted to their developmental abilities**. This information, provided in cooperation with parents, will be presented within a more general context of information on sexuality and will pay particular attention to the risk, in particular the risks posed by utilizing new information and communication technologies.

EXPLANATION AND APPLICATION IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

- **Article 12 – Reporting suspicion of sexual exploitation or sexual abuse**

1. Each Party shall adopt the **legislative or other measures necessary to ensure that the rules on secrecy imposed by internal law on certain professions requiring contact work with children do not constitute an impediment to the ability of members from those professions to report to responsible child protection services any situation in which they have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is a victim of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse**.

2. Each Party shall adopt the legal or other measures necessary to **encourage all persons who know or in good faith suspect sexual exploitation or sexual abuse of children to report these facts to the relevant services.**

EXPLANATION AND APPLICATION IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM: Every person, including all persons employed in educational institutions, has the duty to report **any suspicion of sexual violence**. Indeed, the status of educational employees as official persons significantly increases their responsibility and implies an additional obligation to care for the well-being of children and young people, including protection from sexual violence and to take all necessary steps in case of suspected sexual violence. Furthermore, reporting suspected sexual violence is a **priority over professional secrecy**. The application of this provision in the Croatian education system is regulated by criminal legislation, while the Protocol on the Procedure in Case of Sexual Violence defines in detail the conduct of persons employed in the education system.

In conclusion, the Lanzarote Convention is a key document for the protection of children from sexual violence, and all persons employed in the educational system should be familiar with it in detail. Despite its importance, the Republic of Croatia still does not apply the Lanzarote Convention within its full capacity to ensure the well-being and protection of children. Since its ratification, certain steps have been made towards fulfilling the obligations assumed by the Republic of Croatia in ratifying the Lanzarote Convention, which is mainly limited to amendments to the Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure.

The relevant authority in charge of monitoring the implementation of the Lanzarote Convention in the Republic of Croatia is the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration, which for the purpose of preparing the consolidated report, submits data on the implementation to the Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Committee) in the form of responses to a questionnaire.²⁶ Unfortunately, publicly available reports containing data for Croatia do not exist, which prevents transparent monitoring and drafting of the shadow report. This report is prepared independently of the report by the relevant state authority in charge of overseeing the implementation of a particular convention or other similar documents. It is drafted by shadow reporters (usually civil society organizations) that monitor the implementation according to the same parameters as the relevant state authority in order to compare the data from the two reports and get a complete and more objective picture of the implementation. Although the Rules of Procedure of the Committee state that the Committee will seek the opinions of representatives of civil society and other relevant bodies on progress in implementing the Lanzarote Convention, as well as responses from the state authority responsible for monitoring the implementation, we have not yet seen this in practice.

A proper understanding of the obligations undertaken by the state upon the ratification of the Lanzarote Convention in each of the relevant systems, including education, as well as active advocacy in implementing the necessary changes, will allow us to improve the implementation of this important Convention, and thus better protect children from sexual violence.

²⁶ 7th Activity Report of the Lanzarote Committee <https://rm.coe.int/7th-activity-report-of-the-lanzarote-committee/1680aa8e3a>



13

**THE ROLE AND
IMPORTANCE OF PARENTS
IN PREVENTING SEXUAL
VIOLENCE**

13. THE ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF PARENTS IN PREVENTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Matea Belošević, Ph.D.

Sexual violence against children and adolescents is a significant public health problem and a negative childhood experience (Center for Disease Control [CDC], 2019; Prikhidko and Kenny, 2021). The public health care approach to preventing sexual violence among children and adolescents emphasizes the importance of engaging different environments involved in preventing sexual violence, i.e., the indispensable role of parents in preventing sexual violence (Anderson, Mangels and Langsam, 2004; Babatsikos and Miles, 2015; Rudolph et al., 2018; Wurtele, 2009).

Despite experts recommending that parents participate in their children's education to prevent sexual violence and they be the primary educators of children on this topic (Foster, 2017; Rudolph and Zimmer-Gembeck, 2018; Walsh and Brandon, 2012), many are reluctant to talk about sexuality with their children, especially about sexual violence. The main reasons are that many parents do not believe their children are at risk of sexual violence or they lack the knowledge, skills, and practice to talk about the topic, or are uncomfortable in the role of teaching sex education (Babatsikos, 2010; Del Campo et al., 2023; Flores and Barroso, 2017; Kenny and Wurtele, 2013; Livingston et al., 2020; Prikhidko and Kenny, 2021; Rudolph and Zimmer-Gembeck, 2018).

Several studies have shown that parents can be effective educators in preventing the risk of sexual violence, but only with the adequate level of knowledge and skills to effectively elaborate on the subject of sexual violence with their children (Del Campo and Fávero, 2020; Del Campo et al., 2023). First, parents should be encouraged to have multiple conversations with their children about preventing sexual violence during their growing up period (Babatsikos and Miles, 2015; Dilorio et al., 2002). If we want to prevent sexual violence, parents should acquire the competency on how and at what point in the child's development to provide the necessary information to children and young people (Dilorio et al., 2002). Specifically, parents should be taught to better recognize the tactics and behavior of perpetrators (e.g., recruitment), potentially risky situations, the warning signs (when an adult pays special attention and gives privileges or gifts to one of children), as well as the identity of possible perpetrators, such as and including partners, older children or adolescents, extended family (Rudolph et al., 2018). Parents should also be taught about healthy boundaries and privacy protocols (e.g., regarding non-biological household members and older children), special protection techniques (such as an unannounced arrival when the child spends time only with an adult or older child), talking with older children about appropriate and inappropriate behavior with younger children and recognizing problematic or worrisome sexual behavior (Mendelson and Letourneau, 2015). Key to this process is teaching parents about the link between positive parenting and the risk of sexual violence against children, better supervision of children, getting involved in the child's life, warmth and communication in the relationship with the child. The above are not only important

components for the child's well-being in social and emotional domains but also important strategies for preventing sexual violence (Rudolph et al., 2018). Conversations between parents and children on topics related to sexuality and the prevention of sexual violence can be the most effective strategies if we encourage parents to carry communication with the child in a warm, caring, and firm way (Mendelson and Letourneau, 2015).

Hence, parents can play a key role in preventing sexual violence in two ways: directly, through parental supervision, monitoring, involvement in the child's life and communication, and indirectly, by promoting competence, well-being, self-esteem, and self-efficacy in children, making them less likely targets for sexual violence and more capable of responding appropriately to and potentially detecting sexual violence if it occurs (Rudolph et al., 2018; Guastaferrero et al., 2022). However, a challenge for experts is how to reach parents with messages on preventing sexual violence against children since many parents do not attend prevention workshops, consult with experts, or consult online, as some studies show (Babatsikos, 2010; Babatsikos and Miles, 2015). Therefore, trying to include parents in different ways is important. The key messages for preventing sexual violence can be included in other topics of interest to parents, such as online safety, prenatal home visitation, or parenting skills development programs. Innovative approaches to reaching parents, such as using social media, are important.

Given the mentioned challenges, guidelines and key messages for parents conveyed in different ways are given below, referring to when and how parents can initiate conversations with their children on the topic of sexual violence and what steps can be taken to protect their child.

WHEN AND HOW TO INITIATE A CONVERSATION WITH CHILDREN ABOUT SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

There is no exact age of the child, place, time, or way to talk to the child about preventing sexual violence. Importantly, this should not be an isolated, once-only conversation with your child. In our culture, the topic of sexual violence is often accompanied by stigma and discomfort. This is precisely why talking with children about the topic at an early age and as often as possible is important. The earlier you start talking to children, the easier and more normal these conversations will become, and a good foundation will exist for preventing sexual violence in your own family (Bernier, 2014; Jeglic and Calkins, 2022; Daniels, 2023; Mendelson and Letourneau, 2015). Start naming body parts correctly and talking about them as early as possible in early childhood (Bernier, 2014; Daniels, 2023; Jeglic and Calkins, 2022). The words penis and vagina should become as common and neutral in your household as the words arm and leg.

Children become increasingly curious in middle childhood and early adolescence and pose increasingly complex questions (Jeglic and Calkins, 2022). How do you prepare for it? The recommendation is to use a conversation starter. Perhaps an event at your child's school, relationships between peers, a movie you watched together, or an event you saw together on the news broadcast can be an initial talking point. At this age, it is important to talk with children about broad topics such as sexual orientation and gender identity, setting personal boundaries, intimacy, and respect, responsible sexual behavior, peer pressure, consent in relationships, and partner and sexual violence (Jeglic and Calkins, 2022).

Once adolescence arrives, maintaining communication with children becomes increasingly challenging, so the key is a good foundation in the earlier stages of development. A positive

relationship between parents and adolescents, characterized by open communication and support (Hair et al., 2009), is important for the development of adolescents, who tend to experience numerous physical and emotional changes in adolescence (Sacks et al., 2014). Numerous studies show that positive family communication about sexual behavior is associated with improved safe sexuality among adolescents, including deferred commencement of sexual activity and increased use of contraception (Aspy et al., 2007; Wight and Fullerton, 2013). Furthermore, at this age, a balance between giving autonomy to young people and adequate supervision and care for them is important (Kobak et al., 2017). Parents must know where young people spend their free time, who their friends are, and what they spend their money on. We must not forget that young people learn from a model, so continuing to model prosocial behaviors is essential, i.e., young people observe how you resolve conflicts and create and maintain relationships with others.

Guidelines for parents in preventing sexual violence (Bernier, 2014; Daniels, 2023; Jeglic and Calkins, 2022)

- **Start talking to children about body parts, the importance of personal space and privacy in early childhood, as well as sexual relationships in early adolescence.**

Start naming body parts correctly and talking about them as early as possible. We encourage the child to feel comfortable using these words and know their meaning, which can help them verbalize clearly if something inappropriate happens.

- **Teach the child that some parts of the body are private.**

Teach the child that intimate parts of the body are called private because no one else should ask to see, touch or photograph them.

- **Permit the personal care and bathing of your child only to people you trust and have known for many years. In line with the child's development, encourage the child to be independent in their personal hygiene and caring for their own body.**
- **Teach your child to set boundaries for their personal space and body. Also, teach the child that the boundaries and rules for their own body apply to people they know, including adults but also other children.**

Teach the child that no one should touch their private parts, and none of them should seek to touch other people's private parts.

- **Teach the child NOT TO HAVE secrets about their own body. At the same time, teach the child that they will NEVER be in trouble if they reveal a secret about their own body to you.**

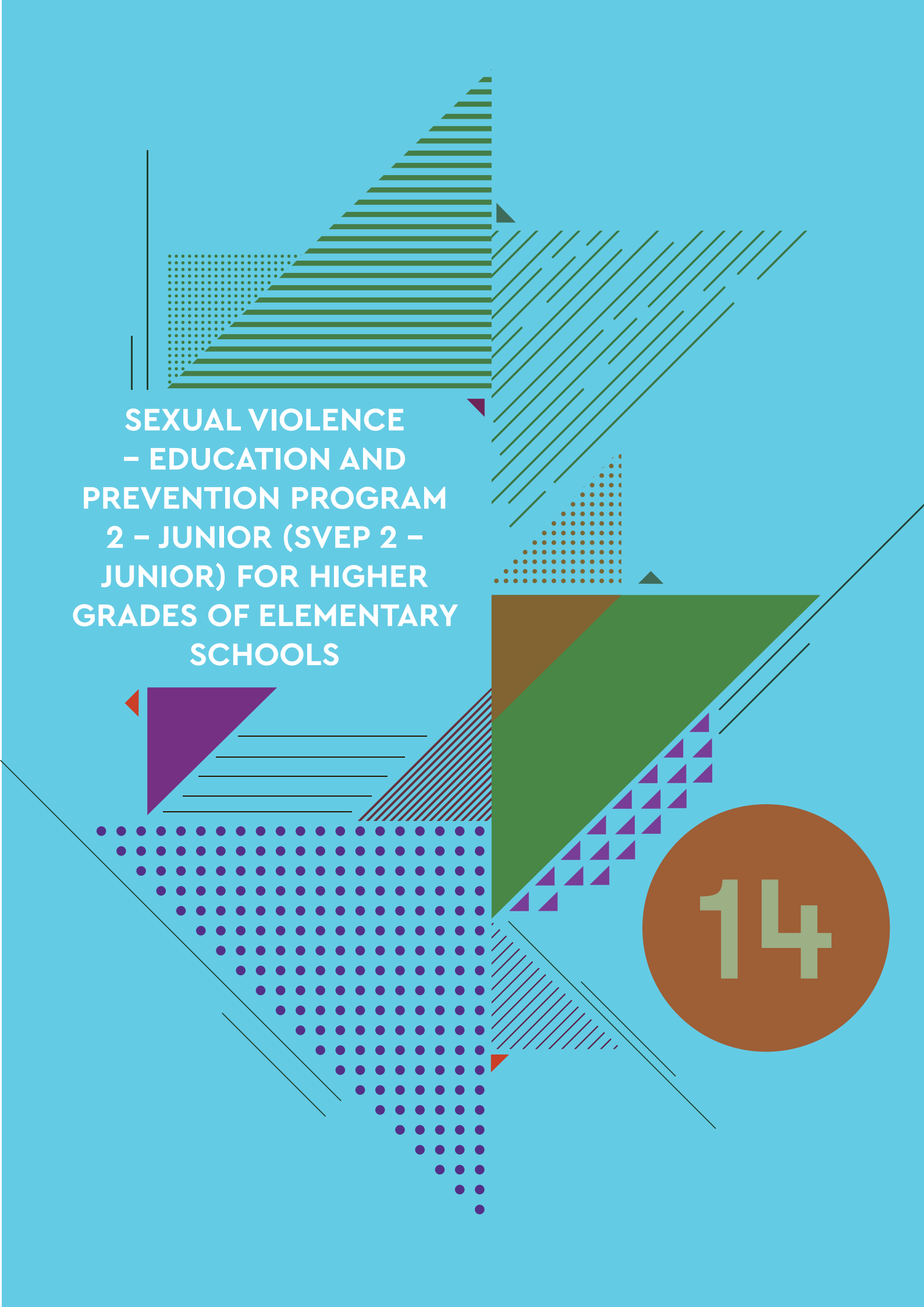
Tell the child that no matter what anyone tells them, secrets about their own body are NOT OKAY, and they should always tell you when someone tries to talk them into keeping a secret about their body. Establishing a relationship with the child is important, and there are no unpleasant or forbidden topics. Your child knows you are always available to answer questions about any topic of interest.

- **Teach the child that touching the body can be painful and unpleasant but sometimes pleasant and ticklish.**

A lot of literature talks about “good and bad touches,” but that can sometimes be confusing for children and young people because often some of the “bad touches” do not hurt or cause unpleasant feelings, but, on the contrary, can be pleasant. Therefore, talking to children about inappropriate touching is important.

- **Leave an opportunity to discuss personal development, sexuality, and the prevention of sexual violence. Talking about these topics openly and honestly is the best method to protect your children throughout life.**

In conclusion, parents can play a key role in preventing sexual violence against children and adolescents through active and involved parenting. The greatest parental contribution to preventing sexual violence against children and adolescents is creating a safer environment and supporting their children to feel safe and confident in different environments, especially in the family. Therefore, establishing a warm and caring relationship with the child is important, including encouraging ongoing discussion at different stages of the child’s development about body parts, privacy, healthy boundaries, giving consent, models of healthy relationships, and much more. The mentioned topics are not limited to just one conversation with the child. Open communication with children and trusting relationships are keys to preventing and detecting sexual violence.

The background is a vibrant blue with several abstract geometric elements. In the upper left, there is a large triangle composed of horizontal green lines, with a smaller dotted green triangle nested inside it. To the right of this is a large triangle of diagonal green lines. In the lower left, there is a purple triangle with horizontal white lines, and below it, a large triangle of purple dots. In the lower right, there is a large green triangle with a row of purple triangles along its bottom edge. A large brown circle containing the number '14' is positioned in the bottom right corner. The overall design is modern and geometric.

**SEXUAL VIOLENCE
– EDUCATION AND
PREVENTION PROGRAM
2 – JUNIOR (SVEP 2 –
JUNIOR) FOR HIGHER
GRADES OF ELEMENTARY
SCHOOLS**

14

14. SEXUAL VIOLENCE – EDUCATION AND PREVENTION PROGRAM 2 – JUNIOR (SVEP 2 – JUNIOR) FOR HIGHER GRADES OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

NAME OF PROGRAM	SVEP 2 - JUNIOR (SEXUAL VIOLENCE – EDUCATION AND PREVENTION PROGRAM 2 – JUNIOR)
TYPE OF PROGRAM	Prevention program
PROGRAM COORDINATOR	Women’s Room
GENERAL PROGRAM OBJECTIVE	Prevention of sexual violence against children
TARGET POPULATION	Students from 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th grade of elementary school
SUB-THEMES	5th grade: Sexual Violence and Prejudices About Sexual Violence 6th grade: Convention on the Rights of the Child and Sexual Violence in the Family 7th grade: Cyber Sexual Violence 8th grade: Sexual Violence in Adolescent Relationships
LEARNING OUTCOMES AT THE PROGRAM LEVEL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Explain what is sexual violence * List the causes, forms, and consequences of sexual violence * Recognize the warning signs that indicate exposure to sexual violence * Recognize sexual violence against children as an example of the violation of a child’s right to protection from violence and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse * Critically reflect on prejudices about sexual violence and differentiate them from the facts * Establish the link between sexual violence and gender inequality in society

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Describe the mechanisms that increase the risk of engaging in cyber sexual violence and list the types of risky online behavior * Formulate rules for safe online behavior to protect against cyber sexual violence * Explain the concept of consent to sexual activity * Recognize the characteristics of good and harmful relationships * Identify and know how to find systems for assisting and supporting children who have survived sexual violence, as well as systems for reporting sexual violence * Show compassion and empathy for persons who have survived any form of sexual violence * Recognize that in the case of sexual violence, the responsibility is always on the perpetrator and recognize the importance of reporting the perpetrator
<p>WORK METHODS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Collaborative learning * Short lectures * Guided teaching * Educational films and stories * Work in pairs * Work in small groups * Worksheets * Group discussions
<p>PLANNED PROGRAM IMPLEMENTORS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Expert school associates (such as school pedagogues, social pedagogues, psychologists, education rehabilitators.) * Teaching personnel who have completed specialized education by the Women's Room

<p>PROGRAM AUTHORS</p>	<p>WOMEN’S ROOM</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maja Mamula, Ph.D., psychologist 2. Kristina Mihaljević, M.A. social pedagogue 3. Josipa Tukara Komljenović, M.Soc. <p>INCEST TRAUMA CENTER - BELGRADE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dušica Popadić, psychologist 2. Ljiljana Bogavac, M.D. <p>CESI - Center for Education, Counseling and Research</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nataša Bijelić, M.Sc., sociologist <p>EXTERNAL ASSOCIATES</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dejana Bouillet, Ph.D., social pedagogue 2. Jelena Bićanić, social pedagogue
<p>PROGRAM REVIEWERS</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Martina Ferić, Ph.D., professor, Laboratory for Prevention Research, Department of Behavioral Disorders, Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences, University of Zagreb 2. Vesna Bilić, Ph.D., professor, Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Zagreb
<p>INTRODUCTORY NOTE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WORKSHOPS</p>	
<p>Throughout the workshops, italics only provide suggestions on how facilitators can communicate the value system and its key messages to students. Each facilitator has their style and valuable experience in classroom work and will use such resources for this topic in the best interest of students. Each of us has our own style, but only one value system in protecting children from violence exists and the key messages that it reflects</p>	
<p>If at any time you suspect that a pupil is a victim of sexual violence, be sure to contact the school’s expert associates and act according to the current Protocol on the Procedure in Case of Sexual Violence</p>	

If you notice that the pupil wants to share their personal experience of surviving sexual violence during the workshop, stop the presentation of personal experience carefully and appropriately and suggest that the pupil discuss their experience with you after the workshop (see Support Group). Also, you can say, something like: *“It seems to me that you’re prepared to tell us something about your personal experience, your life. I’d like to ask if you would like to do it now, in this workshop, or do you want us to go outside now and talk about it (if a co-facilitator is present)? You can also share your experience with the support group, which will be attended by anyone who wants to talk about their personal experience, or you can tell me after this workshop.”*

**RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR
IMPLEMENTING
THE WORKSHOPS**

1. **Read the Introductory Note on holding the workshops and this entire textbook.**
2. The recommendation for **conducting workshops** is to do it **as a co-facilitator pair**, a super standard that greatly promotes and raises the quality of work and shows special attention in case a pupil is identified as needing special attention.
3. **Students** should preferably **sit in a circle** (if possible).
4. Stories used in the groups are handed out to students in written (paper) form (to make it easier to follow the story when read aloud). **If there are students with names mentioned in the stories read in the class in which the workshop is conducted, the facilitators shall change the names of the characters.**
5. The recommendation is not to have a considerable interval between implementing two workshops (introductory and thematic) for the same class. **The optimal period is to conduct them at an interval of 2 weeks.** Consequently, this will require less repetition and reminders of what happened at the last workshop, with enough time left between workshops for students to think about what they have learned and to address doubts or questions at the next workshop.
6. **The recommendation is that the workshops – whenever possible – are organized to take place in the last hour of classes,** primarily due to holding the Support Groups and the fact that students get time to think about what they have learned in the workshop.
7. If the facilitators find the need to discuss the topic with students further or think that further elaborating on a certain part of the workshop is necessary, they are advised to talk to the students at the next class hour in school.

