

Understanding child sex offenders: implications for the protection of children



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Purpose of Research

- explore the aetiology of child sex offenders & their behavioural strategies
- determine whether knowledge of the above two purposes will contribute to demystifying CSA
- capture the strategies of grooming, planning and orchestration of the abuse by CSO on a DVD
- to expose a diverse population to the DVD: service providers, academics, CP managerial and policy implementers, including parents/caregivers of sexually abused children
- to test whether knowledge of the behaviours and strategies of how offenders enact their crimes, perceive opportunities, manage risks, can assist in designing and implementing prevention programs

Procedures

- **3 phases of research**
- **P1: Biographies of child sex offenders**
- **P2: compilation of a DVD**
- **P3: administration of the DVD to:**
 - **- service providers, learners & academics**
 - **- parents**
 - **- participants outside of SA**

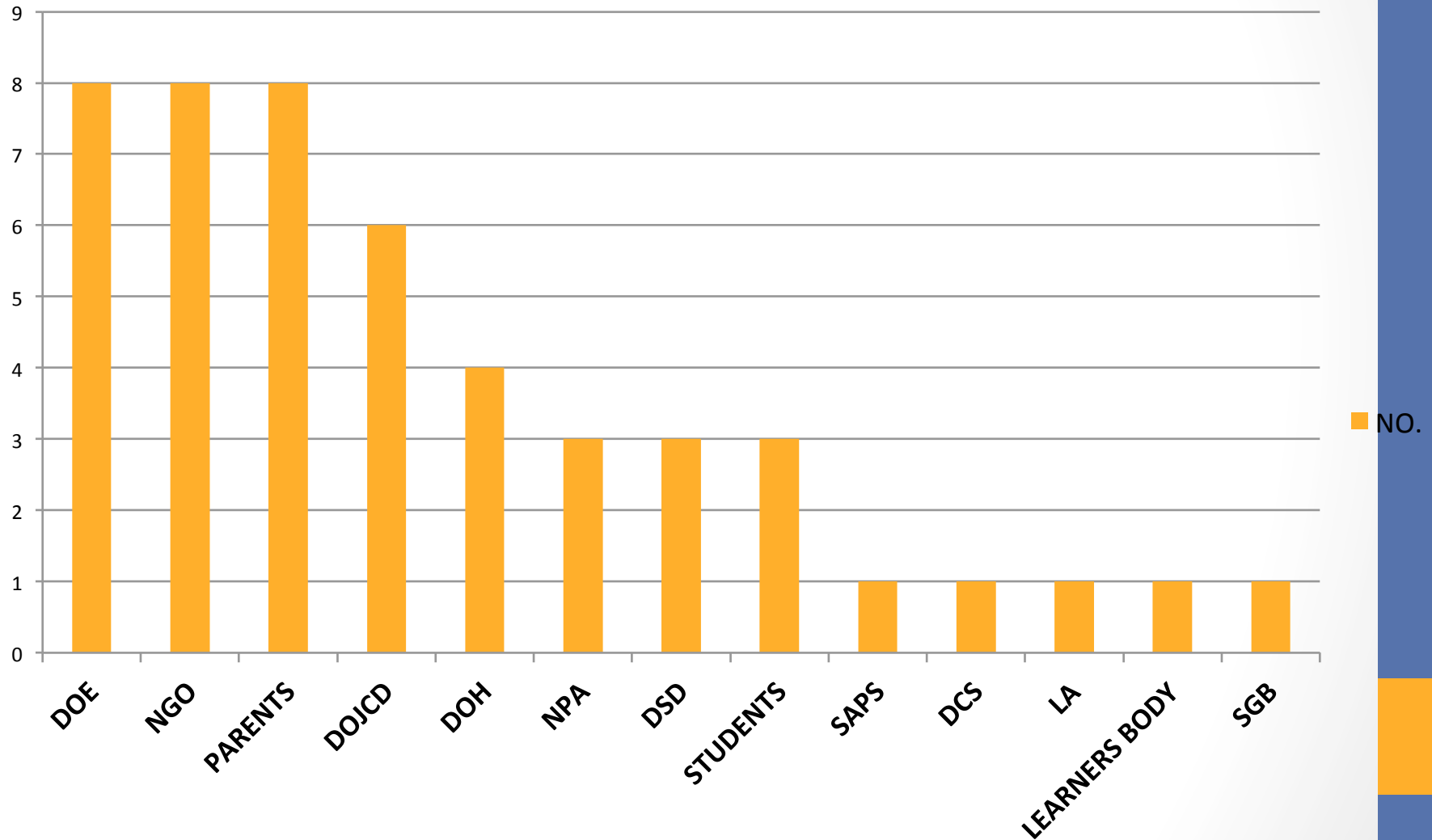
DVD



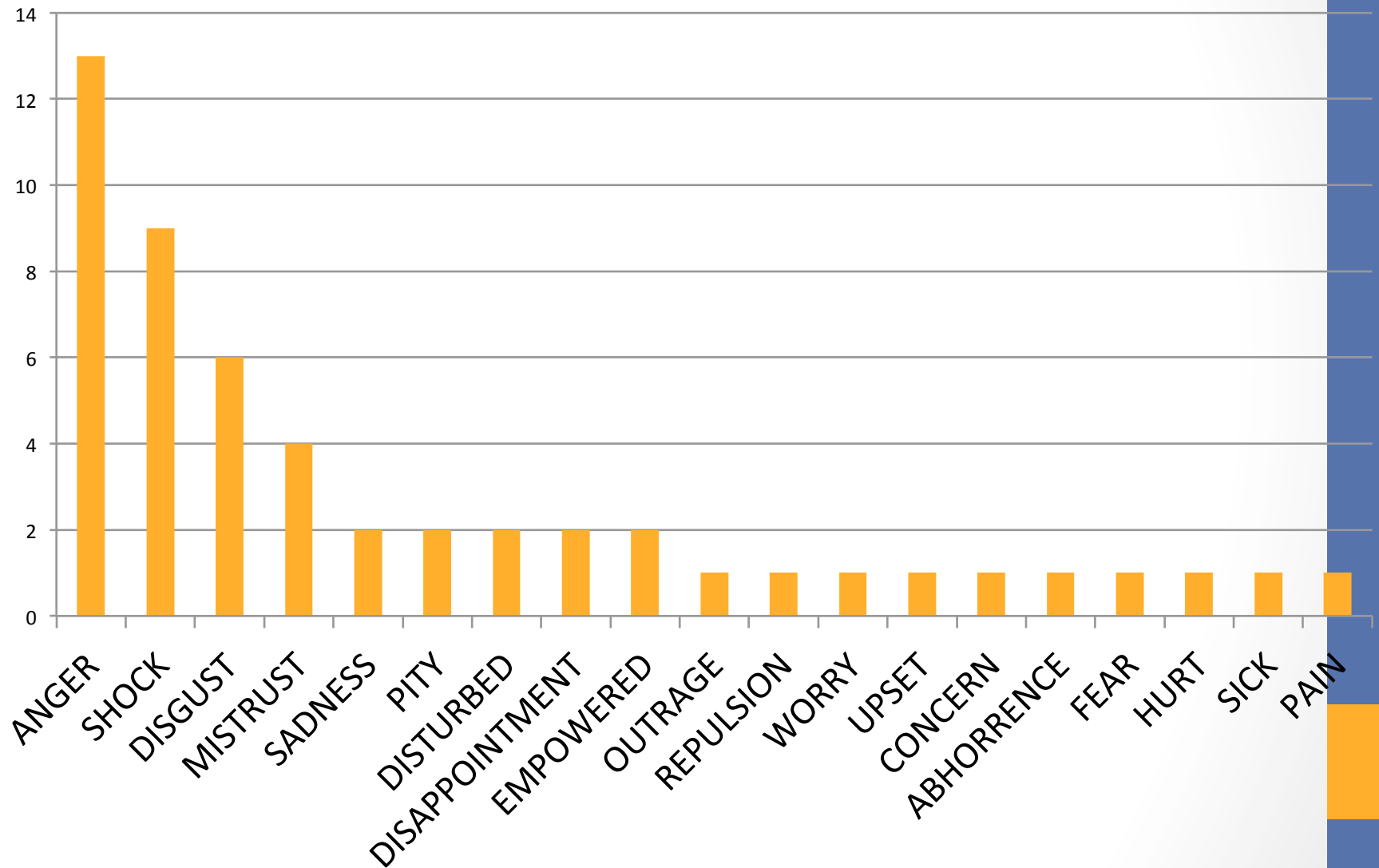
Participants Exposed to DVD

- **PARENTS**
- **EDUCATION:** Minister of Education; Chief directors; Curriculum development, policy
- **NGOs:** child abuse; domestic violence
- **DEPT JUSTICE:** magistrates in sexual offences; family court
- **DEPT OF HEALTH:** Forensic doctor: clinical management; school & youth health; management
- **NPA:** DPP,, specialised prosecutions court preparation
- **DSD:** probation; VEP sector; child protection
- **LEGAL AID:** training and legal assistance to children
- **CONGRESS OF SA STUDENTS**
- **NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL GOVERNANCE**

