

WELCOME

Virtual panel discussion on strengthening responses to boys affected by sexual abuse

Please ensure your video is off and your
microphone is on mute.

Thank you.

Programme

- Introduction
- Panelist presentations
- Question and answer
- Closing

caring for boys

AFFECTED BY

sexual violence

IN SOUTH AFRICA



OVERVIEW OF SOUTH AFRICAN RESEARCH

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IN SOUTH AFRICA



Research questions

Masculinity and sexuality

- How are masculinity and sexuality socially constructed?
- How are the dominant notions of masculinity reflected in the lived experiences of boys?
- How are the dominant notions of sexuality reflected in the lived experiences of boys?

Sexual violence

- What are the links between the dominant notions of sexuality and masculinity and sexual abuse of boys?
- What are the links between the dominant notions of sexuality and masculinity and harmful sexual behaviour of boys?

Interventions

- What support and interventions exist for boys affected by sexual violence?
- What are people's experiences of accessing support and interventions?
- What gaps exist?



Protective and risk factors identified

Protective Factors

Parental knowledge about sexual violence

Responsive parent-child relationships

Life skills programmes at school

The involvement of fathers and social fathers

Responsive, community-based support for boys affected by sexual violence and their families

Risk Factors

Little parental supervision of television and online use

Enforcing respect and obedience to elders

High levels of violence

Greater freedom given to boys

Focus on girls only as vulnerable denies

boys an adequate response

Grooming and non-contact sexual abuse not always recognised

Focusing only on the physical outcomes of abuse

Dr Shaheda Omar

Shaheda Omar has been with The Teddy Bear Clinic for Abused Children since 2000. During this time, she has developed the professional standard of services offered by the clinic. She is well known and respected in the field of child abuse. Shaheda has driven the Diversion Programme for young sex offenders since its inception and continues to take the programme from strength to strength. She completed her PHD and graduated in June 2011. Her work in this level of study adds to the literature and greater understanding of child abuse in South Africa, and the Diversion programme in particular.



Dr Wessel van den Berg

Wessel van den Berg is the father of two young children and works as the Research, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Unit Manager at Sonke Gender Justice. Key projects that he has contributed to include the MenCare Global Fatherhood Campaign, the State of South Africa's Fathers report series, advocacy for the prohibition of corporal punishment in all settings, and the promotion of gender equal parental leave. He has worked as a kindergarten teacher, counsellor, researcher and activist. His doctoral study was about the engagement of South African men in a feminist ethic of care.



Ms Nonhle Nthetha

Nonhle Ntetha is a qualified Social Worker with a Bachelor of Social Work and a Certificate in Project Management. She is currently a Programme Manager at Childline SA. In this role, she provides therapeutic counselling to boys who present inappropriate sexual behaviour, coordinates child protection programmes for victims of sexual violence (boys & girl) and facilitates accredited CPD training to diverse professionals within the child protection system for capacity building.



Mrs Linda Smallbones

Linda Smallbones is a social worker and play therapy practitioner. She has been a social worker for 22 years, working in diverse fields such as community work, therapeutic work and child protection work. This has led to her passion of working with people's emotional health, especially as it pertains to healthy relationships and parenting. She has a special interests in attachment and trauma and how they impact on the parenting role and relationships. A key focus of her work is on strengthening relationships between the children she sees and their parents. Play and joy are key components that she loves to cultivate as they grow relationships and help to protect resilience and flourishing.





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BOYS ARE ALSO VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ABUSE



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The Relationship between Domestic Violence and Violence against Boys

- Compelling evidence of the link between domestic violence and child sexual abuse. Both girls and boys are victims of abuse.
- Even if they are witnesses and not the intended targets – affected in the same way as those who are physically and sexually abused.
- Domestic violence is not a single event but a pattern of behaviour increasing in severity and frequency even resulting in sexual victimization (boys and girls)
- Episodes of domestic violence expand to include attacks on boys and girls.
- The estimated overlap between domestic violence and child physical or sexual abuse ranges from 30 to 50 percent. Women at shelters have confirmed this.



Males and Sexual Assault

- Most research suggests that 10 to 20 percent of all males will experience some form of sexual abuse at some stage in their lives.
- Male sexual assault has been shrouded in secrecy and stigma. Cultural values, invulnerability and denial of pain are seen as essential qualities of “macho” and masculinity. Males are simply not allowed to admit that they have been sexually abused and assaulted.
- Male survivors report a lack of recovery services and support.
- Services focus on the needs of girls as victims
- Law enforcement and justice systems ill equipped to deal with the sexual abuse of males.
- Few people realize that large numbers of males are sexually abused, male victims become a forgotten category (invisible, hidden, denied, disowned).
- Most boys who experience sexual assault choose never to reveal it even to people they trust. Their greatest fears are of being disbelieved, ridiculed, shamed, accused of weakness, ignored or being perceived as gay.
- Boy victims fear being blamed for their own attack because they were not “manly” or “macho” enough to protect themselves.
- Boys who survive sexual abuse endure their trauma silently and alone.



MYTHS AND REALITY

Males cannot be sexually abused

- It can happen to any boy regardless of his size, strength, appearance, race, culture, at school, home, cars, anywhere. Boys usually “freeze” unprepared for this.

Only gays are sexually assaulted

- Gay males may be targeted more frequently by anti-gay movements but heterosexual males are sexually assaulted in large numbers

Only gay men sexually abuse boys

- Sexual assault is more about violence and anger than lust or sexual attraction. Vast majority of males who violate boys aren't gay.



MYTHS AND REALITY CONT.

Boys who experience child sexual abuse will become abusers

- Premature sexual trauma may result in emotional damage it may not perpetuate sexual violence. Research (my thesis and findings) that many men who commit sexual abuse/sexual assault suffered other forms of abuse- physical, emotional, or witnessing domestic violence when they were young).

Males cant be sexually abused by females

- It happens but does not often get reported. A female predator can use sex toys or other foreign objects on an unwilling male. It is also not uncommon for a male to experience involuntary erections during sexual assaults. This causes immense guilt on the male (he enjoyed it)

If perpetrator a woman the boy should consider himself fortunate to enter the exciting world of sex

- No matter who provokes it ; teacher, childminder or another male – it is all about control and domination. Premature or forced sex causes confusion, anger, depression, and other psychological problems. It is always abusive and traumatizing.



MYTHS AND REALITY CONT.

Boys suffer less than girls

- Regardless of gender victims suffer the same reactions: depression, anxiety, guilt, confusion, numbness, self-blame, suicide, out of control, sexual dysfunction.