<p>ETHICAL ASPECT</p>	<p>Implementing the SVEP 2 – JUNIOR program must respect the ethical principles applicable to working with children, aiming to ensure the child’s best interest. All program facilitators must respect the code of ethics of the profession to which they belong (Code of Ethics of Social Pedagogues, Code of Ethics of Psychological Activities) and the School Code of Ethics.</p> <p>The SVEP 2 – JUNIOR program, along with the content, activities, and methods, was created to ensure the child’s best interest; hence, it will be implemented along those lines. Importantly, students should participate in the program under the continuous support and guidance of facilitators to achieve positive outcomes in the program.</p> <p>The implementation of the program must be based on respect for diversity.</p> <p>Information presented by students at the workshops or at a support group that does not include suspected violence is confidential and remains in the group. The confidentiality rule is set at the beginning of each workshop and the support group session as a group rule.</p> <p>Also, students should be informed beforehand of the school’s legal obligation to report any suspicion of sexual violence while taking special care of the necessary assistance and support to the pupil.</p>
<p>DIVERSITY ISSUES</p>	<p>It is important to bear in mind that the topic of sexual violence cannot be addressed without a knowledge of diversity. The value system in the field of sexual violence must be based on the child’s best interest, i.e., those students exposed to violence. Our attitudes on sexual violence, adopted through upbringing and education, significantly affect work on preventing sexual violence and protection against sexual violence.</p> <p>Conducting these workshops well requires reconsidering your attitudes and prejudices so as not to pass them on to students. Try to recognize all the ways you respect all diversities and the ways you perhaps discriminate. Each workshop facilitator is to be a public role model for students in terms of their attitudes and behaviors.</p>

GENDER COMPONENT OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Experience in implementing preventive programs confirms that facilitators, when addressing topics of sexual violence and domestic violence, have personally experienced the most difficulties in gaining an understanding of and also conveying the gender component of violence (causes, dynamics, gender of the victim, gender of the perpetrator). Sexual violence and domestic violence are the two main forms of gender-based violence, where the most common perpetrators are men, and the most common victims are girls, young women, and women.

As part of their education and studying professional literature, facilitators learn that it is politically correct to say that the perpetrators of sexual violence are most often male. However, this does not mean they will and can convey this knowledge clearly to their colleagues, parents, and students. Accurate information has to be given to children so we can do everything to prevent passing on prejudices and their impact in order to stop the violence.

Statistics in Europe and the world indicate that the perpetrators of violence in 9 out of 10 partnerships are males. In the case of child sexual abuse, the most common perpetrators are also men. Moreover, the data indicate that these forms of violence are extremely widespread. Accordingly, people are often overwhelmed by the feeling that violence is literally all around us, and they resist essential understanding the gender of perpetrators of sexual violence and domestic violence. One often hears, “if we admit that the perpetrators are most often men, it will seem as if all men are perpetrators of violence.” However, we are aware that this is incorrect. The fact that men are the most common perpetrators does not imply that all men are violent.

Gender-based violence, primarily sexual violence and domestic violence, are a direct consequence of the uneven distribution of power between women and men in society. Although inequality is easier to recognize in other spheres of life (employment, promotion, wage difference), it is necessary to understand that the influence of patriarchy and inequality between women and men are directly related to sexual violence against girls, young women, and women.

If we are not clear about the most common gender of perpetrators of violence, we are helping the violent perpetrators, though perhaps not wishing to do it consciously. We most often do it by supporting widespread prejudices founded on deeply internalized personal attitudes, which, unfortunately, we have gained and developed already when growing up. Some of the more common prejudices are:

“Men and women commit violence equally.” All international and national surveys and data from the police and the judicial system completely refute this bias.

GENDER COMPONENT OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

“He (perpetrator of violence) is violent because he too experienced violence.” It most often alludes to “childhood trauma” and “he needs help too,” which blurs the **priority of helping the victim of the violence committed now by the perpetrator with whom lies the sole responsibility.**

“It can’t possibly be him; I know that man (colleague, neighbor, family member); he’s a great person.” The perpetrator uses this tactic to present themselves as a positive person in public that we are a part of, too. So, when we find out about the case, we begin to suspect, justify or even diminish their violence, and our distrust in the victim’s experience becomes dominant.

“Surely, she did something to provoke him, so he had to...” One of the most common prejudices is shifting the basic responsibility for the committed violence to the victim and trying to explain how the victim herself “provoked” or “contributed” to the violence due to her actions. Instead of reporting violence to relevant services, the environment often looks for a *cause or reason*, i.e., the so-called myth of reciprocity comes into play, implying that “they both participated in the violence” and that the victim is responsible. The victim is always blamed in different ways, and this is just one of the ways the violent person counts on – so do not help him.

“I can’t say he’s violent; I haven’t seen it.” Whether you are a neighbor, a colleague, or a program facilitator, you don’t have to see someone’s violence – especially as a facilitator of this program – to accurately convey information about the most common gender of perpetrators.

The objective of prejudice is to minimize, relativize or erase the perpetrator’s responsibility for the violence. Or altogether. Prejudices play into the hands of perpetrators of violence. They often consciously create prejudices as one of their tactics so that the violence is not revealed or the perpetrator is not held accountable for the committed crime.

No one denies that women can be violent, too. In real life, this is the case in 1 in 10 abusive partnerships. Every time we fail to clearly state that 9 out of 10 abusers in a partnership are male – we bear responsibility for sending a untrue message.

Supporting prejudices occurs when program facilitators speak or express ambiguous or confusing messages, often through body language indicating disagreement with the “task of what needs to be said” or they express uncertainty about the message they need to convey – even though the message about the sex of the perpetrator is **in the best interest** of the child or adult who has survived violence.

How do we know it’s in the best interest? For the fact that **statistics are based on the experiences of real people who have found themselves in violent situations. In denying or altering the numbers, we nullify the experience of real persons who are somewhere among us in real life.**

	<p>Facilitators are also prone to prejudice because they have learned to preserve patriarchal notions while growing up and throughout their lives. Within the topic of violence, stepping out of prejudice means that program facilitators step out of their comfort zone and may become the target of the majority due to their attitudes in favoring the victim of violence. That is why our personal attitude is very important, it shows our readiness to expose ourselves and always clearly say we are not more important than the children and adults who have survived violence.</p> <p>Always remind yourself: When talking about men who are violent, YOU ARE NOT TALKING ABOUT ALL MEN. There are a lot of them who are caring and sensitive, and who contribute to creating a healthy partnership.</p>
<p>SUPPORT GROUP (30 min)</p>	<p>Dealing with the topic of violence against children, including sexual violence, requires an additional support mechanism. When announcing the first workshop, information about the Support Group should be given to the students. This will ensure that there is time allocated for them to have the individual attention of the facilitator if needed. Facilitators should tell the students that they will be at a specific place for 30 minutes (be there regardless of whether someone comes or not). Surely keep that promise.</p> <p>For example, If the workshop is held during the school class hour, which is the last class hour of the day, it is easy to stay after the end of the school class hour and wait 30 minutes if perhaps a pupil comes. If, after the workshop, both the facilitators and students have to go to attend a scheduled lesson, stay behind in school for 30 minutes after all the lessons students must attend that day.</p> <p>Even if you are alone in the room after 15 minutes, stay for the entire 30 minutes because maybe a pupil is struggling to take that first step. Disclosing a personal experience of violence takes time, most often years. Provide the opportunity for that to happen on that day, at the time you promised. In regard to our workshops, that is eight times 30 minutes of your time, which can be invaluable for a pupil.</p> <p>The content exchanged back and forth during the workshops can encourage students to tell their experience of neglect and abuse. Afterward, you need to contact the professional services at the school and act in line with the existing protocols.</p> <p>You can also tell students to come with a friend to a Support Group if that makes them feel safer.</p> <p>More details on establishing and the functioning of Support Groups can be found in “Healthy Choices for Children” on p. 67. (http://incestr Traumacentar.org.rs/files/2016/MPNTR-ITC_ZDRAVI_IZBORI_ZA_DECU_2016.pdf). This resource is directly addressed to you because, besides this subtopic and the workshops, you may find it useful, and you can continually communicate with colleagues, teachers, parents, and students. It is completely related to the topic of violence against children.</p>

**ADDITIONAL
INSTRUCTIONS
FOR THE
SUPPORT
GROUP**

The Support Group is intended for students with an acute life problem to help them open up for the first time and disclose their problem to someone while you provide them protection.

Start a support group by having students express their concerns, i.e., reason why they joined the group.

Our suggestion: *“I know it’s not easy talking about unpleasant things. I know it can be hard to put into words an experience that worries you. If it’s hard for you to talk about it, write it down.”*

A group can identify a topic of conversation in two ways.

The first way is for a pupil to mention the problem they want to address and for which getting help from others is important. At that point, each person present decides for whatever reason whether they wish to stay or leave.

Another way is to gather in a circle where each pupil says why they came to the Group. Based on the content you hear and which is given, choose the direction or focus applicable to the Group in its current composition. For example, if 4 out of 6 students expressed concern about insults in a class WhatsApp group, this becomes the focus of the group. Answers to the following questions will allow children to express their concerns about this problem.

How many of you:

- *are afraid that something bad will happen to someone?*
- *feel helpless?*
- *are angry with their peers?*
- *hope things will get better?*
- *have any ideas on how to stop insults, and want to share it with the Group?*

Importantly, it is important to allow that each pupil who comes to the Support Group has a friend for support, and if the pupil cannot talk about their problem, their friend conveys the information with the pupil’s permission. Also, your task is to encourage the pupil, in time, to say it in their own words.

Allow the pupil to vent their feelings. Often, the Group is the first place where they can do so. Support them, and consider the options and ideas of other students who, today, do not have the same problem in this particular group. Give them information about places where they can get help and support.

	<p>Finish the group so that each pupil notes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One thing they will carry with them from the group • One thing requiring help • One thing they can do that they have learned in the Group <p>If at any time you suspect that a pupil is a victim of sexual violence, be sure to contact the school’s professional service and act according to the current Protocol on the Procedure in Case of Sexual Violence!</p>
<p>FACILITATOR’S DIARY</p>	<p>For the sake of your own analysis and improving your work, it is important that each facilitator should keep a diary – for preparing as well as implementing the workshops.</p> <p><u>After the first workshop:</u></p> <p><i>In the first hour of the workshop, I learned about my preparation and conducting the class...</i></p> <p><i>In the first hour of the workshop, I learned from the students...</i></p> <p><i>For the next time when holding the first hour of the workshop, I’ll prepare even better...</i></p> <p><u>After the second workshop:</u></p> <p><i>In the second hour of the workshop, I learned about my preparation and conducting the class...</i></p> <p><i>In the second hour of the workshop, I learned from the students...</i></p> <p><i>Next time when holding both workshops, I’ll prepare even better...</i></p> <p><i>The lessons learned and my recommendations regarding the two workshops, I will share with my colleagues ... (specify whom and when) ...</i></p> <p>When entering notes at the end of the second hour of the workshop, it is necessary to consult your notes made after the first hour of the workshop.</p>
<p>LECTURE FOR PARENTS</p>	<p>Video lecture for parents is excellent material for preparing parents to talk about sexual violence with their children (a topic that parents are reluctant to discuss), especially parallel with workshops that are conducted with students. It is then possible to expect greater interest from children in these topics.</p> <p>Importantly, facilitators should inform parents about lectures on sexual violence against children before conducting workshops with children in each class. Parents can watch the lecture at parent meetings, or the lecture can be sent to them electronically (also available on the program website: www.snep2junior.zenskasoba.hr). Parents should be informed that they can get answers to any questions and additional clarifications by contacting the Women’s Room via e-mail (zenska.soba@zenskasoba.hr) and telephone (+385 1 6119-174).</p>

INTRODUCTORY WORKSHOP FOR 5TH GRADE SEXUAL VIOLENCE

1. WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

- * Inform students about the basic characteristics, frequency and consequences of sexual violence
- * Help students recognize different forms of sexual violence
- * Inform students about the mechanisms and possibilities of acquiring protection in case of sexual violence

2. EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES (knowledge, skills, attitudes and values)

After participating in the workshops, students will be able to:

1. Explain the concept of sexual violence and list the basic forms
2. Describe the unacceptability, harm and consequences of sexual violence
3. Show compassion and empathy for survivors of sexual violence
4. Specify and know how to find systems for assistance, support and reporting any case of sexual violence

3. LITERATURE

1. Bogavac, Lj., Popadić, D., and Mrše, S. Educational Pack for Learning About the Child Sexual Abuse Issue in Primary and Secondary Schools in Serbia. Belgrade: Incest Trauma Center - Belgrade. 2016.
2. Mamula, M. (Ed.), Popadić, D., Mihaljević, K., Hojt Ilić, A. and Drožđan-Kranjčec, A., Peto Kujundžić, L., Bičanić, J. and Kolega, M. Sexual Violence Against and Among Children and Youth. Zagreb: Women's Room – Center for Sexual Rights. 2020.

To implement the workshop, it is necessary to read the entire theoretical part of the textbook "Sexual violence against children - SVEP 2 - JUNIOR".

4. CONTENT – DESCRIPTION OF THE WORKSHOP

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY (5 min)

The program facilitator briefly welcomes students and reminds them of the class rules, emphasizing communication skills involving listening and respecting the opinions of others as a significant form of mutual respect.

The facilitator announces that a topic rarely talked about will be addressed today. The students are asked if they have had the opportunity to listen and learn about the different forms of violence experienced by children. The question is also posed on what forms of violence they have heard about most often. The various forms of violence that children can experience are listed: physical violence, psychological violence, peer violence, etc. **Sexual violence** is noted as one of the forms of violence rarely talked about, and this is the focus of this workshop. The students are informed that the workshop consists of introductory, main and final activities.

The facilitator should **point out** that the topic of sexual violence can stir **various feelings** (avoid using the word “severe”) and that students have several options:

- * They can **share their feelings** about the sexual violence issue in front of the whole group.
- * They can **leave the class** to take a breather and come back at some point. If the pupil wants, the workshop co-facilitator (if present at the workshop) can accompany the pupil outside to provide immediate support to the child. If a co-facilitator is not present, this option is not mentioned.
- * They can **keep their feelings to themselves at this moment and express them afterward** – tell them who they can contact, when and how (spoken, written or otherwise), and link this option with the Support Group (see Introductory Note).
- * **After the workshop, they can seek out facilitator and/or expert school associate** with whom they can talk openly about the topic and feelings experienced during the workshop. The facilitator or expert school associate will tell the pupil that the facilitator will be at a certain place, PROVIDING CLEAR INFORMATION FROM WHEN TO WHEN – SUPPORT GROUP (min. 30 min, best IMMEDIATELY after the workshop). More information about the Support Group is described in the INTRODUCTORY NOTE –NECESSARY TO READ.
- * They can, if they wish, contact one of the **addresses or telephone numbers** given at the end of the workshop.

The facilitator will point out that everyone should be aware that no child should suffer any form of violence, and if necessary, the facilitator will be there for them in line with the legal rules and school procedures.

MAIN ACTIVITIES (35 min)

The facilitator announces that a short film about sexual violence will be shown and asks students to follow closely.

A. Screening Video 1 Sexual Violence followed by a discussion (10 min)

After watching the film, the facilitator says: *We have just watched a video that gave us some basic information on the topic of sexual violence. Discussing this topic is important because one in five children has been sexually abused by someone, and they need help. The most common victims of sexual violence are girls. But some boys have also gone through this experience. Although this form of violence is not talked about often or is not discussed in schools as often as the topic of physical or peer violence, sexual violence is widespread, and you should know about it, so you can recognize and report it and protect yourself and others (friends and other persons close to you).*

Then, the facilitator asks the students: *What do you remember from the video film? Do you already know anything about this from before? Do you have any more questions?*

The facilitator reflects on the responses of the students and thanks them.

B. Activity “What would you do?” (25 min)

The facilitator tells the students that they will now work together on stories concerning sexual violence.

The facilitator reads (a PowerPoint presentation (PPT 1) on a projector screen) two stories, and leads a conversation with the students after each story.

1. Art photography

After the story, the facilitator gets a discussion going by asking the following questions:

1. *What is wrong with this story? What feelings does this story stir up in you?*
2. *How do you think the girl feels in this story? What feelings come to mind?*
3. *What forms of violence do you recognize in this story?*
4. *What would you do to help the girl in this story?*
5. *Who would you turn to for help?*

Note: The facilitator should offer support and a solution if the students cannot offer one.

1. Taekwondo trainer

After the story, the facilitator gets a discussion going by asking the following questions:

1. *What is wrong with this story? What feelings does this story stir up in you?*
2. *How do you think the girl feels in this story? What feelings come to mind?*
3. *What forms of violence do you recognize in this story?*
4. *What would you do to help the girl in this story?*
5. *Who would you turn to for help?*

Note: The facilitator should offer support and a solution if the students cannot offer one.

The facilitator concludes the activity by showing **PPT 2 – “Contacts in Institutions and Civil Society Organizations”** which they can contact if needing help. **WORKSHEET 1 – “What to Do in Case of Sexual Violence”** is handed out to the students. The sheet is not analyzed, but the facilitator says:

*It is important that everyone has **an adult they trust**, can confide in and ask for help. It is important to remember that **the child is never responsible for or guilty of the violence they have survived**, but it is the responsibility and guilt of the perpetrator. **All forms of violence should be reported**. Count on me; I’m here to understand and support you in all life’s situations.*

FINAL ACTIVITY (5 min)

Letter or message of support to a child who has survived sexual violence

The facilitator shares Attachment 1 and asks students to write a short letter or message of support (depending on the time available) to a child who has survived sexual violence. The facilitator puts the letters or messages on the class board.

The facilitator thanks the students for their active participation.

5. LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

1. Video 1 - Sexual Violence
2. PPT 1 – “Stories for Working on Forms of Sexual Violence”
3. PPT 2 – “Contacts of Institutions and Civil Society Organizations”
4. Worksheet 1 – “What to Do in Case of Sexual Violence”
5. Attachment 1 – “Evaluation” (message or letter to a child who has survived sexual violence)

THEMATIC WORKSHOP FOR 5TH GRADE PREJUDICES ABOUT SEXUAL VIOLENCE

1. WORKSHOP GOALS

- * Teach students about prejudices and facts related to sexual violence
- * Introduce students to the protection mechanisms and possibilities in case of sexual violence to preserve personal safety and integrity and respect the safety and integrity of others

2. EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES

(knowledge, skills, attitudes and values)

After participating in the workshops, students will be able to:

1. Critically address prejudices about sexual violence
2. Establish a link between the harmfulness and impact of prejudices about sexual violence on the child who has survived it, as well as on the broader social response to surviving violence
3. Choose adults to confide in if there is suspicion of or exposure to sexual violence

3. LITERATURE

1. Bogavac, Lj., Popadić, D., and Mrše, S. Educational Pack for Learning About the Topic of Sexual Violence Against Children in Primary and Secondary Schools in Serbia. Belgrade: Incest Trauma Center - Belgrade. 2016.
2. Mamula, M. (Ed.), Popadić, D., Mihaljević, K., Hojt Ilić, A., Drožđan-Kranjčec, A., Peto Kujundžić, L., Bičanić, J. and Kolega, M. Sexual Violence Against and Among Children and Youth. Zagreb: Women's Room – Center for Sexual Rights. 2020.

To implement the workshop, it is necessary to read the entire theoretical part of the textbook "Sexual violence against children - SVEP 2 - JUNIOR".

4. CONTENT – DESCRIPTION OF THE WORKSHOP

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY (8 min)

The facilitator reminds the students that the topic from the previous workshop was to define what is sexual violence, and the topic is continued in this workshop, **focusing on prejudices about sexual violence**. The students are informed that the workshop consists of introductory, main and final activities, as well as been able to stay in the **Support Group** after the workshop class (see Introductory Note) if there are topics and questions that individual students want to present in a smaller group. If the Support Group met after the first workshop, express your gratitude for the meeting. If no Support Group met, point out that the facilitator knows it was not held last time and that after this workshop hour the facilitator will be available to students and wait if someone comes. The facilitator goes over the class rules emphasizing communication skills involving listening and respecting everyone's opinions, which is an important sign of mutual respect.

The facilitator states that everyone should know that no child should suffer any form of violence and if necessary, the facilitator will be there for them in line with the legal rules and school procedures.

The Introductory Activity ends with an explanation of the term **prejudice**:

Given that today's topic discusses prejudices about sexual violence, we should clarify the concept of prejudice.

Prejudices are beliefs we have about a person, group of people or things that happen in society for which we do not have proven or verified true information. They happen when we believe something about someone or something and form a belief or attitude without knowing enough accurate information about that person or topic. In this way, prejudices distort the image we have of a person or topic.

Prejudices can be positive (e.g., all boys are dexterous and run fast) or negative (e.g., all boys are messy). These prejudices are not righteous because they are not based on truth but on assumptions.

Some prejudices are accepted by a lot of people and, most often, we do not even question or verify their accuracy (e.g., "Sexual violence does not happen to children" or "Perpetrators of sexual violence are not persons known to or close to children").

There are many prejudices about sexual violence, and they are one of important reasons why sexual violence is not talked about, why sexual violence is not reported and prejudices are one of the reasons why survivors of sexual violence rarely seek help and support. Having said all that, talking about prejudices about sexual violence is important, which we will do in today's workshop.

MAIN ACTIVITY (27 min)

Screening the video “Prejudices About Sexual Violence” followed by a discussion

The facilitator hands out post-it sticky notes (red and green) and instructs students what the Post-it sticky notes are used for, telling them they have to choose only one of the sticky notes. The students are shown the video “Prejudices About Sexual Violence.” The screening stops after each claim, after which the students pick up a red (Disagree) or green (Agree) Post-it sticky note, indicating whether they agree or disagree with the claim. The facilitator then asks a pupil who raised the red Post-it note to explain their view, and then repeats it for the green Post-it. If the facilitator sees that this approach in the classroom is too “exposing” and consequently the desired interaction will not be achieved (extremely important for this activity), the facilitator should add up the red and green notes after each claim, provide accurate information and then ask the students if they want to comment on something.

The film is continued after the right answers and specific facts and information.

Claims (prejudices)

1. Children are rarely victims of sexual violence.
2. Sexual violence can't happen to me.
3. There are several forms of sexual violence.
4. Perpetrators of sexual violence can easily be recognized.
5. Perpetrators of sexual violence are most often persons not previously known to the child.
6. Sexual violence only happens to girls.
7. A child is never to blame for having survived sexual violence!
8. A child who has survived sexual violence can never recover.
9. Anyone who has survived sexual violence is a strong person.

