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Teachers' Attitudes toward Reporting Child Sexual Abuse: Problems with Existing Research  
Leading To New Scale Development

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### Abstract

This paper details a systematic literature review identifying problems in extant research relating to teachers' attitudes towards reporting child sexual abuse, and offers a model for new attitude scale development and testing. Scale development comprised a five-phase process grounded in contemporary attitude theories including: a) developing the initial item pool; b) conducting a panel review; c) refining the scale via an expert focus group; d) building content validity through cognitive interviews; e) assessing internal consistency via field testing. The resulting 21-item scale displayed construct validity in preliminary testing. The scale may prove useful as a research tool, given the theoretical supposition that attitudes may be changed with time, context, experience, and education. Further investigation with a larger sample is warranted.

Keywords: child sexual abuse, mandatory reporting, attitudes, teachers

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Child sexual abuse (CSA) is experienced along a spectrum from exposure through unwanted touching to penetrative assault by approximately 12-20% of females and 5-10% of males in childhood (see for example Dube et al., 2005; Dunne, Purdie, Cook, Boyle, & Najman, 2003; Finkelhor, 1994; Fleming, 1997; May-Chahal & Cawson, 2005). These data may be conservative because many individuals who have experienced CSA fail to disclose their victimization irrespective of methodological rigor in research (see for example Berliner & Elliot, 2002; Finkelhor, 1994; Putnam, 2003). Factors associated with increased risk of CSA include: gender, girls have up to 3 times greater risk (Finkelhor, 1993); age, children under 12 years account for two-thirds of cases (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 1998); and disability, children having sensory and communication impairments are overrepresented (Westcott & Jones, 1999).

Teachers are the professionals spending most time with children outside of their families and are likely to notice physical and behavioural changes that may indicate CSA (Briggs & Hawkins, 1997). Teachers also witness to the serious social-emotional problems associated with CSA including low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, aggression, dissociation, and self-harming behaviours (see for example Kendall-Tackett, Williams, & Finkelhor, 1993), as well as unusual and inappropriate sexual behaviours (Trickett et al., 1997), and academic underachievement (Jones, Trudinger, & Crawford, 2004). Teachers' reporting of CSA to child protection or law enforcement services is, therefore, an important strategy for interrupting and intervening to limit its adverse short- and long-term consequences.

In many jurisdictions around the world, mandatory reporting laws have been enacted which require members of key occupational groups having contact with children to notify their suspicions of child abuse and neglect to designated authorities (Mathews & Kenny,

2008). Across jurisdictions within any particular country, these laws may have significant differences. In Australia, for example, there are differences between States in the types of abuse that must be reported, with some States requiring the reporting of *all* forms of child maltreatment (physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect), and others requiring reports only of particular types (e.g. sexual and physical abuse). There are also differences in the occupational groups required to report; some jurisdictions require all citizens to report, others require a broad range of occupations to report, and others require a narrower range of occupations to report (Mathews & Kenny, 2008). For Australian teachers, legislation in all six States and two Territories requires teachers to report suspicions of CSA. However, in Queensland, this is limited to cases where the suspected perpetrator is a school employee. Western Australia's legislation commenced recently, on January 1, 2009.

Teachers must interpret information and consider many factors when identifying and responding to CSA (see Crenshaw et al., 1995; Kenny, 2001, 2004; O'Toole, Webster, O'Toole, & Lucal, 1999; Walsh, Bridgstock, Rassafiani, Farrell, & Schweitzer, 2008; Zellman, 1992) and there is evidence to suggest that, after characteristics of the case, factors such as attitudes may be significant positive predictors of recognition and reporting (O'Toole et al., 1999). Hence, teachers' attitudes towards reporting CSA are worth studying because of their potential to affect report decision making and impact the quality and accuracy of notifications made to child protective services. Attitudes are formed in many ways and can change with time, context, experience, and education (Albarracin, Zanna, Johnson, & Kumkale, 2005; Ajzen, 2005). As such, it is reasonable to suggest that attitudes may be malleable in training. Studying teachers' attitudes towards reporting, therefore, may provide crucial insights into their role in well-functioning child protection systems. Further, understanding teachers' reporting of child sexual abuse is important because failure to report has serious consequences for child victims as there are established links between the early

onset of CSA and abuse severity and duration (Berliner & Elliot, 2002; Trickett et al., 1997). Failure to report due to poor attitudes or other reasons also carries serious consequences for schools' liability in negligence (Butler, Mathews, Farrell, & Walsh, 2009), which education institutions would be wise to avoid.