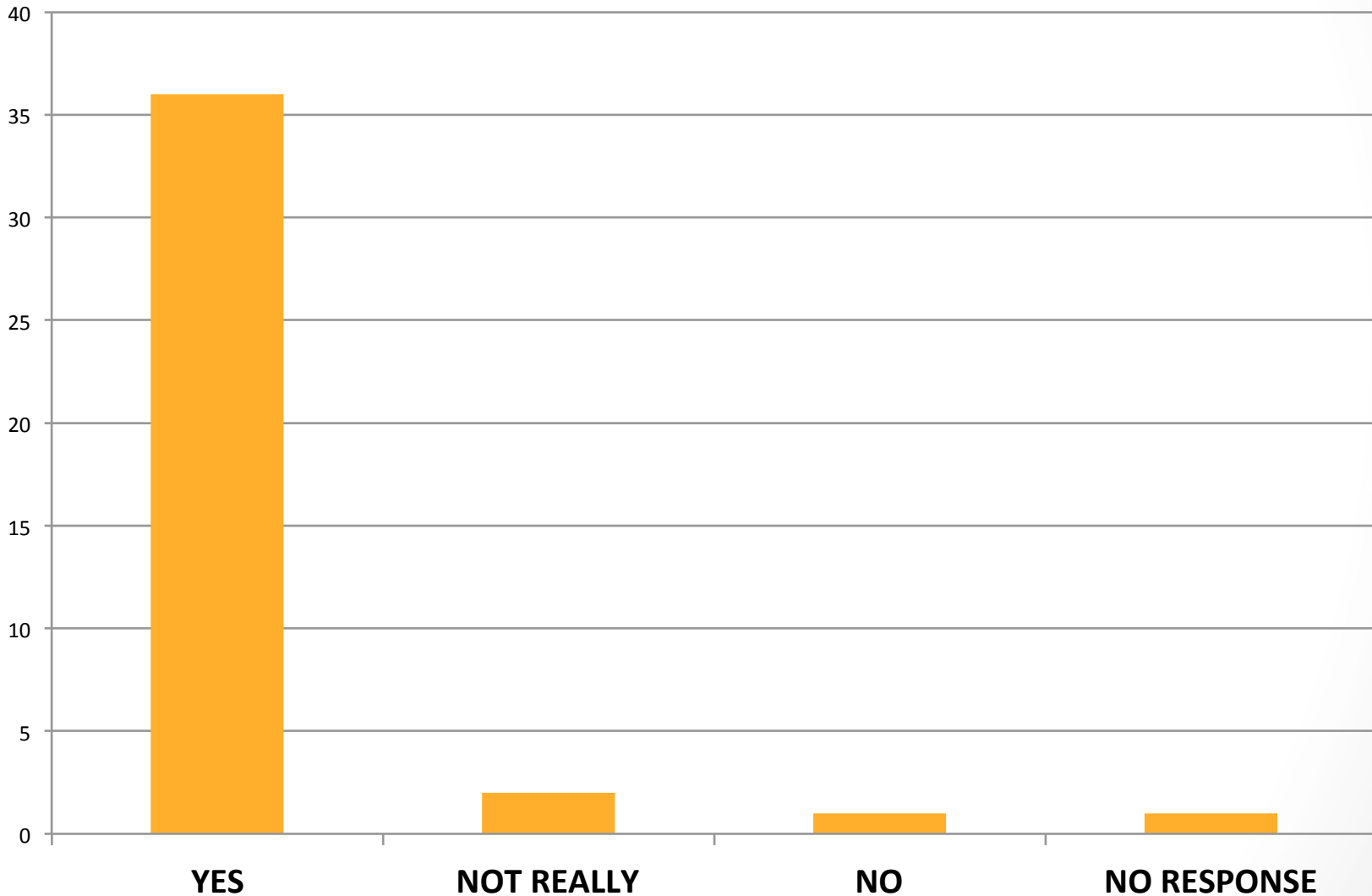
Participants Exposed to DVD



RESULTS: Emotional Response

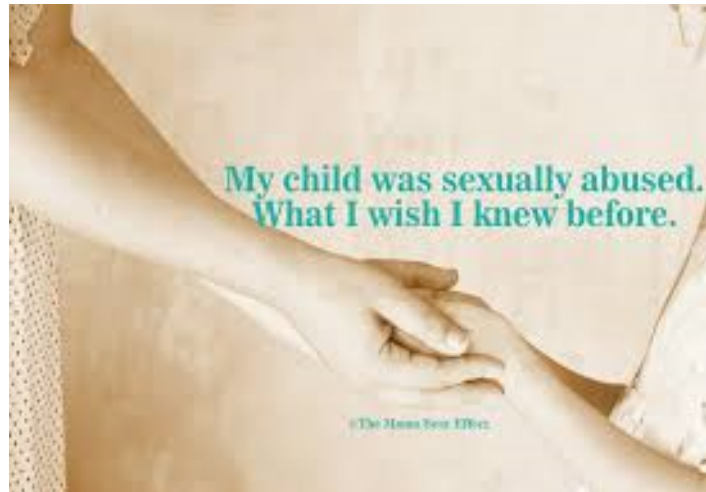


RESULTS: Learnings From Watching The DVD



RESULTS: Responses of Parents Exposed to the DVD

- Parents/caregivers were emotionally affected.
- expressed concerns about the partial impact of the current protection programmes and felt more capacitated to protect their children by being exposed to the video
- Parents felt more empathic towards their children, aware of challenges experienced by their children by offenders



RESULTS: Service Providers Responses

- I did not realise the extent of the problem in families
- Offenders admittance of their manipulation strategies
- The power of manipulation, its a shield for deception, which goes beyond the victim, to family, professionals
- Grooming
- power of the offender in his context
- Professionals can be deceived as well as families
- Role of pornography & substance abuse
- Goals of self-gratification

RESULTS: Service Providers Responses

- **Abusérs are among us: respected, normal people**
- **Offenders have victim choices & preferences**
- **The DVD makes the literature of CSOs come alive**
- **Children cannot, & do not fight off the abuser**
- **Forms of denial by the abuser were reflected**
- **I worked in a sexual offences court for 20 years, but this is new information for me**

RESULTS: Recommendations for the new learnings

- **Education to parents & caregivers**
- **Public awareness, very inclusive**
- **Protection programmes in schools**
- **Train members of the criminal justice system including all professionals in child protection**
- **Sex offender groups**
- **Media including national TV**
- **Traditional leadership, religious leaders**

RESULTS: Public Awareness

- share the information reflected on the DVD as people sometimes think children make up stories
- Believe children's disclosures
- I would inform & empower people on the warning signs of child abuse, manipulation techniques & grooming strategies of offenders