Males cannot get raped

- It happens but does not often get reported.

Males get labelled

- Both boys and girls are victims of sexual abuse and assault and they are not responsible for it.



Case Studies:

1. 40 children in a classroom sexually acting out on each other. Initiator identified who was a victim of transactional sex, background of poverty, dysfunctional family, neighbourhood violence.
2. 13 year old receiving maths tuition by a female at home. Maths tutor who is an adult female begins by praising him on his physical appearance, sharing her troubled marriage, texting him and then sexting him her genitalia and requesting him to reciprocate. This was discovered by the boys mother. Victim became suicidal and felt responsible for his tutor and became depressed, refused to attend school eventually had to be attended to by a psychologist.
3. Adult academic who got married and displayed barriers to intimacy. Referred to TBF. He disclosed his sexual abuse as a child at a boarding school and his aversion to any sexual intimacy.



Misunderstood behaviour:

- Demonstrate, hostility and aggression
- Doubting their own sexual identity or orientation
- Acting out in sexually aggressive ways
- Downplaying the impact of their sexual trauma



Conclusion:

- Traditions and culture minimizes the impact of sexual abuse and sexual assault on the boy child. When a disclosure is made the blame is shifted on the boy victim (accused of lying, or told in some way that the crime is his fault). Male victims often have to confront unsympathetic attitudes, especially if they choose to report the crime and they may lack support from family and friends.
- Counselling can help boys cope with the powerful physical and emotional reactions to their experience regaining a lost sense of control.





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THANK YOU

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The cover features a photograph of a man in profile, holding a baby. The man is on the right, and the baby is on the left, resting their head on the man's shoulder. The background is a soft, warm gradient. The title is in a white box in the top left, and the publisher information is in the bottom left.

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SONKE GENDER JUSTICE
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RESEARCH COUNCIL
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Vision of SOSAF project