### **Background to the Studies**

The overall project, of which the research reported in this paper is a part, sets out to investigate primary school teachers' reporting of CSA across 3 Australian jurisdictions having 3 different CSA reporting obligations for teachers. The study was approved by the Queensland University of Technology's University Human Research Ethics Committee (Reference Number 07 0000 0298) and the Catholic Education Office of Brisbane. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. To this end, in 2007, the search began for an existing research instrument in the form of a series of questionnaire items or a scale that could be used to measure teachers' attitudes towards reporting CSA so that attitudes could be studied in combination with other professional characteristics and contexts to promote understanding of past and possible future reporting practices. Hence, an attitude measure was sought that was broad but sufficiently discriminating (Ajzen, 2005) and sensitive enough to accurately measure the target construct (Krosnick et al., 2005) defined as teachers' attitudes towards reporting CSA.

It was surprising to find that an appropriate measure did not exist and despite widespread and long-standing use of the term *attitudes* in the child protection literature, some existing studies did not measure attitudes at all, but instead measured knowledge, beliefs, perceptions, views, and a range of other constructs. What was claimed as attitude research did not seem to reflect attitude theories nor were the measures developed using proven procedures for developing valid and reliable measures (e.g. Ajzen, 2005; De Vaus, 2002; Krosnick, Judd, & Wittenbrink, 2005; Watson, 2006). These initial impressions required

further investigation for verification and resolution before a new scale could be generated. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is twofold. First, it details the structured literature review process leading to the identification of specific problem issues in existing work. Second, it offers a step-by-step model for new scale development and preliminary testing. This dual purpose is presented as two studies: Study 1 outlines a structured multi-stage critical literature review (Wallace & Wray, 2006); Study 2 describes the multi-phase scale development and testing process (De Vaus, 2002; Watson, 2006).

### **Study 1**

#### **Procedure**

A structured six-stage search strategy was adopted to review the literature on teachers' attitudes towards reporting child sexual abuse. The search was limited to studies published in English. First, in August 2007, electronic databases were searched including EBSCOhost (CINAHL, ERIC, MEDline, PsychARTICLES, PsychINFO), Pubmed, Web of knowledge, Web of Science, Science Direct, ProQuest (including Dissertations), Sociological abstracts, and Ovid. Second, the global search engine Google Scholar was searched. Third, relevant organizational databases were searched including: Australia Institute of Health and Welfare, Bell Canada Child Welfare Research, International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, National Data Archive on Child Abuse and Neglect. Fourth, the most prominent electronic journals in the field were searched, including recent and in-press work: *Child Abuse and Neglect*, *The Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *Child Maltreatment*, *Child Abuse Review*, *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, *Children and Youth Services Review*, *Aggression and Violent Behaviour*, and *Journal of School Psychology*. Fifth, reference lists of relevant articles were scanned and further studies identified manually. Finally, some authors were contacted for information about their studies and/or instruments. Combinations of the following keywords were used in the searches: *attitud\* report\**, *child\**, *sex\**, *abuse\**,



teacher\*, school\*, belief\*, value\*, percept\*, and view\*. This strategy uncovered 58 studies which were sorted according to three key considerations for substantive validity in new scale construction (Watson, 2006). First, study participants must have been teachers or school staff. Second, the target construct in the study must have been teachers' attitudes towards the task of reporting CSA specifically, or reporting child abuse in general. Notably, few studies focused on CSA as distinct from all forms of child abuse and neglect (CAN), making it necessary to retain more generic abuse and neglect terminology to capture closely-related studies capable of informing scale development. Third, the study must have included a multi-item survey instrument with items relating to attitudes. Table 1 displays the 58 studies against these criteria.

*>>Insert Table 1 about here<<*

Fifteen studies meeting all three criteria were subject to closer scrutiny. These were reviewed independently by two members of the research team according to ten further research design criteria: a) publication type (peer reviewed journal article, thesis, report); b) type(s) of CAN (CAN generally or CSA specifically); c) participants; d) administration; e) attitude definition used; f) attitude theory used; g) previous studies from which the instrument was derived; h) number of items in the attitude scale and type of response/rating used; i) extent of pilot testing; and j) psychometric properties. These 15 studies and review criteria are presented in Table 2.