- understanding the different feelings & mind-sets of victims & perpetrators
- prevention strategies on pórñ & substance abuse
- Religious groups, media, traditional leadership

RESULTS: School Programmes

- as an educator- be aware of abuse and how to listen to their disclosures and not be manipulated by a possible offender
- Animate for children, other tools for children
- Age appropriate programmes to understand the manipulation
- Awareness of sex games of abusers

RESULTS: Members Of Criminal Justice System

- to conscientise magistrates ;
- share with the prosecutors so that they can have some insight about how offenders think & their strategies
- to encourage prosecutors in explore the strategies to determine risk which impacts on sentencing

RESULTS: All Professionals

- **prevention and early intervention levels**
- **Capacitate organisations working with children**
- **Stop working in silos**
- **Understand the development of children**
- **Be vigilant of their activities & behaviour**
- **Be aware of adults interaction patterns with children**
- **Inform mothers to be wary of signs home**

RESULTS: Support Groups

- **Child sex offender programmes**
- **self awareness leads to management of behaviour to prevent relapses**
- **to family members of the offenders to be vigilant of relapses by understanding the offenders behaviour**
- **Male groups**

DVD



Some Quotes from the DVD

- “I invited my children to play, used their own games, distorted it, with a new element of sex”
- “I hugged her a lot and my tickling involved ‘tickling of her sexual parts’ no-one suspected this!!”
- “I scolded her about not bathing and cleaning properly, and used this as an opportunity to wash her private parts”

Some Quotes from the DVD

“When she disclosed the sexual abuse, I engaged the best psychologists indicating that I was really concerned and wanted to help, so although my victim was saying it was me, I was the ABUSER, I convinced them otherwise, and always got away”

