

Recommendations for reducing sexual violence among teenagers

A specialist report



Authors:

Margit Averdijk, Chantal Billaud, Franziska Greber,
Isabel Miko Iso, Cornelia Kranich,
Andrea Wechlin, Martha Weingartner

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Authors

Margit Averdijk (ETH Zürich, Co-Autorin der Optimus Studie Schweiz); Chantal Billaud (Schweizerische Kriminalprävention); Franziska Greber (IST Interventionsstelle gegen Häusliche Gewalt des Kantons Zürich); Isabel Miko Iso (Interventionsstelle gegen häusliche Gewalt des Kantons Basel-Stadt); Cornelia Kranich (IST Interventionsstelle gegen Häusliche Gewalt des Kantons Zürich); Andrea Wechlin (LIP – Koordination Gewaltprävention des Kantons Luzern); Martha Weingartner (Fachstelle für Gleichstellung der Stadt Zürich)

Editors

advocacy ag
Dominik Büchel, Christina Klausener

Project and production management

Patricia Lannen

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Robert Blasiak

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Foreword

The results of the Optimus Study Switzerland were published in March 2012. The large-scale study included a survey of ninth-grade students as well as an institutional survey conducted within Switzerland. More than 6700 school students from the Swiss ninth grade provided information about their experiences of sexual assault, possible consequences they suffered, the context of the incident, the perpetrator and the circumstances of their personal lives. In addition, 324 institutions from the field of child protection gave information about cases reported to them. The result was likely the most comprehensive picture so far of the extent and forms of sexual assault against minors in Switzerland.

The Optimus Study Switzerland was able to empirically substantiate what had previously only been a vague conjecture among many experts: sexual violence among teenagers is widespread in Switzerland and goes well beyond bullying in terms of the types of events as well as the number of incidents. Almost 22 percent of girls and 8 percent of boys admitted to having experienced sexual assault with physical contact at least once in their lives. According to the Optimus Study, however, victimization without physical contact is even more prevent – that is, incidents such as indecent exposure, verbal and written sexual harassment, the display of pornographic materials, or suggestive remarks and actions. Such incidents occur with particular frequency via electronic media and girls are more affected than boys. Almost every third girl had at some point experienced suggestive com-

ments, received pornographic photos or films, been urged to carry out sexual acts in front of a webcam or been victimized in a similar fashion.

One notable result of the Optimus Study, however, that was even surprising for experts: *the perpetrators are often from the same age group*. Among adolescent victims the perpetrators were, in most cases, not adult family members as is often assumed, but peers – often partners in a relationship or dates. Based on statements by the affected victims, almost half of the assaults with physical contact (42 percent) were carried out by



Sexual abuse among teenagers in Switzerland must be dealt with more intensively and in a more differentiated manner.

current or past romantic or dating partners¹. In 39 percent of incidents, the perpetrators were classmates of the victims.

These findings clearly show that (sexual) violence among teenagers in Switzerland must be addressed in a stronger and more differentiated manner. Prevention and intervention efforts must make use of the results of scientific studies and focus their activities on the corresponding target groups that these identify. Furthermore, additional qualitative and quantitative studies are needed on this issue.

With the recommendations contained here on “Sexual violence among teenagers”, we hope to provide expert input regarding the prevention of sexual violence among teenagers and initiate discussions on the issue of sexualized violence within adolescent relationships. The recommendations are primarily directed at practical training centers and organizations, but also at politicians, researchers, teachers and parents. We are aware that the issue of sexual violence among teenagers is part of a very complex field of practice. Within Switzerland, there are many different players dealing with specific elements of this issue. Their areas of competence also vary. We avoid giving concrete recommended actions – instead, we hope that with our recommendations we can show which initiatives can be considered sensible in light of the findings of the Optimus Study, as well as

areas in which we consider that there is still a need for action. Our recommendations encompass universal as well as specific prevention measures, and are categorized going from the general to the specific.

Our recommendations provide a first impulse, and we are aware that the problem of sexual violence among adolescents can only be addressed with effective prevention and intervention efforts at all state levels (federal, cantonal, communal). We therefore hope that these recommendations will lead to additional initiatives, practice-oriented projects, studies and publications aimed at helping to improve the protection of the sexual integrity of teenagers.

Margit Averdijk, Chantal Billaud, Franziska Greber, Isabel Miko Iso, Cornelia Kranich, Andrea Wechlin and Martha Weingartner

November 2013

¹ It was not investigated whether these were heterosexual or homosexual partnerships or dates.

Results of the Optimus Study Switzerland

The teenage years from ages 13 to 19 constitute an important step for adolescents on their path from childhood to adulthood. This period also includes their first romantic relationships and sexual experiences. This transitional period, however, is also accompanied by risks as shown by the Optimus Study.

