ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# School-based Abuse Prevention: Effect on Disclosures

Ian G. Barron · Keith J. Topping

**Abstract** This paper focuses specifically on the analysis of disclosures and forms part of a wider study which evaluated the effectiveness of the Violence is Preventable program. Participants included a survivor group, grade 6 group, and a grade 7/8 group with equivalent waiting-list comparison groups. Lessons were delivered either by voluntary organization workers or class teachers. Disclosures were systematically recorded by presenters. Video was used to analyze interactions around disclosures. Substantial numbers of disclosures occurred when lessons were delivered by survivor organisation presenters. Video analysis suggested this was partly due to adult-student interactions characterized by low levels of adult control. Studies on a larger scale are needed particularly comparing outcomes from different presenters with an analysis of what leads to disclosure in and beyond the classroom.

**Keywords** Disclosure · Evaluation · Abuse prevention · Analysis

## Introduction

A recent review of the evaluation of school-based abuse prevention programs (Topping and Barron 2009) reiterated that disclosure rates represented the secondary prevention gains of abuse prevention programs, i.e., to stop abuse that had already occurred. Finkelhor and Strapko (1992) described disclosure rates as the easiest to measure and the least ambiguous of the outcomes and Macmillan et al. (1994) noted they were the

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most valid. An increased rate of disclosed grooming and threats of abuse constituted primary prevention whereas disclosure of ongoing or previous abuse constituted secondary prevention. There was evidence that whatever happened in the future, abuse prevention programs prompted children to disclose past abuse which would probably not have occurred otherwise (Kolko et al. 1989). Disclosed abuse enabled the abuse to end, protection measures to be taken, therapy to be provided and reduced the likelihood of long-term consequences, potentially re-victimisation (Sauzier 1989).

As part of abuse prevention a range of studies sought to discern the nature of disclosures. Finkelhor (1990) affirmed that most survivors never told of their abuse in childhood and that many who disclosed had been abused for years beforehand (Gomes-Schwart et al. 1990). Summit (1983) explained such a response as the accommodation syndrome where children were forced to keep the secret, felt helpless and entrapped, accommodated to the abusive situation which for some led to unconvincing disclosures and retractions. Lawson and Chaffin (1992) observed that a child's disclosure could be inhibited or enabled by a caretaker's support and belief and Hollinger (1987) postulated that young children may not have had an understanding of what the adult was doing. Sgrio (1982) made the distinction between purposeful and accidental disclosures with accidental disclosures being more frequent in younger children (Sorensen and Snow 1991). In summary, Farrell (1988) identified the age of the victim, the seriousness of the abuse, and the relationship to the perpetrator as issues which impacted on the nature of a child's disclosure.

### Review of Efficacy Studies: Key Findings

Within the Topping and Barron (2009) review of efficacy studies, only eight out of twenty two studies reported on
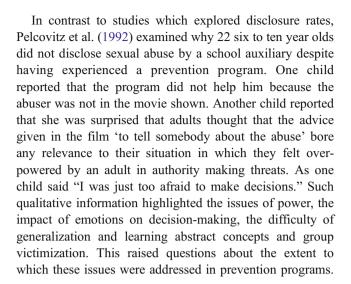
disclosure rates with some studies giving more details than others. Many studies gave overall disclosure rates for experimental and control groups or reported that disclosures occurred but gave no figures, e.g., Dhooper and Schneider (1995). Where disclosures were reported percentages were small in nature. Rarely was the context described in which the disclosure occurred. Importantly across studies disclosures were characterised by a lack of false allegations (Oldfield et al. 1996).

Disclosure rates from the efficacy studies were as follows: Pohl and Hazzard (1990) recorded eight reports of ongoing abuse, twenty reports of past sexual abuse and one report of past physical abuse; Hazzard et al. (1991) reported ongoing sexual abuse (1.5%), past sexual abuse (3.8%), ongoing physical abuse (0.9%) and past physical abuse (two percent) and Madak and Berg (1992) recorded nine disclosures within an eight-week period. Briggs and Hawkins (1994a, b) found six reports of child sexual abuse (4.3%), emerged from general questions about children's fears and Finkelhor et al. (1995a, b) discovered that children who reported receiving a prevention program were more likely to disclose victimization attempts. Oldfield et al. (1996) found two disclosures of physical abuse and two of sexual abuse and MacIntyre and Carr (1999a, b) reported that *Stay Safe* participants (particularly girls) made more disclosures of sexual abuse than non-participants.