The facilitator will summarize as follows:

Most people think sexual violence does not happen or rarely happens. Many people think children can avoid or prevent sexual violence from happening to them. Next, most people think identifying the perpetrator is easy, and they are persons whom the child knows. Most often, people do not believe recovery after sexual violence is possible. These are all prejudices, i.e. wrong beliefs that make it especially difficult for people to believe children that they have survived sexual violence and for them to tell their stories. Recognizing these prejudices and encouraging a friend to talk about the matter is important. Each of us can have prejudices, but we should not support prejudices but support our friends and trust them.

FINAL ACTIVITY (10 min)

A) Assistance and Support Mechanisms (7 min)

The facilitator poses the following question to the students:

1. Who do you consider to be your trusted adult? Write that name down on a piece of paper, and remember that this should be a person you can confide in and talk to about your experience. I encourage you to talk to your person of trust today, if you are able, and pass on the knowledge you learned at this workshop to them.

When answering these questions, the part on how to react in case of sexual violence should be gone over with the students. The facilitator will point out: You're never guilty of surviving sexual violence! Trust your inner voice, as it will always tell you when something is wrong and remember that there are no good secrets when it comes to sexual violence. A trusted adult should be informed about having survived sexual violence. The violence can be reported to relevant institutions. The school and its professional service are there to help you, and so am I.

The facilitator presents **PPT 2 – “Contacts of Institutions and Civil Society Organizations”** which the students can contact if needing help, and points out that all contacts can also be found on the worksheet received at the previous workshop.

B) Evaluation (3 min)

The facilitator distributes Post-it notes and invites students to anonymously write a keyword or message they remember from this workshop. The facilitator should pay special attention if the message indicates the child may have survived sexual violence.

5. LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

1. Video 2 – “Prejudices About Sexual Violence”
2. Post-it notes in 2 colors
3. PP2 – “Contacts of Institutions and Civil Society Organizations”
4. Post-it notes for evaluation

INTRODUCTORY WORKSHOP FOR 6TH GRADE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

1. WORKSHOP GOALS

- * Inform students about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the State having to fulfill its obligations on the rights of the child and intervene if a family violates a child's rights
- * Provide students with basic information about sexual violence against and among children (what is sexual violence, its forms, prevalence, and the most common perpetrators)

2. EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES (knowledge, skills, attitudes and values)

After participating in the workshop, students will be able to:

1. Explain key concepts related to the rights of the child
2. Recognize sexual violence against children as an example of violating a child's right to protection from violence and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse
3. Recognize the role and responsibility of the State in fulfilling its obligations towards children under the Convention
4. Establish a connection between the Convention rights and life situations facing a child

3. LITERATURE

1. United Nations. [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#). 1989.
2. Council of Europe. [Council of Europe Convention on Protection of Children Against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse \(Lanzarote Convention\)](#). 2007.
3. Finkelhor, D. [The Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse](#). Video lecture on major components to a comprehensive approach to preventing sexual abuse in all its forms. Slovenia: Association SOS Help-line for Women and Children Victims of Violence from Ljubljana. 2020.
4. Finkelhor, D. *The Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse: An Overview of Needs and Problems*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 2019.
5. National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children ([NSPCC](#)). United Kingdom.
6. Bogavac, Lj., Popadić, D. and Mrše, S. [Educational Pack for Learning About the Topic of Sexual Violence Against Children for Primary and Secondary Schools](#) Belgrade: Incest Trauma Center - Belgrade. 2016.

7. Bogavac, Lj. and Popadić, D. Complementary - Resource to Educational Pack for Learning About the Topic of Sexual Violence Against Children for Primary and Secondary Schools in Serbia: Healthy Choices for Kids – Violence Prevention Program of the Incest Trauma Center – Belgrade for Preschool Institutions, Teachers, Parents/Caretakers and Children During Homeroom Class, for Creating and Implementing School Actions and Local Community Actions. Belgrade: Incest Trauma Center - Belgrade. 2016.

To implement the workshop, it is necessary to read the entire theoretical part of the textbook “Sexual violence against children - SVEP 2 - JUNIOR”.

4. CONTENT – DESCRIPTION OF THE WORKSHOP

UVODNA AKTIVNOST (15 min)

A) Introduction to the Workshop (3 min)

The facilitator announces the topic and structure of today’s workshop to the students: *Today, we will talk about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and its articles, mostly related to protecting children from sexual violence.* The facilitator informs students that the workshop consists of introductory, main and final activities.

The facilitator should **point out** that the topic of sexual violence can stir **various feelings** (avoid using the word “severe”) and that students have several options:

- * They can **share their feelings** about the problem of sexual violence in front of the whole group.
- * They can **leave the class** to take a breather and come back at some point. If the pupil wants, the workshop co-facilitator (if present at the workshop) can accompany the pupil outside to provide immediate support to the child. If a co-facilitator is not present, this option is not mentioned.
- * They can **keep their feelings to themselves at this moment and express them afterward** – specify who they can contact, when and in what way (spoken, written or otherwise), and link this option with the Support Group (see Introductory Note).
- * After the workshop, they can seek out facilitator and/or expert school associate with whom they can talk openly about the topic and feelings experienced during the workshop. The facilitator or expert school associate will tell the pupil that they will be at a certain place, **WITH CLEAR INFORMATION FROM WHEN TO WHEN** – “SUPPORT GROUP” (min. 30 min, best IMMEDIATELY after the workshop). More information about the Support Group is described in the INTRODUCTORY NOTE – NECESSARY TO READ.
- * They can, if they wish, make contact through **one of the addresses or telephone numbers** given at the end of the workshop.

The facilitator will point out that everyone should be aware that no child should suffer any form of violence, and if necessary, the facilitator will be there for them in accordance with the legal rules and school procedures.

The facilitator distributes the prepared work materials to the students and tells them that they are to have the materials with them during both workshops, i.e., to definitely bring the material with them to the next workshop.

B) Screening Video 1 Sexual Violence (12 min)

The facilitator announces that a short film about sexual violence will be shown and asks students to follow closely.

After watching the film, the facilitator says: *We have just watched a video that gave us some basic information on the topic of sexual violence. Discussing this topic is important because one in five children has been sexually abused by someone, and they need help. The most common victims of sexual violence are girls. But some boys have also gone through this experience. Although this form of violence is not talked about often or is not discussed in schools as often as the topic of physical or peer violence, sexual violence is widespread and you should know about it, so you can recognize and report it, and protect yourself or others (your friends, other people close to you).*

Then, the facilitator asks the students: *What do you remember from the video film? Do you already know anything about this from before? Do you have any more questions?*

The facilitator reflects on the responses of the students and thanks them.

The facilitator then points out the following: *These two workshops will help us to gain the knowledge how to be a true friend to your friend who has been exposed to sexual violence. We will be true friends by helping – together with adults – to stop the violence.*

MAIN ACTIVITY (25 min)

CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD – THE RIGHT OF THE CHILD TO BE SAFE AND PROTECTED

Note: If the students are quite familiar with the entire Convention on the Rights of the Child, emphasis should be placed on its articles related to sexual violence (particularly highlighted).

The facilitator prepares **Attachment 2** and 16 cards of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in advance and introduces the children to the topic of today's workshop by saying:

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is a list of children's rights guaranteeing the rights of every child in the world from the moment they are born until they are 18 years old. The Convention was adopted by the United Nations in 1989. The Convention was also ratified by the Republic of Croatia, which committed itself to comply with it.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is a universal and important legal framework regulating the safety and protection of the child. When a State becomes a signatory, it undertakes to apply the Convention consistently and fully. Accordingly, it is obliged to take care of every child equally, regardless of where and the conditions they live in, their age, their national or ethnic background, physical and mental abilities, and regardless of any other personal characteristic differentiating the child from others.

The State and its institutions are responsible for the child's physical and psychological well-being. Next in line bearing responsibility for the well-being of the child are adults who are responsible for and take care of the child, who are the parents or guardians of the child, or persons who by law directly care for the child.

The list of children's rights under the Convention also includes the right of the child to be safe and protected. This means that the State and parents, i.e., guardians, provide the child with complete protection from neglect and various forms of abuse such as emotional, economic, physical and sexual abuse.

In line with our theme, today we will talk specifically about the right of the child to be safe and protected and this will be done as follows:

We have a total of 16 cards listing the rights of the child to help us understand what it means for the child to be safe and protected. I'd like to ask those who want to take a card from this (already prepared) hat and read out aloud which right of the child is written on the card.

The facilitator's role is to present the Convention on the Rights of the Child in an almost ceremonial way, pointing out its immense importance. Accordingly, ask every pupil who has volunteered to get up from their seat, stand in front of the class and read the article of the Convention written on the card in the same way as you placed importance of the Convention.

When a pupil reads an article of the Convention from a selected card, the facilitator will check with the students whether they conceptually understand the overall content or a particular word. If a term is difficult to understand, and needs clarification, the facilitator will provide an explanation.

Next, ask the pupil to briefly tell everyone how they understand the content of the article. If the pupil is uncertain in interpreting of the article, the facilitator should not increase the pupil's feeling of being put on the spot, but immediately asks the other students to try to explain the article.

As they move from card to card, article to article, the facilitator expresses sensitivity to the process in class and if noticing that an article of the Convention affects live and active exchanges between students, the facilitator will pause the presentation and show interest in the exchange, listening to opinions and experiences, while providing brief feedback in the spirit of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Below are a few examples to show the facilitator how to link the articles of the Convention to the context of (sexual) violence against children:

Article 1. You're a child and all the rights under this Convention apply to you until there are 18 candles lit up on your birthday cake.

Article 2. All the rights under the Convention apply to all children and all children are to be protected from all forms of discrimination.

Article 3. All procedures concerning you will be taken in your best interests and the State will take care of you if your parents or caretakers do not.

Article 4. The State shall ensure your rights given in this Convention.

Article 9. You have the right to live with your parents unless separating from them is better for you, and even then, you have the right to remain in contact with them.

*In regard to Article 9, the facilitator explains:

There are parents who hurt their children and then the State is obliged to separate the child from their parents and thus protect them.

Facilitator asks students:

Can you reply in one word what you think how the child feels when being hurt by parents? Say it in one word, name one feeling of the child.

The facilitator gives an opportunity for three to four students to mention a feeling and point out:

It's about feelings that even adults don't easily deal with. So how difficult is it for a child who has many feelings but mostly keeps them locked inside, afraid to talk about them to someone.

The facilitator then moves onto the next article of the Convention.

Article 12. You have the right to express your opinion freely and that it be considered with due care in all matters concerning you.

* In regard to Article 12, the facilitator takes the opportunity to explain the following:

If a child has experienced any form of violence, the Convention encourages them to disclose their experience and that they be fully respected. The child is also encouraged not to give up until the full trust is given to the child's experience.

Article 17. You have the right to ask for information that interests you, and the State must protect you from harmful materials and information.

Article 18. Your parents together have to take care of you, and the State has to help them in that task.

Article 19. You have the right to protection against all forms of neglect and abuse, and the State should provide that for you.

*In regard to Article 19, the facilitator recalls:

We are dealing with the Convention as an introduction specifically to the topic of sexual violence, which we will elaborate upon in more detail at the next workshop. Also, the facilitator announces (or we've already heard it from them, depending on the order in which the cards are drawn):

There is also Article 34 of the Convention, which especially refers to sexual violence. We'll hear about it when it too is drawn from the hat.

Article 23. If you are a child with disabilities, you have the same rights as others, and also the right to special care, education and training for work.

*In regard to Article 23, the facilitator draws the students' attention:

A child who has physical or mental developmental difficulties has specific vulnerability and it is precisely due to their diversity that the child is at multiple risk of being exposed to violence, especially sexual violence.

Article 30. If you are a member of a minority, you have the right to your own culture, religion and language.

Article 32. You have the right to protection against work that is harmful to your health or interferes with your development and education.

Article 34. You have the right to protection against sexual exploitation and abuse, including pornography and prostitution.

*In regard to Article 34, the facilitator provides the following information to students:

World data show that the most common form of sexual violence against children is sexual violence in the family. The facilitator will point out this fact is sometimes difficult to understand and there will be more talk about it at the next workshop.

Article 35. The State must protect you from kidnapping, the sale and the trafficking of children.

Article 36. The State must protect you from all forms of exploitation that harm your well-being.

Article 39. If you have been subjected to armed conflicts, torture, neglect, abuse or exploitation, you are entitled to receive assistance for physical and psychological recovery.

* In regard to Article 39, the facilitator emphasizes the following:

Violence is a complex life experience. Recovery is possible, which is why it is important we should all be allies to friends who have experienced violence by asking them in a caring manner what they need from us.

After all the cards have been read, the facilitator thanks the students for actively participating and informs them that this was preparation for the next workshop, when there will be more discussion about sexual violence against children. The facilitator tells the students that they are encouraged to think about everything they have talked about today and if they have any questions, they can ask them at the next workshop.

FINAL ACTIVITY (5 min)

The facilitator asks each pupil to complete the following sentence on a Post-it note:

“A child is safe when...”

Once the students complete the sentence, the facilitator instructs them to stick their notes to the board/flipchart/billboard. The facilitator says that all answers will remain there until the next workshop, encourages the students to read them by then and they are told that at the next workshop they will go through them together again.

5. LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

1. Video 1 – “Sexual Violence”
2. Attachment 2 – Convention on the Rights of the Child (total of 16 cards)
3. Post-it notes
4. Flipchart/billboard

THEMATIC WORKSHOP FOR 6TH GRADE SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN FAMILIES

1. WORKSHOP GOALS

- * Understand the connection between sexual violence against children in the family and violations of the rights of students under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- * Introduce students to the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children Against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention)
- * Introduce students to basic information about sexual violence against children in the family (who are the most frequent victims and who are the offenders, statistics, types of violence and consequences)

2. EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES (knowledge, skills, attitudes and values)

After participating in the workshop, students will be able to:

1. Recognize sexual violence against children in the family as a form of violation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Lanzarote Convention
2. Recognize warning signs which indicate that child has been a survivor of sexual violence
3. Show compassion and empathy with survivors of sexual violence
4. Understand that in the case of sexual violence, the responsibility lies solely with the offender and to recognize the importance of reporting the offender

3. LITERATURE

1. United Nations. [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#). 1989.
2. Council of Europe. [Council of Europe Convention on Protection of Children Against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse \(Lanzarote Convention\)](#). 2007.
3. Finkelhor, D. [The Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse](#). Video lecture on major components to a comprehensive approach to preventing sexual abuse in all its forms. Slovenia: Association SOS Help-line for Women and Children Victims of Violence from Ljubljana. 2020.
4. Finkelhor, D. *The Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse: An Overview of Needs and Problems*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 2019.
5. National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children ([NSPCC](#)). United Kingdom.
6. Bogavac, Lj., Popadić, D. and Mrše, S. [Educational Pack for Learning About the Topic of Sexual Violence Against Children for Primary and Secondary Schools](#) Belgrade: Incest Trauma Center - Belgrade. 2016.

7. Bogavac, Lj. and Popadić, D. Complementary Resource to *Educational Pack for Learning About the Topic of Sexual Violence Against Children for Primary and Secondary Schools in Serbia: [Healthy Choices for Kids – Violence Prevention Program. Incest Trauma Center – Belgrade for Preschool Institutions, Teachers, Parents/Caretakers and Children During Homeroom Class, for Creating and Implementing School Actions and Local Community Actions.](#)* Belgrade: Incest Trauma Center - Belgrade. 2016.

To implement the workshop, it is necessary to read the entire theoretical part of the textbook “Sexual violence against children - SVEP 2 - JUNIOR”.

4. CONTENT – DESCRIPTION OF THE WORKSHOP

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY (15 min)

A) Introduction (2 min)

The facilitator announces to the students the theme and structure of today’s workshop. The facilitator informs students that the workshop consists of introductory, main and final activities, as well as been possible to stay in the **Support Group** after the workshop class (see Introductory Note) if there are topics and questions that individual students want to present in a smaller group. If the Support Group met after the first workshop, express your gratitude for the meeting. If there was no Support Group, facilitator points out understanding that it was not held last time and that after this workshop hour, the facilitator will be available to students and wait if someone comes.

B) Introductory activity (5 min)

The facilitator recalls that the previous and this workshop topic is “Sexual Violence in the Family” and work on the theme will continue in this workshop. Briefly repeat which three activities were carried out at the previous workshop and the conclusions.

Remind the students about the basic statistics on sexual abuse of children in the Republic of Croatia presented in the introductory film at the first workshop, by putting emphasis on data related to sexual violence in the family.

This is followed by: *Today we will continue to talk about a topic concerning which there is much silence in society. Last time we talked about the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and today we will talk about sexual violence against children. This topic is regulated by another convention called the Lanzarote Convention and talks about how to keep children safe and protected from sexual violence.*

The facilitator will then refer back to the Post-it notes on the board/flipchart/billboard, where completed sentences were written at the end of the last workshop on the topic “A child is safe when...” A summary is already prepared in the following manner:

The most common answers are...

Then, approx. number of students think a child is safe and protected when ...

Several of you believe that...

Based on the content of the first workshop, if the students did not mention certain important segment in their responses, this can be done in a way that the facilitator expresses own wish to participate in this activity, adding the following:

The child is safe when... (give your answer).

During the introductory activity, the facilitator takes care strictly of the time available.

MAIN ACTIVITY (30 min)

Screening the Video Story About My Female Friend (6 min)

The facilitator announces to the students that they will watch a short video about a situation in which a child was exposed to various forms of violence within the family. The video is called **Story About My Female Friend**. The facilitator says how many minutes the video lasts and at the end they will discuss the film. The facilitator asks students to pay special attention to how a child feels when exposed to violence

Discussion after the video (24 min)

After the video, it is important that the facilitator announces for the students to take 2-3 minutes break and think about the video they just watched. This is a moment for the facilitator to allow time for silence or possible murmuring among the students, without interruptions.

After 2-3 minutes, depending on what is happening among the students, the facilitator could say something like:

If there is silence: I understand the video strongly impacted you and you probably have deep thoughts about what you heard...

or

I can just imagine how the video triggered different feelings in you. If we are now silent and struggling with these feelings, imagine what it is like for a child who has sometimes been silent for years and has had to keep a bad secret.

If there is murmuring: I can see that the video has stirred different reactions in you and it is important to talk about it together now.

or

Simply, in another way, give permission for verbal exchanges that have already taken place, by saying:

It is important to me you've already started exchanging impressions and now we're going to continue doing it but in the way of carefully listening to each other.

The facilitator initiates the discussion:

- a. What forms of violence did you recognize in Story About My Female Friend?**
- b. To whom does violence happen?**
- c. Who commits violence?**
- d. What rights of the child are violated under the Convention on the Rights of the Child?**

Students do not need to know exactly which articles of the Convention are relevant, they will be referred to the articles by the facilitator when listening to their answers (Articles 19, 18 and 12):

- e. How does the girl feel?**
- f. Based on what did the psychologist notice that something was happening to the girl?**

When the students respond, the facilitator points out:

These are **warning signs**. Very often, children who are exposed to sexual abuse will not show any warning sign, because deep down they hide what is happening to them out of fear that no one will believe them, because of sadness, helplessness, and the threats they receive from the offender (they must not tell anyone, something bad will happen to another family member that the child loves, the family will fall apart) and other factors. A child finds it particularly difficult to confide in someone if the offender is a family member.

In this story, the warning signs are:

The **feelings** that the psychologist noticed in my friend are fear, shame, anxiety, sadness, helplessness and loss of hope that it will ever get better, but also the hope that the only way out is to go somewhere where it will be difficult for their father to find them.

The **behaviors** that can be observed in my friend are withdrawal, sleeping difficulties, lack of concentration and will (she can't study or go to school, overly worrying for her mother and brother, feels guilty about the lies and secrets she was forced into).

My friend is in a state called "a state of total surrender" – she doesn't rebel, and agrees to everything, which is the only way for her to survive, as though in a "state of constant hypervigilance", which means – she twitches, everything upsets and frightens her, children at school say she is very timid.

The list of warning signs that are applicable for any child, as well as the warning signs discussed in Story About My Female Friend are listed in **Attachment 3**. The facilitator should prepare this attachment in advance with a sufficient number of printed copies for each pupil.

- g. Who are the observers? Who else notices that something is happening to the girl, but does nothing to help her?**

The facilitator then explains to the students:

It is often the case that someone suspects or knows that a child has been sexually abused without doing anything to protect them or seek help from someone. These are observers and their responsibility is great. It is necessary always to be an ally to the child, because the child alone cannot prevent or stop the offender.

It is to expect that the students will recognize some children as observers in the story. If not, the facilitator will take the initiative:

Sometimes the behavior of a child exposed to violence can be confusing for other children because they cannot explain to themselves why this is so. Even when you don't understand the behavior of your friend, the most important thing is not to judge them. We never quite know if a painful experience lies beneath this behavior. Most often, this behavior is a signal from the child to show us that they need help.

h. What must be done when someone is sexually abused?

The facilitator takes the initiative by sharing with the students **Attachment 4 – “Your Body Belongs Only to You”** as previously prepared written content and goes through it slowly, in a teaching way, regularly checking to see if the students have understood properly.

YOUR BODY BELONGS ONLY TO YOU AND YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO SAY “NO” TO ANYONE WHO WANTS TO TOUCH IT.