*>>Insert Table 2 here<<*

## **Results**

In terms of research design, all studies except one had been peer reviewed for an academic journal or thesis. No studies focused exclusively on teachers' attitudes towards reporting CSA as distinct from all forms of CAN. Participants included teachers and other school personnel such as school counselors or psychologists with one study involving

university education majors and four involving other professionals for comparative study. All studies were self-administered questionnaires, distributed directly by the researcher or by mail. None of the 15 studies offered a definition of attitudes or included reference to theory in relation to the study of attitudes. All studies were derived from general reviews of the literature or previous work in the area by Pelcovitz (1977, 1980), Giovannoni and Becerra (1979), Zellman and Antler (1990), Zellman and Bell (1990), or Crenshaw and Crenshaw (1992). Pelcovitz's (1977, 1980) survey instrument, in particular, was used in its original form in four subsequent studies. Sampling was mixed including six true random samples, two studies with random group assignment, and the remainder comprising non-probability or convenience samples. Scale items ranged from single items (e.g. Crenshaw et al., 1995) to 26 items (Einsel, 1992; Firestone, 1987; Meyers, 1986; Pelcovitz, 1977, 1980; Stubblefield, 2002). Participant responses were required on 3-7-point Likert-type scales. Pilot testing was reported in only half of the studies and the extent of pilot testing was minimal, typically involving expert consultation with 3-5 individuals. Psychometric properties for internal consistency were reported only for Pelcovitz (1977, 1980), those studies based upon Pelcovitz' study (Einsel, 1992; Firestone, 1987; Meyers, 1986; Stubblefield, 2002), and for Medrano (2001).

The study by Pelcovitz (1977, 1980) provided the most likely model instrument; however, as a case in point, the measure was not an exact fit. The study used a detailed questionnaire including a 26-item attitude measure to quantify teachers' attitudes towards the broad construct of CAN. Within the items were 12 items directly about CAN reporting but the items were not specifically about CSA reporting. Further, several items were relevant only to the United States context. Incidentally, Pelcovitz (1977; 1980) found strong support for reporting CAN broadly. In his sample of 135 Philadelphia elementary teachers, 96.3% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed to their responsibility to report.

## Study 2

In response to the issues identified in Study 1, the Teachers' Reporting Attitude Scale for Child Sexual Abuse (TRAS - CSA) was developed in a systematic step-by-step process. The scale's purpose was to capture a measurement of the target construct of teachers' attitudes towards reporting child sexual abuse. Scale development and preliminary testing comprised five-phases depicted in Figure 1, intended to enhance the rigor of the scale by developing construct validity in terms of content comprehensiveness, item representativeness, and relevance. The aim in reporting these minutiae was to redress the methodological shortcomings in previous work and to provide a step-by-step model for future scale development in this field.

>>Insert Figure 1 about here<<

### Phase 1: Initial item pool

**Procedure.** The aim of this phase was to create an initial item pool. The most relevant 15 studies listed in Table 2 were used as a basis for this purpose. Complete survey instruments were obtained for each of the fifteen studies. In this phase two key principles that were proposed by Watson (2006) were followed. The first principle stated that the initial item pool should be more inclusive than the study's definition of the target construct, and second, that the pool should contain items that will eventually be shown to be unrelated to the target construct. According to Watson (2006), testing in later phases will be able to identify weak or irrelevant items that should not be included, but testing will not be able to generate items that ought to have been considered but were not.

**Results.** Seventy-four raw survey items were identified as directly relating to the core construct of teachers' attitudes. Interestingly, in the existing instruments, attitude items were sometimes single items (e.g. Crenshaw et al., 1995), but more frequently multiple items scattered throughout longer instruments (e.g. Hawkins & McCallum, 2001) rather than

collected as a conventional scale (e.g. Pelcovitz, 1977, 1980). All 74 items (known as the *long list*) were included in the initial item pool in an attempt to exhaust features of the target construct (Watson, 2006). These items were placed on an Excel spreadsheet for refining and adding to in the next phase. A pragmatic problem that should be raised at this point, as noted by Watson (2006), is that a scale based on previous research, in which several problems have been identified, is unlikely to be satisfactory. In fact, the scale is likely to faithfully replicate the preceding flaws. This is exactly why further empirical scrutiny was required in further steps in the scale development process.

### **Phase 2: Panel Review**

**Procedure.** The aim of this phase was to ensure the item pool was inclusive and comprehensive (Watson, 2006). First, statements in the long list were coded, independently, by two members of the research team and two research assistants according to their theme (for example, one theme was *reporting necessary*) and grouped together. A team meeting was held to arrive at consensus. Statement duplicates were deleted. Statements about other constructs (for example, *training*) were dropped from the list as were statements about jurisdiction-specific procedural matters (for example, *consequences of failure to report*) or issues outside the scope of the laws in Australia (for example, *details of specific interventions following reporting*). Twenty-seven statements remained.

Second, a further research team meeting was held to engage in an expert panel review and inductive process asking “what, if anything, is missing from this list?” Several context-relevant statements emerged from this exercise, and were added to the item pool, resulting in a sufficiently representative and relevant list of 33 statements deemed suitable for pilot testing.