In one study, disclosures depended on who presented the program, i.e., a teacher or outside consultant (Hazzard et al. 1990). This fitted with a survey of a thousand young people aged ten to 19 years (Eighteen and Under 1997) where only three percent would disclose to a teacher. Most reported they would disclose to a peer or to a confidential independent service. A few researchers recorded disclosure rates at 1 year follow-up. Beland (1986) reported unspecified higher disclosure rates, Briggs and Hawkins (1994a, b) found 4.3% and Hazzard et al. (1991) reported five percent of abuse reported at 1 year follow-up

Giving Meaning to Disclosures

An increase in disclosures could mean either that the program had been effective in encouraging children to tell or that the abuse rates had actually risen. Alternatively, a reduced disclosure rate could mean abuse had gone down or that the program had failed to create a climate that enabled children to tell. Pelcovitz et al. (1992) raised the issue of insufficient knowledge about the context of disclosures and suggested more detailed recording. Systematic reporting would have included the percentage of children in intervention and control groups and what, when, how, and to whom they disclosed. In addition it was important that appropriate child protection services were aware of the beginning of such programs in order to ensure a planned response (Pohl and Hazzard 1990).

In contrast to studies which explored disclosure rates, Pelcovitz et al. (1992) examined why 22 six to ten year olds did not disclose sexual abuse by a school auxiliary despite having experienced a prevention program. One child reported that the program did not help him because the abuser was not in the movie shown. Another child reported that she was surprised that adults thought that the advice given in the film 'to tell somebody about the abuse' bore any relevance to their situation in which they felt overpowered by an adult in authority making threats. As one child said "I was just too afraid to make decisions." Such qualitative information highlighted the issues of power, the impact of emotions on decision-making, the difficulty of generalization and learning abstract concepts and group victimization. This raised questions about the extent to which these issues were addressed in prevention programs.

Summary

In conclusion the numbers of disclosures within studies were small and tended to be reported in an inconsistent manner. Some did not report on disclosures at all. Most disclosures appeared to occur within lessons. There was little attempt to explain the context facilitating or inhibiting disclosures. As a result, the current study sought to i) develop a systematic approach to the recording/reporting of disclosures ii) explore the nature of interactions leading to disclosure and iii) measure the generalization of disclosure beyond the classroom.

**Methods**

Participants

*Survivor Group*

Students were all victims of CSA and had been identified for support by a survivor of abuse organization (18U). Students were from urban locations across a Scottish city (150,000) with ten students in each condition. There were four males and six females in the intervention group and an all-female comparison group. Altering the gender balance would have been unethical as students had been identified for support.

The age of the intervention group ranged from 6–13 years with an average age of 10.02 (SD=2.25). The comparison group ranged from 8–12 years with an average age of 10.03 (SD=1.25). The two groups matched for working class and unemployed family backgrounds. All participants were Caucasian and local to the city. There was a zero attrition rate and no survivors had previously received a prevention program.

*Grade Six Group*

All 147 pupils were educated within the Scottish primary school system. Because of local authority restrictions convenience sampling was used to identify schools and classes. A class of twenty students received the lessons from their class teacher (CT), a volunteer and 68 students (21, 23, 24 per class) received lessons delivered by two 18U presenters. The latter sample was from the next two schools due to receive the program lessons. The comparison group consisted of 59 students (21, 20, 18 per class) from the subsequent two schools to receive the lessons. The 18U classes age-range was 11.04 to 13.01, average age of 11.11 (SD=0.49). The CT class age-range was 11.04 to 12.03, average age-range of 11.11 (SD=0.42). The comparison group age-range was 11.07 to 12.06, average age of 11.11 (SD=0.48).

The gender balance was 8 male and 12 female (CT); 47 male and 21 female (18U); and 32 male and 27 female (comparison group). Socio-economic status included working class ($n=78$), middle class ($n=11$) and unemployed ($n=45$). Nearly all students were Caucasian. In the 18U group there was one African and one Asian student. In the CT group there was one Asian student and in the comparison group there was one African and one Asian student. All five schools were secular state schools. Twelve students (five from the intervention condition and seven from the comparison group) were omitted during the study because of medical absences. No students had previously received abuse prevention lessons.