The study survey conducted within the context of the Optimus Study Switzerland shows that sexual assaults by adolescents of the same age play an important role. The students questioned were asked to give information about their relationships to the abusers. An evaluation of their responses suggests that a considerable proportion of sexual assaults take place between adolescents, who know one another through school or leisure activities. A considerable proportion of these involve victimization carried out by a current or former romantic partner. Since sexual assault within adolescent relationships is clearly widespread, the Optimus Study also paid particular attention to the corresponding risk factors. Do victims of such assaults share common characteristics? Do they differ from other victims who have been abused not by their partners, but by somebody else?

Findings from the risk factor analysis

A separate risk factor analysis for adolescents who admitted to having been sexually abused by a romantic or dating partner at some point aimed to shed light on this issue. Assaults with and without physical contact were considered as one category for the purposes of this analysis. Corresponding with the other results on general risk factors, the risk of being abused by a romantic or dating partner is almost three-and-a-half times as high for girls as it is for boys.

Patterns of behavior during leisure time also influence this risk: given that adolescents form relationships predominantly with peo-

Sexual assaults in relationships among teenagers are quite common.



The most important data in brief

- > Adolescents often experience sexual violence in the context of their first relationships with people of a similar age. Forty-two percent of adolescent victims indicated that the perpetrator was their partner or date at the time. Only nine percent named a family member as the perpetrator.
- > Adolescents who move in violence-oriented circles, go out a lot in their leisure time and consume drugs or alcohol are more likely to be abused by a romantic or dating partner.
- > Girls experience sexual victimization by partners around three times as often as boys.
- > Adolescents with a physical disability are particularly at risk of being abused by a partner or a date.
- > Adolescents with parents who adopt a harsh style of parenting are more likely to find themselves in a sexually violent relationship.
- > Adolescents often suffer sexual abuse from acquaintances of the same age. The majority of adolescent victims indicated that the perpetrator was between 14 and 18 years of age.
- > An overwhelming proportion of perpetrators are male. However, male victims indicated more frequently that they had been abused by a girl or woman.
- > Sexual violence emerges from a general context of violence and neglect. Young sexual offenders often perpetrate other forms of violence and experience violence themselves at home.



Leisure
behavioral patterns
also influence
this risk.

ple from a similar circle of friends and with a similar lifestyle, risky activities like going out a lot, violent criminal behavior or drug and alcohol consumption increased the risk of a person being abused by their own partner.

The risk is particularly high for those who spend time in an environment where there is a high propensity for sexual violence. This was measured using the corresponding level in the same school class: All students in a class were asked if they had at some point perpetrated sexual violence themselves. The more people answering yes to this question, the higher the level of propensity for violence in a class, which was calculated by the number of potential perpetrators within the class. The risk of being abused by one's own partner is several times higher in a class like this than in an environment less oriented to violence. This is obvious in that adolescents often enter into relationships with their classmates.

Physical limitation and harsher style of parenting within the family as risk factors

A good five percent of adolescent respondents admitted to having a physical disability. What is shocking is that this in particular increases the risk of being abused by one's partner. When one examines the risk of being sexually abused regardless of the victim-perpetrator relationship, the victim's physical

condition does not play a role. However, when it comes to sexual violence with physical contact in intimate relationships, the picture is suddenly very different: adolescents with a physical limitation are almost twice as likely to be abused by their partners as adolescents without limitations². The study cannot give a verdict on why there is such an increased risk. Possibly adolescents with a physical disability are exposed to the risk of being ridiculed sexually or being humiliated.

The evaluations also show that the atmosphere in the parental home plays an important role when it comes to abuse by a partner too. A harsher style of parenting can point to the idea that a person generally gets little support at home³. This may make adolescents more accessible to sexually violent partners: according to the data from the student survey, the risk of being abused by a romantic partner is nearly twice as high for adolescents from unhappy family backgrounds as that of others.

²This finding holds true for both girls and boys aged 15 to 17.

³The term "harsher style of parenting" refers to a strict, unloving and authoritarian upbringing.

Abuse or victimization: Terminology

Within the discussion of sexual victimization of children and adolescents, terms such as sexual abuse, sexual violence, sexual assault are often used more or less interchangeably. This often leads to confusion and a lack of clarity. The research team that prepared the final report of the Optimus Study Switzerland (Margit Averdijk, Katrin Mueller-Johnson, Manuel Eisner) has proposed differentiated definitions, and in particular, a distinction between sexual abuse and sexual victimization.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse can be seen as a sub-area of child abuse. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines child abuse as “all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.” It is the power and dependency between the victim and perpetrator that is crucial here, as is the abuse of trust. The WHO also defines sexual abuse as follows: “Child sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violate the laws or social taboos of society.”

Sexual victimization

The Optimus Study has shown that peer groups are of great significance for sexual

victimization. Adolescents are victimized, in particular, by people of the same age. Dependency relationships can also be of importance in such constellations (for example, emotional dependency). This is the case, for example, with cyber-bullying between peers, sexual assaults within the context of a sexual relationship or sexual harassment on the playground. Hence the authors of the Optimus Study have used the term “sexual victimization” as a general umbrella term for all forms of acts against children or adolescents where their sexual and personal integrity is threatened and violated.