Third, to ensure that the item pool was inclusive of the multiple dimensions of the target construct, three members of the research team coded the pilot list according to three

attitude components: affect (feelings/affect or psychological reactions towards reporting CSA), cognition (cognitions including beliefs about and perceptual reactions to reporting CSA), and behaviour (behavioural intentions or overt behaviours with respect to reporting CSA). This process also laid the groundwork for future structural testing of attitude subscales.

**Results.** There was a fair to good level of inter-rater agreement for coding of the subscales (Spearman's  $r = 0.57 - 0.62, p = 0.01$ ). Disagreements in coding were discussed and the categorizations finalized with modifications to stem-phrase wording. For the 33-item pilot list, the breakdown of subscale items was: affect (11 statements), cognition (11 statements), and behaviour (11 statements). Items were randomly ordered for pilot testing.

### **Phase 3: Structured Focus Group**

**Procedure.** The purpose of this phase was to refine the scale in terms of relevance, structure, and content, to assess comprehensibility and reduce ambiguity (Dillman, 2007; Krosnick, Judd, & Wittenbrink, 2005). In this phase, a convenience sample of registered primary school teachers and school administrative staff employed at the University as tutors were accessed. Participants were purposively-selected based on having at least 5 years experience in school education, and holding experience and training in CAN ( $n = 7$  from a potential pool of 12 individuals). All participants were female, aged between 35 and 44 years with a mean of 40 years ( $SD = 2.83$  years). They held bachelor-level qualifications (3 participants), postgraduate bachelor qualifications (3 participants), or were currently studying towards a higher degree (1 participant). Participants were provided with the study materials 2 weeks in advance and attended a structured focus group where they were asked to comment on the structural quality of the 33 statements and their content (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999). The focus group was audiotaped, transcribed, and analyzed independently by three members of the research team.

**Results.** General feedback from participants included comments on the potentially onerous length of the scale and identification of some statements considered similar. Participants discussed, at some length, the need to reflect different cultural and/or personal views about reporting. Based on these findings, the item list was reduced to 32 items by removing 2 items deemed similar to others (items 13 and 17) and replacing one of these items with another statement.

#### **Phase 4: Cognitive Interviews**

**Procedure.** The purpose of this phase was to build content validity and to reduce the number of scale items. In this phase, individuals were purposively selected who had a strong background in education and child protection. Structured cognitive interviews as outlined by Willis (2005) were conducted with child protection education advisors and a key member of a principal professional association ( $n = 4$ ). Participants were two males and two females with an average age of 52.7 years ( $SD = 8.6$ ) and a mean of 15 years experience in their current roles ( $SD = 9.6$ ). In addition to selection criteria for Phase 1, these participants also held deeper awareness of legislation and policy for teachers' reporting of CAN generally by virtue of their employment specialisation. Participants were provided with the study materials ahead of time and asked to complete a rating exercise on the attitude scale scoring each item on a 4-point scale according to the magnitude of its relevance to the underlying construct, ranging from 1 (*not relevant*) to 4 (*highly relevant*).

**Results.** The Content Validity Index (CVI), an index expressing the proportion of agreement about relevance among respondents, was calculated for the entire scale following methods recommended by Polit and Beck (2006). Items with scores greater than 0.25 were retained. Based on these findings, the nine attitude items scoring poorly were removed. This reduced the scale to 23 items. Minor changes to the wording of items 5, 8, and 15 were made on the basis of participants' recommendations.

### **Phase 5: Field Testing**

**Procedure.** The purpose of this phase was to evaluate and improve content validity of the 23-item scale and three subscales with a sample of teachers. In addition, this phase was designed to assess comprehension and identify typographical and formatting errors. A convenience sample of school staff and visiting academics were recruited for this phase ( $n = 21$ ). Participants were recruited via direct contact with the school principal who provided information about the study at a school staff meeting and thereafter on a staffroom notice board. A research assistant attended the school 1 week after the staff meeting to distribute the self-administered survey, returning several days later to collect completed instruments and to conduct structured interviews with a sub-group of participants. Participants were 20 female and one male with an average age of 43.7 years ( $SD = 9.6$ ). On average, participants had 15.95 years experience ( $SD = 11.0$ ). Participating teachers had qualifications at the undergraduate diploma or bachelor level (11 participants), postgraduate bachelor level (3 participants), and masters level (6 participants) with one set of missing data. The majority taught P-Year 4, that is, children aged 5 to 9 years (14 participants) with the remainder in the upper primary school and specialist teaching positions.