If you suspect or know that your friend has been sexually abused, immediately do the following:

- e. Always trust your friend when they tell you that someone is abusing them in a sexual way.
- f. Listen carefully when they speak.
- g. Don't say anything negative about your friend and say it aloud that a child is never to blame for violence.
- h. Don't ask what happened in a curious manner. Respect the fact that your friend will tell you as much as they can.
- i. Be loyal to your friend, don't tell others in the class about an experience you were told in confidence.
- j. Be with your friend persistently and consistently, no matter what happens next. That is a real friendship.
- k. Thank your friend for trusting you and sharing experience that weigh their mind and hurts them.
- l. Tell them that a bad secret should not be kept and that it is important to seek help from an adult whom the child trusts and whom you trust.
- m. Tell them that a bad secret should not be kept and that it is important to seek help from an adult whom the child trusts and whom you trust.
- n. Ask your friend which adult they trust and think about who you trust.
- o. If the first adult you turn to does not react or reacts in a way that is not good for your friend and does not provide protection, find another adult immediately.
- p. If the second adult does not provide protection, nor the third, ask for an adult until they provide the right help to make your friend feel safe and protected. Do not stop looking for help!
- q. It's not easy, but only if you tell an adult, the violence can stop!
- r. An adult is obliged to call the police and report sexual violence because violence is a crime, that is, behavior that harms a child and is against the law. This is the only way to ensure the child's safety. As it is unlawful behavior, the offender has to be punished, so that they cannot hurt another child, too.

- s. If a child is sexually abused by a family member, remember what we said in the previous workshop class, it is then the State that guarantees the child the right to safety which is why we must inform the police that they do everything on behalf of the State to stop the violence and protect the child.
- t. And once again: be unreserved and unconditionally with your friend. That is real friendship.

TRUST YOUR INNER VOICE THAT SOMETHING IS WRONG WHEN AN ADULT TOUCHES YOU IN PLACES WHERE YOU ARE NOT COMFORTABLE AND IN A WAY THAT MAKES YOU ASHAMED, THAT MAKES YOU FEEL GUILTY OF SOMETHING AND SCARES YOU.

FINAL ACTIVITY (8 min)

As in the previous workshop, the facilitator uses the same methodology for the final activity, to round off the end of the workshop and enable students to return to what is familiar (from a plenary and official manner of working, into their personal process, into their zone of privacy) thus ensuring anonymity for answers given on the Post-it notes.

The facilitator asks each pupil to complete the following sentence on a Post-it note:

“If my friend is experiencing sexual violence, I can...”

Once the students complete the sentence, the facilitator instructs them to stick their notes onto the board/flipchart/billboard. They are then instructed to read all the answers in the coming days.

The facilitator then gives them **homework** by handing out the assignment text (**Attachment 5 – “My Person of Trust”**) and, in agreement with the students, sets a deadline to hand in the assignment to the workshop facilitator within 7 days.

As with the support group, this homework is also a kind of evaluation of how you actually ran the workshop in the classroom. It is to expect that you will receive private information from students, which you may not have been aware before. Some of this information may relate to disclosing students having experienced various forms of violence, including sexual. Accordingly, it is important to give a special attention to reviewing essays and maintaining full confidence to respond in written to each pupil individually. If in this way is by reviewing essay open up a suspicion or knowledge of yours that a pupil is exposed to violence, begin taking yourself, your authority and competences seriously and initiate the (confidently and consistently for the child) intervention.

We, adults, have the power to stop emotional, economic, physical and sexual violence against children and entirely protect them. We are responsible to do so urgently. This is the only way to earn the child’s trust.

5. LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

1. Video 3 – *Story About My Female Friend*
2. Attachment 3 – “Warning Signs”
3. Attachment 4 – “Your Body Belongs Only to You and You Have the Right to Say “NO!” to Anyone Who Wants to Touch it”
4. Attachment 5 – Homework Essay: “My Person of Trust”

INTRODUCTORY WORKSHOP FOR 7TH GRADE CYBER SEXUAL VIOLENCE

1. WORKSHOP GOALS

- * Inform students about the concept, basic characteristics and frequency of sexual violence and cyber sexual violence
- * Explain to students the forms, risks and consequences of cyber sexual violence
- * Inform students with the mechanisms and opportunities for protection in case of sexual violence, including cyber sexual violence

2. EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES (knowledge, skills, attitudes and values)

After the workshop, students will be able to:

1. Explain what sexual violence is
2. List the different forms of cyber sexual violence and its consequences
3. Show compassion and empathy for persons who have survived sexual violence, including cyber sexual violence
4. Specify and know how to find support, assistance and reporting systems in case of any form of sexual violence (including cyber sexual violence)

3. LITERATURE

1. Labaš, D., Ciboci, L. and Kanižaj, I. The World of the Internet at Your Fingertips. Zagreb: Djeca medija. 2015.
2. Cesar, Sanja. Cyber Sexual and Gender Based Violence in Teenage Relationships – A Handbook for Teachers. Zagreb. CESI – Center for Education, Counselling and Research. 2021.
3. Mandić, S. and Radić Bursać, S. Sexting i Sextortion – Teaching Material for Secondary School. Zagreb: Croatian Agency for Electronic Media and UNICEF. 2020

To implement the workshop, it is necessary to read the entire theoretical part of the textbook “Sexual violence against children - SVEP 2 - JUNIOR”.

IV. CONTENT – DESCRIPTION OF THE WORKSHOP

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY (15 min)

A. Introduction (2 min)

The facilitator briefly welcomes the students and reminds them of class rules while emphasizing communication skills involving listening and respecting the opinions of everyone as a significant form of mutual respect.

The facilitator announces to the students the theme of today's workshop: *Today we will address the topic of sexual violence, with an emphasis on **CYBER SEXUAL VIOLENCE***. The facilitator informs students that the workshop consists of introductory, main and final activities. They are also informed of the learning outcomes from previous workshops (in 5th and 6th grades).

The facilitator should **point out** that the topic of sexual violence can stir **various feelings** (refrain from using the adjective “severe”) and that students have several options:

- * They can **share their feelings** about the problem of sexual violence in front of the whole group.
- * They can **leave the class** to take a breather and come back at some point. If the pupil wants, the workshop co-facilitator (if present at the workshop) can accompany the pupil outside to provide immediate support to the child. If a co-facilitator is not present, this option is not mentioned.
- * They can **keep their feelings to themselves at this moment and express them afterward** – specify who they can contact, when and in what way (spoken, written or otherwise), and associate this option with the “Support Group” (see introductory note).
- * **After the workshop, they can seek out facilitator and/or expert school associate** with whom they can talk openly about the topic and feelings experienced during the workshop. The facilitator or expert school associate will tell the pupil that they will be at a certain place, **WITH CLEAR INFORMATION FROM WHEN TO WHEN – “SUPPORT GROUP”** (min. 30 min, best IMMEDIATELY after the workshop). More information about the “Support Group” is described in the INTRODUCTORY NOTE –NECESSARY TO READ.
- * They can, if they wish, contact one of the **addresses or telephone numbers** given at the end of the workshop.

The facilitator will point out that everyone should be aware that no child should suffer any form of violence, and if necessary, the facilitator will be there for them in accordance with the legal rules and school procedures.

B. Screening the Video 2 Sexual Violence (8 min)

The facilitator announces the screening of a short film about sexual violence and asks the students to watch attentively.

After watching the film, the facilitator says: *We have just watched a video that gave us some basic information on the topic of sexual violence. Discussing this topic is important because one in five children has been sexually hurt by someone, and they need help. The most common victims of sexual violence are girls. But some boys have also gone through this experience. Although this form of violence is not talked about often or is not discussed in schools as often as the topic of physical or peer violence, sexual violence is widespread and you should know about it, so you can recognize and report it, and protect yourself or others (your friends, other people close to you).*

Then, the facilitator asks the students: *What do you remember from the video film? Do you already know anything about this from before? Do you have any more questions?*

The facilitator reflects on the responses of the students and thanks them.

C. PPT 3 “Cyber Sexual Violence – Definition, Types and Consequences” (5 min)

The facilitator finishes the activity by thanking everyone for their attention. Although the use of the Internet and other electronic devices has many advantages, it also poses many dangers we should be aware of. One of the dangers is the possibility of experiencing cyber sexual violence. The facilitator emphasizes that talking about this topic is important as is an awareness that this form of sexual violence can happen to each of us and can have many consequences. Also highlighted is the need to become aware of our behavior on the Internet and how it can affect another person.

MAIN ACTIVITY “It Happened Once on the Internet” (20 min)

The aim of the exercise is to recognize the three types of cyber sexual violence, the consequences of violence and encourage students to think about possible solutions to different situations of cyber sexual violence.

The facilitator mentions to the students that the previous presentation explained various forms of cyber sexual violence and that in the following exercise they will focus on three forms: abusive sexting, cybergrooming and sextortion.

The facilitator divides the students into three groups (*Note: the number of students in the group depends on the number of students in the class. The recommendation is that students from the same row/nearest benches should be in one group, so as not to waste much time on grouping them. Hand out pre-prepared story papers to each pupil in the group. Prepare a sufficient number of story papers for each group (Attachments 6a, 6b, 6c for each pupil. Point out to the students that they do not have to use full sentences to answer the asked questions).*

The facilitator points out:

The story before you describes a form of cyber sexual violence. Get one of the persons in the group to read the story aloud while the others listen carefully. After reading the story, discuss together the answers to the four questions. When you all agree on the answer, one person from the group should write it down. Write down the answers on the other side of the paper. Also, select a member from the group to briefly retell the resulting story and answers to the questions posed to the rest of the class. You have 10 minutes for this task.

Where appropriate, facilitator shall complement the pupil's responses with explanations set out in **Attachment 7** previously prepared for the workshop.

After all the groups have presented their answers, the facilitator concludes the exercise:

All the situations we have worked on represent different forms of cyber sexual violence, and all forms of cyber sexual violence have consequences on the person experiencing the violence! Remember, a person who has experienced violence is never to blame for what has happened to them, the responsibility lies solely with the perpetrator. No one wants to experience violence. If cyber sexual violence has occurred or is occurring to you or your friends, I think it is very important that you know I am here for you and will help you.

MAIN ACTIVITY (10 min)

A) Assistance and Support Mechanisms (6 min)

The facilitator invites the students to reflect and say aloud to whom they would turn for help and support in the case of cyber sexual violence.

The facilitator's task is to write down some of the answers on the board and show **PPT 2 – “Contacts of Institutions and Organizations”** they can contact if needing help. All of this information can be found on **WORKSHEET 1 – “What to Do in Case of Sexual Violence”** (the worksheet must be handed out to the students beforehand), though it is not analyzed with them, but three key points are highlighted:

- Confiding in an adult in whom you trust is important,
- You have to remember at all times that you are not to blame of having survived violence,
- It is important to report the violence to relevant institutions.

The facilitator then points out: *Trust your inner voice, it will always tell you when something is wrong and remember: telling a trusted adult about the violence you have survived is very important!*

B) Evaluation (4 min)

Hand out **1 post-it note** to students and instruct them to imagine how people who have survived cyber sexual violence feel (e.g., on the Internet, social media, in online groups). The facilitator asks the students to write that feeling on a Post-it note and to stick it on the board/flipchart/billboard when leaving the classroom. At the beginning of the second workshop, the facilitator reflects on the students' answers on the Post-it notes which were kept from the first workshop.

5. LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

1. Video 2 - *Sexual Violence*
2. PPT 3 – “Cyber Sexual Violence”
3. Attachments 6a, 6b, 6c: Stories about forms of cyber sexual violence
4. Attachment 7 – “Explaining the Forms of Cyber Sexual Violence”
5. PPT 2 – “Contacts of Institutions and Organizations”
6. Worksheet 1 – “What to Do in Case of Sexual Violence”
7. Post-it notes

THEMATIC WORKSHOP FOR 7TH GRADE CYBER SEXUAL VIOLENCE

1. WORKSHOP GOALS

- * Point out to students the link between risky behaviors and sexual violence in online communication
- * Recognize the importance of the role of observers in cyber sexual violence
- * Recognize the positive and negative consequences of own behavior on the Internet
- * Introduce students to the protection mechanisms and possibilities in case of cyber sexual violence

2. EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES

(knowledge, skills, attitudes and values)

After participating in the workshops, students will be able to do the following:

1. Describe the mechanisms contributing to the increased risk of engaging in cyber sexual violence and list the risky online behaviors
2. Describe the circle of persons involved in committing cyber sexual violence, emphasizing the important role of the observer
3. Formulate rules for safe online behavior with a goal of protection against cyber sexual violence
4. Show compassion and empathy for persons who have survived sexual violence, including cyber sexual violence

3. LITERATURE

1. Belošević, M., Ćosić, A., Lamešić, L., Mandić, S., Mitrić, I. and Radić Bursać, S. *A Path to Successfully Overcoming the Challenges of Growing Up*. Center for Rehabilitation. Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences. University of Zagreb. 2021.
2. Bogavac, Lj., Popadić, D. and Mrše, S. *Educational Pack for Learning About the Topic of Sexual Violence Against Children in Primary and Secondary Schools in Serbia*. Belgrade. Incest Trauma Center - Belgrade. 2016.

3. Bogavac, Lj. and Popadić D. Complementary Resource to *Educational Pack for Learning About the Topic of Sexual Violence Against Children for Primary and Secondary Schools in Serbia*: “Healthy Choices for Kids – Violence Prevention Program. of the Incest Trauma Center – Belgrade for Preschool Institutions, Teachers, Parents/Caretakers and Children During Homeroom Class, for Creating and Implementing School Actions and Local Community Actions.” Belgrade: Incest Trauma Center - Belgrade. 2016.
4. Mamula, M. (Ed.), Popadić, D., Mihaljević, K., Hojt Ilić, A., Drožđan Kranjčec, A., Peto Kujundžić, L., Bičanić, J. and Kolega, M. *Sexual Violence Against and Among Children and Youth*. Zagreb: Women’s Room – Center for Sexual Rights. 2020.
5. Smahel, D., Machackova, H., Mascheroni, G., Dedkova, L., Staksrud, E., Ólafsson, K., Livingstone, S., and Hasebrink, U. *EU Kids Online 2020: Survey results from 19 countries*. EU Kids Online. 2020. Doi: 10.21953/lse.47fdeqj01of

To implement the workshop, it is necessary to read the entire theoretical part of the textbook “Sexual violence against children - SVEP 2 - JUNIOR”.

IV. CONTENT – DESCRIPTION OF THE WORKSHOP

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY (5 min)

The facilitator reminds the students that the theme of the last workshop and this workshop is **“Cyber Sexual Violence”** and that the theme will be further elaborated upon during this workshop. The facilitator informs students that the workshop consists of introductory, main and final activities, and that after the workshop class the students can stay in the **Support Group** (see Introductory notes) if there are topics and questions that individual students want to present in a smaller group. If the Support Group gathered after the first workshop, show your appreciation to them. If there was no Support Group, the facilitator points out understanding that it was not held last time and that after this workshop hour it will be available again and the facilitator will wait for anyone who comes to the Group. The facilitator recalls the class rules and emphasizes the communication skills for listening and respecting the opinions of all as mutual respect.

The facilitator asks the students to remember their last workshop hour:

- *What did you learn in the last workshop?*
- *Have you talked to anyone about the workshop you attended?*

Then the facilitator reflects on the responses of the students (from the Post-its evaluation) about how children who have experienced or are experiencing cyber sexual violence feel. The emphasis is on cyber sexual violence having different consequences – **emotional** (e.g., shame, fear, feelings of inferiority), social (e.g., stigmatization, social exclusion), **physical** (e.g., headaches, indigestion), **in school** (poor grades, avoiding school and activities). The facilitator points out that persons who witness violence can undergo different consequences, feel sad and worried. Also noted is that observers play an important role in a situation involving violence, while emphasizing that the focus of today's workshop will be precisely on the reactions of observers in cases of cyber sexual violence.

The facilitator explains to the students that they will now watch a video and asks them to watch attentively because the video is followed by group work.

MAIN ACTIVITY (30 min) – Video 5 – And Who Are You?

After the students have watched the video *And Who Are You?* (8:07 min), the facilitator divides the students into pairs according to the bench seating arrangement. Each pair receives a paper (**Attachment 8**) with the following questions (*NOTE: prepare a sufficient number of copies of Attachment 8 in advance and point out to the students that they do not have to write full sentences but short notes*):

1. How did you feel watching the video? What impressed you the most?
2. Of the three situations shown in the video, rank the situations from 1 to 3, so that number 1 is what you assume happens most often, and number 3 is what happens the rarest.
3. Based on your previous answers, why do you think this is most likely to happen? Explain your answer (based on your own experiences and knowledge).
4. Do you think girls or boys experience this form of violence more often? What makes you think that?
5. How do you think the girl feels in the first case, when no one reacted? How do you think she feels when her friends gave her support?
6. From what you have learned in this video, what would be the observer's most appropriate reaction and how would the girl in the video feel then?

Students have 10 minutes to answer the questions. Then all pairs of students have a discussion together, and the facilitator moderates the discussion, focusing on why people do not react when someone experiences violence and why girls are more likely to experience cyber sexual violence.

The facilitator writes down on the board all the feelings that the girl experiences upon receiving support.

The facilitator then says:

*It is important to remember that a person experiencing or having survived violence is not to blame for the abuse which they have been subjected to and that there is no justification for the violence. In other words, perpetrators of violence are responsible and guilty of their actions and they choose their own behavior. Remember, support is important for the recovery of a person surviving violence, but also for stopping the violence. All forms of violence, including cyber sexual violence, is **an act of power and control** and perpetrators hold power over their victims. In situations involving violence, including cyber sexual violence, perpetrators have a bigger power or with their behavior they exercise power over the person towards whom they are violent. Observers have significant power because their actions can encourage or discourage perpetrators of cyber sexual violence and help the person experiencing the violence to receive the necessary assistance.*

The facilitator will point out that violence should be responded to in an effective way (e.g., turning to a trusted person for help, reporting to classmates or professional support personnel at school, etc.). The facilitator points out that they are there for the students and they can always turn to the facilitator for help and support.

FINAL ACTIVITY (10 min)

A) Assistance and Support Mechanisms (8 min)

The facilitator shows **PPT 2 – “Contacts of Institutions and Organizations”** which the students can contact for help in the case of having experienced cyber sexual violence.

The facilitator hands out **Worksheet 2 – “Cyber Sexual Violence and Protection Mechanisms”** to the students and goes through key tips on Internet safety with them: protect your personal information and do not share it with other people; do not meet up with people face to face you meet online; do not send content that may put you in an uncomfortable position or that offends others; do not delete disturbing content that you have received because it can be used to report violence.

Finally, the facilitator highlights the following: it is important to **confide in an adult** whom you trust, it is important to know at all times that you are not to blame of having experienced violence and you should **report violence** to the relevant institutions.

B) Evaluation (2 min)

Hand out to the students one post-it note on which everyone should write a message to a person who is surviving cyber sexual violence.

Then stick the note to the board/flipchart when leaving the classroom.

Finally, the facilitator thanks all the students for their active participation.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY

If there is time left, you can include another activity in the final activity and check with the students what they have learned in the two workshops. You can also do this activity in the homeroom class and delve into the topic in more detail.

Activity “The Internet and I” (10 min)

The facilitator places CORRECT and INCORRECT signs in two different corners of the classroom (Attachment 9). The students are told how that they will be given a few claims about using the Internet and social media. The rule is that after a particular claim, everyone chooses the answer that is valid for them or they agree/disagree with, and then stand in a marked place in the classroom. After each answer, the facilitator asks several students why they chose a particular answer and, after they discuss it, will provide them with an explanation (Attachment 10).

1. **Claim:** I think children often experience cyber violence and cyber sexual violence.
2. **Claim:** There have been situations where I witnessed gossip, mockery and inappropriate comments towards another person on social media and/or in an online group (WhatsApp, Viber, etc.).
3. **Claim:** I don't think a person can be hurt if someone insults them on social media – well, that's just the Internet.
4. **Claim:** The person who sent the intimate content to someone else is to blame – if they did not want it published, they should not have sent it.
5. **Claim:** If I witness a form of cyber sexual violence (e.g., receiving other people's intimate photos, insulting them on social media), I can do something and help the person experiencing the violence.

The facilitator concludes the activity by thanking everyone for their honesty. Finally, the facilitator emphasizes the importance of talking about this topic and becoming aware how each of us behaves online and how it can affect not only us, but also other people.

5. LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

1. Video 5 - *And Who Are You?*
2. Attachment 8 – “Questions for Discussion After the Video and *Who Are You?*”
3. PPT 2 – “Contacts of Institutions and Civil Society Organizations”
4. Worksheet 2 – “Cyber Sexual Violence and Protection Mechanisms”
5. Post-it notes
6. Attachment 9 – CORRECT and INCORRECT Labels
7. Attachment 10 - Explanations of the Activity “The Internet and I”

INTRODUCTORY WORKSHOP FOR 8TH GRADE SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN ADOLESCENT RELATIONSHIPS

1. WORKSHOP GOALS

- * Inform students about the basic characteristics, frequency and consequences of sexual violence
- * Inform students about what consent to sexual activity is
- * Introducing students to the importance of consenting to sexual activity
- * Understanding sexual violence

2. EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES (knowledge, skills, attitudes and values)

After participating in the workshops, the students will be able to:

1. Explain what sexual violence is
2. List the causes, forms and consequences of sexual violence
3. Recognize different forms of sexual violence in adolescent relationships
4. Explain the concept of consent
5. List and know how to find systems for support, assistance and reporting in cases of sexual violence in adolescent relationships

3. LITERATURE

For students (textbooks, handbooks and other sources of information):

- * Youth Magazine *TRUE2YOU –Truthfully Without Censure*, CESI <https://nechupedia.sezamweb.net/files/TRUE2YOU-casopis-za-mlade.pdf>
- * Youth brochure “Violence in Relationships is Wrong.” CESI http://www.sezamweb.net/attach/b/brosura_nasilne_veze_su_bez_veze.pdf
- * Educational brochure “The Dark Side of Love – A Story About Tanja and Mario.” CESI <http://www.sezamweb.net/attach/t/tamna-strana-ljubavi.pdf>

VLOGS:

- * Like a Cat Near Hot Porridge – Consent to Sexual Relations. CESI
- * <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FKdW5T23K-w>

For teachers (professional-scientific, methodical, pedagogical, psychological):

- * Handbook for Peer Educators “Violence in Relationships is Wrong.” CESI
http://www.sezamweb.net/attach/_p/prirucnik_nasilne_veze.pdf
- * Handbook *Better to Prevent Than Treat*. CESI
<http://stari.cesi.hr/hr/bolje-sprijeciti-nego-lijeciti-prevencija-nasilja-u-adolescentskim-vezama/index.html>
- * Handbook *Sex and Gender Under the Spotlight*. CESI
<http://stari.cesi.hr/hr/spol-i-rod-pod-povecalom-2-prosireno-izdanje/index.html>
- * *Make a Change – A Handbook for Youth Work on Preventing Gender Violence Using Audiovisual Media and Music*
http://www.sezamweb.net/attach/_p/prirucnik_pokreni_promjenu.pdf
- * *Gender Equality Against Violence in Intimate Partner Relationships*. Teacher Handbook and Working Materials for Students. CESI
<http://stari.cesi.hr/hr/prirucnici-rodnom-jednakosci-protiv-nasilja-u-intimnim-partnerskim-vezama/index.html>
- * *Handbook for Teachers: Cyber Sexual Gender Violence in Adolescent Relationships*. CESI
<https://nechupedia.sezamweb.net/korisni-materijali/>
- * *A Handbook on Sexual Violence Against and Among Children and Youth*. Women’s Room
<http://zenskasoba.hr/docs/zenska%20soba%20knjiga.pdf>
- * *Violence in Adolescent Relationships – A Handbook for Experts*. Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences. University of Zagreb https://cnzd.org/uploads/document/attachment/97/Prirucnik5_nasilje_u_mladenackim_vezama.pdf
- * *Can That be Love? – A Handbook on Violence in Adolescent Relationships*. Zagreb Child and Youth Protection Center. <https://www.poliklinika-djeca.hr/publikacije/je-li-moguće-da-je-to-ljubav/>

To implement the workshop, it is necessary to read the entire theoretical part of the textbook “Sexual violence against children - SVEP 2 - JUNIOR”.