*Grade Seven/Eight Group*

All students were educated in the Scottish high school education system. The intervention school was a large urban Roman Catholic school. The comparison school was a large urban secular school. Both schools had volunteered to participate in the study. In the intervention condition there were 60 pupils in grade seven (23, 18, 19 per class) with an age-range from 12 to 13.07, average age of 12.05 (SD=0.48). In the comparison group there were 58 students in grade seven with an age-range of 12 to 13.03, average age of 12.04 (SD=0.46). In the intervention group in grade eight there were 57 students (16, 23, 18 per class) with an age-range of 13.01 to 14.10, average age 13.07 (SD=0.44). In the comparison group there were 58 students with an age-range of 13.01 to 14.10, average age of 13.07 (SD=0.44)

In total there were 131 males and 101 female students. In grade seven there were 34 males and 26 females in the intervention condition and 36 males and 22 females in the comparison group. In grade eight there were 29 males and 28 females in the intervention condition and 32 males and 25 females in the comparison group. Socio-economic status was predominantly working class ($n=170$) with only 50 middle class and 12 from unemployed families. Nearly all

students were Caucasian. Thirty students were omitted during the course of the study because of school non-attendance, sixteen from the intervention condition and fourteen from the comparison group. The selection of classes was random within classes taught by the three of eight teachers who volunteered to participate in the evaluation. Two of the three had delivered abuse prevention materials before. The two 18U presenters included the author of the materials and an experienced presenter. All were female.

Intervention Program

The Tweenees program (Mathew and Laurie 2002) used as an intervention in this study, aims to enable students to develop self-protective knowledge, share their thoughts and feelings about abuse and disclose their stories of harm. The program was developed from survivor experience of delivering abuse prevention lessons in schools with no explicit theoretical basis. The main types of activities are movement and discussion in response to provocative statements, e.g. "it is ok to hit a woman." When a provocative statement is made by the presenter students have to respond by moving to one side of the class or another or to the middle to signify agreement, disagreement or uncertainty. Students are then invited to give their reasons for why they held their view. Opinions from the three positions are summarised by the presenter and students are given the opportunity to change their view. The first three lessons follow the above pattern. The fourth lesson uses the board game 'Truth Dare Scare' where students have to roll a dice and answer personal safety questions which involves either telling the truth, sharing what situations scare them or whether they were willing to take a dare. Lessons were 45 minutes each. Appendix one summarizes the four lessons.

All presenters received a one hour training session delivered by the author of the program. Content of the training included child-centered values, the aims and objectives, and content of the program, the methods and facilitative style of program delivery, the non-directive nature of communication, the timing and organization of lessons, issues of confidentiality, and appropriate responses to disclosure. Further training and consultation was offered but was not taken up by teachers. The 18U trainers were highly experienced in delivering the program.

*Measure—Recording of Disclosures*

Disclosures were recorded during delivery of the lessons and to a survivor helpline (i) three weeks prior to the beginning of the lessons (ii) during the lessons and (iii) two weeks after the lessons were completed. Disclosure rates
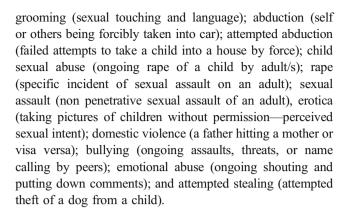
were compared with disclosures covering the same time period in the previous year (no abuse prevention lessons). Guidelines were provided for presenters on how to use the disclosure forms during the lessons (see Appendix: Content of the disclosure form). Purposeful disclosures were defined as the student being seen to be making an explicit choice to tell compared to an accidental disclosure where the student was overheard saying to a peer or disclosed to a worker privately and then retracted. Where disclosures occurred either during or after the lessons, child protection procedures were followed. Data was collated and tabulated in order to glean a clearer picture of the patterns of disclosures. The factors analysed were: gender and ethnicity of the victim, who disclosed the abuse, who was the abuse disclosed to, how was the abuse disclosed, whether there was subsequent confirmation of the abuse or not, the type of abuse, the number of disclosures, who the alleged abuser was, as well as the number of abusers. These were broken down by the three groups of survivor, grade six students and grades seven/eight students.