STATE OF
SOUTH AFRICA'S
FATHERS 2021

Figure 1: Focus on four dimensions of co-residence and involvement

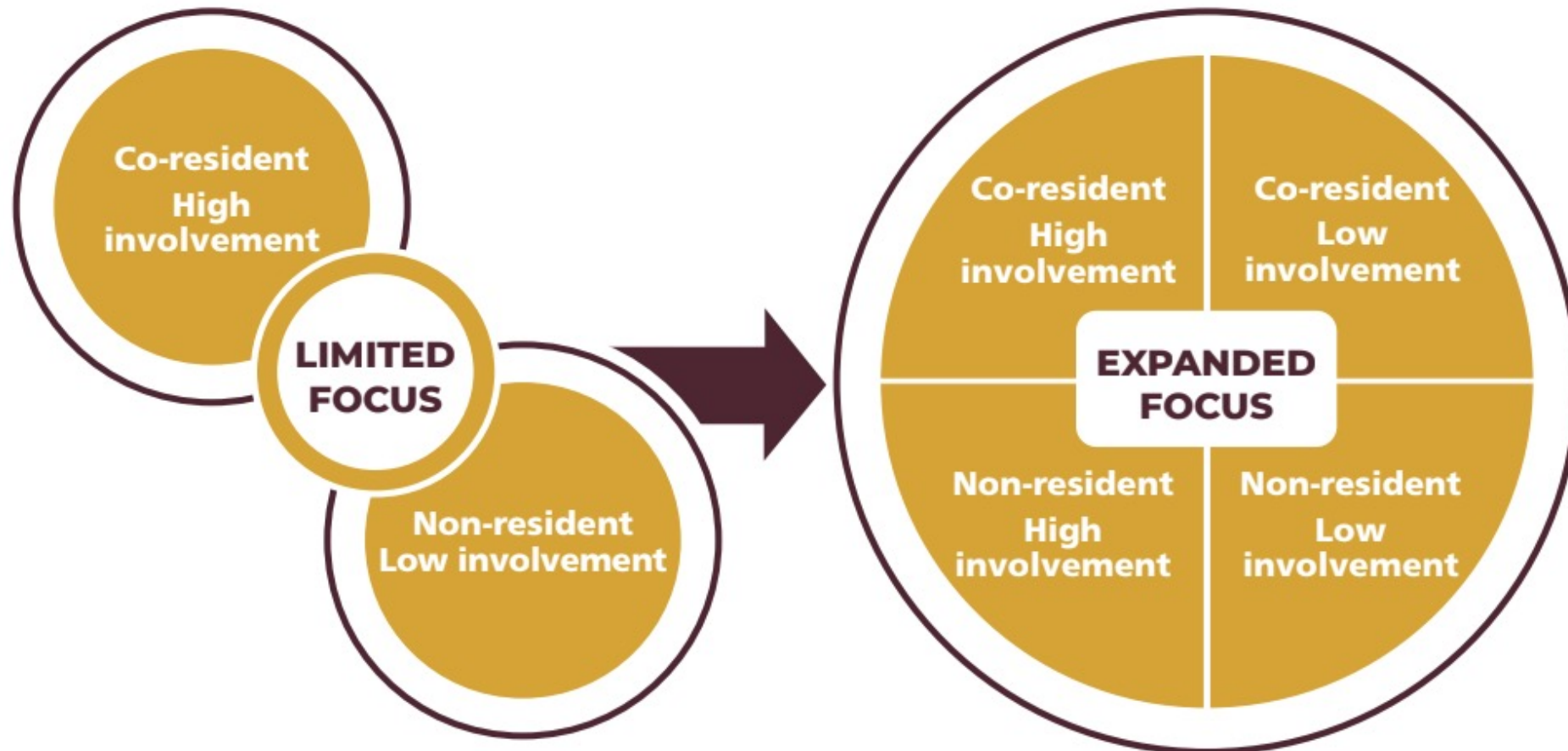


Figure 28: SOSAF 2021 survey respondents' experiences of violence as a child

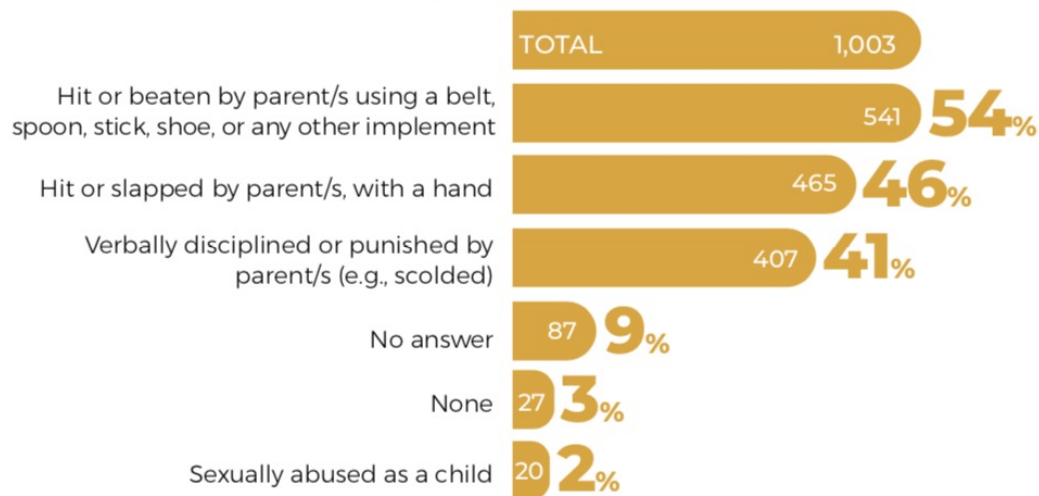


Figure 27: SOSAF 2021 survey fathers' use of discipline or punishment

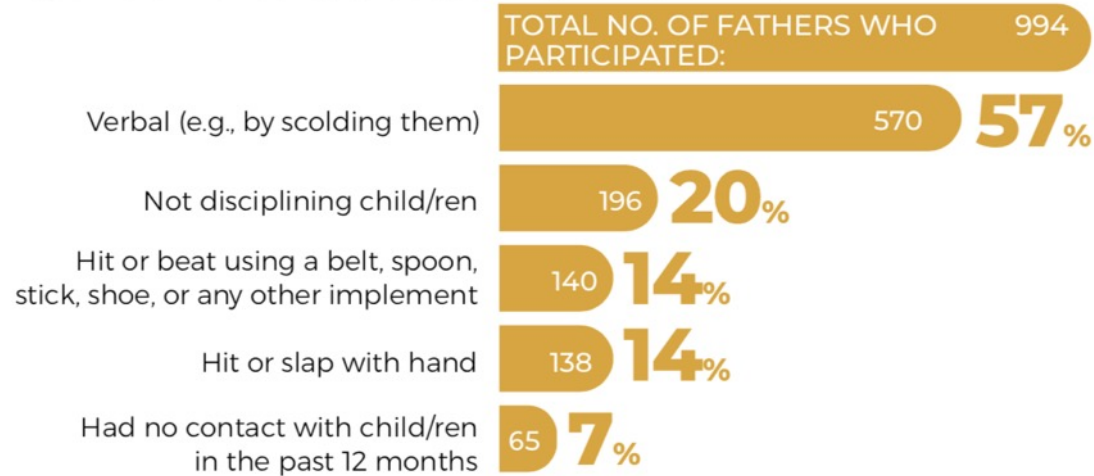


Figure 29: SOSAF 2021 respondents' experiences of intimate partner violence

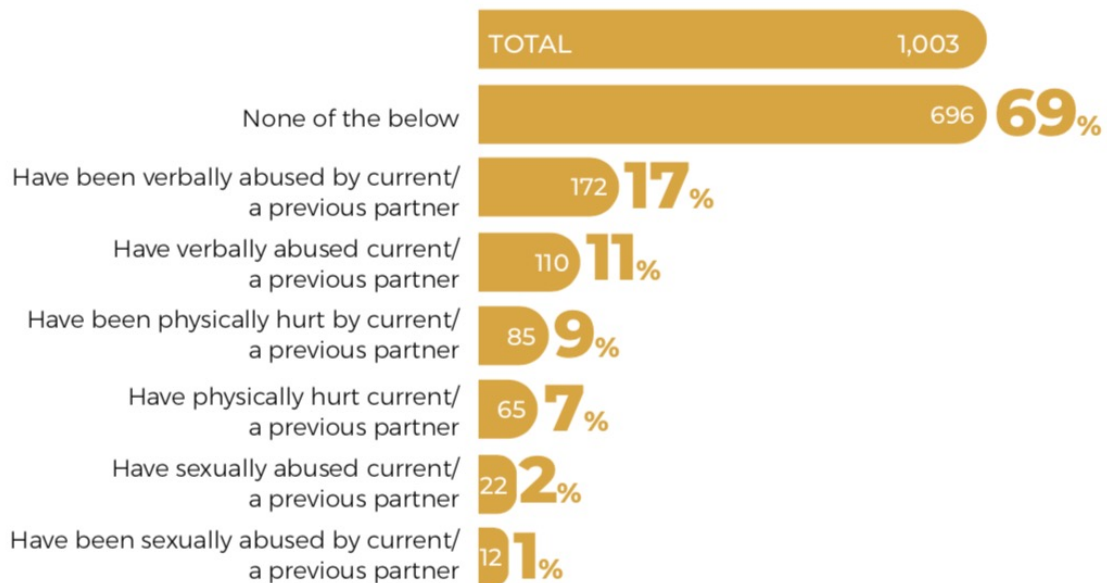


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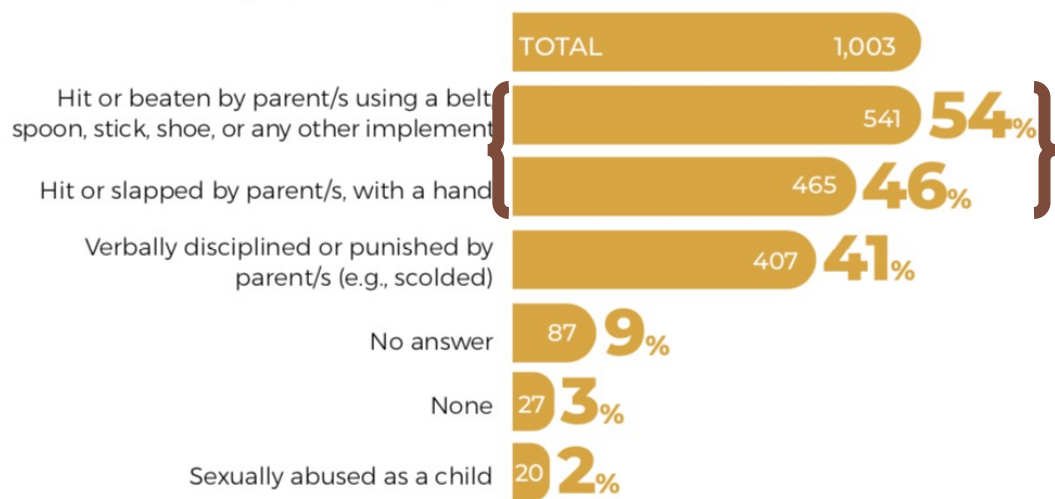


