

Parents & Child Sexual Abuse Prevention: Obstacles & Opportunities

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Parents & Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) Prevention

Sample 1: High SES (UK & Au)

$n = 248$ parents

Child Age = 6 - 11

Recruited from uni,
schools, parenting
magazine.

74% Some University
(30% postgraduate
quals)

15% < \$50,000

50% > \$150,000

Sample 2: At-risk (Gold Coast)

$n = 116$ parents

Child Age = 2½ - 7

Attending parenting
program

Referred by Child
Safety, Health, other
services.

50% Some university

25% < \$50,000

36% > \$150,000

Sample 3: Qualitative (Gold Coast)

$n = 24$ parents

Child Age = 1½ - 15

Recruited from uni &
schools.

75% Caucasian, 12.5%

Asian, 4% ATSI

66% Some university

17% < \$50,000

62% > \$150,000

Sample 4: Uni Students (Gold Coast)

$n = 1,265$ students

$M_{\text{age}} = 22.8$, $SD = 7.7$

80% Caucasian, 13%
Asian, 3% ATSI, 3%
Pacific Islander, 9%
other cultural
backgrounds.

Child Education as Prevention

Main method of prevention.

Mainly school programs

Children are taught how to:

- Recognise
- Resist
- Report



Parent-led CSA Education (PLSAE)

Limited role - limited to educators

Parents should tell their children about CSA:

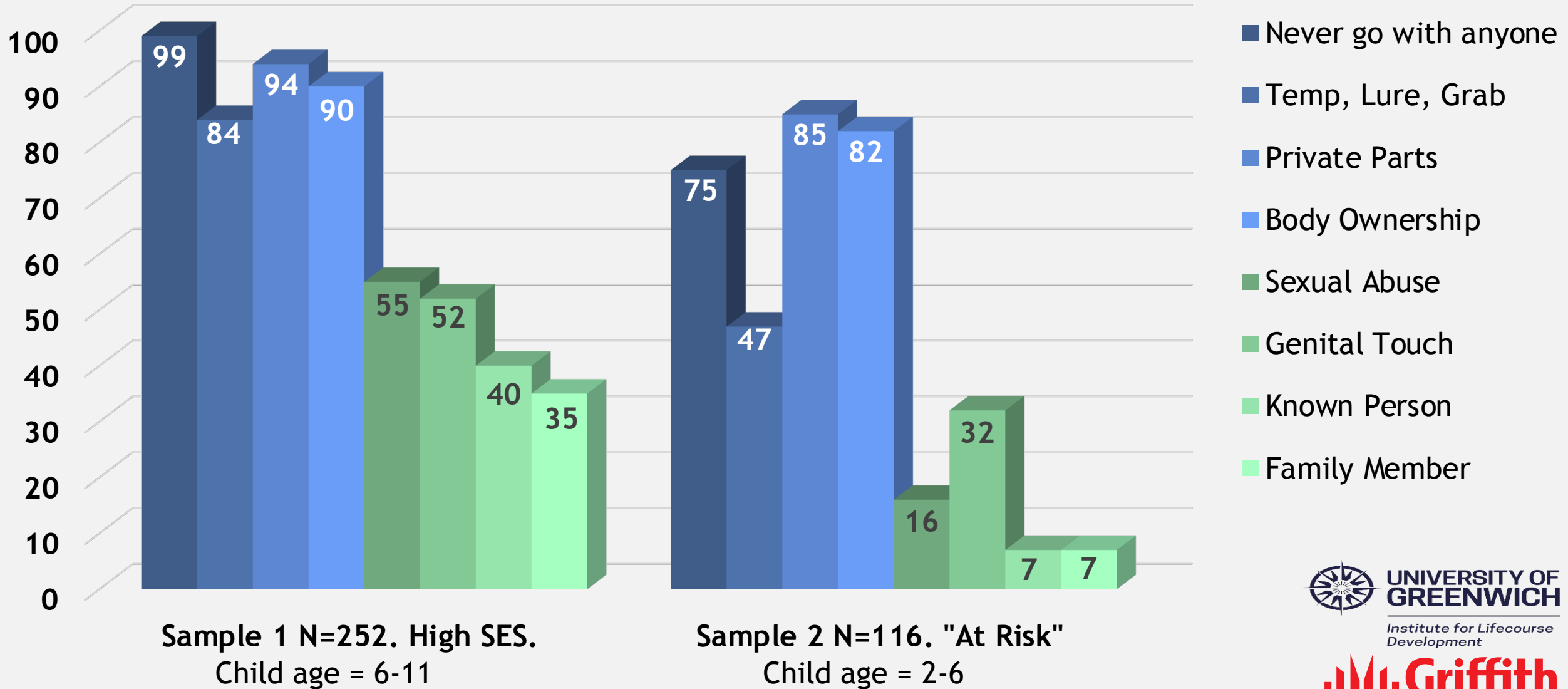
- often, & from a young age,
- using concrete examples,
- reinforcing identity of perpetrators,
- with a description of incentives
- and the safe responses the child should enact

