

Parents & Child Sexual Abuse Education: Contradictory views & behaviours

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Child CSA Education

Child protective behaviours education is the main prevention method.

Usually delivered through schools.

Children are taught how to:

- Recognise
- Resist
- Report



Parental Reluctance to Educate

For 40 years parents have been encouraged to tell their children about CSA:

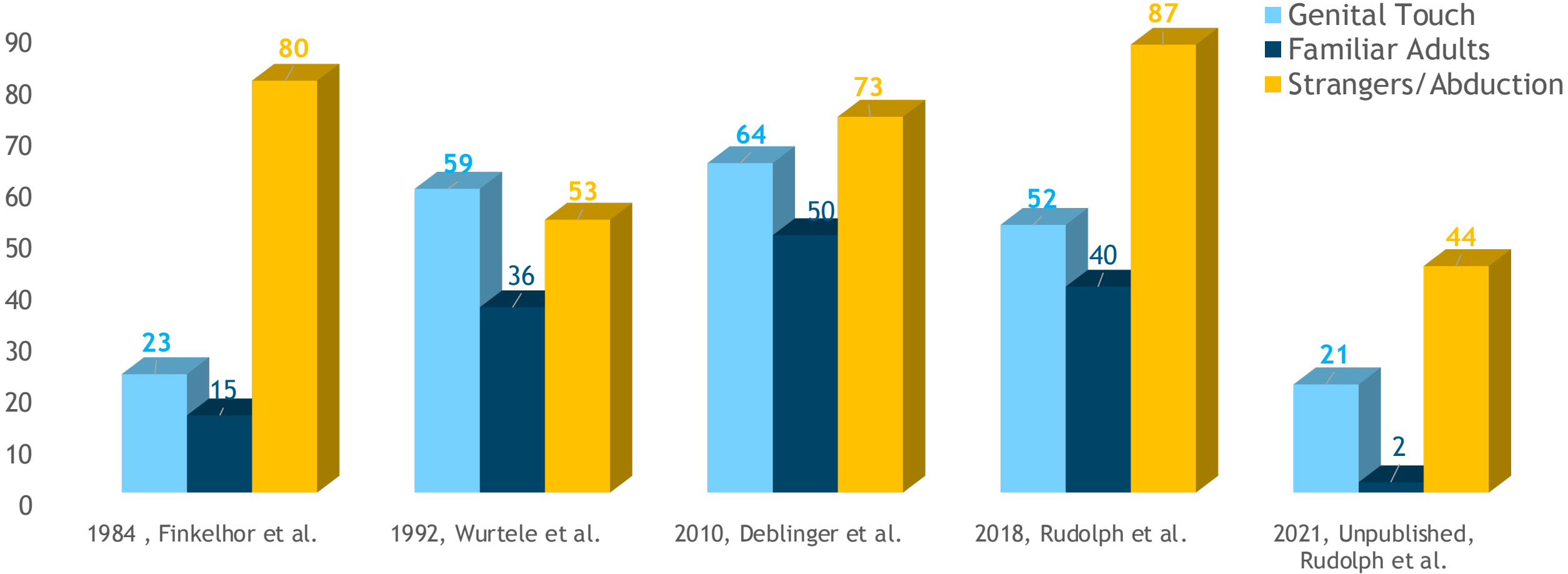
- often, & from a young age
- using concrete examples of behaviours
- reinforcing that trusted others, family members and teenagers/other children could be perpetrators
- incentives
- courses of action

Problem:

They are not very good at it!!



Parental Reluctance to Educate: 37 Years of Research



90% thought children should receive education

95% thought parents should educate

73% thought children should be taught that an adult may try to touch their genitals

72% thought children should be told that familiar adults/family could be perpetrators

Contradictory views & behaviours

1

Despite knowing the correct information, parents concentrated on strangers and abduction dangers

2

Despite thinking that CSA education was important, parents didn't give their children recommended messages

3

Parents had doubts and concerns about CSA education

Sample: 24 parents {17 ♀, 7 ♂}.

{75% Caucasian, 12.5% Asian, 4% Aboriginal, 4% Hispanic, 4% Middle Eastern}

Rudolph et al., 2018

Concentration on Strangers

“

The risk “is quite low [...] they are never alone with strangers.”

“I’ve taught them what to do if they are grabbed.”

“If a stranger touches you there you need to tell me.”

“Like, if someone tries to take you...these are the things you should do...
scream, attack, whatever.”

”

Important, but no Comprehensive Education

50% said child education was the most effective method

BUT: None gave their children comprehensive sexual abuse prevention messages as recommended by CSA organizations.

2

2 started from a young age {4 or younger}

2

2 mentioned family member

0

0 mentioned teenager/older child

0

0 mentioned incentives {in the context of abuse rather than abduction}

3

3 mentioned specific behaviors {e.g., someone might touch the child's genitals, someone might ask the child to touch their genitals}

Children should be told often, & from a young age, about CSA, using concrete examples and reinforcing that perpetrators can be trusted others, family members and teenagers/other children, with a description of the incentives offenders may use.

Important, but no Comprehensive Education

“

“I’ve not been specific. I’ve not kind of said, you know about sexual acts or anything like that. I’ve just talked about being comfortable and not being pushed into something you don’t want to do. Basically, I’ve not gone into great detail.”

“I spoke with my 8-years-old once, telling her about the parts of the body and asking: ‘has anyone ever done anything that you weren’t happy with?’ and she said no. And I said, well, if anyone ever does you need to tell an adult that you trust.’ .. I was probably a bit vague.”

”



Parental Doubts & Concerns

50%

of participants thought education was the best prevention method.

58%

of participants were skeptical that child-education would help their children avoid/resist CSA.

83%

had concerns that telling their children about the specifics of CSA has negative side effects.

Fear/anxiety
Damage to relationships
Hypervigilance

Loss of trust
Loss of innocence
Negative body image



Two Pathways of Parental Protection:

1 The creation of **safe environments** where CSA is less likely to occur. Achieved through effective parent supervision, monitoring and involvement.

2 Fostering **child well-being**, lessening the child's risk of being a vulnerable target. Derived from adequate parenting practices, parent-child relationships and communication.

Parents as Protectors rather than Educators

A group of diverse people, including men, women, and children, are smiling and taking a selfie outdoors. The background is bright and slightly blurred, suggesting a sunny day. A large black circle is overlaid on the top right of the image, containing the word 'Summary' in white text.

Summary

Parents Reluctance to Educate

- research shows parents don't give the children comprehensive message.

Contradictory Views and Behaviours

- despite knowing correct information, concentrated on stranger warnings
- despite thinking it was best method, didn't give comprehensive messages
- most had doubts and concerns

New Directions

- Two Pathways Model - involving parents with the creation of safer environments and child well-being.