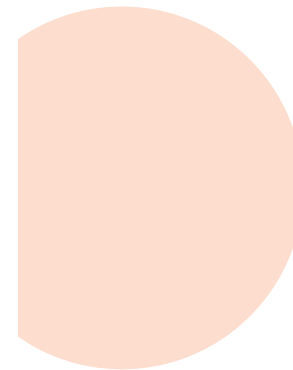
Definition of sexual violence among teenagers

Building on the Optimus Study Switzerland and the expertise of the authors in relation to the recommendations provided in the Optimus Study, a definition of sexual violence among teenagers is provided on the right.

“Teenagers” are classified in accordance with general usage as girls and boys between the ages of 13 and 19⁴. When considering the following recommendations, it must be taken into consideration that the Optimus Study surveyed adolescents aged between 15 and 17. The findings that these recommendations are based upon are therefore connected with adolescents between 15 and 17 years of age.



Sexual violence among teenagers encompasses all forms of sexual assault that takes place between adolescents of approximately the same age, and which threatens or harms the sexual or personal integrity of a teenager. This can take place both in current and past relationships (romantic relationships, friendships, dating partners, acquaintances), as well as in contact with strangers or other parties. The definition includes, in particular, forms of violence among partners, sexual violence via electronic media and/or sexual abuse within different contexts (e.g. at home, going out, during leisure time, or playing sports).



⁴ Within the following recommendations, the terms “teenager” and “adolescent” are applied synonymously for stylistic reasons.

Recommendations



A

Universal prevention:**A complex problem requiring differentiated solutions****Findings**

Sexual violence among teenagers must be viewed within the context of adolescent violence, domestic violence, and violence in general. It is one part of a complex subject that is subject to societal change: behaviors have changed, new forms of media have had a particular impact on youth culture, and there are new (e.g. electronic) avenues to sexuality, which are also being used by teenagers.

It is a complex problem with a great variety of different factors, including a diversity of constellations and contexts. Every individual can be a victim of sexual violence and the boundaries between perpetrators and victims are often, but not always, clearly defined. At the same time, perpetrators can be victims, and vice versa (at the same period in time, or during earlier or later stages of life).

It was possible to show with the Optimus Study that there are risk factors for victimi-

zation within the context of sexual violence among adolescents. These include the gender of the adolescent, their parental home, and their lifestyle. According to the findings of the Optimus Study, girls are between two and three times more likely to experience sexual assault than boys. Adolescents who go out a lot, are surrounded by a violence-oriented environment, consume drugs or alcohol and often surf the internet are considerably more likely to be victimized than others.

Finally, the study showed that adolescents of non-Swiss nationality had a higher risk of victimization than those of Swiss nationality. According to the findings of the Optimus Study, however, adolescents of other nationalities were not only more frequently the victims of sexual victimization, but also more often involved in such incidents as perpetrators.

Caution is generally required when interpreting these results: The data from the survey of school students does not allow one to say with certainty whether specific free-time and consumption behaviors existed before the person became a victim of sexual abuse for the first time, or whether it was a consequence thereof. Therefore no clear causal relationship can be determined. However, the school survey does clearly confirm that sexual victimization should not be viewed as an isolated issue. Anyone who experiences sexual violence is often the victim of other forms of violence too. The comparison between adolescents who have already experienced sexual abuse at some point and those who have not (yet) had such experiences shows clear differences with regard to other forms of violence. Victims of sexual abuse are twice as likely to have suffered physical and verbal bullying or bodily harm from their peers at some point. The data also show that sexual violence with-

in the family is closely linked to both neglect and physical and verbal abuse by parents or guardians. Victims of sexual abuse within the family are five times more likely to also be victims of neglect. A similar figure applies to adolescents who suffer sexual violence within a relationship. They also experience nonsexual violence from their partners. Perpetrators of sexual assaults therefore often cover a broad spectrum of different forms of violent behavior.

A

Recommendations A

A1 Sensitization and initiation of policy debate

It is only when the issue of sexual violence among teenagers is on the *agenda of politicians, practitioners and donors* that adolescents as well as children can be adequately protected in the future. Efforts to promote sensitization regarding the extent and consequences of the problem must be undertaken, particularly within the context of schools, youth organizations, parent counseling and health care organizations.

A2 Striving for a coordinated and concerted national approach

A holistic approach is needed; the issue of sexual violence among teenagers must be addressed by a variety of players and with attention to the different forms of violence. Unified efforts by the scientific, practitioner and political communities are needed – for example in (existing) *interdisciplinary working groups or through national coordination* among existing services, which must be evaluated to ensure their quality over the long-term. Synergies must be used and inter-cantonal coordination and cooperation among the various different specialized bodies must be strengthened.

A3 Proceed integratively and establish connections

Sexual victimization should be considered within the *context of other forms of violence and other thematic areas such as migration, disability, gender, schooling, or familial violence*, from which corresponding integrative prevention and intervention measures can be derived.