Measure—Disclosure Sequential Analysis

As an exploratory study one lesson in grade seven was video recorded and analyzed in order to gain an insight into the communicative interactions around disclosures. It was anticipated that there may be a pattern to the inception and reception of disclosures and that this pattern of interactions may possibly be described through the sequence of communicative turns around the disclosure itself. It was anticipated that the disclosure made by a student would be connected to the provocative statement being discussed. A Disclosure Sequential Analysis (DSA) sheet was developed as a result of step by step interaction analysis of the communicative behaviors immediately before, during, and after disclosures. The DSA recorded: the time within the lesson; the provocative statement being discussed (e.g., children often tell lies); the prior turn to the disclosure taken by either the disclosing student or another student (e.g., "it's more sensible to tell but scared to do it, you'll get battered"); the disclosure (e.g., "he said a friend threatened him") and the adult response to/ reception of the disclosure (e.g., nodding and saying "right").

Coding of Disclosures

The researcher, as an experienced psychologist (20 years) with a specialism in child protection and in particular working with survivors of child sexual abuse, coded all the disclosures. Students' disclosure statements were compared and matched with abuse definitions used within government guidelines (Scottish Executive 1998). There were 13 different types of abuse identified, that is—physical abuse (ongoing physical assault); physical assault (sngle event physical attack);

grooming (sexual touching and language); abduction (self or others being forcibly taken into car); attempted abduction (failed attempts to take a child into a house by force); child sexual abuse (ongoing rape of a child by adult/s); rape (specific incident of sexual assault on an adult); sexual assault (non penetrative sexual assault of an adult), erotica (taking pictures of children without permission—perceived sexual intent); domestic violence (a father hitting a mother or visa versa); bullying (ongoing assaults, threats, or name calling by peers); emotional abuse (ongoing shouting and putting down comments); and attempted stealing (attempted theft of a dog from a child).

Helpline Analysis of Disclosures

Eighteen and Under (18U) were approached through an email request by the researcher for data regarding the use of their Helpline throughout the duration of the evaluation. An email was received in return explaining that only limited data was available because of the minimal nature of recording of the telephone calls, i.e., adult or child (school grade), gender, georaphical location, purpose of call and the nature of abuse disclosed. Confidentiality was the reason given for the minimalist nature of recording.

## Results

Survivor Group

Table 1 gives an overview of the disclosures for each each group by the number, percentage, and type of abuse by student group and presenter. No disclosures were reported in the survivor waiting-list group during the period of the evaluation. Of the 12 disclosures, there were nine by females and three by males. Two of these were made directly to an 18U presenter with ten disclosures made in front of the group. All disclosures were purposeful. Three had been previously disclosed, with the other six being confirmed on investigation by 18U workers contacting families. There were two disclosures of sexual abuse where the abusers were an 11 year old boy's sister and a male relative; two disclosures by two girls (aged 11 years) during the second lesson of physical assault where the abusers were parents and eight reports of bullying all by peers apart from one (brother). In terms of gender, girls disclosed six instances of bullying, two of physical abuse and one of child sexual abuse. In contrast, boys disclosed two instances of bullying and one of CSA.

Grade six—18U Presented Lessons

No disclosures were reported in the grade six waiting-list group during the evaluation. There were 65 disclosures, 44

**Table 1** Number, percentage and type of abuse by student group and presenter

| Presenter/Group | Number/Percentage of disclosures | No/Percentage By Type of abuse |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Survivor (18U) | 12 (14.1%) | 8 (9.4%) Bullying |
| | | 2 (2.4%) Physical assault |
| | | 2 (2.4%) CSA |
| Survivor Comparison | 0 | – |
| Grade 6 (CT) | 3 (3.5%) | 2 (2.4%) Domestic violence |
| | | 1 (1.2%) Attempted abduction |
| Grade 6 (18U) | 65 (76.5% ) | 17 (20%) Physical abuse |
| | | 14 (16.5%) Bullying |
| | | 9 (10.6%) Domestic violence |
| | | 9 (10.6%) Physical assault |
| | | 5 (5.9%) Attempted abduction |
| | | 2 (2.4%) CSA |
| | | 2 (2.4%) Grooming |
| | | 1 (1.2%) Erotica |
| | | 1 (1.2%) Rape |
| | | 1 (1.2%) Sexual assault |
| | | 1 (1.2%) Emotional abuse |
| | | 1 (1.2%) Abduction |
| | | 1 (1.2%) Attempted stealing |
| | | 1 (1.2%) Domestic violence/Physical assault |
| Grade 6 Comparison | 0 | – |
| Grade 7/8 (18U) 1st lesson | 5 (5.9%) | 1 (1.2%) Physical abuse |
| | | 1 (1.2%) Physical assault |
| | | 1 (1.2%) Domestic violence |
| | | 1 (1.2%) Bullying |
| | | 1 (1.2%) Abduction |
| Grade 7/8 GT | 0 | – |
| Grade 7/8 Comparison | 0 | – |
| Total | 85 (100%) | 85 (100%) |