“I blindfolded her and told her I was putting a sausage into her mouth, but it was my penis with peanut butter”

Some Quotes from the DVD

“I waited for her to come out of the bathroom and watched her dress in front of me, for 4 years before I abused her and satisfied the fantasies that was building up within me”

“I performed activities like - putting her to sleep, undressing her, to observe her naked body”

“It was easier to sexually abuse her, when she was asleep”

RECOMMENDATIONS: Policy Development

- **CSA prevention strategy should be systematic, coordinated, scientifically-informed, rigorously monitored and evaluated.**
- **Policy developments should be proactive not rescue oriented.**
- **Legal and policy frameworks need to address proactive prevention - victim vulnerability & offender opportunity.**

RECOMMENDATIONS: Awareness & education programmes

- **educate on impact of post-disclosure events on victims – investigations, justice processes, psychosocial needs**
- **adults should be more informed to take responsibility to prevent CSA as children cannot thwart attempts of offenders**
- **goal of awareness programmes should not be for purposes of resistance of abuse but to promote disclosure, and reduce self-blame and stigma**
- **Family interventions should provide support, education and negative attributions of victims.**

RECOMMENDATIONS: Awareness & education

- **Media & entertainment industry:**
- **Need to be informed that it has responsibilities for children & society**
- **Sexual issues dominate modern day technology, and influence children eg. magazines, the internet, music videos, adverts.**
- **Pornography and the sexual messages in the media influence social values and leads to sexualized individuals who abuse children out of lust.**
- **current research indicates that adult pornography does influence adults, so stricter sanctioning of pornography**
- **and substance abuse, which disinhibits deviant behaviour.**

RECOMMENDATIONS: Interventions

Equip offenders to recognize their own vulnerability & be empowered to manage themselves in risky situations

counselling strategies for sexually abusive children & victims, to:

- prevent destructive mental health and life course
- outcomes **to** reduce occurrences, sense of stigma & self-blame,
- empowerment during the reporting process

RECOMMENDATIONS: Capacity Development

- **Capacitate all professionals working with children - to support children, ensure early detection, prevention, sensitive responses and management of abuse**
- **enhancing knowledge of how sex offenders operate- has practical & policy relevance for interventions & skills**
- **training & addressing emerging forms of grooming**

RECOMMENDATIONS: Multisectoral & Justice system

- **Problem:**
- based on myths, stereotypes,
- misunderstandings of offender,
- ineffective systems for reporting,
- investigation & follow-up
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RECOMMENDATIONS: Multisectoral & Justice system

Solutions:

- **expand efforts to expose & apprehend undetected offenders**
- **improve investigative techniques, interview-ing skills, resources to examine the evidence or strategies of the offenders**
- **improve relationships with the public to promote reporting**
- **Increase convictions – deters potential offenders that offenders do get caught, and can be refused bail – so that their attempts to intimidate and abuse a victim can be thwarted**
- **children do not have the skill/ practice to fabricate explicit sexual manipulations & the offender will not release his power and control that he has over victims, until he is sufficiently held to account for his actions**

RECOMMENDATIONS: Reframing Dominant Discourses

Consistency and intolerance to halt behaviour that is criminal – a crime is a crime against humanity BUT a holistic approach required

Offenders are also victims of:

- Victimisation experiences that predisposed them to their abusive nature, Bio-psychosocial factors**
- structural context - influences & ideologies.**
- Poor cognitive functional levels & individual choices so human agency in making poor choices**
- their thinking influenced and embedded in social structures, which influence functioning and cognitive frames of manipulation, reflected in power, sexuality choices and the privilege of masculinity.**

RECOMMENDATIONS: S. A. Society

Relationships are modelled to children:

South African culture glorifies violence, sex, corruption, entitlement, pornography, crime, leniency to criminals, makes heroes of corrupt politicians, & perpetuates the context to silent children

- ✓ **In media reports on incidents of violence or portrays gender roles,**
- ✓ **any context that fails to promote equality, respect and non-discrimination, whether home or organisation**

All of the above have an effect on the cultural acceptability or otherwise of violence.

- **There has to be a 'moral compass' on issues of governance, leadership, with an economy that meets the needs of its citizens**

Concluding remarks

- Child abuse is unacceptable, unjustifiable, yet preventable
- If we allow it to continue then we are working against humanity.
- Thank you for listening!!



END

- **Thank You For Viewing This Presentation**
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