A4 Address sexual violence everywhere as a cross-cutting issue

Sexual violence must be *considered* as a cross-cutting issue *in prevention and intervention activities as well as other activities (e.g. couples or family therapy, individual counseling for children or adolescents, or court directives)*. This means that the issue of sexual violence among adolescents should also be incorporated into other programs and services that are not specifically aimed at addressing violence, such as health promotion programs, sexual and media upbringing, or services for migrants. Interventions must be heavily adapted to each individual case; particular attention must be paid to the context (e.g. parents' home, migration background) and the type of relationship (e.g. between siblings, or between male and female friends).

Additional Information⁵**National program on "Youth and Violence" to increase the effectiveness of violence prevention measures**

In 2011, the federal government, cantons, cities and communes began implementation, until 2015, of a joint prevention program on youth and violence. The program will create the basis for long-term and effective prevention of violence in Switzerland. The responsible players on the regional and communal level will be supported in the development and implementation of promising violence prevention strategies and activities. With this assistance, the measures should contribute to long-term reductions in violent behavior by adolescents, an increased feeling of security among the people, and the healthy and positive development of children and adolescents within their respective surroundings.

> www.jugendundgewalt.ch

Handbook from Limita on institutional prevention

Limita, the specialized office for prevention of sexual exploitation, has developed a handbook titled "Achtsam im Umgang – konsequent im Handeln. Institutionelle Prävention sexueller Ausbeutung." Using a model of organizational development as a basis, various elements of institutional prevention are presented in a practical manner and illustrated with clear examples. The handbook is supplemented with a legal section on criminal law, child protection and labor law. The office also offers educational modules on institutional prevention, evening information sessions for parents and workshops for adolescents.

> www.limita-zh.ch

⁵ The additional information listed here provides possible sources for more in-depth information and/or exemplary projects. The list should serve as an inspiration and makes no pretensions of comprehensiveness.

B

Prevention of sexual violence by peers: Focusing on at-risk groups

Findings

As the Optimus Study has shown, forms of sexual victimization change over the course of childhood and adolescence. Children up to the age of 12 are more likely to be abused within a domestic setting; it is only in adolescence (from 12 years) that victimization by individuals of the same age group (colleagues, romantic partners, acquaintances, strangers, siblings) has been shown to play an important role.

In the findings collected by the Optimus Study, individuals of the same age, often (ex-) partners, are indicated with the greatest frequency as perpetrators – this needs to be taken into account more in prevention and intervention activities. Not only the age and gender of the victim and perpetrator need to be considered, but additional attention must also be paid to their network of relationships and other relevant factors such as disabilities. Sexual violence among adolescents must be

considered and addressed for different ages, genders and contexts. The setting in which sexual assault takes place among teenagers must be taken into account in designing prevention, intervention and other measures.

Recommendations B

B1 Information and support for teenagers

Adolescents must be encouraged in their [sexual self-determination](#) and in the sense of empowerment. They must be supported in determining their (sexual) identity, their bodily experiences and their sexuality, so that they recognize, respect and learn to assert their own boundaries, and learn to recognize and respect the boundaries of others. But in addition, the legal consequences of sexual assault must be explained to them (legal boundaries).

B2 Develop tailored services

[Specific services](#) are needed for the different at-risk groups on the side of both the victims and the perpetrators. Groups that are potentially at risk of sexual violence among adolescents must be further researched with the help of qualitative instruments. This is the only way in which tailored activities can be identified, which are oriented to the needs of the victims and the perpetrators. Affected adolescents need different easy-access avenues to support, which they can make use of [anonymously and independent of their peer surroundings](#) (e.g. services within the context of new media).

B3 Activate teenagers' environment

Specific prevention and intervention measures should be planned for adolescents within their [peer surroundings](#). This should help to increase the participation of adolescents.

B4 Take age into account

Prevention measures should be planned and implemented according to [age-specific circumstances](#) (perpetrator relationships, peers, leisure activities, etc.).

B5 Gender-sensitive action

[Gender-specific differences](#) should be taken into account in prevention and intervention measures. Gender stereotypes, perceptions of masculinity and femininity as well as the right to (sexual) self-determination must be confronted.



B

Additional information

Age-specific and anonymous help available online:

- > www.147.ch: The 147 counseling and help service from Pro Juventute provides children and adolescents with 24-hour professional counseling via telephone, SMS and chat (in German, French and Italian).
- > www.ciao.ch: This website is aimed at adolescents from the French-speaking part of Switzerland, and provides information about health. Part of the website addresses issues like violence at school and sexual violence. Services include an app that leads directly to the latest Q&As and addresses for getting help.
- > www.comeva.ch: this website provides adolescents with the opportunity to ask questions and provides answers to previous anonymous questions. The website was launched by the association "Vivre sans violence," which links various institutions in French-speaking Switzerland working on violence between couples. It also provides a counseling website for adults: www.violencequefaire.ch.
- > www.frageinfach.ch: Email counseling for adolescents between the ages 13 and 20 provided by the educational counseling center of the Canton Bern. Counseling is provided to adolescents as well as parents and teachers.
- > www.lantana-bern.ch: The victim advisory service in Bern provides adolescents with free counseling and support related to sexual violence. The advisory services are also available online, by telephone and anonymously.
- > www.lilli.ch: Lilli provides young women and men with anonymous online advice and information on sexuality, sexual violence, relationship, female and male issues, questions about one's body, contraception and sexually-transmitted diseases.
- > www.tschau.ch: The e-counseling and youth information website Tschau.ch is a professionally led advisory platform for young people living in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. It is politically and denominationally neutral. Experts answer questions related to lifestyle and daily life from young people in written form within a maximum of three working days. Since 2007, sponsorship of Tschau.ch has rested with infoklick.ch, Kinder- und Jugendförderung Schweiz.