were made by males and 21 made by females in the intervention group. Fifty seven discloses were of students experiencing abuse themselves compared to eight disclosures made by students telling of another student being harmed. All 65 disclosures were made in front of the class and were recorded as purposeful. None were reported by the schools to have been previously known, one was part of an on-going investigation and five were confirmed following investigation.

There were 13 different types of abuse with bullying, physical assault, physical abuse, and domestic violence being the most frequently reported. Bullying was almost exclusively by peers, and physical assault by a range of people (police officers, peers, parents, and a neighbor). Attempted abduction was reported five times with one instance of abduction. Perpetrators were both male (mostly) and female. Physical abuse was carried out by family members, particularly with a high proportion of mothers being named. Child sexual abuse was disclosed twice and the perpetrators were female family members. The sexual assault was perpetrated by a family member (gender unknown). Two pupils reported grooming, one attempted theft of their dog while out walking and one child reported to be involved in erotica by a neighbour who was reported to be a sex offender.

In terms of gender females disclosed domestic violence, physical abuse, bullying, physical assault, abduction, and physical assault. Boys disclosed domestic violence, physical abuse, bullying, physical assault, CSA, grooming, attempted abductions, emotional abuse, rape and sexual assault. In the previous year in the same time period where no program was delivered, there were zero disclosures passed to the CPO.

Grade six—Teacher Presented Lessons

One disclsoure involved a male who disclosed his own abuse (attempted abduction by a man) and that of a male peer. The other two were by females who disclosed

domestic violence by their fathers (and physical abuse towards one of the girls). In the latter case, the father was under a restraining order. One disclosure (child sexual abuse) had been passed to the CPO during the same time period in the previous year.

Grades 7/8

There were five disclosures in the first lesson to the one grade seven class where the lessons were delivered by the 18U presenter. One reported their own abuse; the rest reported abuse of others. Four of the disclosures were to the class with one disclosure made privately to the 18U worker. All disclosures were purposeful and two of the disclosures had been disclosed previously and were confirmed following formal investigation. All the disclosures were of a different type of abuse with one abuser in each instance. Abusers included a peer who was bullying, two parents (domestic violence and physical/emotional abuse) and two strangers (physical assault and abduction). In terms of gender the three girls disclosed bullying, domestic violence, and physical assault and the two boys disclosed abduction and physical and emotional abuse.
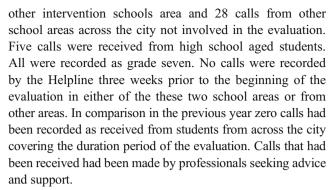
No disclosure forms were completed by the teacher for the subsequent three lessons for this class or for the other grade 7/8 classes over the four lessons.

Disclosure Sequential Analysis

All disclosures occurred between the 20th and 40th minute of the lesson. Two disclosures occurred within a minute of each other. Three disclosures occurred during one particular statement about the Police. Disclosure content was partly connected to the question content, i.e., bullying, domestic violence, police violence, and abduction. Prior turn statements by students were mostly of a 'general opinion' in nature. This was then followed by a specific disclosure. The 18U presenter then responded to students disclosures with a minimal communicative reception of the disclosure, i.e., nodding, saying right, ok, asking a question to confirm action, and repeating words. The teacher responded to one disclosure by nodding and saying "right" and to another disclosure (a student's personal experience of domestic violence) suggesting that this may not be the right place or time to tell.

Disclosures to the 18U Helpline

Two weeks after the delivery of the Tweenees lessons the total number of calls received from students throughout the duration of the evaluation were as follows: Seventy-seven calls were recorded as received in total. Nineteen calls were made from one intervention schools area, 25 calls in the

other intervention schools area and 28 calls from other school areas across the city not involved in the evaluation. Five calls were received from high school aged students. All were recorded as grade seven. No calls were recorded by the Helpline three weeks prior to the beginning of the evaluation in either of the these two school areas or from other areas. In comparison in the previous year zero calls had been recorded as received from students from across the city covering the duration period of the evaluation. Calls that had been received had been made by professionals seeking advice and support.