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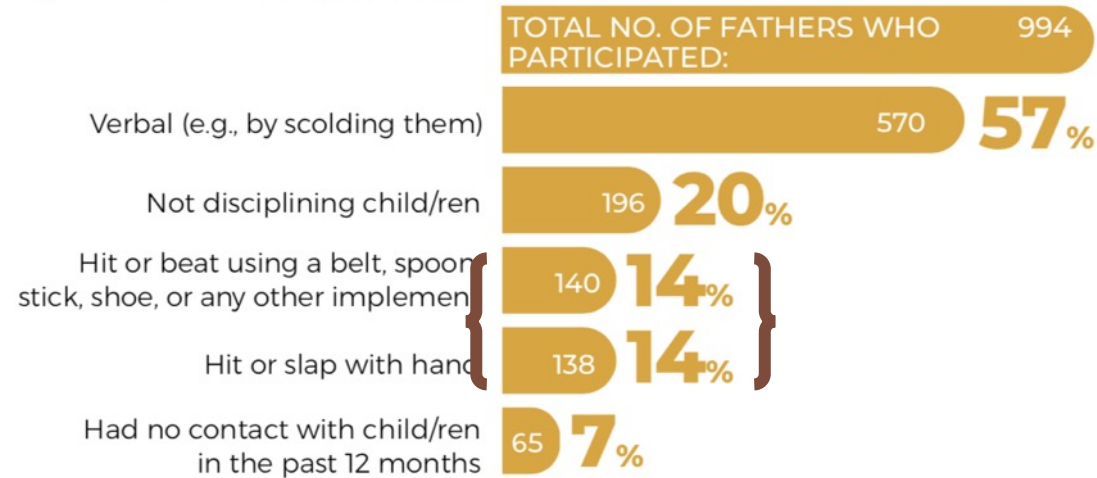


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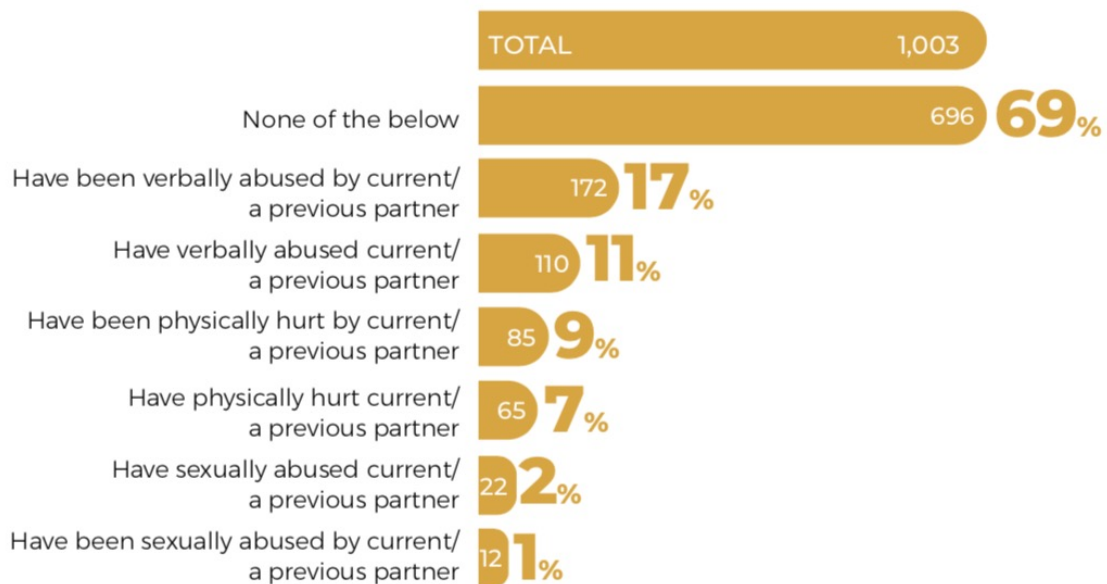