**Results.** Internal consistency reliability for the 23-item list for this phase of the study was moderate ( $\alpha = .745$ ). Items 17 and 18 (reporting child sexual abuse does more harm than good; it is important for teachers to be involve in reporting child sexual abuse to prevent long-term consequences for children) were found to correlate poorly with the target construct and were removed yielding a moderately high adjusted alpha coefficient of  $\alpha = 0.81$ , also making the scale more reliable for use as a predictor variable. The poor scoring on these particular items may be partly explained by what Haynes, Richard, and Kubany (1995) refer to as the “dynamic nature of content validity” (p. 238): as a field advances and social understandings of a target construct such as CSA develop, statements that may previously

have been important dimensions to the target construct are seen to be less central or even irrelevant.

To examine homogeneity of the scale, the average inter-item correlation was calculated resulting in an average of .15, falling within the recommended acceptable range of .15-.50 (Clarke & Watson, 1995; Watson, 2006). Additionally, as missing data were detected for the first item, this item was inserted randomly, further down the list. The penultimate 21-item attitude scale is presented in Table 3.

>> *Insert Table 3 about here*<<

### **Discussion**

This paper reports on research into teachers' attitudes towards reporting CSA. It detailed a structured literature review process leading to the identification of specific problem issues in existing research, and offered a step-by-step model for new scale development and preliminary testing. This research, although modest, represents a significant theoretical and empirical advance over previous work in this field.

Several methodological and conceptual problems were identified in the existing literature. First, and most importantly, was the lack of clear, precise definitions of the target construct. It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to create reliable and valid measures of attitudes without this; boundaries of the target construct must be tested and resolved in rigorous pretesting prior to data collection (Watson, 2006). Second, few studies could be found that focused on CSA as distinct from all forms of CAN. This is problematic from a theoretical as well as empirical point of view. Theoretically, CSA has particular issues of sensitivity and taboo that other forms of CAN do not have, making it subject to different evaluative predispositions by individuals. Empirically, because research about teacher attitudes towards reporting CSA is scarce, the foundations for a study of teachers' attitudes towards reporting CSA must be inferred from or determined by studies about closely-related



phenomena. This makes the first stages of new scale development process even more critical in identifying the full range of content relevant to the target construct (Watson, 2006).

Third, the study of attitudes towards reporting CAN in general, and CSA in particular, has lacked application or incorporation of attitude theories. At a basic level, such theories emphasize that attitudes have intensity and are subject to change. Although attitudes alone are poor determinants of behaviour, when studied alongside characteristics such as intentions and confidence, as well as contextual features such as legislative requirements and policy concerns, attitudes' effects may be better understood. Also, existing research has failed to acknowledge and account for the multidimensional nature of attitudes with reciprocal relationships between attitudes, and affect, cognition, and behaviour. Although there is a need to understand the relationship of attitudes to reporting practice (reporting and failure to report), there is also a need to understand attitudes as constructs in themselves. For example, what teacher characteristics predict certain attitudinal dispositions towards reporting? What proximal and distal features of the context shape teachers' attitudes? As it stands, the research to date provides extremely limited assessment of teachers' attitudes towards reporting CSA when considered in the light of attitude theories.

The fourth problem relates to empirical consequences of the third. Atheoretical approaches to studying teachers' attitudes have resulted in methodological flaws in measurement. Existing assessments of teachers' attitudes may, therefore, have been unreliable. For example, some studies measured attitudes using a single or small number of questions when attitude theories suggest that single questions fail to do justice to the complexity of attitudes (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005, p.177). Most have taken an exploratory (post hoc) rather than a confirmatory (a priori) approach resulting in a trend of cobbling together loosely-related sets of items to form a scale without the pretesting required to

establish construct validity. Attitude measures must be subjected to rigorous empirical scrutiny in pretesting to resolve such issues.

To accurately assess individuals' attitudes and to have the best chance of finding significant associations between attitudes and other variables, researchers must reduce measurement error and maximize the validity of a new scale via meticulous development and testing (Krosnick et al., 2005). In the structured literature review it became clear that little attention had been paid to scale construction and validation and that most measures had not arisen from systematic development, pretesting, and/or piloting. The attitudes literature contains many guidelines for producing reliable and valid measures of attitudes using scales or series of items (see, for example, Krosnick et al., 2005; Watson, 2006), however, it may perhaps be an artifact of child maltreatment research that it is often difficult to justify the time and resources required for developing and testing a comprehensive attitude scale.

Unfortunately, this situation creates methodological limitations that must be addressed for the field to move forward.