Data was available for the content analysis of 72 calls. Thirty-six calls had occurred to check the number out, e.g., whether the line provided confidentiality (no gender was noted); sixteen calls reported instances of bullying (14 from females and two from males); seven calls included domestic violence (all by females); five calls were of physical abuse from parents (three from males and two from females); four females reported that a female friend had been raped; two calls from females reported sexual assault; one female reported her own rape and one male spoke of his fear of a stranger "who hurts children." There was no way of verifying the calls.

Discussion

Disclosures—Within Lessons

Within lessons substantial numbers of disclosures were made; some known previously, most for the first time about their own abuse. Similar to MacIntyre and Carr (1999b) nearly all disclosures were purposeful. All disclosures occurred to the presenter at the front of the class as most students chose to tell publicly. Hypotheses may be that students were modeling disclosure for each other then seeing fellow students being listened to and believed; students were only sharing a small part of their stories of harm and/or children want to tell their stories of harm but adults rarely ask. There may also be an issue with teachers having insufficient knowledge and skill to respond appropriately and thus inhibiting disclosure (Barron and Topping 2009). Only a small proportion of the disclosures (16%) were confirmed with no evidence of false allegations (Oldfield et al. 1996).

Disclosures Within Lessons—Nature and Extent of Abuse

There was a wide diversity of abuse disclosed; however, the frequency of disclosure by individual students was not recorded. In the survivor and grade six groups there were high levels of bullying reported. In grade six the number of attempted abductions reported was surprisingly high. When

the figures for disclosures of physical assault and physical abuse against children are taken together along with domestic violence (Margolin and Gordis 2004) the picture is one of physical violence being a common experience for many children.

Neglect and emotional abuse were rarely disclosed in the lessons in contrast to prevalence figures. Possible reasons for this may be in part due to neglect being the absence of something and even adults struggle to recognize the signs of emotional abuse (May-Chahal and Cawson 2005).

Across the three intervention groups there were nine (4.19%) disclosures of child sexual abuse which occurred within the lessons. Percentages ranged from 20% in the survivors' group, 7.95% in grade six and zero in grades 7/8. Student disclosures indicated a wide range of inappropriate sexual experiences, i.e., grooming, rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, child sexual abuse, and erotica. In comparison disclosure levels for sexual abuse in previous efficacy studies ranged from 0.3% (Dhooper and Schneider 1995) to 6.5% Pohl and Hazzard 1990), with an average of 2.75% from six studies (Pohl and Hazzard 1990; Hazzard et al. 1991; Madak and Berg 1992; Briggs and Hawkins 1994a, b; Dhooper and Schneider 1995; Oldfield et al. 1996). Some of the reasons for these differences may include differing child protection procedures, definitions, levels of training, and awareness of participants and design methodology.

Within lesson disclosure rates of child sexual abuse across the three intervention groups were higher than typically reported incidence rates (Roberts et al. 1991) but lower than prevalence rates (Baker and Duncan 1985). When the disclosure rate of child sexual abuse was collated for both within and beyond the lessons the disclosure rate was 14.29% more akin to prevalence rates. Although the Tweenees study was a 'count' of occurrence rather than each disclosure referring to a separate incident, it would seem that the Tweenees program may be one way to begin to address the discrepancy between prevalence and incidence statistics.

Taking into account all the disclosures made, there is a need to consider why the figures for disclosure of child sexual abuse within the lessons were not higher. The reasons may be those already identified within the research e.g., children fearing the break up of family, threats of violence and believing it's their fault (Alaggia 2005). Other factors include the lack of privacy to disclose to a trusted peer (Mont'Ros-Mendoza and Hecht 1989) and the nature of the lessons (e.g., insufficient focus on CSA).

## Age, Gender and Presenter

Given that the bulk of the disclosures were made within 18U presented lessons disclosures may be more to do with presenter than age of pupil. For example, in the primary group 18U presenters received on average seven times as many disclosures per lesson compared to the primary teacher. Sample sizes were however uneven. This hypothesis fits with Hazzard et al. (1990) conclusion that disclosure rates differed depending whether a teacher or an outside consultant presented the lessons. Barron and Topping (2009) reported that because survivor organization presenters held wider definitions of abuse they were more likely to notice disclosures and report them on. Regardless of who presented across the three groups there was a mix of boys and girls disclosing. In contrast prevalence figures suggest that girls are more likely to disclose (May-Chahal and Cawson 2005).