Figure 28: SOSAF 2021 survey respondents' experiences of violence as a child

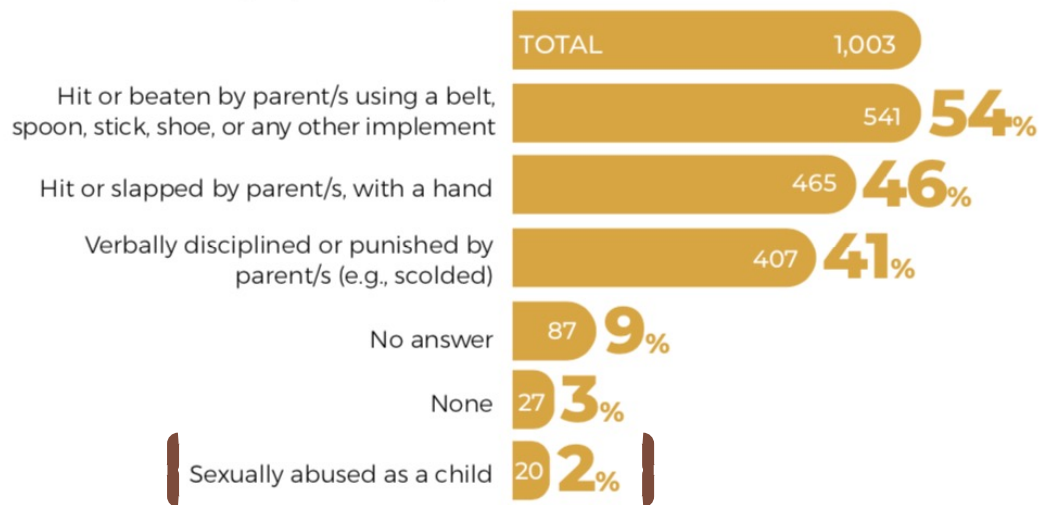


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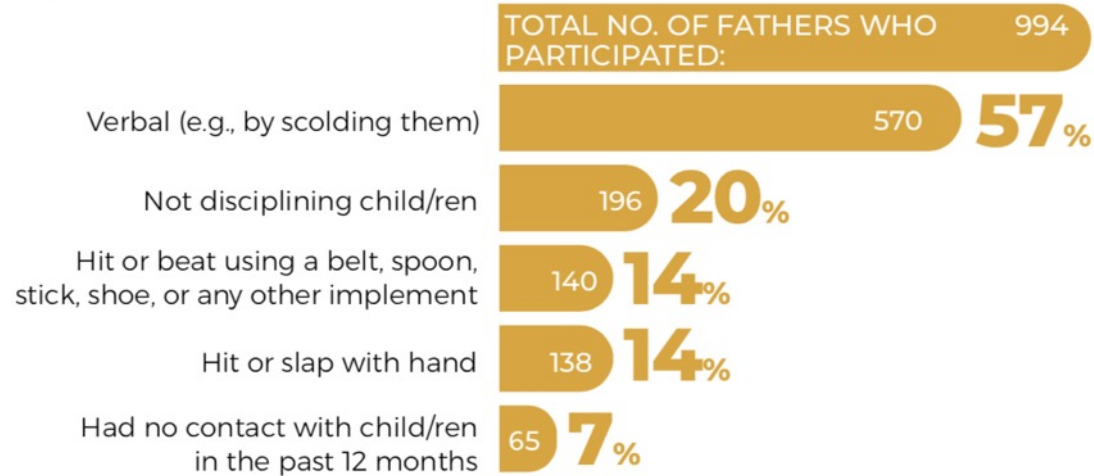


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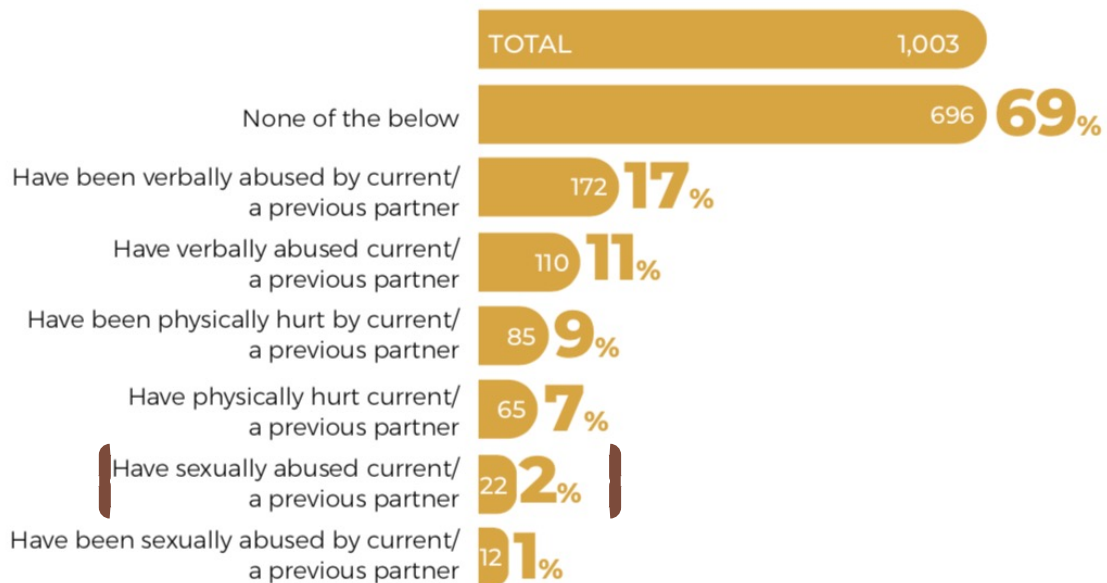


Figure 12: SOSAF 2021 survey fathers' reported activities with their biological children in the past three years

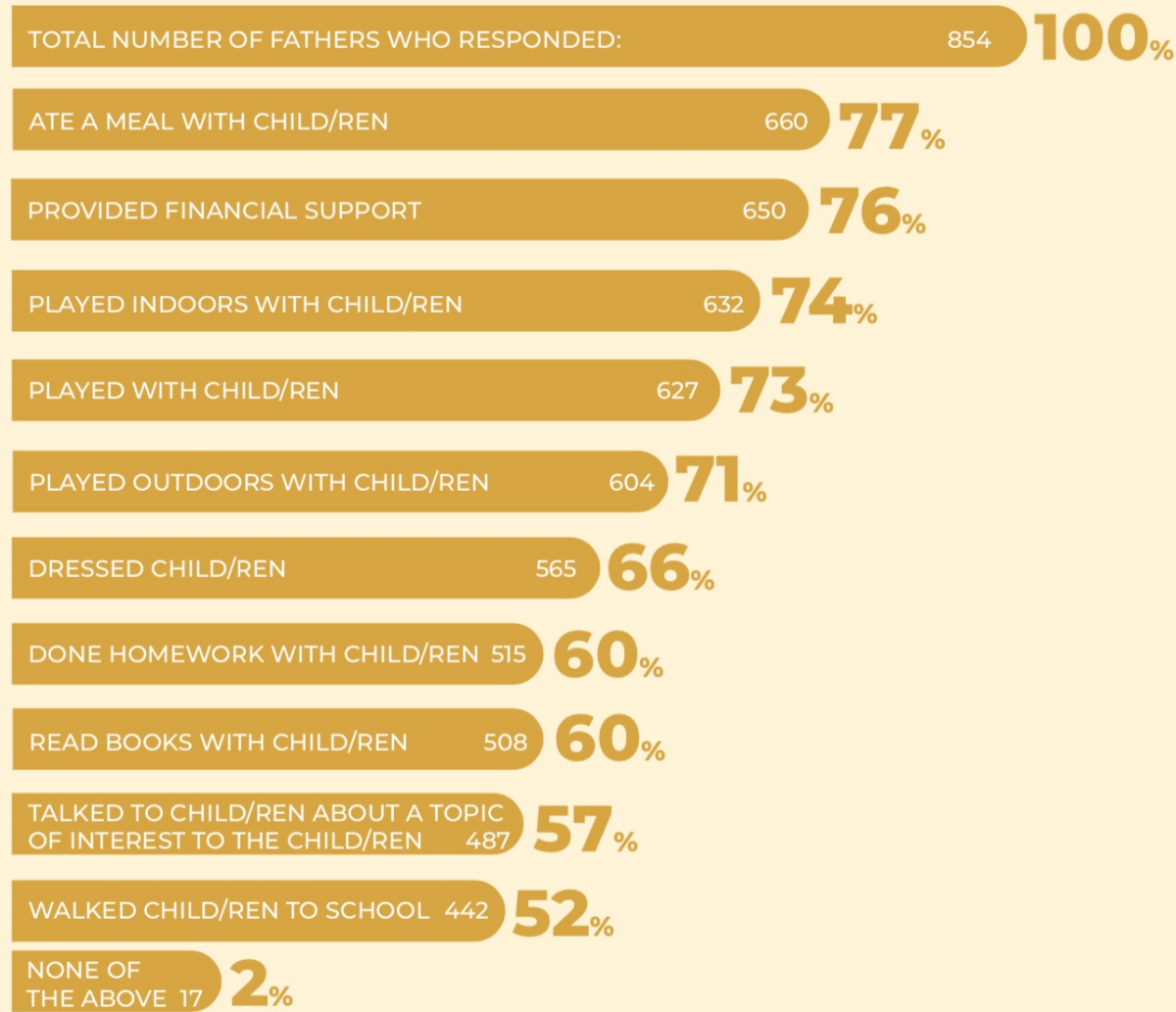


Figure 13: SOSAF 2021 survey fathers' activities in the past three years with children who are not their biological children