Helpful materials for gender-specific prevention

The "Netzwerk Schulische Bubenarbeit" has already published a number of handouts and position papers on gender-specific prevention of sexual violence, including the leaflet published in 2007 on prevention of sexual assault by male adolescents, who do not respect the boundaries of girls – tips for school.

> www.nwsb.ch/dokumente/statement_nwsb_sex_uebergr.pdf

The working materials of the city of Zurich's office of gender equality also provide a good basis of information on the issue of gender-specific sexual violence. This office supports teachers and people working with youth organizations to get further training and lecture materials on prevention work. It has also released the DVD "Flirt, Harassment, or Assault?", which includes ten video sequences from MedienFalle Basel, which provoke discussion among boys and girls about sexuality, violence and boundaries.

> www.stadt-zuerich.ch/content/prd/de/index/gleichstellung/themen/gewalt/sexualisierte_gewalt/DVD.html

The gender suitcase is a project by the expert group on gender of the Bündner Jugendarbeit network. The suitcase provides adolescents and people working with youth organizations with a playful and creative avenue to the issue of gender. The primary objective is sensitization to different role models and behaviors. The project aims to promote respect towards "other" behavioral roles and supports learning and experimentation with new behavioral roles.

> www.jugend.gr/index.php?id=174

A large, white, stylized letter 'C' is centered within a solid yellow circle. The 'C' is thick and has a slight shadow effect, giving it a three-dimensional appearance. The circle is positioned on the left side of the page, partially overlapping the main text area.

Prevention of cyber-victimization:

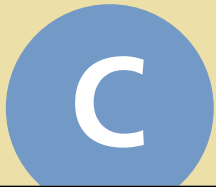
Strengthening the capacity of parents and adolescents

Findings

The most frequently reported form of victimization in the category of sexual victimization without physical contact was victimization via electronic media. Almost every third girl had at some point experienced suggestive comments, received pornographic photos or films, been urged to carry out sexual acts in front of a webcam or been victimized in a similar fashion. Among boys this had been experienced by around one in ten.

Cyber-victimization is a form of violence that often takes place within the context of other types of violence and has a number of distinct categories. Cyber-victimization is not just cyber-bullying, but may also include cyber-stalking or victimizing sexting. These sorts of new issues require specific attention and activities that have already been developed to prevent violence, but must be adapted and redesigned to fit the new media. Cyber-victimization is a major factor in sexual

violence and is correlated with other forms of violence that take place both online and offline. Nevertheless, prevention efforts must not focus solely on cyber-victimization: as shown in the previous recommendations, sexual violence among teenagers is a complex problem and every associated factor should be taken into account.



Recommendations C

C1 Focusing on cyber-victimization

Effective prevention measures against cyber-victimization need to be developed, evaluated and implemented. Such measures should take into account that cyber-victimization often occurs within the context of other forms of (sexual) violence. In addition, measures such as the imparting of knowledge about cyber-victimization to parents and other grown-up reference persons, which can have a major impact, need to be embraced. The use of peer-to-peer activities has also been shown to have a positive impact here.

C2 Promoting media competency

Adolescents must be accompanied in their usage of the electronic media – qualitative measures are needed to support the media competency of adolescents, which should be incorporated into schools as an obligatory element of lesson plans.

C3 Ensuring program quality

Existing prevention and intervention programs aimed at cyber-victimization must continue to be conducted and regularly evaluated so that the quality of the programs can be maintained.

Additional information

National program on “Youth and Media” for the promotion of media competence by the Swiss Federal Office for Social Security

The national program on youth and media has the objective of making children and adolescents aware of the dangers on the internet and able to safely use digital media. At the halfway point in the program, the program partners have observed a positive interim result. The approach of “peer education” has been assessed as particularly promising, and efforts should continue to be made in this area within the context of pilot projects. By 2015, the federal government wants to also assess what additional regulations are needed at the federal level. The tips for safe usage of digital media developed within the context of the national program could provide an approach for the recommended promotion of media competence. These tips can be found at:

> www.jugendundmedien.ch

JAMES Study: Youth, activities, media – Switzerland survey

Every two years, over 1,000 adolescents aged from 12 to 19 living in the three large linguistic regions of Switzerland are surveyed in regards to their media activities. Issues covered in the survey include leisure activities in non-media areas and usage behaviors within the media landscape (e.g. cell phone, internet or video games). For the first time, the study is also focusing on the contents of the media.