IV. CONTENT – DESCRIPTION OF THE WORKSHOP

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY (15 min)

A) Introduction (2 min)

The facilitator briefly welcomes the students and reminds them of the class rules, emphasizing communication skills requiring listening and respecting the opinions of everyone as an important form of mutual respect.

The facilitator announces to the students the topic of today's workshop: Today, we will deal with the **topic of sexual violence in adolescent relationships**. The facilitator informs students that the workshop consists of introductory, main and final activities. They are also reminded of the learning outcomes from the previous workshops (in 5th, 6th and 7th grades).

The facilitator should **point out** that the topic of sexual violence can stir **various feelings** (refrain from using the adjective "severe") and that students have several options:

- * They can **share their feelings** about the problem of sexual violence in front of the whole group.
- * They can **leave the class** to take a breather and come back at some point. If the pupil wants, the workshop co-facilitator (if present at the workshop) can accompany the pupil outside to provide immediate support to the child. If a co-facilitator is not present, this option is not mentioned.
- * They can **keep their feelings to themselves at this moment and express them afterward** – specify who they can contact, when and in what way (spoken, written or otherwise), and associate this option with the "Support Group" (see introductory note).
- * **After the workshop, they can seek out facilitator and/or expert school associate** with whom they can talk openly about the topic and feelings experienced during the workshop. The facilitator or expert school associate will tell the pupil that they will be at a certain place, **WITH CLEAR INFORMATION FROM WHEN TO WHEN – "SUPPORT GROUP"** (min. 30 min, best IMMEDIATELY after the workshop). More information about the "Support Group" is described in the INTRODUCTORY NOTE – NECESSARY TO READ.
- * They can, if they wish, contact one of the **addresses or telephone numbers** given at the end of the workshop.

The facilitator points out that everyone should know that no child has to suffer any form of violence and, in case of need, the facilitator will be available to help the children, in accordance with the legal rules and school procedures.

B) Screening the Video 2 Sexual Violence (8 min)

After watching the film, the facilitator says: *We've just watched a video that gave us basic information about sexual violence. Discussing this topic is important because one in five children has been sexually hurt by someone, and that child needs help. The most common victims of sexual violence are girls. But some boys have also gone through this experience. Although this form of violence is not talked about often or is not discussed in schools as often as physical or peer violence, sexual violence is widespread, and you should know about it, so you can recognize and report it and protect yourself and others (your friends, other people close to you).*

Then, the facilitator asks the students: *What do you remember about the video? Do you already know anything about this topic from before? Do you have any more questions?*

The facilitator reflects on the students' responses and thanks them.

C) What is Consent? – Explaining the Concept (5 min)

Note for the facilitator:

In order to respect diversity issues, it is important to use the term "person" or "persons" for young people who are in a relationship because we want to take into account diversity of relationships regardless of the sex, gender, gender identity and gender expression of partners. In the next workshop, we will focus on sexual violence in relationships.

The facilitator announces to the students: *At today's workshop, we will deal with the topic of sexual violence in adolescent relationships. Most of you have probably not been in a relationship yet, but talking about sexual violence earlier in life is important, i.e., before entering a relationship. We will begin the topic by explaining an important term, which is **CONSENT** to any sexual activity (e.g., kissing, sexual touches).*

*Importantly, in the Republic of Croatia, the Law stipulates **15 years of age** as the age of consent for sexual activity, meaning that a person under the age of 15 cannot give consent to sexual activity. The law says that it is not a crime if the age difference between persons having sex or sexual activity is **not more than 3 years** (for instance, if teens aged 14 and 16 have sex, then it is not punishable by law, but if the people are aged 14 and 25, then it is a crime).*

*Why is it important to talk about consent? Because **sexual activity without consent = sexual violence**.*

Engaging in sexual activity (kissing, intimate touches) is a personal decision. Only you can decide what's good for you. Sexual consent means you agree to engage in sexual activity, freely, voluntarily and without any pressure, coercion or threats. There has to be sexual consent every time you engage in sexual activity, meaning consent should be given (or sought from the person) for any sexual activity (and at any stage of that activity). Regardless of whether you are in a relationship or not, both partners must give consent each time for any type of sexual activity.

Saying "yes" today does not mean "yes" in the future. Giving consent once does not mean consenting to all sexual activity in the future. Also, giving consent for one form of sexual activity (e.g., kissing) is not consent for taking further steps (e.g., removing clothes, touching sex organs, etc.).

The facilitator points out: **It's important to remember that you can always change your mind and say NO (i.e., withdraw your consent) at ANY TIME, and you don't have to have a reason to do so. How you feel is enough, and always follow your feelings. The other person is OBLIGED to respect your decision and must immediately stop doing what they are doing!**

After this section, the facilitator hands out **WORKSHEET 3 – “Sexual Consent”** to the students and points out that this topic will be further addressed in the workshop.

MAIN ACTIVITY “SEXUAL CONSENT” (25 min)

At the start of the activity, the facilitator points out that the most important thing for two people before engaging in any sexual activity (kissing, touching, etc.) is to talk about it and be sure it is what they want. Popular culture has sent a powerful message to young people that sexual activity (sexual intercourse) happens “spontaneously” and “without words,” and “talking about it kills romance”. This portrayal is unrealistic for young people and requires clarification that communicating with the other person about sexuality is important so both feel good and comfortable. The explanation should point out that consent can be verbal (but not always) or nonverbal (i.e., without saying the words “yes” or “no”). A person may withhold consent in a non-verbal manner with their body language signaling “no” (e.g., a gesture, facial expression, body position, gaze, act, etc.).

Note for the facilitator:

Adolescent relationships imply various gender dynamics and unequal power relations associated with gender-stereotypical roles and expectations. Gender roles stem from what society considers appropriate and expects from young (women) and young (men). Gender stereotypes are generalized beliefs about typical characteristics associated with women and men. Some gender stereotypes associated with men are aggressiveness, insensitivity, and independence. On the other hand, passivity, sensitivity, and tenderness are attributed to women. For example, a girl should not tell her partner she wants sexual contact, or when and how, due to a traditional understanding where men make these decisions and women listen (a woman's “duty” is to sexually satisfy a man). A girl might think she is not strong enough or has no right to say NO if her partner persuades her to engage in sexual activity or sexual intercourse. Unequal power relations, gender-stereotypical expectations and roles in adolescent relationships affect and make it difficult to give or withhold consent. The initial position of boys and girls in a relationship is different, i.e., unequal, and unequal power relations can lead to violence in relationships.

Proper consent to sexual intercourse must be:

1. *GIVEN FREELY (without threats or coercion)*
2. *CONSCIOUSLY (not under the influence of alcohol and other narcotics)*
3. *ENTHUSIASTIC (ONLY YES MEANS YES – the person elatedly and enthusiastically agrees to sexual activity; can be verbal: e.g., “YES, I like that!” or non-verbal: e.g., laughing)*
4. *SPECIFIC/FLEXIBLE (given for a specific situation and can be withdrawn at any time)*
5. *INFORMED (the person must know what they agree to).*

Coercion has many different forms – it does not only refer to applied physical force but also includes psychological intimidation, blackmail and threats (the threat of inflicting physical injury, not getting a job, blackmail for a grade, threatening to break up from the relationship, etc.).

A) Work in Pairs (5 min)

The facilitator asks the students a question: **How can someone show (both verbally and nonverbally) that they do not consent to some sexual activity?**

The facilitator explains to the students that they will work in pairs (with the person they are sitting with on the bench) and they have two minutes to answer. The facilitator points out that the task for each pair is to provide several answers to this question, noting that they are to specifically present answers for verbal and especially nonverbal disapproval. Then the facilitator asks a pair to present their answers and invite the other pairs to supplement what has not already been said by referring to their list (not necessary that each pair read their answers).

Some examples of responses may include: verbally (something like “No, I’m not ready for sexual intercourse yet” or “I’d like us to wait and get to know each other a little better”) or non-verbally (one of the couple can stop kissing, move away from the other person, refuse to be hugged or touched, showing signs of nervousness or fear, the person stiffens up or “freezes up”, stops talking).

After the responses from students, the facilitator points out that consent can be verbal, i.e., by saying “Yes!” or “No!”, which is the best way, or it may also include nonverbal cues. It should be pointed out that it is always best to ask the other person whether they agree to a particular sexual activity and always try to get VERBAL CONSENT (such as asking, “Is this OK for you?” “Do you want to...?” “Are you comfortable...?”). If you are not sure, stop and ask.

B) Work in small groups (20 min)

The facilitator places the students into small groups (*the criterion for segregating into small groups can be done based on the classroom bench seating arrangement, i.e., the first two benches are one group, and the students just turn to each other*). Each small group receives **Attachment 11 – “Consent: Key Messages”**. The facilitator then gives instructions: *The task in the small groups is to link the quote to a key message related to consent.*

After they are finished, the facilitator reads each quote and asks the groups to present their answer. They are then given the correct answer. All the quotes should be used, and all the key messages should be discussed. In this activity, the emphasis is not on getting the students to solve the task correctly but associating sexual situations with consent and becoming aware of the importance of consent.

Solutions Worksheet 1 “Consent: Key Messages”: 1 C, 2 A, 3 F, 4 B, 5 D, 6 G, 7E

FINAL ACTIVITY (5 min)

Finally, the facilitator points out the following to the students:

- * Seeking and receiving verbal consent for any sexual activity is important.
- * Check several times that you have been given consent (best to ask the other person clearly!).
- * Just because a person is silent does not mean they have given consent.
- * In the Republic of Croatia, a person under the age of 15 cannot consent to sexual activities because the law says that the age for sexual consent is **15 years** (Criminal Code, Chapter 17, Article 158). The law also says there is no crime if the age difference between persons having sexual intercourse or sexual activity is **not more than 3 years**.
- * If a person does not want sex, the other person must accept it. It is wrong to persuade a person to change their mind or to force them into sexual activity because it equivalent to sexual violence and a crime.
- * **Sexual activity without consent is sexual violence.** A person cannot give consent if they are under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or induced into sexual activity under threat, coercion, bribery or offering something in return.
- * **You are never to blame** for experiencing sexual violence. Trust your inner voice; it always tells you when something is wrong. Remember, it is important to tell an adult you trust about having survived violence. There are relevant institutions to which violence is reported. The school and its professional service are there for you.

Repeat to the students again that they can contact you after the workshop if they want to talk to you more about this topic. Set the time and place students can see you immediately after the workshop or at a time that suits you. *Refer to the support group section in the introductory annotations for facilitators.*

Tell the students that the assistance and support mechanisms will be dealt with in more detail at the next workshop.

5. LIST OF APPENDICES

1. Video 2 – *Sexual Violence*
2. Worksheet 3 – “Sexual Consent”
3. Attachment 11 – “Consent: Key Messages”

THEMATIC WORKSHOP FOR 8TH GRADE SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN ADOLESCENT RELATIONSHIPS

1. WORKSHOP GOALS

- * Inform students about the occurrence of violence in adolescent relationships, specifically sexual violence in relationships
- * Inform students about the signs of sexual violence in adolescent relationships
- * Introduce students to the protection mechanisms and possibilities in case of sexual violence in adolescent relationships

2. EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES (knowledge, skills, attitudes and values)

After participating in the workshops, the students will be able to:

1. Recognize the signs of sexual violence in adolescent relationships
2. Recognize the characteristics of harmful and good relationships
3. List and know how to find systems for support, assistance and reporting in cases of sexual violence in adolescent relationships

3. LITERATURE

For students (textbooks, handbooks and other sources of information):

- * Youth Magazine *TRUE2YOU – Truthfully Without Censure*, CESI <https://nechupedia.sezamweb.net/files/TRUE2YOU-casopis-za-mlade.pdf>
- * Youth brochure “Violence in Relationships is Wrong.” CESI
http://www.sezamweb.net/attach/_b/brosura_nasilne_veze_su_bez_veze.pdf
- * Educational brochure “The Dark Side of Love – A Story About Tanja and Mario.” CESI
http://www.sezamweb.net/attach/_t/tamna-strana-ljubavi.pdf

VLOGS:

- * Like a Cat Near Hot Porridge – Consent to Sexual Relations. CESI
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FKdW5T23K-w>

For teachers (professional-scientific, methodical, pedagogical, psychological):

- * Handbook for Peer Educators “Violence in Relationships is Wrong.” CESI
http://www.sezamweb.net/attach/_p/prirucnik_nasilne_veze.pdf
- * Handbook Better to Prevent Than Treat. CESI
<http://stari.cesi.hr/hr/bolje-sprijeciti-nego-lijeciti-prevencija-nasilja-u-adolescentskim-vezama/index.html>
- * Handbook Sex and Gender Under the Spotlight. CESI
<http://stari.cesi.hr/hr/spol-i-rod-pod-povecalom-2-prosireno-izdanje/index.html>
- * *Make a Change – A Handbook for Youth Work on Preventing Gender Violence Using Audiovisual Media and Music*
http://www.sezamweb.net/attach/_p/prirucnik_pokreni_promjenu.pdf
- * *Gender Equality Against Violence in Intimate Partner Relationships. Teacher Handbook and Working Materials for Students.* CESI
<http://stari.cesi.hr/hr/prirucnici-rodnom-jednakosci-protiv-nasilja-u-intimnim-partnerskim-vezama/index.html>

Handbook for Teachers: Cyber Sexual Gender Violence in Adolescent Relationships. CESI
<https://nechupedia.sezamweb.net/korisni-materijali/>

A Handbook on Sexual Violence Against and Among Children and Youth. Women’s Room
<http://zenskasoba.hr/docs/zenska%20soba%20knjiga.pdf>
- * *Violence in Adolescent Relationships – A Handbook for Experts.* Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences. University of Zagreb
https://cnzd.org/uploads/document/attachment/97/Prirucnik5_nasilje_u_mladenackim_vezama.pdf
- * *Can That be Love? – A Handbook on Violence in Adolescent Relationships.* Zagreb Child and Youth Protection Center.
<https://www.poliklinika-djeca.hr/publikacije/je-li-moguće-da-je-to-ljubav/>

To implement the workshop, it is necessary to read the entire theoretical part of the textbook “Sexual violence against children - SVEP 2 - JUNIOR”.

4. CONTENT – DESCRIPTION OF THE WORKSHOP

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY (10 min)

A) Introduction (2 min)

The program facilitator briefly welcomes students and reminds them of the class rules, emphasizing communication skills involving listening and respecting the opinions of others as a significant form of mutual respect. The facilitator reminds the students that the **topic from the previous workshop and this workshop is sexual violence in adolescent relationships** and this topic will continue in this workshop.

The facilitator reminds the students that at the last workshop they covered the topic of consent which is important in understanding sexual violence. Today they will be dealing with recognizing sexual violence in adolescent relationships, what to do in the case of sexual violence and who to turn to for help. The facilitator will also recall that the lawful age for sexual consent in the Republic of Croatia is 15 years, which means that a person under the age of 15 cannot give consent to sexual activities. The law stipulates that there is no crime if the age difference between persons having sex or sexual activity is not more than 3 years (this means that if persons aged 14 and 16 have sex, then it is not legally punishable, but if they are aged 14 and 25, it is a crime).

The facilitator informs students that the workshop consists of introductory, main and final activities, as well as been possible to stay in the **Support Group** after the workshop class (see Introductory Note) if there are topics and questions that individual students want to present in a smaller group. If the Support Group met after the first workshop, express your gratitude for the meeting. If there was no Support Group, the facilitator points out understanding that it was not held last time and that after this workshop hour the facilitator will be available to students and will wait if someone comes.

The facilitator points out: *Whether you are in a relationship or are about to be in a relationship, you should learn to recognize and react in case of violence in a relationship. Violence can occur in all love relationships (regardless of sex, gender, gender identity and gender expression of the partners). Violence also occurs in LGBTIQ+ relationships, and the violence dynamics is the same as in heterosexual relationships. In this workshop, we will focus on sexual violence that occurs in relationships between people of the opposite sex (heterosexual relationships), given that research data and statistics show it is a very common problem.*

In adolescent relationships, besides sexual violence, some other types of violence may also occur, which we will present in a short presentation.

B) PPT 4 – “Violence in Adolescent Relationships” (8 min)

After the presentation, the facilitator asks whether anyone has more questions and has everyone understood everything.

MAIN ACTIVITY – SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN ADOLESCENT RELATIONSHIPS (25 min)

The facilitator announces to the students that they will, as a large group, review several situations that can happen among young people and talk about them based on the given questions (**Attachment 12 – “Situations”**). The facilitator reads each situation separately and asks the students questions (*in order to facilitate the process, Attachment 12 is also available as a presentation (PPT 5) where each slide has one situation with the relevant questions*). Students give answers to the questions, and the facilitator then clarifies and supplements the answers. The same procedure is repeated for each situation.

Explanations for the facilitator:

1. The first situation concerns using coercion for sexual intercourse in a relationship (persuading to have sex).
2. The second situation concerns rape in a relationship. The alcohol mentioned in the story can be linked to the topic of consent from the previous workshop – a person who is under the influence of alcohol cannot give consent. Here too, the emphasis is on the person, i.e., the observer, who happens to own information about sexual violence. Awareness should be raised among young people of the importance of intervening, and they should be led to see how they can help. It is important to avoid discussing what the girl could have done differently (e.g., by not drinking) and rather keep the focus on consent.
3. The third situation concerns offensive and humiliating sexual comments. In this situation, it is the girl who offensively comments on her boyfriend. Nonetheless, the attention of students should be drawn to the fact that young women are the ones who most often experience sexual comments from young men (as supported by the results of various research, as well as the personal experiences of young women and women).

Upon completing the activity, the facilitator explains to the students that the victims of sexual violence in relationships in most situations are the mentioned girls. The reason is that most of the victims of sexual violence are girls, and the perpetrators are young men. In more than 90% of cases, the perpetrators of sexual violence are men and adolescent males, and the victims in more than 90% of cases are young women and women (Women’s Room, 2013; RAINN). Also, point out that adolescent males can also experience different forms of sexual violence in a relationship (whether in a relationship with a young woman or a young man).

The facilitator points out: If a young person, whether a young woman or a young man, experiences sexual violence or any other form of violence in a relationship, it is important to recognize violence and seek help. This approach means confiding in a close person they trust, which can be friends, teachers, or parents, and with the support of a trusted adult, seek help and report the violence to relevant institutions.

The facilitator points out: You should **confide in an adult** you trust; you must know at all times that **you are not to blame** of having survived violence, and it is important that you **report the violence** to relevant institutions. The school and its professional service are here to help you!

The facilitator shows **PPT 2 – “Contacts of Institutions and Organizations,”** which they can contact if needing help. Also, hand out **Worksheet 1** with the contact information.

FINAL ACTIVITY (10 min)

A) Screening Video 6 – Good and Harmful Relationships (8 min)

The facilitator points out that at the end of the workshop, the students will watch a video showing behavior in a harmful relationship compared to behavior in a good relationship.

After the video, the students are asked to mention one statement they can recall regarding good relationships and to explain it briefly (in one sentence). Hand out **Worksheet 5 – “Good and Harmful Relationships”** to the students.

B) Evaluation (2 min)

Hand out Post-it notes to the students. Ask them to finish the following sentence: “I would advise a person experiencing violence in a relationship to...”, write the answer on a Post-it note and stick it on the board.

5. LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

1. PPT 4 – “Violence in Adolescent Relationships”
2. Attachment 12 – “Situations”
3. PPT 5 – “Situations”
4. PPT 2 – “Contacts in Institutions and Civil Society Organizations”
5. Worksheet 1 – “What to Do in Case of Sexual Violence”
6. Video 6 – *Good and Harmful Relationships*
7. Worksheet 4 – “Good and Harmful Relationships”

WORKSHEETS/ATTACHMENTS/PPT/VIDEOS			
1.	Worksheet 1	What to Do in Case of Sexual Violence	5 th Grade – Introductory Workshop 7 th Grade – Introductory Workshop 8 th Grade – Thematic Workshop
2.	Worksheet 2	Cyber Sexual Violence and Protection Mechanisms	7 th Grade – Thematic Workshop
3.	Worksheet 3	Sexual Consent	8 th Grade – Introductory Workshop
4.	Worksheet 4	Good and Harmful Relationships	8 th Grade – Thematic Workshop
ATTACHMENTS			
5.	Attachment 1	Template for the Letter/Message to a Child Who Has Survived Sexual Violence	5 th Grade – Introductory Workshop
6.	Attachment 2	Convention on the Rights of the Child	6 th Grade – Introductory Workshop
7.	Attachment 3	Warning Signs	6 th Grade – Thematic Workshop
8.	Attachment 4	Your Body Belongs Only to You and You Have the Right to Say “NO” to Anyone Who Wants to Touch It	6 th Grade – Thematic Workshop
9.	Attachment 5	Homework Assignment: Essay – My Person of Trust	6 th Grade – Thematic Workshop
10.	Attachment 6a, 6b, 6c	Working on Stories – Forms of Cyber Sexual Violence	7 th Grade – Introductory Workshop
11.	Attachment 7	Explaining the Forms of Cyber Sexual Violence	7 th Grade – Introductory Workshop
12.	Attachment 8	Questions for Discussion After the Video <i>and Who Are You?</i>	7 th Grade – Thematic Workshop
13.	Attachment 9	TRUE and NOT TRUE labels	7 th Grade – Thematic Workshop
14.	Attachment 10	Explaining the Activity “The Internet and I”	7 th Grade – Thematic Workshop
15.	Attachment 11	Consent: Key Messages	8 th Grade – Introductory Workshop
16.	Attachment 12	Situations	8 th Grade – Thematic Workshop

VIDEOS			
17.	Video 1	Video 1 – Sexual Violence	5 th Grade – Introductory Workshop 6 th Grade – Introductory Workshop
18.	Video 4	Video 2 – Sexual Violence	7 th Grade – Introductory Workshop 8 th Grade – Introductory Workshop
19.	Video 2	Prejudices About Sexual Violence	5 th Grade – Thematic Workshop
20.	Video 3	Story About My Female Friend	6 th Grade – Thematic Workshop
21.	Video 5	Cyber Sexual Violence	7 th Grade – Thematic Workshop
22.	Video 6	Good and Harmful Relationships	8 th Grade – Thematic Workshop
POWER POINT PRESENTATIONS			
23.	PPT 1	Stories for Working on Forms of Sexual Violence	5 th Grade – Introductory Workshop
24.	PPT 2	Contacts of Institutions and Civil Society Organizations	5 th Grade – Introductory Workshop 5 th Grade – Thematic Workshop 7 th Grade – Introductory Workshop 7 th Grade – Thematic Workshop
25.	PPT 3	Cyber Sexual Violence	7 th Grade – Introductory Workshop
26.	PPT 4	Violence in Adolescent Relationships	8 th Grade – Thematic Workshop
27.	PPT 5	Situations	8 th Grade – Thematic Workshop

WORKSHEET 1 – “WHAT TO DO IN CASE IN SEXUAL VIOLENCE”

You are never to blame for surviving sexual violence! Trust your inner voice. It will always tell you when something is wrong, and remember that when having survived violence, you should tell about it to an adult you trust. There are relevant institutions to which the violence can be reported. The school and its professional service are here for you.

WHAT TO DO AND WHO TO TURN TO FOR HELP IF YOU SURVIVE SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

- **Confide** in an adult you trust.
- With the support of an adult in whom you trust, **seek help and report the violence** to the relevant institutions (e.g. police).
- Find out who you can contact at school (e.g. expert school associates, teachers) or in your city for help and support (e.g. civil society organizations and associations).

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR FRIEND HAS SURVIVED SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

- **I BELIEVE YOU!** are the most important words that a person who confides in you needs and wants to hear. Say it out loud!
- The perpetrator is solely responsible for the violence. Make that clear! **A CHILD IS NEVER TO BLAME FOR HAVING SURVIVED SEXUAL VIOLENCE!**
- **DON'T ASK A LOT OF QUESTIONS, DON'T INTERROGATE.** Let your friend tell you what and how much they want you to know.
- Say that **A BAD SECRET SHOULD NOT BE KEPT SECRET** and that it is **IMPORTANT TO SEEK HELP FROM AN ADULT** whom they trust and you trust.
- Together seek help from an adult – **DON'T STOP LOOKING UNTIL YOU FIND AN ADULT WHO WILL HELP!**

For more information, visit our website: www.zenskasoba.hr

WORKSHEET 1 - CONTACTS OF INSTITUTIONS AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

Name of Institution	Name of Institution
<p>Professional services at your school</p> <p>(pedagogue, psychologist, social pedagogue, educational rehabilitator)</p>	<p>Women's Room</p> <p>Center for Victims of Sexual Violence</p> <p>Tel: +385 6119 444</p> <p>E-mail: savjetovaliste@zenskasoba.hr</p> <p>Web: www.zenskasoba.hr</p>
<p>Policija 112</p>	<p>Brave Telephone – Hotline for Abused and Neglected Children</p> <p>Tel: 116 111</p> <p>E-mail: hrabrisa@hrabritelefon.hr</p> <p>Web: www.hrabritelefon.hr</p>
<p>Office of the Ombudsperson for Children</p> <p>Tel: +385 4929 669, +385 4929 278</p> <p>E-mail: info@djete.hr</p> <p>Web: www.djete.hr</p>	

WORKSHEET 2 – “CYBER SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND PROTECTION MECHANISMS”

Cyber sexual violence is any form of sexual violence associated with the Internet. It involves sending and sharing content of a sexual nature that serves to sexually harass another person and aims to establish the perpetrator’s power and control over that person. The content may include messages, photos, comments, videos and other audiovisual materials of an intimate nature (showing an intimate part of the body, sexual intercourse, or messages of a sexual nature).

SOME OF THE MOST FREQUENT FORMS:

Abusive sexting	Sexting is the sending, receiving and/or forwarding of sexual content in the form of messages, images, photos and/or videos. Sexting is voluntary when it involves consensual sharing of content, which is different from abusive sexting, which is sharing that content with others without the person’s consent.
Cybergrooming	The process of meeting and bonding (gaining the trust) of a sexual predator (adult) with a child or young person with the aim of engaging in sexual abuse. The process involves accessing the child (e.g., using a false profile), gaining the child’s trust, and keeping the communication secret to prevent disclosure.
Cyber sexual harassment	Writing or sending unwanted comments and images that cause feelings of fear, discomfort and humiliation. It is most often directed at girls, young women and women. Some examples of this form of violence are unwanted messages and images containing sexual content, jokes and comments about someone’s sexuality, and comments aimed at a person’s physical appearance.
Sextortion	A form of online blackmail involving threats. The perpetrator most often threatens to publish and/or forward the victim’s photos containing sexual content if they refuse, in some way, further sexual activities.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT:

www.zenskasoba.hr

WORKSHEET 2 – PROTECTION AGAINST CYBER SEXUAL VIOLENCE

ADVICE FOR SAFE USE OF THE INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA

1. Safely store personal information and passwords – don't share it with other people (except your parents)!
2. Don't meet alone with people you've met online and on social media!
3. Do not send, forward or publish content that may put you in an uncomfortable position!
4. Do not send messages and pictures that offend others!
5. Before sending a message to another person, think about how you would feel if you received such a message!
6. Choose your friends carefully on social media!
7. Do not send pictures and videos in exchange for gifts or for blackmail or threats!
8. Talk to parents and/or other trusted adults about ways to protect yourself when using the Internet!
9. Inform parents and/or other trusted adults if you receive an inappropriate message or content!
10. Inform parents and/or other trusted adults if you see someone else experiencing cyber sexual violence or any other form of violence.
11. Do not delete any disturbing content you have received! It may serve as evidence when reporting the violence.

REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE NEVER IN A HOPELESS SITUATION AND TURN TO YOUR PARENTS OR ANOTHER CLOSE ADULT FOR HELP AND SUPPORT! IF THEY DON'T REACT THE WAY YOU EXPECT, FIND THE NEXT ADULT – THERE'S ALWAYS SOMEONE WILLING TO PROTECT YOU!

It's not your fault for the violence you're experiencing.

Ask for help and advice even when you think you've done something recklessly.

WORKSHEET 3 – “SEXUAL CONSENT”

- Sexual consent means you agree to engage in sexual activity **freely, voluntarily, without pressure, coercion, or threat.**
- Sexual consent **should exist every time** you engage in some sexual activity or sexual relationship, meaning consent should be given (or sought from the person) for any type of sexual activity (and at any stage of that activity) or for the actual sexual act.
- Whether or not you are in a relationship, **both partners** must give consent every time for any sexual activity.
- **Saying “Yes” today does not mean “Yes” in the future.** Giving consent once does not mean consenting to all sexual activity in the future.
- Giving consent for one form of sexual activity (e.g., kissing) **does not mean giving consent for any further steps** in sexual activity (e.g., removing clothes, touching sexual organs, etc.).
- **You can always change your mind and say “No!”** (i.e., withdraw your consent) **AT ANY TIME without providing a reason.** The other person is **OBLIGED** to respect your decision and must immediately stop doing what they are doing!

Sexual activity without consent = sexual violence

WORKSHEET 4 – “GOOD AND HARMFUL RELATIONSHIPS”

How does it look when someone likes and respects me
as opposed to when someone controls and abuses me?

THESE ARE SOME OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A HARMFUL OR VIOLENT RELATIONSHIP

Checks what I'm doing, where I'm going and who I'm communicating with.

Talks me into sex and says they'll break up if I don't say yes.

Tries to stop me from spending time with friends or family.

Is angry if I don't respond to messages right away.

Doesn't let me talk to other guys (or girls).

Belittles and humiliates me.

Makes me feel like I have to be careful what I say or do.

Doesn't like it when I make my own decisions about life.

Threatens to hurt me or kill himself (or herself) if I hang up.

Gets upset if I hang out with my friends without him (or her).

Behaves aggressively and jealously.

Causes me to fear him (her) if I disagree with something or reject something.

I don't like how he (she) comments on my looks and behavior in front of his (her) friends.

Forces me to do sexual activities that I don't want.

Decides how I spend my allowance.

Demands my passwords for social media profiles.

THIS IS A GOOD QUALITY RELATIONSHIP

We talk openly and honestly, and I can express my desires and feelings without any fear.

My partner loves me and respects me and my personal boundaries. I behave the same way.

We feel comfortable around each other.

We love spending time together but also on our own.

We each have time for ourselves, leisure activities, sports, hobbies and socializing with friends and family.

We agree and make decisions that concern us as a couple (e.g., whether we want to go to a concert or a party at a friend's house).

We resolve quarrels and disputes by talking (WITHOUT insulting and belittling one another).

My partner supports me in what I love to do (*playing guitar or training karate*) and what I want to become one day (*female pilot or actor*).

We talk and decide together about engaging in different sexual activities or sex and what contraception to use.

We laugh and have a lot of fun.

My partner encourages me to achieve better success in school.

Our first sexual intercourse happened when we both wanted it and were ready and took care of the contraception.

My partner listens to my ideas and is sometimes a part of them.

My partner looks forward to my achievements and successes.

If my girlfriend/boyfriend wants to end the relationship, I accept it and respect their decision, even though I may feel sad.

ATTACHMENT 1 – “TEMPLATE FOR THE LETTER OR MESSAGE TO THE CHILD WHO HAS SURVIVED SEXUAL VIOLENCE”

A spiral-bound notebook with a silver metal spiral binding at the top. The pages are cream-colored and feature horizontal blue lines for writing. The notebook is shown from a slightly elevated perspective, and the pages are blank, ready for use.

ATTACHMENT 2 – “UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD” (TOTAL OF 16 CARDS)

Article 1. You’re a child and all the rights under this Convention apply to you until there are 18 candles lit up on your birthday cake.

Article 2. All the rights under the Convention apply to all children and all children are to be protected from all forms of discrimination.

Article 3. All procedures concerning you will be taken in your best interests and the State will take care of you if your parents or caretakers do not.

Article 4. The State shall ensure your rights given in this Convention.

Article 9. You have the right to live with your parents unless separating from them is better for you, and even then, you have the right to remain in contact with them.

Article 12. You have the right to express your opinion freely and that it be considered with due care in all matters concerning you.

Article 17. You have the right to ask for information that interests you, and the State must protect you from harmful materials and information.

Article 18. Your parents together have to take care of you, and the state has to help them in that task.

Article 19. You have the right to protection against all forms of neglect and abuse, and the State should provide that for you.

Article 23. If you are a child with disabilities, you have the same rights as others, and also the right to special care, education and training for work.

Article 30. If you are a member of a minority, you have the right to your own culture, religion and language.

Article 32. You have the right to protection against work that is harmful to your health or interferes with your development and education.

Article 34. You have the right to protection against sexual exploitation and abuse, including pornography and prostitution.

Article 35. The State must protect you from kidnapping, the sale and the trafficking of children.

Article 36. The State must protect you from all forms of exploitation that harm your well-being.

Article 39. If you have been subjected to armed conflicts, torture, neglect, abuse or exploitation, you are entitled to receive assistance for physical and psychological recovery.

ATTACHMENT 3 – “WARNING SIGNS”

Frequent urinary infections, painful urinating

Sexually transmitted diseases

Digestion problems

Unable to sit peacefully (pains in the lower abdomen area or genitalia)

Incontinence or bedwetting

Pregnancy

Eating disorders (anorexia, bulimia)

Self-harm

Attempted suicide

Insomnia, nightmares, flashbacks

Panic attacks

Refusing to speak (deciding to be silent)

Sudden mood swings

Absent from school

Fear of certain persons or remaining along with someone

Changes in school performance

Falling asleep during classes

Regression

Uncharacteristic behavior reflecting a sexual nature

Inappropriate or detailed knowledge of sex expressed as a drawing or verbally (inappropriate for the child’s age)

ATTACHMENT 4 – “YOUR BODY BELONGS ONLY TO YOU AND YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO SAY ‘NO’ TO ANYONE WHO WANTS TO TOUCH IT”

If you suspect or know that your friend is being sexually abused, you must immediately do the following:

- a) Always **believe** your friend when they tell you someone is abusing them in a sexual way.
- b) **Listen carefully** when they speak.
- c) Don't say anything negative about your friend and say out loud that **a child is never to blame for violence**.
- d) **Don't enquire with curiosity** as to what happened. Respect the fact that your friend will tell you as much as they can.
- e) **Be loyal** to your friend, don't tell others in the class the experience you've been told in confidence.
- f) **Be with your friend persistently and consistently**, no matter what happens next. That's a real friendship.
- g) **Thank** your friend for trusting you and telling you about the experience that hurts and burdens them.
- h) **Tell your friend that you are together now**, that they are no longer alone, that every child should be protected and that together you will seek help.
- i) **Say that a bad secret should not be kept a secret and that it is important to seek help from an adult your friend trusts or whom you trust**.
- j) Ask your friend **which adult they trust and think about who you trust**.
- k) If the first adult you turn to does not react or reacts in a way that is good for your friend and does not provide protection, find another adult immediately.
- l) If the second adult does not provide protection, and then go to the third adult, look for an adult until one provides the right help that will give your friend with a sense of protection and safety. **Don't stop looking!**
- m) It's not easy, but only if you confide in an adult can the **violence stop!**
- n) An adult is obliged to call the police and report sexual violence because violence is a crime, that is, behavior that harms a child and is against the law. This is the only way to ensure the child's safety. Given this sort of behavior is against the law, the offender must be punished, so that the offender cannot hurt another child.
- o) If a child is sexually abused by a family member, remember how we said in the previous workshop class that then **the State guarantees the child the right to safety**, and that is why we must inform the police to do everything on behalf of the State to stop the violence and protect the child.
- p) **Once again: Be unreservedly and unconditionally with your friend. That's real friendship.**

TRUST YOUR INNER VOICE THAT SOMETHING IS NOT OK WHEN AN ADULT TOUCHES YOU ON PLACES THAT YOU FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE AND CAUSING YOU TO FEEL SHAME, MAKING YOU FEEL AS THOUGH IT'S YOUR FAULT AND IT MAKES YOU SCARED

ATTACHMENT 5 – HOMEWORK ESSAY: “MY PERSON OF TRUST”

Essay: My Person of Trust

Dear Student,

Before You is an important and interesting essay and these are just some of the questions to help you in your writing. You can go beyond the actual topic, and can write more extensively than given by the questions. Once you've finished writing the essay, you will hand it in to me. I will read it and as with any written essay, you will get my (written) feedback.

Questions to motivate the writer:

What kind of person should my trusted adult be like?

What does my inner voice tell me?

What traits should my trusted adult have?

How do I know I can trust this person?

Based on what earlier life experiences do I know I can trust this person?

If my friend has survived sexual violence, should I share this with my trusted adult and ask for help for my friend? Give a reason for your answer.

If my person of trust does not handle the situation well, what am I to do next?

In this essay, you can but don't have to name Your trusted adult. You decide based on how You feel and if You are comfortable with it.

Thank You very much!

ATTACHMENT 6A – “IT HAPPENED ONCE ON THE INTERNET TO JOHANNE...”

Johanne is a 7th grade student at an elementary school and is in a relationship with Mark, who is 2 years older and has more experience in relationships. Johanne and Mark occasionally meet up in the schoolyard and regularly correspond via WhatsApp and Snapchat. Lately, Mark has been increasingly sending messages containing sexually explicit content to Johanne causing her some discomfort (e.g., “I imagine us in bed together, cuddling and hugging. Do you imagine the same thing?”) Mark assured her it was a normal step in deepening a relationship and proof they have a good relationship. He told her that messaging in this way is called sexting and everyone does it today. Over time, Johanne’s sexting became exciting, although she wasn’t always in the mood to answer his messages. Mark started sending Johanne photos of himself dressed only in boxers and asked her to send him a photo of herself only in a bra and one only in panties.

After a while, while hanging out with her best friend who is also in Mark’s class, Johanne found out that all the guys in her class had intimate photos of her. She was shocked that Mark had sent photos of her to others without her consent. The other guys in school soon started catcalling her in the hallway saying “Where are you, kitty?” and “Want to send me also a picture?” Johanne didn’t know what to do or know how to break up with Mark because she was afraid he would also post pictures of her on social media.

Over time, it became difficult for her to concentrate on classes because she was constantly thinking who had seen her photos and whether her parents, teachers, would also see them. She felt restless and irritable. She began to withdraw and ceased socializing in the park after school. She felt sad and lonely because she didn’t know what to do and how to act towards Mark.

INSTRUCTIONS AND QUESTIONS FOR GROUP WORK:

The story before you describes a form of cyber sexual violence. Get one person in the group to read the story aloud while the others listen carefully. After reading the story, discuss the answers to the four questions together. A person in the group should write down the answers once you all agree on the answer. Write down the answers on the other side of the paper. Also, choose who among you will briefly retell the story and present answers to the questions to the rest of the class. You have 10 minutes for this task.

You can write answers to the questions on the other side of this paper.

1. *How would you explain to your friends what abusive sexting is?*
2. *Do you think there are risks in sexting? If yes – what are risks? If not – why not?*
3. *What are the negative consequences for Johanne as a victim of sexting, as a form of cyber sexual violence?*
4. *What do you think Johanne should do in this situation?*

ATTACHMENT 6B – “IT HAPPENED ONCE ON THE INTERNET TO MASHA... “

Masha has been texting Adam for some time now, whom she met on Facebook. She accepted his friend request, even though she had never met him. Her friends warned her to be careful because she didn't know Adam, who lives in Austria, but she said she had full confidence in her new friend who understood her and understood more than they do. Masha did not tell her parents about Adam because he asked her to keep their correspondence a secret. They shared a lot of photos and family secrets with each other, and Masha felt that she had made a very close friend who completely understood her.

After a while, Adam asked Masha to send him a video of herself while showering and changing her clothes. Masha was embarrassed and felt strange, refusing his requests. Adam would get angry, stop communicating for a day or two which made Masha sad. She didn't want to lose Adam's friendship and eventually sent him a short shot of herself in a bathing suit. But the footage wasn't enough for Adam and he wanted another one with Masha completely naked. Although Masha explicitly said that she did not want to do it and did not understand why Adam kept asking her for it, he again disappeared and stopped responding to her messages. In the end, he contacted Masha and asked to meet up with her in two day's time at the Botanical Garden in Zagreb. Masha was surprised by his behavior and was not really ready to meet him, which she also told him. But Adam threatened Masha that if she didn't come to the agreed place, he would reveal all her secrets to Masha's parents and send her video to everyone at her school. Masha was afraid and ultimately agreed to meet. At the agreed place, she saw that a 35-year-old man waiting for her. She was very frightened and fled from the Botanical Garden. She realized she was a victim of **cybergrooming** because all along Adam was an older man. He immediately texted her telling her to come back because she was the most beautiful girl he had ever met and wanted an intimate relationship with her.

INSTRUCTIONS AND QUESTIONS FOR GROUP WORK:

The story before you describes a form of cyber sexual violence. Get one person in the group to read the story aloud while the others listen carefully. After reading the story, discuss the answers to the four questions together. A person in the group should write down the answers once you all agree on the answer. Write down the answers on the other side of the paper. Also, choose who among you will briefly retell the story and present answers to the questions to the rest of the class. You have 10 minutes for this task.

You can write the answers to the questions on the other side of this paper.

1. *How would you explain to your friends what cybergrooming is?*
2. *What are the risks of corresponding with strangers online and then meeting up with them?*
3. *What negative consequences can happen to Masha as a victim of cybergrooming, which is a form of electronic sexual violence?*
4. *How do you think Masha should act in this situation?*

ATTACHMENT 6C – “IT HAPPENED ONCE ON THE INTERNET TO EMMA...”