Progressing the study of teachers' (and arguably other professionals') attitudes towards reporting CSA is worthwhile because attitudes may be latent features of decision making and potential determinants of the quality and accuracy of reports made to child protection authorities. Clearly unwarranted child protection notifications divert precious resources for investigations away from necessary investigations and important intervention services. Even more importantly, a failure to report suspected CSA due to negative attitudinal factors may result in a child continuing to suffer abuse and the perpetrator being left free to abuse other children. In Australia, teachers are the source of approximately 10-20% of all child protection notifications to State and Territory child protection and support agencies (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2009). Their accurate and effective reporting is vital to well-functioning child protection systems.

Studying teachers' attitudes in particular contexts is also important because attitudes are complex and variable over time and across situations (Albarracin, Zanna, Johnson & Kumkale, 2005; Ajzen, 2005; Krosnick et al., 2005). Most studies of teachers' reporting of CSA have been conducted within the United States where CSA reporting laws are fairly uniform (Mathews & Kenny, 2008). Rodriguez's (2002) New Zealand study is the only study so far conducted in a jurisdiction without mandatory reporting laws. There are no studies on teachers' attitudes that have drawn upon participants in the United Kingdom, for example, where reporting is also voluntary. Hence, the field lacks evidence on the influence of legal contexts on teachers' attitudes, and the influence of those attitudes on teachers' reporting practice.

In summary, the TRAS - CSA is a 21-item self-administered scale in its preliminary stages of development. Response choices consist of a 5-point Likert-type format ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*). Assuming the tripartite theory of attitude structure, the scale was developed based on the notion that attitudes have affective, behavioural and cognitive dimensions (Albarracin et al., 2005; Ajzen, 2005). This measure has displayed preliminary evidence of construct validity and further investigation to test instrument precision with a larger sample is now warranted.

Further work is needed to validate the scale. In particular test-retest reliability as discussed below. The scale must also be subject to structural analysis. Confirmatory Factor Analysis must be used to determine how well items are related to one another and if and how the items form clusters of items or factors which may belong to a group that make theoretical sense (for example, the tripartite beliefs, cognitions, and affect dimensions). As pointed out by De Vaus (2002), factor analysis will determine if the scale measures one factor (teachers' attitudes towards reporting child sexual abuse) or whether, despite rigor and best intentions, the scale measures several constructs.

Limitations of this study should be noted. An important key psychometric index omitted from the process was a measure of the new scale's test-retest reliability. Without this measure of temporal stability, the utility of the scale cannot be thoroughly assessed. The test was not omitted by design, but in consideration of the burden on the pilot school and in an attempt to reduce the study's conflict with important core curricular activities. This can be acknowledged as a shortcoming and future work with this scale must incorporate measures of test-retest reliability. However, it should also be noted that conducting such a study in a school environment may prompt teachers to think about or reflect on the core construct, and perhaps even to discuss it or research it, and perhaps even change their attitudes towards it. A further limitation was that the sample of experts who participated in the panel review, focus group, and cognitive interviews were predominantly female. In that respect, they may not be representative of the broader range of expertise in the field. Finally, it is important to reiterate that, although rigorous, this was a preliminary study and the resulting attitude scale remains incomplete until further testing establishes internal and external validity and stability.

Although preliminary, this small-scale in-depth study has yielded important findings about the measurement of teachers' attitudes towards reporting CSA. In reviewing the literature, numerous shortcomings in previous studies were identified leading to inadequate assessment of teachers' attitudes towards reporting CSA. This study began to redress these shortcomings by developing and testing a multi-item attitude scale that can be used to more adequately assess teachers' attitudes towards reporting CSA. The scale has since been used as part of a longer self-administered survey instrument in an Australian cross-jurisdictional comparative study of teachers' CSA reporting. After further testing, researchers may ultimately find the scale useful in training evaluation studies where a parsimonious measure of teachers' attitudes toward reporting CSA is required.

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Table 1

*58 Studies identified in the literature review sorted according to 3 methodological considerations*