> www.psychologie.zhaw.ch/james

D

Parent and family-focused prevention: Promoting early recognition

Findings

Like other studies, the Optimus Study Switzerland also showed the crucial impact of the situation in the parental home: a rough and aggressive approach by parents, Domestic violence⁶ or parental neglect and nonsexual physical abuse all increase the risk of a child becoming a victim or perpetrator of sexual assault – and thereby also the likelihood of being affected by sexual violence among teenagers.

This increased risk of being victimized could signify that one parent carries out the sexual abuse themselves, yet it is also conceivable that negative and aggressive behavior by parents over many years can lead to psychological damage as well as an unstable and low level of self-esteem. This, in turn, is linked with an increased risk of becoming a victim again or a perpetrator.

It also emerged from the Optimus Study that these perpetrators of sexual assault were

more likely to have been abused as children, to have been raised with a harsh parenting style, and to have fewer friends and therefore be socially isolated. This points to the idea that negative experiences as the victim of violence and exclusion contribute to the risk of a person becoming conspicuous for their aggressive behavior in adolescence. Sexual violence is not born of nothing, but emerges in a context that is generally marked by violence and neglect.

⁶Domestic violence is intentionally written with a capital D. This should clearly emphasize that Domestic violence is not limited to specific locations; it does not just take place within the home. Domestic violence must instead be understood as a term for various forms of violence in different contexts and connections.

Recommendations D

D1 Introducing prevention activities for families

Prevention of sexual violence among teenagers must begin at an early stage and within the family. This is the only way to avoid victimization at a later stage and to provide preventive support to potential victims/perpetrators.

D2 Forcing early recognition

Intervention within at-risk families and specific support and counseling for their children/adolescents as well as parent training must be designated a high level of importance.

D3 Supporting families

Measures aimed at early recognition and support can also contribute to minimizing the risk of sexual victimization.

D

Additional information**Child protection in the case of domestic violence in Canton Aargau**

Since mid-2009, in the case of interventions as a result of severe cases of domestic violence, the cantonal police have been reporting these cases to the domestic violence shelter. If children are involved, the shelter attempts to assess the well-being of the children through contact with the parent suffering from violence. If additional measures are necessary, they pass the case to the child protective services group. The child protection group in Aarau is currently working to create its own counseling services for children affected by violence.

> www.ag.ch

Pilot project on the protection of children suffering from domestic violence in the Canton Bern

In the instance of police intervention due to domestic violence, children are also affected in more than half the cases. Witnessing violence within the partnership and family is a threat to the child's well-being and, if early intervention steps are not taken, can lead to long-term damage. Within the context of a two-year pilot project building on existing structures, the Canton Bern tested a model for supporting affected children and their caregivers. Thanks to financing from the Jacobs Foundation, an evaluation could also be conducted of the project. Overall, the results of the evaluation lead to the conclusion that it is a good solution for the large canton to incorporate child protection as a cross-cutting issue into all measures aimed at addressing domestic violence.

> www.pom.be.ch/pom/de/index/direktion/ueber-die-direktion/dossiers/haeusliche_gewalt/kindesschutz_beihaeuslichergewalt-pilotprojekt.html

KidsPunkt & KidsCare pilot projects in the Canton Zurich

The KidsPunkt pilot project of the Winterthur youth secretariat and the KidsCare pilot project of the Pinocchio association provide support to children and adolescents who experience violence between their parents. Affected children and adolescents are contacted as quickly as possible by counselors and are provided with space to speak about what they have experienced. It still has to be determined in which cases the parent perpetrating the violence must be incorporated into the counseling in addition to the parent suffering the abuse. Evaluation of both projects provides the basis for the potential development of a counseling service covering the entire canton.

> www.zh.ch/internet/bildungsdirektion/ajb/de/forschung_entwicklung/gewaltbetroffene_kinder.html

care4kid – pilot project in Canton Thurgau

The care4kid project seeks to provide children and adolescents within Canton Thurgau, who have been affected by domestic violence, with professional and timely counseling tailored to their individual needs. Expert support to the project is provided by representatives of Thurgau's specialist unit for helping victims, Eastern Switzerland's forensic institute, Canton Thurgau's specialized unit for domestic violence, the guardianship office and the child and youth psychiatric service of Thurgau.

> www.frauenberatung-tg.ch

The Federal Office for Gender Equality's domestic violence toolbox

The domestic violence toolbox provides access to field-tested materials focusing on violence between adult couples. Tools include guides, brochures, checklists, leaflets, lecture materials, draft letters, documentation and other items. Among other things, the toolbox also includes an information sheet that addresses violence in adolescent relationships (Information Sheet 18: Violence in adolescent relationships). You can access the toolbox here:

> www.ebg.admin.ch/dienstleistungen/00436/index.html?