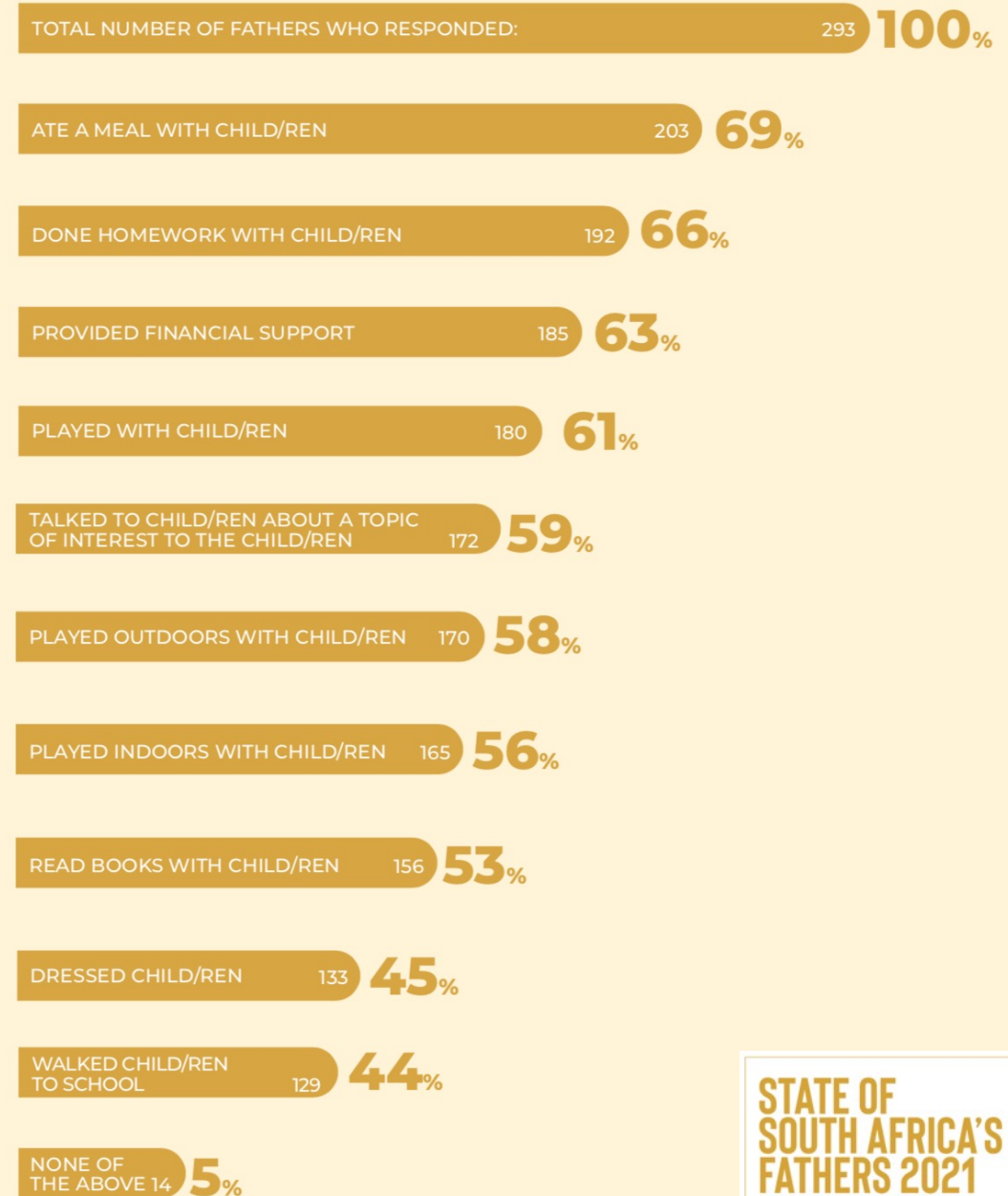


Figure 12: SOSAF 2021 survey fathers' reported activities with their biological children in the past three years