Study authors & date	Participants include teachers	Target Construct	Use of multi-item scale	Exclude	Include
Abrahams, Casey & Daro (1992)	✓	x	✓	x	
Alvarez, Kenny, Donohue & Carpin (2004)	x	x	x	x	
Anderson & Levine (1999)	✓	x	x	x	
Batchelor, Dean, Gridley & Batchelor (1990)	✓	x	✓	x	
Bauerlein (2001)	✓	✓	✓		✓
Beck, Ogloff & Corbishley (1994)	✓	✓	✓		✓
Bishop, Lunn & Johnson (2002)	✓	x	✓	x	
Boehm & Itzhaky (2004)	x	x	x	x	
Bonardi (1999)	✓	x	✓	x	
Briggs & Potter (2004)	✓	x	x	x	
Compaan, Doueck & Levine (1997)	x	x	x	x	
Conger (1994)	✓	x	x	x	
Crenshaw, Crenshaw & Lichtenberg (1995)	✓	✓	✓		✓
Delaronde, King, Bendel & Reece (2000)	x	x	✓	x	
Egu & Weiss (2003)	✓	x	x	x	
Einsel (1992)	✓	✓	✓		✓
Engel (1998)	✓	✓	✓		✓
Feng & Levine (2005)	x	✓	✓	x	
Firestone (1987)	✓	✓	✓		✓
Hamilton (1998)	✓	✓	✓		✓
Hawkins & McCallum (2001)	✓	✓	✓		✓
Hazzard & Rupp (1986)	✓	x	✓	x	
Hazzard (1984)	✓	x	✓	x	
Hinson & Fossey (2000)	✓	x	✓	x	
Kenny (2001a)	✓	x	✓	x	
Kenny (2001b)	✓	x	✓	x	
Kenny (2004)	✓	x	✓	x	
Levin (1983)	✓	✓	✓		✓
MacIntyre & Carr (1999)	✓	x	✓	x	
Mahoney (1995)	x	x	x	x	
McIntyre (1990)	✓	x	x	x	
McIntyre (1987)	✓	x	x	x	
Medrano (2001)	✓	✓	✓		✓
Meyers (1986)	✓	✓	✓		✓
Neyra (1997)	x	✓	✓	x	
Nightingale & Walker (1986)	✓	x	✓	x	
O'Toole, Webster, O'Toole & Lucal (1999)	✓	x	✓	x	
Olson & Sykes (1982)	x	x	x	x	
Osseroff, Oseroff, Westling, & Gessner (1999)	✓	x	x	x	
Pelcovitz (1977, 1980)	✓	✓	✓	x	✓
Peters (2001)	x	x	x	x	
Reyome & Gaeddert (1998)	✓	x	x	x	
Ridgway (2005)	✓	✓	✓		✓
Rodriguez (2002)	✓	✓	✓		✓
Rosien, Helms & Wanat (1993)	✓	x	x	x	
Sanghara & Wilson (2006)	✓	x	✓	x	
Shor (1997)	✓	x	x	x	
Stubblefield (2002)	✓	✓	✓		✓
Sylvester (1997)	x	x	x	x	
Tite (1991)	✓	x	✓	x	
Tite (1993)	✓	x	✓	x	
Tite (1994a)	✓	x	✓	x	
Tite (1994b)	✓	x	✓	x	

Study authors & date	Participants include teachers	Target Construct	Use of multi-item scale	Exclude	Include
Turbett & O'Toole (1983)	✓	x	✓	x	
Turner (1994)	✓	x	✓	x	
Van Haeringen, Dadds & Armstrong (1998)	x	✓	✓	x	
Volpe (1984)	✓	x	✓	x	
Webster, O'Toole, O'Toole & Lucal (2005)	✓	x	✓	x	

*Note.* Target construct identified as teachers' attitudes towards reporting child sexual abuse or child abuse in general.

Table 2

**Table 2: Summary of most relevant 15 studies by key research design criteria**

Study	Publication type	Type(s) of CAN	Participants	Administration method	Attitude definition	Attitude Theory	Survey items derived from	Number of items & rating scale	Pilot testing	Psychometric properties of scale
Bauerlein (2001)	Thesis	All	University students	Self-administered	None	None	General lit review	10 items 4-point scale	Not indicated	Not indicated
Beck, Ogloff & Corbishley (1994)	Peer reviewed journal article	All	Teachers K-12	Self-administered Mailed	None	None	Zellman & Antler (1990) Giovannoni & Becerra (1979) Kalichman, Craig & Follingstad (1989) Reisenauer (1987)	5 items 7-point scale	Pilot for face validity with 2 psychologists & 1 university professor	Not indicated
Crenshaw, Crenshaw & Lichtenberg (1995)	Peer reviewed journal article	All	Educators	Self-administered Mailed	None	None	General lit review Crenshaw & Crenshaw (1992)	1 item 6-point scale	Not indicated	Not indicated
Einsel (1992)	Thesis	All	Teachers & counsellors	Self-administered Mailed	None	None	Pelcovitz (1977)	26 items 5-point scale	Pilot for face and content validity with experts in teaching CAN	Internal consistency Cronbach's alpha 0.73
Engel (1998)	Thesis	All	School counsellors, nurses, & psychologists	Self-administered Mailed	None	None	O'Donnell (1995) Crenshaw & Crenshaw (1992)	3 items 4-point scale	Not indicated	Not indicated
Firestone (1987)	Thesis	All	Teachers K-12	Self-administered Researcher present	None	None	Pelcovitz (1977)	26 items 5-point scale	Pilot for face and content validity with experts in teaching CAN	Internal consistency Cronbach's alpha 0.73
Hamilton (1998)	Thesis	All	School psychologists & school principals	Self-administered Researcher present	None	None	Tharinger et al (1989) Walker (1995)	12 items 5-point scale	Pilot with 3 psychologists & 2 principals	Not indicated
Hawkins & McCallum (2001)	Peer reviewed journal article	All	Mandated reporters including teachers	Self-administered Mailed	None	None	General lit review	3 items 3- and 5-point scales	Pilot with teachers	Treated as individual questions, not used as scale.