E

Interventions within leisure time:

Situational and outreach prevention

Findings

The Optimus Study also sheds light on important links between the lifestyle of young people and their risk of becoming victims of sexual abuse. Adolescents in high-risk settings, i.e. those who go out a lot, are surrounded by a violence-oriented environment, consume drugs or alcohol and often surf the internet, are considerably more likely to be victimized than others. This applies to a similar extent both for incidents with physical contact and those without. In addition, adolescents who practice sexual victimization (perpetrators) are likewise more likely to be involved in high-risk activities.

The character of one's daily life also has an impact on whether adolescents encounter potential perpetrators or situations in which they are more apt to suffer abuse. At the same time, there is often a lack of individuals in such situations that could potentially stop sexual victimization from occurring (parents,

teachers, other adults). Alcohol consumption, for example, often takes place in high-risk settings (e.g. with friends, in bars, without an adult presence). In addition, intoxicated adolescents are less capable of protecting themselves against sexual victimization.

Unlike other age groups, teenagers are at particular risk in their leisure time of becoming victims of sexual abuse. During their adolescence, teenagers have a particular need for freedom and follow their own interests. Many activities that can be deemed risky based on the Optimus Study occur in the period after school hours.

These developments can be understood as an element of the natural transition to adulthood. But it is important to undertake measures to protect teenagers from sexual assault during their leisure time and when engaging in risky activities.

Recommendations E

E1 Making use of after-school hours

One potential way to make the after-school period safer and to protect teenagers from risky activities and sexual victimization during such times could be to provide [structured programs starting directly after school hours](#) in community centers, in youth organizations or in schools themselves (for example, performance role-playing).

E2 Using peer relations

Prevention within leisure settings should also make use of [peer-based group work](#). In this case, it is important to provide different options for different peer groups in which sexual violence takes place.

E3 Promoting outreach work aimed at prevention

The places in which teenagers spend their leisure time could be used for [media-based prevention campaigns](#) targeting the prevention of sexual victimization. These could, for example, include poster campaigns or DVDs addressing the topic.

E4 Working to reduce alcohol and drug consumption

Alcohol and drug consumption by teenagers are correlated with increased potential to become victims as well as perpetrators of sexual victimization. It could therefore be beneficial to [reduce \(excessive\) alcohol and drug consumption among adolescents](#). Such interventions can be targeted at all adolescents or just at those who are currently consuming excessive quantities of alcohol and/or drugs.

F

Measures in the school setting:

Sensitization, explanation and discussion

Findings

The Optimus Study has shown that the degree of sexual delinquency within a school class has an impact on the risk of adolescents to be sexually victimized. This was measured within the student survey conducted by the Optimus Study and based on the corresponding level of violence within the same school class: all of the students in a class were asked whether they had ever committed sexual violence. The more individuals who answered yes, the higher the level of readiness to use violence within the class. In such a class, the danger of being abused by one's own partner is several times higher than in a less violence-prone environment. This is understandable insofar as adolescents often enter into romantic relationships with their classmates. The findings, however, also show that negative sexual experiences among couples are more likely at schools in which sexual bullying is widespread, for example at recess. Structures of

violence are an important element of sexual violence among teenagers.

F

Recommendations F

F1 Supporting schools

Conducting a [screening of the presence of violence in schools](#) combined with measures specifically targeting high-risk schools could have a preventative effect. Schools should be supported in the development of an early-warning system, which promotes the early recognition of incidences of sexual violence and other forms of violence, and provides a framework for action in such cases with the objective of establishing a positive culture and zero tolerance for violence within the peer group (also outside of the school context).

F2 Increase the level of knowledge at schools

School officials, principals, and experts working within a school environment (e.g. teachers, social workers and nurses) must have a deeper understanding of the issue of sexual violence among teenagers. Additional assistance needs to be provided to school officials and teachers who would like to sensitize students in regards to sexual violence. Projects that have already been launched for such purposes must continue to be supported.

F3 Promote discussion and reflection

The [discussion of norms, values and gender stereotypes](#) with children and adolescents, whether in schools or in integration courses, can have a preventative impact.

F4 Using sex education as an entry point

[Age-appropriate explanations](#) as well as measures addressing (sexual) violence can contribute to enabling children and adolescents to deal with one another respectfully and without violence. Parents as well as schools must take responsibility in this regard. Cooperation should also be sought out with the cantonal offices responsible for sex education. More resources are needed in this area: The financing of services that already exist must also be secured. Existing services should also be evaluated to ensure their quality.

F5 Introducing specific programs at schools

Within the schools [specific offerings](#) should be available to potential perpetrators such as anti-aggression training and coaching.

F6 Anchoring non-violent attitudes within schools

Both [internally and externally](#), schools should take up [an anti-violence stance](#), correspondingly anchor this stance within its principles and other working documents, and take action accordingly.