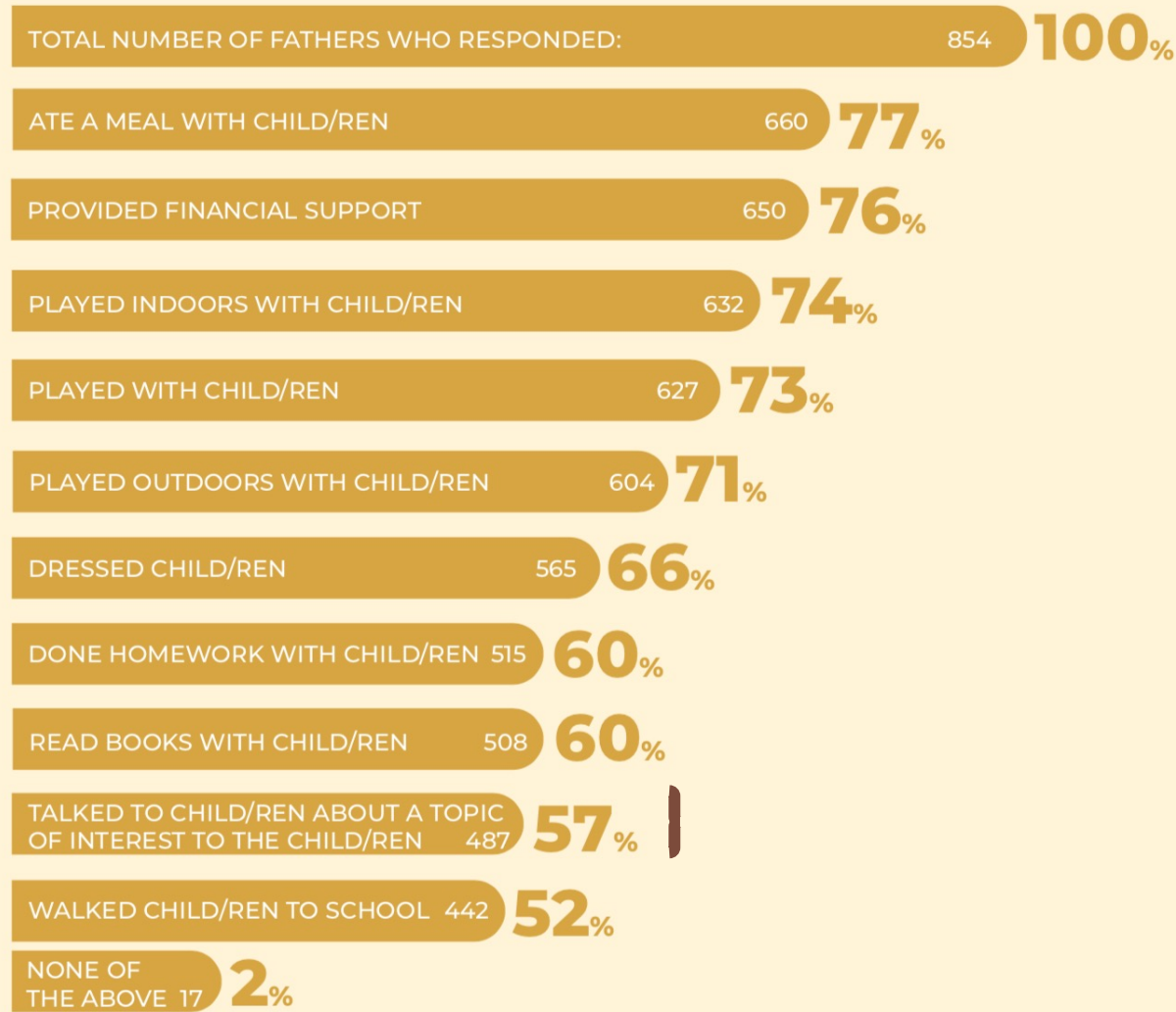
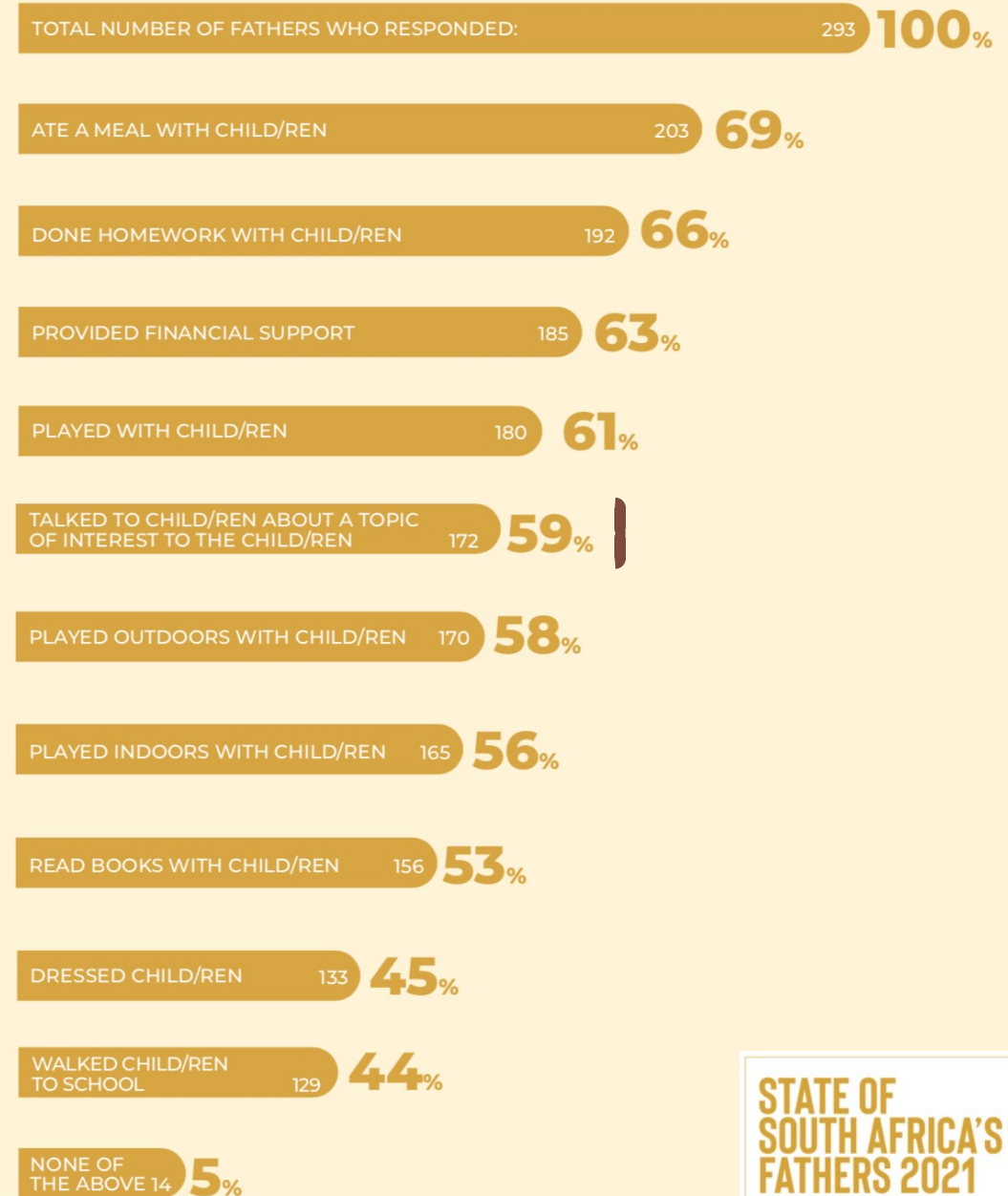


Figure 13: SOSAF 2021 survey fathers' activities in the past three years with children who are not their biological children





RESIDENTIAL THERAPEUTIC PROGRAMME

WORKING WITH BOYS AFFECTED BY SEXUAL ABUSE

21/4/2022

Content



1. Introduction
2. Child protection programme : Residential Therapy programmes
3. Work with boys
4. Findings gathered from the residential therapy programmes

Introduction



- Childline is an effective non-profit organization that works collectively to protect children from all forms of violence and create a culture of children's rights in South Africa
- Childline SA together with NACCW (National Association on Child & Youth Care Workers) developed the therapeutic residential programmes in response to
 - to the plight of children (survivors of sexual abuse) who presented at the ISIBINDI sites
 - Poor or lack of therapeutic interventions in rural and sub-urban areas for children survivors of sexual abuse
 - In 2013, Childline developed a similar project focusing on young children who were presenting with inappropriate sexual behaviour.
- During Phase II of the Global Fund Funding, Childline South Africa was able to offer the two programmes mentioned above to over 1200 children.