Emma is an 8th grade elementary school student. Her class teacher noticed that Emma began getting worse grades and was increasingly withdrawn. She decided to ask Emma to stay back in class after the last lesson and have a talk with her. Emma said she was not allowed to reveal her secret because she was very afraid and ran out of class. The class teacher decided to talk to the school psychologist, so they both approached Emma the next day and explained to her that she could trust them and they would support her, no matter what was happening to her. They also said that they have to react if she was experiencing some form of violence, or inform her parents about it, but that they would be there for her and do everything they could to protect her. Though Emma hesitated, she finally opened up and confided in the class teacher and psychologist. She explained that John, a high school 2nd grader, was regularly harassing and threatening her. She explained that during their relationship, they often sexted, and sent each other messages and photos containing sexually explicit content, which she thought was fine at the time. Emma believed it was a mandatory part of their relationship, because she had heard everyone else was doing it. However, after she decided to end the relationship, John began threatening her that if she broke up with him, he would make her photos go public and send them to her friends. Emma said she wanted to end the relationship with him, after which he became very angry, waited for her a couple of times in front of the school and constantly texted her for a while. Fearing the photos of her would be released, Emma agreed to continue her relationship with John, but the constant threats and blackmail continued. For instance, if she did not want to make out with him, he would threaten her. After Emma told her everything, the class teacher explained to her that she was surviving cyber sexual violence, i.e., sextortion – a form of online revenge and blackmail that includes threats of posting intimate content. They thanked Emma for confiding in them and agreed to take further steps in protecting her while stopping and sanctioning John’s behavior. They explained to Emma that they would now call her parents, inform them about what was happening to her and how they could support her. After that, they intend to inform the relevant institutions (police, social welfare center), because John’s behavior is punishable by law. Emma thanked the class teacher and psychologist for their support and for explaining everything to be undertaken.

INSTRUCTIONS AND QUESTIONS FOR GROUP WORK:

The story before you describes a form of cyber sexual violence. Get one person in the group to read the story aloud while the others listen carefully. After reading the story, discuss the answers to the four questions together. A person in the group should write down the answers once you all agree on the answer. Write down the answers on the other side of the paper. Also, choose who among you will briefly retell the story and present answers to the questions to the rest of the class. You have 10 minutes for this task.

You can write the answers to the questions on the other side of this paper.

1. *How would you explain to your friends what sextortion is?*
2. *What is the risk of sending messages and photos of sexually explicit content?*
3. *What are the negative consequences for Emma as a victim of sextortion, which is a form of cyber sexual violence?*
4. *Do you think Emma did the right thing to confide in her class teacher? What would you do if you or your friend were experiencing this form of violence?*

ATTACHMENT 7 – “EXPLAINING THE FORMS OF CYBER SEXUAL VIOLENCE”

<p>Abusive Sexting</p>	<p><u>Sexting</u> is the sending, receiving and/or forwarding of sexual content (personal or someone else’s) in the form of messages, images, photos and/or video materials.</p> <p>Sexting is voluntary when it involves consensual electronic sharing of content between two people who have given consent.</p> <p><u>Abusive sexting</u> is sharing content with others without the consent of the person (victim). It is important to remember that <u>sexting can lead to sextortion</u>.</p> <p>Young people often think that sexting deepens relationships and is just harmless flirting, necessary for any intimate relationship. While sexting can be fun and exciting, no one should participate in sexting if they are uncomfortable or feel compelled to do so. Bear in mind that once content has been forwarded, it remains permanently available online.</p>
<p>Cybergrooming</p>	<p>A form of sexual violence used by <u>unknown adults</u> to sexually abuse <u>children</u> via the Internet and social media is called cybergrooming. It is the process of a sexual predator getting to know and bond with (gaining the trust of) a child or young person with the aim of committing <u>sexual abuse</u>. This process of committing violence involves approaching the child, gaining the child’s trust and maintaining ongoing secret communication to prevent disclosure. <u>Often everything is done with the aim of continuing sexual abuse in person</u>. Abusers intending to establish such a relationship use manipulation, lies, demand secrecy, kindness and flattery, and emotional blackmail and threats.</p>
<p>Sextortion</p>	<p><u>Sextortion</u> is an English derivative that combines the words sex and extortion and refers to <u>any form of blackmail based on acquired sexually explicit content, threats and extortion based on new sexually explicit content over the Internet</u>. The perpetrator most often threatens to publish and/or forward sexually explicit photos of the victim if the victim refuses to engage in further sexual activities in some way.</p>

**ATTACHMENT 8 – QUESTIONS FOR GROUP WORK AFTER THE VIDEO
“AND WHO AM I?”**

1. How did you feel watching the video? What made the biggest impression on you?

2. Regarding the three situations in the video, list the situations from 1 to 3, where number one is the situation, you presume happens most often, and number 3 is the situation occurring least often.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

3. Based on your previous answers, why do you think the situations are most likely to happen as you listed them? Explain your answer (based on your personal experience and knowledge).

4. What do you think, who experiences cyber sexual violence more often – girls or boys? Why?

5. How do you think the girl feels in the first situation when no one reacted? How do you think she felt when her friend was provided with support?

6. Based on everything you have learnt so far from the video, what would be the most suitable reaction by the observer and how would the girl from the video feel then?

ATTACHMENT 9 – TRUE AND UNTRUE LABELS

TRUE

UNTRUE

ATTACHMENT 10 – “EXPLANATION FOR THE ACTIVITY ‘THE INTERNET AND I’”

1. Claim: *I think child often experience cyber violence and cyber sexual violence.*

Explanation for facilitators: Research shows that 1 in 5 children (20%) have experienced some form of cyber violence (Smahel i sur., 2020), which you heard about during the first hour. Children often experience cyber violence and cyber sexual violence, which is why talking about this topic is important!

2. Claim: *There have been situations where I witnessed gossip, mockery and inappropriate comments towards other people on social media and/or in online chat groups (WhatsApp, Viber).*

3. Claim: *I think a person cannot be insulted if someone mocks them on social media – it’s only the Internet.*

Explanation for facilitators: Cyber violence leaves consequences just like all other types of violence. The consequences are less visible because we do not see the reaction of the person experiencing this form of violence. However, it does not mean the person is not upset, sad, embarrassed, etc. Remind students of all the feelings they noted at the end of the previous workshop experienced by victims of cyber sexual violence.

4. Claim: *A person who sent someone intimate content is to blame – if they did not want it published, they shouldn’t have sent it.*

Explanation for facilitators: Remind students to work on the cases from the previous workshop. Point out that no one wants their messages and intimate photos or videos forwarded or publicly shown. Also, emphasize that people most often send such content to people they trust, believing that no one else will see it. Forwarding any content without the person’s consent is a form of violence.

5. Claim: *If I happen to witness a form of cyber sexual violence (e.g., receiving someone else’s intimate photographs, insults on social media), I can do something and help the person experiencing the violence.*

Explanation for facilitators: If, as an observer, you witness cyber sexual violence, you can become an active observer and stand up for the person experiencing cyber sexual violence (e.g., if violence occurs in a WhatsApp group, you can send a comment indicating that this form of communication is unacceptable; if you receive someone’s intimate photo, do not forward it to anyone but warn the person that their photos are being shared online and together with that person, inform an adult in whom you trust about it). You should always confide in a trusted adult if you know someone is experiencing any form of violence, including cyber sexual violence.

ATTACHMENT 11 – “CONSENT: KEY MESSAGES”

Match the quote in the left column with the key message about sex and sexual violence in the right column relating to the quote (e.g., 1B, 2E, and so on).

1) She's very quiet and doesn't look me in the eye at all... Does she want me to continue?	A) There are other ways for someone to show you they do not consent to sexual activity. They don't always have to say "No." If you're not sure, ask!
2) She didn't say no, so I think she wants to.	B) The partner has the right to change their mind and withdraw consent for sexual activity at any time (even if you have already started) and they don't need a reason.
3) Come on, I can't believe it! Well, you were okay when we were kissing. Why don't you want me to touch your breasts?	C) Always make sure you have consent. If a person wants to be intimate with you, they will let you know with words or body language. Always check - best to ask!
4) Of course, we can stop. Shall we curl up on the bed and watch the rest of the movie?	D) When it comes to sex or physical closeness, both people should feel safe and comfortable with their partner and trust that person. It is important to respect the decisions of each person.
5) I like it, but I'd like to still wait – I don't know if now is the right time, and we don't know each other very well to talk about sex and contraception.	E) The person has the right to change their mind and withdraw their consent at any time and without having a reason to do so.
6) We've done this before, so I don't see the point why ask again – she's probably OK with me touching the intimate parts of her body.	F) Consent to one type of sexual activity does not mean consent to everything. Consent must be requested for each sexual activity.
7) She let me touch her breasts, but when I put my hand between her legs, she immediately moved away from me and wanted to go home.	G) Even if two people have engaged in sexual activity earlier, consent is required each time.

Answers:

ATTACHMENT 12 – “SITUATIONS”

FIRST SITUATION

Maria is being persuaded by her boyfriend, John, to have sex. She's not yet ready to have sex, but he says he'll break up with her if they don't sleep together soon.

Questions for discussion:

1. Explain why this is sexual violence?
 2. With whom can Maria discuss this situation and get advice on what to do?
 3. What would you say to Maria?
-

SECOND SITUATION

You've witnessed a situation where John, a boy from your peers who is 16 years old and attends high school, said he was at a party at a friend's house for the weekend and dragged his girlfriend Ena, who was tipsy, into a room and slept with her. You also know Ena because she belongs to your peers.

Questions for discussion:

1. Explain why this is sexual violence?
 2. What can you do and who can you talk to about what you've heard?
 3. Whom can Ena turn to for help?
-

THIRD SITUATION

You've witnessed a situation where a girl from your class made an offensive sexual comment to her female and male friends about a boy with whom she is in a relationship.

Questions for discussion:

1. Explain why this is sexual violence?
2. What can you do in this situation?
3. What would you say to the girl?



**EXPERIENCES BY
TEACHERS AND
EXPERT SCHOOL
ASSOCIATES RELATING
TO IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE SVEP 2 – JUNIOR
PROGRAM**

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15. EXPERIENCES BY TEACHERS AND EXPERT SCHOOL ASSOCIATES RELATING TO IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SVEP 2 – JUNIOR PROGRAM

Kristina Mihaljević, M.A., social pedagogy

Svea Kučinić, M.Sc., educational rehabilitation

The SVEP 2 – JUNIOR program is implemented in 34 elementary schools (including two regional schools) from 17 counties throughout Croatia. To better implement the program, two two-day specialized educational courses on sexual violence against children and the implementation of sexual violence prevention programs **for 64 teachers and expert school associates were held**. In schools, there were 48 lectures on sexual violence for **1,476 parents**. After conducting these educational courses, 388 workshops within the SVEP 2 - JUNIOR program were conducted for **3,029 students**.

After implementing the program, it was of utmost importance for us to find out what the teachers and expert school associate themselves perceive as opportunities for improving the implementation of the SVEP 2 – JUNIOR program and what they think would be useful for everyone to know who is involved in implementing the program. Table 3 provides useful and relevant information collected from the teachers, which can make your work on preventing sexual violence in terms of the SVEP 2 – JUNIOR program better and more successful. In addition, you should read the Introductory Notes, which are an integral part of the SVEP 2 – JUNIOR program and contain key important information for its high quality implementation.

Table 3. Experience of teachers and expert school associate in implementing the SVEP 2 – JUNIOR program

<p>SCHOOL</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before implementing the SVEP 2 – JUNIOR program, a lecture for the Teachers' Council should be held to introduce the program to all employees. • All school employees should be familiar with the Protocol on the Procedure in Case of Sexual Violence and its legal obligations because the program helps disclose sexual violence.
<p>INCLUSION OF PARENTS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present the SVEP 2 – JUNIOR program at the Parents' Council. • Hold a lecture for parents before conducting workshops for students. • Inform parents about the program and its goals in detail and of elementary school age and children want and should be able to talk about sexual violence with them.

<p>PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The recommendation is to work in a co-facilitators' pair so that the group process is observed. • Good preparation for the implementation of the program is important (detailed introduction to all materials and concepts). • Provide technical conditions for implementing the program (speaker, projector and similar) and check whether everything works before running the workshops. • Support groups should be held regularly. • An additional workshop should be organized if a discussion is initiated and not all activities can be carried out in available time. • Pay special attention to double negations (e.g., video <i>Prejudices About Sexual Violence</i>) and clarify this to students. • Conduct workshops at an interval of no more than two weeks apart to ensure continuity. • Prejudices about sexual violence is a topic proven to be the most demanding and has provoked the greatest debates. A good preparation is necessary and all theoretical chapters from the Textbook should be read. • Before conducting the workshops, the "Introductory Notes" should be read in detail, especially the section on the gender component of violence, to be able to adequately react to the reactions of boys. Given that in more than 90% of cases of sexual violence, the perpetrators are male adolescents and men, this can cause different feelings in male adolescents, including shame and guilt, leading to resistance to the topic and understanding the importance of the gender perspective. Space should be given to their feelings, as well as emphasizing that not all male adolescents are perpetrators while redirecting their attention to their constructive role in promoting gender equality and preventing sexual violence. Point out to them that they can have a positive impact on the attitudes of their peers.
<p>INCLUSION OF STUDENTS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure enough time for students to express their opinions. • At the first workshop, discomfort may occur, but when students feel and see that facilitators are not embarrassed to talk about the topic of sexual violence, they relax and become more active. • Check whether students understand all the concepts (e.g., stereotypes) and explain further if necessary. • Expect active participation from students and interest in the topic.

Implementation of the program has **helped create a deeper trust** between the students and facilitators (e.g., they began to confide and in relation to peer violence, domestic violence).

RESPECTING DIVERSITY AMONG STUDENTS AND THE INCLUSION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE PROGRAM

From previous experience in implementing the program, all the potential diversities that facilitators may encounter in class should be considered when running the workshops. One of the diversity issues requiring attention is possible disabilities among students participating in the workshops. According to data from the Croatian Bureau of Statistics, at the end of the 2020/2021 school year, a total of 18,916 female and male students with disabilities attended regular elementary school programs (6%) out of a total of 308,353 students. Students with disabilities belong to a group at increased risk of sexual violence and, therefore, should be provided with conditions for equal participation in all program activities. Data show that the risk of exposure to sexual violence is several times higher in children with disabilities than in other children (WHO, 2012; Davies and Jones, 2013; Assink et al., 2019).

When preparing for the implementation of the program, we recommend that facilitators check whether there are students with disabilities in the class they plan to hold. If the facilitator finds out that students with disabilities will be in the class, necessary steps should be taken for individualization and adaptation of content and access in preparing the workshops.

Given the great diversity of needs of students with disabilities, creating a universally adapted program to satisfactorily encompass the entire spectrum of potential individualization and adaptation procedures is impossible. Therefore, we present below a summary of general guidelines and recommendations for adapting the program, while the selection of specific adjustment procedures is left to the facilitators, who best know the students and their needs.

Continuously checking whether students understand key concepts is important, and if you notice they have difficulties in understanding and adopting abstract concepts, it should be explained using real examples, appropriate pictorial representations, and the like. Key concepts should be highlighted in written materials to suit the specific pupil (e.g., bolding text, underlining text, or color-coded). If necessary, summaries with key terms can be created for students who are challenged by the large quantity of text. All visual and audio-visual materials you find as part of the program can be helpful in the paper. If necessary, give students more time to master the material or again review the material. All materials can be printed or photocopied in enlarged format for students with visual impairments.

When it comes to equal and active participation of students with disabilities in discussions and other program activities, adjustment procedures may include elaborating complex tasks and instructions into simpler steps, giving instructions gradually, using clear sub-questions, and facilitating participation and communication to allow students to express themselves easily and in the best way (e.g. communicator, exclusively oral or exclusively written expressions, Croatian sign language, etc.).

For more detailed recommendations and instructions, we recommend the Guidelines for Working with students with Disabilities of the Ministry of Science and Education (2021).

Furthermore, the Women's Room, in cooperation with the teachers of the Grigor Vitez Elementary School, have devised and created a collection of workshops to prevent sexual violence against children with disabilities. The collection is available at: <http://zenskasoba.hr/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/ZIP-elektroni%C4%8Dka-zbirka-preventivnih-aktivnosti.pdf>

In conclusion, we once again emphasize the importance of ensuring the conditions for equal participation of students with disabilities in implementing this program, just as they have the right to equal participation in all other educational processes.

16. A BRIEF NOTE ABOUT THE AUTHORS

MAJA MAMULA, PH.D., WOMEN'S ROOM

She is the founder and Coordinator of the Women's Room. A psychologist by profession, and a women's rights activist, she has been a lecturer, trainer, researcher, and counsellor on the topic of gender-based violence for more than 25 years. She has gained a lot of expertise in the field of sexual violence. As an expert, she is a member of numerous national committees and working groups in developing strategies and public policies to combat violence against women, with a special focus on sexual violence. As a coordinator of the Women's Room, she was the initiator for lobbying and devising the Protocol on the Procedure in Cases of Sexual Violence, lobbying for amendments to the law on sexual violence, and lobbying for the development and adoption of the National Plan for Combating of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment.

As a researcher, she has conducted research at the national, regional, and international levels, and has participated in several studies for the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), acting as an independent expert for Croatia. As co-founder of the European Women's Network Against Sexual Violence (EWNASV), she is currently its legal representative and a member of the Board of Directors.

To date, she has published eight books, eight manuals, thirty chapters in various books on sexuality and violence, and three scientific and twenty-eight professional articles. She has given lectures at more than fifty national and international conferences and scientific congresses as a speaker or invited speaker and as part of program and organizational teams.

KRISTINA MIHALJEVIĆ, M.A. SOCIAL PEDAGOGY, WOMEN'S ROOM

Kristina Mihaljević holds a Master of Social Pedagogy from the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences, University of Zagreb. She is the Head of Prevention Programs at the Women's Room. As an expert, she is continuously involved in devising and holding lectures, workshops, training sessions, and educational courses for children, adolescents, parents, students, experts working with children, representatives of civil society organizations, and the general public with a focus on the prevention of sexual violence, promotion of gender equality and active involvement in the work of civil society organizations. She is actively engaged in campaigns on social media, and is the author of various brochures and publications aimed at preventing sexual violence and cyber sexual violence. Moreover, she is one of the authors of the program against sexual violence for secondary schools (SVEP) and for higher grades of elementary school (SVEP 2 – JUNIOR). Her other involvements have been as a lecturer at various round tables, holding lectures, educational courses, and conferences, and she endeavors to improve her professional competencies continuously. She is a psychotherapist in training under supervision at the Center for Gestalt Psychotherapy and Education (Center IGW Zagreb).

DUŠICA POPADIĆ, PSYCHOLOGIST, INCEST TRAUMA CENTER – BELGRADE

Since 1994, Dušica Popadić has been working with adolescents and adult survivors of sexual abuse and their supportive persons. She is a certified supervisor and certified and accredited trainer in the field of Child Protection (NSPCC, UK), co-author and supervisor of the First National Study on the Social Problem of Child Sexual Abuse in the Republic of Serbia, co-author of the Strategy in Education for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse in the Republic of Serbia and the Educational Pack for Primary and Secondary Schools for Learning About the Issue of Sexual Violence Against Children.

LJILJANA BOGAVAC, M.D., INCEST TRAUMA CENTER – BELGRADE

Ljiljana Bogavac, M.D., since 1994, has been working in particular with child survivors of sexual abuse and their supportive persons. She leads the Counseling Team at the Incest Trauma Center – Belgrade for service provision to child and adult survivors of sexual abuse and represents the expert opinion of the Incest Trauma Center – Belgrade as an expert witness in the court. She is a co-author and president of the Ethics Committee of the First National Study on the Social Issue of Child Sexual Abuse in the Republic of Serbia, co-author of the Strategy in Education for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse in the Republic of Serbia and the Educational Pack for Primary and Secondary Schools for Learning about the Issue of Sexual Violence against Children. She is the author of the Educational Pack for Preschoolers, Parents and Guardians to Learn about the Issue of Sexual Violence Against Children. She is currently President of the European Women's Network Against Sexual Violence.

NATAŠA BIJELIĆ, M.SC., CESI – CENTER FOR EDUCATION, COUNSELING AND RESEARCH

She graduated in sociology from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb and earned a master's degree in the UK from the London School of Economics and Political Science in Gender Studies (MSc Gender). For many years, she has worked as a researcher and educator at CESI - Center for Education, Counseling and Research in the Sex, Gender, and Sexual Rights program. She addresses issues on sexual and reproductive health and rights, adolescent sexuality, sex education, gender equality, gender-based violence, masculinity, and LGBT topics through education, research, advocacy activities, and campaigns. Her published papers include manuals, brochures, research reports, and scientific articles. As a researcher and consultant, she has collaborated with Queer Zagreb, GTZ – Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit from Bosnia and Herzegovina, ICRW – International Center for Research on Women from the USA, and the International Planned Parenthood Federation. Also, as a member of working groups within various ministries, she has participated in developing the action plan for preventing violence in schools, a national youth program, and an expert committee for developing centers for the reproductive health of children and youth.

ANDREA DOMITROVIĆ ŠMIDA, M.PSYCH., WOMEN'S ROOM

Andrea Domitrović Šmida holds a Master of Psychology from the Faculty of Croatian Studies in Zagreb, with completed psychotherapeutic training in Dance Movement Psychotherapy. In her previous work in non-governmental organizations and educational institutions, she has acquired skills in leading groups of children and adolescents, focusing on the field of counselling and psychotherapeutic work and in psychosocial services with different groups of users (e.g., oncology patients, the elderly).

She is currently employed in the Women's Room as a counsellor at the Center for Victims of Sexual Violence. At the counselling center, she works directly with survivors of sexual violence through counselling and psychotherapeutic treatments for the purpose of helping those who have survived sexual violence, provides psychological preparation for testimonies in criminal proceedings, and accompaniment in the role of a confidential person.

ANAMARIA DROŽĐAN-KRANJČEC, LL.M., WOMEN'S ROOM

Anamaria Drožđan-Kranjčec is the Head of the Legal Team at the Women's Room. Her main fields of professional activity and interests are the position and rights of victims of crimes within criminal proceedings and sexual violence issues. She coordinates the national Support and Cooperation Network for Victims and Witnesses of Crime. Also, she has participated as a member in the working groups for amending legislation, bylaws, and public policy-making related to the issues of gender-based violence and the rights of victims of crime. She is the author of publications and professional articles, a regular lecturer at national and international conferences, lecturer at numerous educational courses on the topic of protecting the rights of victims of sexual violence, domestic violence and the rights and legal position of victims of crime.