## Disclosures—Types of Abusers

Specifically child sexual abusers included 50% family members, 40% strangers, and 10% neighbors, similar to Finkelhor (1984) where, 10 to 30% were strangers with the rest being family or known to the child. Female perpetration accounted for 33.3%, a high figure compared to 10% in a recent Canadian study (Peter 2009). There were no peers as abusers compared to 19% identified in a British study (Roberts et al. 1991), perhaps not surprisingly given lessons were in a classroom.

## Disclosures—Sequential Data Analysis

From the analysis of turn taking it can be seen that the provocative statements as opposed to student prior statements provided the catalyst for disclosures. Disclosures tended to be short statements of one sentence or more suggesting students may be making astute judgments about what to share within a class context? When the presenter's responses to disclosures were analyzed responses involved minimal reception of the disclosure, i.e., affirming a student's disclosure through non-verbal communication, e.g., nodding, or/and by verbal language, e.g., "right," "ok," and/or by asking a question, e.g., "Not done anything about it at all?" It may be that in terms of responding behaviour, all that is needed to encourage students to further disclose is for the presenter to minimally affirm students' responses.

## Disclosures—Beyond the Lessons

Although the Helpline data was scant in detail, there was sufficient information to note that more females than males used the Helpline, that many children contacted the Helpline to 'check it out' (which may have indicated that there was a story to tell?), and that a range of abuses were received by the Helpline (bullying, domestic violence, physical abuse at home, fear of an abuser, and sexual abuse). One incident involved five calls, i.e., the report of the rape. It was unknown if other calls were connected to

each other or not. Calls to the survivors' organization Helpline suggests, particularly in the absence of calls from the control group area during the study and in the absence of any calls in the previous year across the city, that the impact of the Tweenees lessons may have led to the generalization of telling behavior beyond the delivery of the lessons to the survivors helpline. Within the context of the sequential disclosure analysis where students made minimal disclsoures within the class setting, it may be that students make contact with the helpline afterwards to disclose more of their story of harm. Alternatively, it may be those students who did not share their story of harm in class who phone the helpline or those students who need to disclose child sexual abuse within a private and confidential context? The assessment of generalization and contamination effects in future studies will be important in order to explore these issues. Finally, there was no way of verifying the calls or for checking any bias in the recoding of calls.

## Conclusions

The Tweenees lessons appear to be effective in enabling children to disclose a wide variety of abuses however child sexual abuse was more likely to be disclosed in private to a survivor helpline following the lessons. Students' disclosures in class appear to be minimal in nature. From video analysis effective reception of disclosures in class would appear to be characterized by minimal affirming reception of the disclosure.

## Recommendations for research

Future studies need to address:

1. The significance of presenter factors on outcomes
2. The analysis of interactions around what leads to disclosure
3. The response and actions of adults to disclosure in keeping children safe.
4. What enables effective generalization of disclosing behavior.
5. Understanding the impact on students of hearing other students' stories of harm.
6. Impact of the abuse prevention lessons on school and community culture and practices.

## Implications for practitioners

1. The Tweenees lessons are one way for schools to enable students to disclose.

2. Lessons should be delivered by skilled teachers and survivor presenters.
3. Students should be given a helpline number to disclose in private.
4. Teachers and other adults in the school community need training in receiving and responding to disclosures as well as passing on referrals to child protection services.
5. Teachers need to respond in an affirming minimal manner to students' disclosures
6. Teachers need to be accessible for students to disclose following prevention lessons

## Appendix 1: Content of the disclosure form

Date of the disclosure
An anonymous identifier for who disclosed along with the school, stage and class
The child's socio-economic status and ethnicity
Whether abuse had been disclosed previously
Whether the child had additional support needs
Whether the child disclosed their own or another's abuse
Who was disclosed to (teacher, parent, relative, peer, etc.) and the gender, socio-economic status and ethnicity of that individual
When the disclosure occurred (before, during or after the programme)
The type of abuse disclosed, e.g., sexual, physical etc.
Whether the abuse was confirmed or not through investigation
Who the alleged perpetrator was? e.g., father, mother, peer, etc.
And the type of disclosure, i.e., purposeful or accidental

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