Problem:

Evidence suggests they are not very good at it!!!



Rates of PLSAE (%)



Why don't parents educate their children about CSA?

Lack of knowledge of the risks?

Do not support CSA education as prevention?

Worried about harms?

Concerned about effectiveness?

Lack of Knowledge?

Most perpetrators are family members and known people

Sample 1: **93%**
Sample 2: **85%**

CSA is most likely to happen at home
(the child's or someone they know)

Sample 1: **88%**
Sample 2: **91%**

Adolescents make up 30-50% of perpetrators

Sample 1: **73%**
Sample 2: **73%**

Lack of Parental Support for CSA Education?

90+%

Children should be taught to recognise, resist and report CSA

55%

95%

Parents should teach CSA prevention

55%

74%

Children should be taught that known people and family members could be perpetrators

40/35%

Does Knowledge & Support = Comprehensive Messages?

50% said child education was the most effective method

BUT: None gave their children recommended comprehensive sexual abuse prevention messages.

“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 Worry about Harms?

Sample 3: Qualitative ($n=24$)

83% negative consequences telling children about CSA, including:

Fear/anxiety

Damage to relationships

Hypervigilance

Loss of trust

Loss of innocence

Negative body image

Sample 1: High SES ($n=248$)

66% negative consequences to CSA education.

Parental Concerns about Effectiveness?

Sample 3: Qualitative ($n=24$)

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.

33%

of participants who thought education was the best method of prevention thought it would actually help their child in an abusive scenario.

Effectiveness of PLSAE

**Finkelhor et al.
1995**

- 2000 10-16 year olds.
- PLSAE => more knowledge, use of strategies and disclosure
- But not less sexual victimization

**Rudolph et al.
2022**

- 1265 university students.
- PLSAE => less CSA in preliminary analyses
- BUT in follow-up analyses controlling for parenting:
Protective Parenting => less CSA, not education

Parents as Protectors

- Parents want to be involved in CSA prevention.
- Parents, even highly educated, are not educating their children with accurate & comprehensive messages.
- Parents may be concerned about harms & effectiveness of PLSAE.
- Parenting rather than PLSAE may be more effective in reducing CSA.

Therefore:

Parents may be better employed as protectors rather than educators





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 Module

Target both pathways:

Embedding a module which teaches parents about safer environments into existing evidence-based parenting programs teaching parents positive parenting (with the aim of increasing child emotional well-being).

- **Pathway 2 is well address by evidence-based parenting programs**
- **Non-attendance at standalone CSA programs (stigma)**
- **Risk factors**

Pathways:

- **1. Creation of safe environments through parent supervision, monitoring and involvement**
- **2. Child well-being derived from adequate parenting practices, relationships and communication**

Parents as Protectors Module

- 5 digitally animated scenarios
- Therapists assist parents to assess their children's risk through the identification of warning signs and risky behaviour/situations
- To lower the risks by making environment safer
- Partner with parents - workable plans



Parents as Protectors CSA Module

Supporting parents to create safer environments.

Thank you

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