GORDANA FILIPOVIĆ, LL.M., ADVISOR TO THE OMBUDSPERSON FOR CHILDREN

Gordana Filipović is a qualified lawyer, advisor to the Ombudsperson for Children for legal affairs in the field of social welfare, justice, and family. She has been involved in the protection of children's rights within the social welfare system for many years, working on family legal protection cases at the social welfare center and the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. Since 2004, she has been monitoring the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international regulations in domestic legislation and practice, monitoring the application of regulations in the field of the protection of children's rights and interests, drafting proposals and opinions for their improvement, and participating in working groups and bodies for drafting regulations in the field of family law, protection of children in the judiciary and protection of children from sexual violence.

SVEA KUČINIĆ, M.SC., EDUCATIONAL REHABILITATION, WOMEN'S ROOM

Svea Kučinić holds a Master of Educational Rehabilitation from the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences, University of Zagreb, and is a professional associate on programs and projects in the Women's Room. She has gained previous work experience as a professional associate educational rehabilitator in primary and secondary schools, and is the owner of a private educational and rehabilitation practice. In the Women's Room she works on devising and implementing activities aimed at the prevention of sexual violence, with a focus on the prevention of sexual violence against children with disabilities and the coordination of volunteers. She is a psychotherapist in training at the Center for Gestalt Psychotherapy and Education (Center IGW Zagreb).

MATEA BELOŠEVIĆ, PH.D., FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND REHABILITATION SCIENCES

Matea Belošević is an assistant at the Department of Behavioral Disorders at the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences, University of Zagreb. Her position also requires holding classes in the undergraduate and graduate programs Social Pedagogy. She is a member of the Laboratory for Prevention Research (PrevLab), in which she participates in numerous domestic

and European professional and scientific projects. He has also gained valuable professional experience working in the Educational Counselling Center within the Teaching and Clinical Center at the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences, University of Zagreb. In addition, she is a national master trainer for the implementation of EUPC courses (EMCDDA). She is also a member of several societies in the field of scientific and professional work, the most important of which is the European Society for Prevention Research (EUSPR), the European Public Health Association (EUPHA), and the International Society of Substance Use Professionals (ISSUP).

JOSIPA TUKARA KOMLJENOVIĆ, M.SOC.

Josipa Tukara Komljenović holds a master's degree in sociology from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb, and has completed a one-year women's study course at the Center for Women's Studies and numerous other professional development and training courses in the field of gender equality, gender-based violence, mentoring, and direct youth work. Tukara Komljenović has worked at the Women's Room as a Youth Program Manager, as Head of a Media Campaign on social media for the association CESI – Center for Education, Counseling and Research, and is currently employed in the Croatian Youth Network as a project manager and program associate. Today she is a youth worker, a researcher in areas of interest for young people and policies related to youth and youth work, and an educator on gender equality, public advocacy, and civic participation of young people. She is the author of several publications in the field of sexual violence prevention, as well as research publications and methodological tools for youth work.

JELENA BIČANIĆ, B.A. SOCIAL PEDAGOGY

Bičanić graduated in social pedagogy from the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences, University of Zagreb. As a social pedagogue, and throughout her professional life, she has dealt primarily with risk prevention and the treatment of behavioral problems in children and young people. She is the author of a number of professional articles and papers, the author of the handbook for class teachers Practicing Life Skills, and co-author of two manuals. She is a member of the European Association for Reality Psychotherapy, a teacher-trainer, a clinical practice supervisor, and a therapist. She currently works as a counselor and psychotherapist in a private psychological center and as a teacher at the Croatian Association for Reality Psychotherapy.

DEJANA BOUILLET, PH.D., PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF PEDAGOGY, FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF ZAGREB

Dejana Bouillet, Ph.D., is employed as a professor in the Department of Pedagogy at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb, where she teaches social pedagogy. She received her Ph.D. in 1997 from the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences, University of Zagreb. During her work, she has been engaged in various public, state, and scientific institutions, researching and teaching a wide range of etiological, phenomenological, and interventional aspects of behavioral problems and special educational needs of other groups of children and young people with disabilities. She is a member of the presidency of the Croatian Association for Educational Research and president of the Ethics Committee of the Croatian Chamber of Social Pedagogues. Independently and as a co-author, she has published more than 90 scientific and professional papers, three university textbooks, 15 manuals, and six scientific monographs. In 2022, she received the University of Zagreb Award for the most successful technology transfer for the project Improving Inclusivity of Initial Education of Educators of Early and Preschool-Age Children.

17. APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

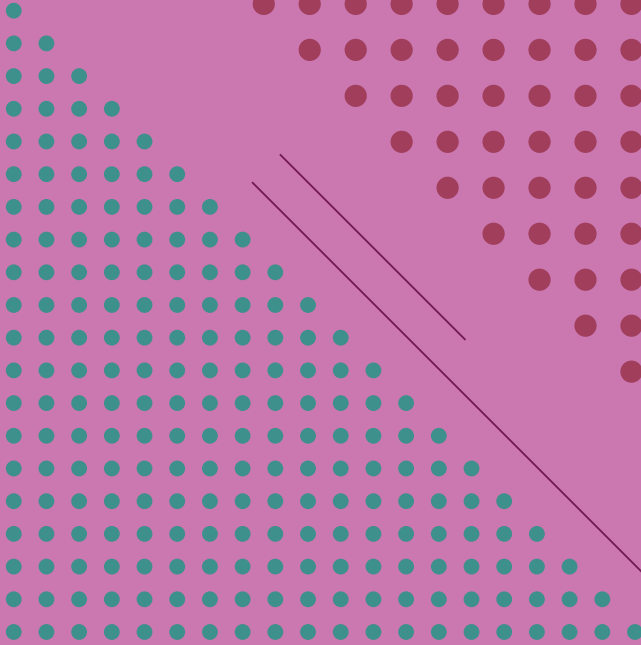
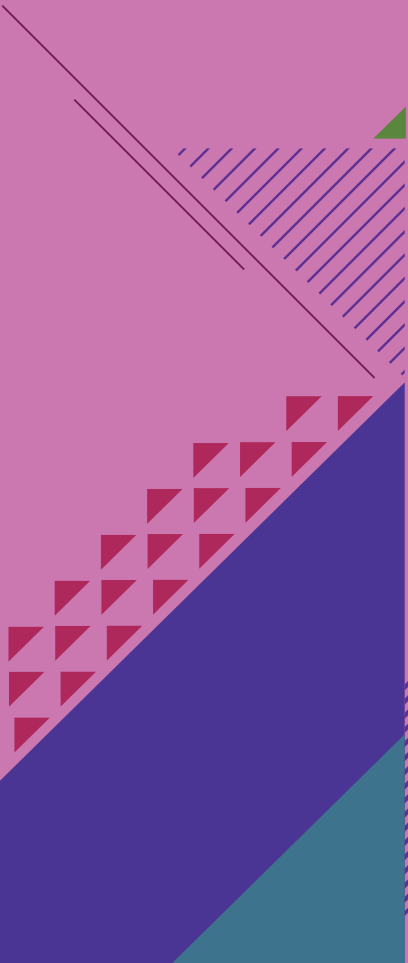
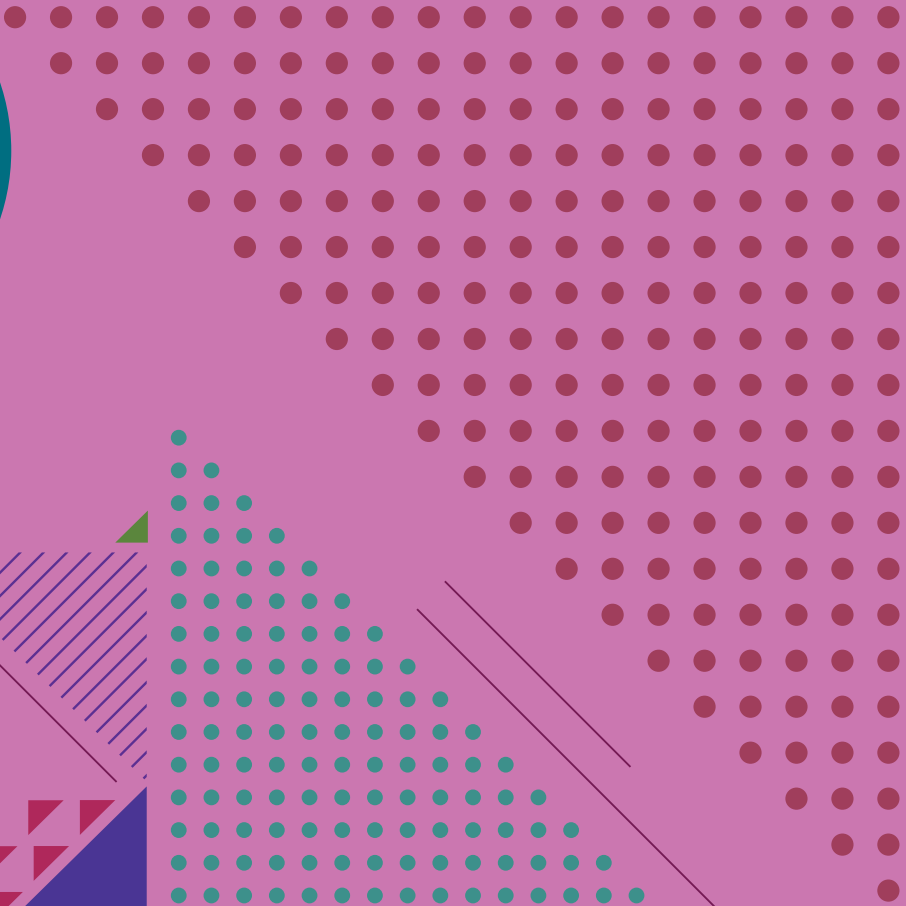
List of partner primary schools:

1. Dragutin Tadijanović Elementary School in Petrinja
2. Kantrida Elementary School in Rijeka
3. Elementary School in Bedekovčina
4. Slava Raškaj Elementary School in Ozalj
5. Antun Mihanović Elementary School in Slavonski Brod
6. Veruda Elementary School in Pula
7. Matko Laginja Elementary School in Zagreb

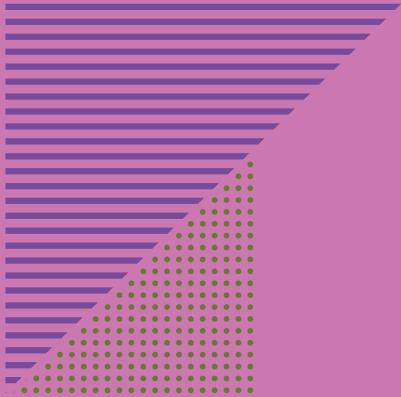
List of cooperative primary schools:

1. Nikola Tesla Elementary School in Zagreb
2. Elementary School in Prečko, Zagreb
3. First Elementary School in Dugave, Zagreb
4. Don Mihovila Pavlinovića Elementary School in Metković
5. Ljudevit Gaj Elementary School in Zaprešić
6. Antun Mihanović Elementary School in Klanjec
7. Ljudevit Gaj Elementary School in Krapina
8. Mate Lovraka Elementary School in Kutina
9. Elementary School in Banija, Karlovac
10. Ivane Brlić-Mažuranić Elementary School in Ogulin
11. Gustav Krklec Elementary School in Maruševac
12. Ivan Ranger Elementary School in Kamenica, Lepoglav
13. Elementary School in Podturen
14. Elementary School in in Kloštar Podravski
15. Vladimir Nazor Elementary School in Daruvar
16. Eugen Kumičić Elementary School in Rijeka
17. Ivane Brlić-Mažuranić Elementary School in Virovitica
18. Josip Antun Čolnić Elementary School in Đakovo
19. Kralja Tomislava Elementary School in Našice
20. Ivana Gorana Kovačića Elementary School in Vinkovci
21. Elementary School in Okučani
22. Plokite Elementary School in Split
23. Don Lovre Katić Elementary School in Solin
24. Kralj Zvonimir Elementary School in Seget Donji
25. Juraj Dobrila Elementary School in Rovinj

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LITERATURE



18. LITERATURE

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19. IMPORTANT CONTACTS

Institution	Organization
Policija 112	Women's Room Center for Victims of Sexual Violence Tel: +385 1 6119 444 E-mail: savjetovaliste@zenskasoba.hr Web: www.zenskasoba.hr
Institutes for Social Work County Services Regional Office	Brave Phone – Helpline for abused and neglected children Tel: +385 1 116 111 E-mail: hrabrisa@hrabritelefon.hr Web: www.hrabritelefon.hr
Office of the Ombudsman for Children Tel:+385 1 4929 669, +385 1 4929 278 E-mail: info@dijete.hr Web: www.dijete.hr	Safer Internet Center Tel: 0800 606 606 Web: www.csi.hr/
Ministry of Science and Education Tel:+385 1 4594 461 E-mail: standardstrategije@mzo.hr Web: https://mzo.gov.hr/vijesti/web-obrazac-za-evidenciju-o-neprimjerenom-ponasanju-u-skolama/3990	Rijeka Children's Home Tić Tel: +385 51 215 670 E-mail: tic@tic-za-djecu.hr Web: www.tic-za-djecu.hr
Education and Teacher Training Agency Tel: +385 1 2785 000 E-mail: agencija@azoo.hr Web: www.azoo.hr	Luka Ritz Counselling Center Tel: +385 1 6470 050 E-mail: info@centar-lukaritz.hr Web: www.centar-lukaritz.hr

The background is a vibrant blue with several abstract geometric elements. In the top left, there's a square with a red dotted pattern transitioning into a yellow striped pattern. In the top right, there's a large area with diagonal white lines. In the middle right, there's a green triangle and a smaller orange dotted triangle. In the bottom right, there's a large cyan circle containing the number 20. The bottom left features a large green dotted pattern. A green triangle with horizontal lines is on the left side. A yellow triangle with a green dotted pattern is in the middle right. A yellow triangle with a green dotted pattern is in the bottom right. A yellow triangle with a green dotted pattern is in the bottom right. A yellow triangle with a green dotted pattern is in the bottom right.

REVIEWS OF THE PROGRAM AND EVALUATIONS BY STUDENTS

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20. REVIEWS OF THE PROGRAM AND EVALUATIONS BY STUDENTS

FROM REVIEWS...

“The SVEP 2 - JUNIOR program is a promising program on universal level of prevention with great potential for development to become a universal prevention program based on evidence of effectiveness. The program fulfills the many characteristics of effective prevention programs, such as justifying an assessment of the target population’s needs, providing the necessary resources for implementation (premises, human, and material) as a clearly set program, the logical intervention design, program evaluation of the pilot implementation and room for possibility expanding the program. In addition, the program respects ethical principles in working with children and young people. The evaluation results of the program’s effectiveness (pilot implementation) show that program participants gained more knowledge and empathy and subsequently showed less support for myths about persons who have survived sexual violence. This proves that the program achieves the expected learning outcomes and contributes to the general goal of preventing sexual violence against (and among) children. The evaluation results of the pilot implementation suggest it is a promising universal prevention program.”

Martina Ferić, Ph.D. professor,

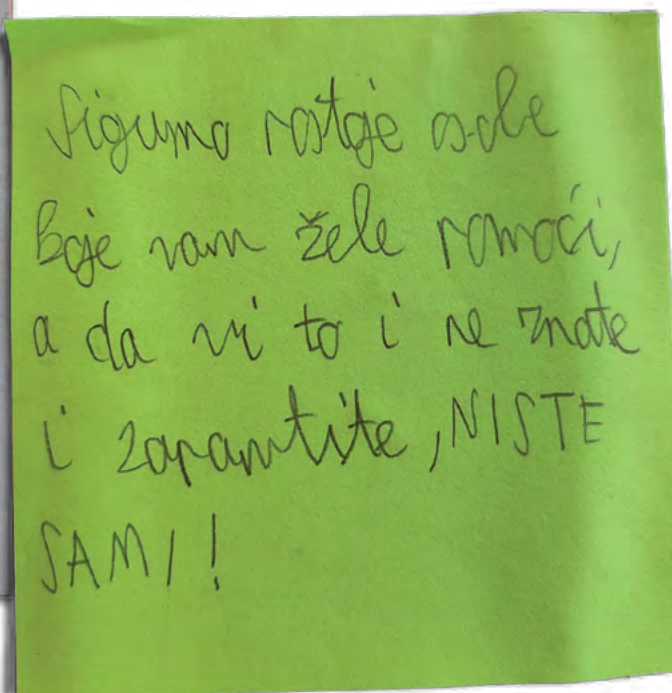
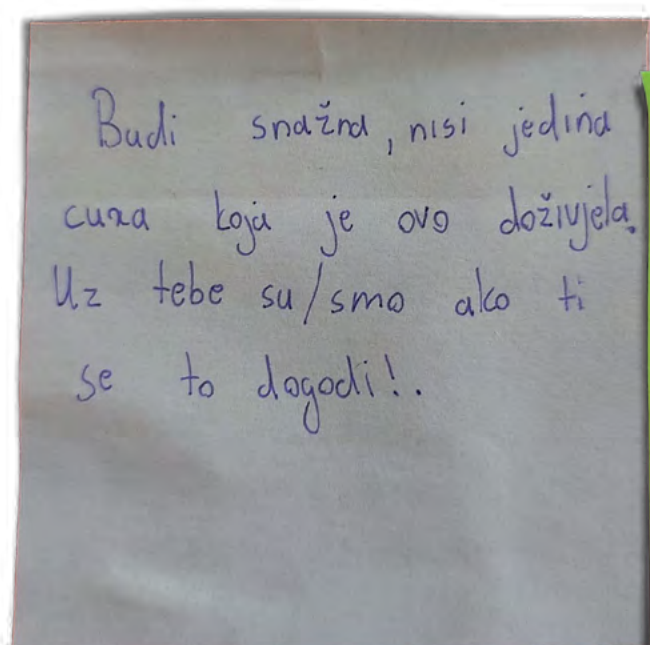
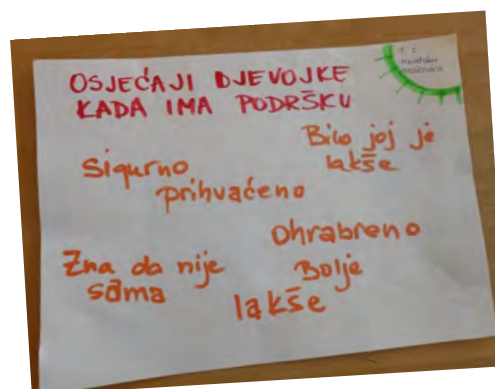
Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences, University of Zagreb

“Although there are programs in Croatia addressing violence prevention, prevention programs for sexual violence are lacking. The program Sexual Violence – Educational and Preventive Program 2 - Junior (SVEP 2 - JUNIOR), which I consider comprehensive, excellent, significant, and necessary, fills that void. The program is well structured, has interesting content, realistic and achievable goals, is appropriate for the age of the students, has well-designed activities, relies on modern teaching methods, and will undoubtedly contribute to the expected learning outcomes. Therefore, it can help students to widen their knowledge about the forms, characteristics, prevalence, and consequences of sexual violence and the myths and prejudices accompanying it, as well as the mechanisms for help and support. In addition, the program offers other aspects of effective prevention programs. It is based on the latest scientific knowledge and is socio-culturally relevant, encouraging positive relationships and educational aspects of the outlined activities. It also serves to train teachers to implement the program. The evaluation supports my presented conclusions. I firmly believe this important preventive program should definitely be approved, supported, and expanded to other schools.”

Vesna Bilić, Ph.D., professor, Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Zagreb

FROM EVALUATION BY STUDENTS ...

- * A child is never to blame for sexual violence! (5th-grade pupil)
- * Always confide in a grownup! (5th-grade pupil)
- * If a friend confides in me that they have survived sexual violence, I can show them love and support, believe them, tell them they're not to blame, and always be there for them (6th-grade pupil).
- * Whatever happens, don't lose hope! Report the violence to an adult you can trust. (7th-grade pupil)
- * I know you're scared and feel like you're alone, but you're not; I understand you (7th-grade pupil).



ABOUT WOMEN'S ROOM

Women's Room is a feminist, non-profit civil society organisation founded in 2002 with the aim of preventing and combating sexual violence, offering direct service provision to survivors of sexual violence, and promoting and protecting sexual rights.

Since 2003, Women's Room has systematically carried out sexual violence and gender-based violence prevention programs. Women's Room carries out the majority of our activities in the fields of **prevention** and **education**. Due to our extensive experience and work in the fields of developing and carrying out specialized courses and trainings, as well as prevention programs, our trainings, workshops, and lectures became recognizable for their high quality and levels of expertise. Our activities continue to score highly with relevant professional associations.

One of our core activities is **working with children and youth** and we create all of our projects and programs based on their needs. We regularly include children and youth in the creation and implementation of our activities, as well as encouraging them to get involved in Women's Room's work, primarily as volunteers. Along with trainings for children and youth, we also carry out numerous trainings and courses aimed at educators, parents, experts from relevant institutions and civil society organisations, volunteers, and the general public.

Women's Room operates the only specialised service for sexual violence survivors in the Republic of Croatia, the **Centre for Victims of Sexual Violence**. The Centre offers a variety of free-of-charge support services for adults, children aged 16 or above, as well as persons close to them. Everyone can contact the Centre via telephone (+385 6119 444), e-mail (savjetovaliste@zenskasoba.hr) or in person. The Centre's multidisciplinary team offers free-of-charge, timely, and accessible support and assistance to survivors of sexual violence and persons close to them.

We continuously conduct **scientific research** in our field and participate actively in monitoring the need for legislative framework and public policy development and suggesting respective amendments regarding sexual violence with the aim of improving and protecting the rights of sexual violence survivors and survivors of other forms of gender-based violence.

For more information, please visit:

Our Facebook profile (www.facebook.com/zenska.soba),

Our Instagram profile (www.instagram.com/zenska.soba),

Our websites (www.zenskasoba.hr, www.sigurnomjesto.hr).



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women's room

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