Child Protection Programme



Childline has been the service provider of the therapeutic treatment to vulnerable children in a form of counselling

Therefore Childline SA partnered with NACCW in some of the provinces through the ISIBINDI project to strengthen child protection services in rural communities. Furthermore Childline SA capacitated professional social workers who had to played the role of providing therapy to children and caregivers present in the residential therapy programme

- The involvement of Childline SA in the ISIBINDI project for Child Protection with NACCW, became the motive for the development of the 2 Residential Therapeutic treatment Programmes:
- THERAPEUTIC RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM FOR VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ABUSE (17 years and under)
- CHILDREN DISPLAYING INAPPROPRIATE/DEVIANT/'OFFENDING' OR AGGRESSIVE SEXUAL BEHAVIOR.
- Both programs are based on the Isibindi (circles of care) Child protection Model, which was devised by NACCW

Working with boys affected by sexual violence



- It was design as a short intensive residential therapeutic programme which targeted to service a group of 20-30 children per programme.
- The programme was guided by Child legislation, the Children's Act 38 of 2005 and its related amendments, and the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act 5 of 2015
- The programme was designed to be implemented during the school holidays for a period of SEVEN days in one child friendly facility such as a Child & Youth Care Centre.
- The following was covered during the 7 days period:
 - 4-5 individual therapy sessions
 - 3-4 group therapy sessions including a motivational group for all children, group session with the children-as part of teaching healthy coping strategies/management of feelings
 - 4 individual therapy sessions with caregivers
 - A half day therapeutic/educational workshop for caregivers
 - A 3 hour educational workshop for CYCCW
 - Involvement of Department of Health for rendering HIV/AIDs pre-post counselling and testing service on the second day of the residential therapy programme.
- Case tracking : Telephone follow-up and Home visit, Interviews with Stakeholders involved in the child's case such as SAPS and DSD.

GOALS OF RTP-VICTIM



- To heal and promote psycho-social adjustment, and provide emotional stability.
- To re-integrate their sexual abuse experience into their lives. To build social and interpersonal skills.
- Healthy and functional family life. To build and strengthen support networks.
- Children to be safe and protected. To learn protective skills.
- To help children identify, understand and ameliorate the effects of sexual abuse. To reduce stigmas and sense of isolation
- To confront distorted belief systems and begin to reframe unhealthy feelings, behavior and thoughts. To promote self-awareness.
- To promote body integrity and build self-esteem and strengths.
- To facilitate disclosures and help children to explore, identify, express, normalize and accept feelings, and to learn healthy coping and management skills.
- To teach about boundaries and healthy sexuality.

Some Findings



- Few cases of sexual violence are reported by males, they were identified through a report of physical abuse or behaviour problem that a child presented at school or at home
- Boys reported fear of not being believed by their significant others when they tell them about being abused sexually
- They lack awareness and knowledge about where to seek help
- They experience trauma and do not talk about their feelings, thoughts and the experience
- They appreciated the opportunity to interact with professionals and other boys who had the same or similar experiences
- Community values, perception of boys and man as masculine individuals are some of the barriers that lead male victims to not reporting cases of sexual violence

Thanks!

Contact details to follow here

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4/25/22

Strengthening responses to boys affected by sexual violence

Focus on promoting responsive parenting by mothers and fathers and elimination of harsh discipline



Harsh Discipline

The use of verbal communication as well as physical punishment that tends to

lecture,

humiliate,

deride,

criticise

Includes shouting, swearing, name calling, and hitting.

Fear-based.



Responsive Caregiving

A key component of the Nurturing Care Framework

Observing and responding to your child in order to recognise and meet their needs.



Positive discipline

More likely to flow out of a responsive caregiving relationship

A relational way of disciplining a child

Promotes connection rather than punishment

Uses empathy to understand reasons for the child's behaviour.



Practitioners

- **Work from a trauma-informed perspective**

Trauma is

***“What happens to a person when there is either too much too soon,
too much for too long,
or not enough for too long.”***

Duros & Crowley (2014)

To be trauma-informed means

To work with an understanding of what psychological trauma is.

To be aware of the far-reaching impact of trauma on the whole person, and the whole family system.

To especially be aware that trauma interrupts connection.

Practitioners

- Check your own mindsets/assumptions/prejudices against boys in general and boys affected by sexual violence in particular, especially where they have been accused of causing harm to others.
- Practice empathy and compassion towards caregivers in order to build relationship, and to model what you would want to see in the relationship between the caregiver and the child.
- Inspire confidence in the caregiver.
- Group contexts for learning more about positive discipline are more effective for practitioners and caregivers.
- Practitioner's own support and supervision is critical and key

Messages practitioners can give parents

- You are important in the life of your son, no matter what he projects in his outward attitude.
- When your son is developing from childhood into pre-adolescence and adolescence, don't stop talking to him, playing with him and intentionally showing him that you care, that you are there for him, that you value and love him as a person.
- Your boy child has emotions just like your girl child does. Boys have emotions and need an outlet to express them, often quite differently to girls and that is ok. Sitting face to face with a boy to simply talk is often very threatening for them. Go for a walk or do an activity where you can hear one another and speak, but you remove the intensity of talking face to face, if that is what's needed.
- Your son's behaviour may be a set of adaptive responses to whatever it is that they have experienced in their life. He first and foremost needs care, support and understanding.
- Your boy child is **just as vulnerable** as your girl child. Supervise and set limits for him accordingly.
- You were chosen to be the parents of your children, be confident that you can be a good parent. Work on your relationship with them. Every relationship takes work, it is not automatic.
- If you're hurting from broken relationships/trauma/family conflict, seek healing and get help. Parenting from a place of trauma can perpetuate harsh discipline and perpetuate disconnection.

Reflection questions for practitioners and parents

- What was your childhood like?
- What was your relationship with your parents like growing up? What do you do the same as them, what do you do differently?
- How were you disciplined when you were growing up? What sort of things did you get disciplined for? How did you experience that? What do you wish could be different?
- What do you wish someone had told you about parenting before you became a parent?
- What do you wish specifically for your relationship with your boy child at this time? What step could you take towards cultivating this relationship? If you need help, who could you call on?

QUESTIONS?

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to join the social network
for child rights practitioners



Changemakers
for children

changemakersforchildren.community