Study	Publication type	Type(s) of CAN	Participants	Administration method	Attitude definition	Attitude Theory	Survey items derived from	Number of items & rating scale	Pilot testing	Psychometric properties of scale
Levin (1983)	Peer reviewed journal article	All	Teachers	Not indicated	None	None	General lit review	8 items 4-point scale	Not indicated	Not indicated
Medrano (2001)	Thesis	All	Teachers & CPS workers	Self-administered Researcher present	None	None	Zellman & Antler (1990) O'Donnell (1995)	19 items 4-point scale	Not indicated	Internal consistency $r=.84$
Meyers (1986)	Thesis	All	School psychologists	Self-administered Mailed	None	None	Pelcovitz (1977)	26 items 5-point scale	Not indicated.	Whole scale alpha reliability estimate 0.61
Pelcovitz (1977, 1980)	Thesis & book	All	Teachers	Self-administered Researcher present	None	None	Gelles (1977) Whitney (1977)	26 items 5-point scale	Not indicated	Cronbach's alpha 0.73
Ridgway (2005)	Thesis	All	Elementary teachers	Self-administered Researcher present	None	None	General lit review	10 items 6-point scale	Not indicated	Not indicated
Rodriguez (2002)	Peer reviewed journal article	All	Educators, general practitioners, & mental health professionals	Self-administered Mailed	None	None	General lit review	8 items 5-point scale	Not indicated	Not indicated
Stubblefield (2002)	Thesis	All	Elementary teachers	Self-administered Mailed	None	None	Pelcovitz (1977)	26 items 5-point scale	Pilot with experts in teaching CAN	Internal consistency Cronbach's alpha 0.73



Table 3

**Table 3: 21-item self-report *Teachers' Reporting Attitude Scale for Child Sexual Abuse* (TRAS - CSA)**

In relation to reporting child sexual abuse, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a) I plan to report child sexual abuse when I suspect it.*	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>
b) I would be apprehensive to report child sexual abuse for fear of family/community retaliation.	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>
c) I would be reluctant to report a case of child sexual abuse because of what parents will do to the child if he/she is reported.	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>
d) The procedures for reporting child sexual abuse are familiar to me.*	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>
e) I would like to fulfil my professional responsibility by reporting suspected cases of child sexual abuse.*	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>
f) Reporting child sexual abuse is necessary for the safety of children.*	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>
g) I feel emotionally overwhelmed by the thought of reporting child sexual abuse.	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>
h) I would not report child sexual abuse if I knew the child would be removed from their home/family.	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>
i) Reporting child sexual abuse can enable services to be made available to children and families.*	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>
j) I would consider not reporting child sexual abuse because of the possibility of being sued.	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>
k) There is a lot of sensitivity associated with reporting child sexual abuse.	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>
l) Child sexual abuse reporting guidelines are necessary for teachers.*	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>
m) It is important for teachers to be involved in reporting child sexual abuse to prevent long-term consequences for children.*	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>

n) I believe that the current system for reporting child sexual abuse is effective in addressing the problem.*	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>
o) Teachers who report child sexual abuse that is unsubstantiated can get into trouble.	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>
p) It is a waste of time to report child sexual abuse because no one will follow up on the report.	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>
q) I would still report child sexual abuse even if my school administration disagreed with me.*	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>
r) I lack confidence in the authorities to respond effectively to reports of child sexual abuse.	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>
s) I will consult with an administrator before I report child sexual abuse.*	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>
t) I would find it difficult to report child sexual abuse because it is hard to gather enough evidence.	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>
u) A child sexual abuse report can cause a parent to become more abusive toward the child.	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>

\* Items a, d, e, f, l, m, n, q, and s are reverse coded.

**Figure 1: Five-phase process for scale development and preliminary testing.**