F

Additional information**Expertise of the Clinic for Childhood and Adolescent Psychiatry and Psychotherapy Ulm**

The experts of the Clinic for Childhood and Adolescent Psychiatry/Psychotherapy Ulm recommend taking the following measures to reduce sexual violence among children and adolescents at schools⁷:

- > Develop a mission statement
- > Establish a liaison teacher / supervisor system
- > Create awareness of the problem of sexual aggression among children and adolescents (sensitization)
- > Introduce clear procedures (including in cooperation with external support systems), communicate these procedures
- > Provide instruction or further training for specialists on the issue of sexual violence among children / adolescents (education, training of conversational skills)
- > Establish anonymous complaint boxes
- > Respectful and consistent parenting

⁷ www.stmas.bayern.de/imperia/md/content/stmas/stmas_internet/jugend/expertise_delinquente_jugendliche.pdf

Crisis situations – a handbook for schools

The Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education has published practical aids for overcoming difficult situations in schools and their surroundings. The handbook is aimed at school officials, directors and teachers at all levels, and can be ordered in German, French and Italian.

> www.edk.ch/dyn/17233.php

Crisis compass – guidance for dealing with major crises at schools

This file includes case examples, draft texts, guidelines for symbolic actions, crisis plans, useful telephone numbers, links, etc. This handbook for dealing with adolescents, parents and colleagues provides school directors, teachers and officials with all the important things needed to react as quickly and independently as possible to all crisis situations. The crisis compass is applicable to all school levels and can be ordered here:

> www.schulverlag.ch

“Sicher!gsund!” dossier

The “Sicher!gsund!” dossier is available to all teachers and officials in Canton St. Gallen, and addresses the issue of adolescent violence, while also providing tips on preventing violence in schools. Individual chapters of the dossier can be downloaded here free of charge:

> www.schule.sg.ch/home/volksschule/unterricht/themen_fachbereiche/Jugend_und_Gesellschaft.html

Work package “Heartbeat. Prevention of violence within intimate teenager relationships”

This work package is aimed at teachers and youth organization professionals. It seeks to provide information about the problem of violence within intimate teenager relationship, strategies for addressing the issue in schools and youth organizations, and working materials for carrying out prevention measures against violence in intimate teenager relationships. The work package can be downloaded here free of charge:

> www.empowering-youth.de/aktuell.html

G Intervention and therapy for perpetrators:

Early prevention and targeted intervention

Findings

A significant correlation was found within the Optimus Study between victimization of individuals and violence-prone behavior. Adolescents who perpetrated sexual violence were much more likely to be involved in other forms of violence, to have consumed illegal drugs and to spend more time surfing the internet. This points to the theory that adolescent sexual abusers carry out their actions mostly within the context of a generally delinquent and aggressive tendency.

It also emerged that these perpetrators were more likely to have been abused as children, to have been raised with a harsh parenting style, and to have fewer friends and therefore be socially isolated. This points to the idea that negative experiences as the victim of violence and exclusion contribute to the risk of a person becoming conspicuous for their aggressive assaults in adolescence.

Recommendations G

G1 Breaking through victim-perpetrator spirals at an early stage

Taking early action to support victims during their adolescence as well as prevention and intervention measures for adolescent perpetrators contributes not only to reducing sexual violence, but also to a reduction in further victimization (of the same and other individuals) in the present and future.

G2 Promoting early recognition of incidences of perpetration and victimization

Potential perpetrators must be identified at an earlier stage and their proneness to violence should be assessed more effectively. To this end, there is a need for a threat management to assess the risk of adolescent perpetrators.

G3 Acting on a specific and individualized basis

Case management is an absolute requirement in the case of interventions in order to promote coordination among the various experts and specialist organizations. The objective should be to achieve an interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary approach.

G4 Adapting prevention and intervention activities to specific situations

Perpetrator and victim roles are often difficult to distinguish. Additional measures are needed in this regard to incorporate victims who are also perpetrators and perpetrators who are also victims into prevention, intervention and other measures.

G5 Reviewing the term domestic violence

At the federal level, there is no legal definition of domestic violence. An assessment is therefore required of the extent to which certain constellations of sexual violence among teenagers can be recognized as forms of domestic violence, and which legal measures can subsequently be taken.

G6 Revise definitions of prevention

A distinction is needed between prevention measures aimed at universal prevention and measures that are aimed at specific prevention, and a clear definition is needed of what will be understood to fall within the prevention, intervention and other measures.

H

Further research:

More studies to understand the problem

Findings

The Optimus Study Switzerland is not sufficient for fully understanding the complex problem of sexual violence among teenagers. Additional research initiatives are needed.

Recommendations H

H1 Push for coordinated research

The federal government is called upon to officially initiate a [national research program](#) on sexual violence among teenagers. Switzerland can also benefit from international efforts in this area – currently, statistics are primarily available from the USA.

H2 Identify and assess existing services

An [analysis and anamnesis is needed of existing services across the entirety of Switzerland](#) aimed at stemming sexual violence among teenagers. There should be an assessment of which current prevention and intervention strategies as well as further measures are being offered in schools, health care organizations, leisure time organizations, family counseling offices, criminal law offices and medical clinics, how these are currently being used and how they can be better linked. This could contribute to identifying gaps within current care services, and promote the development of a coherent strategy for recognizing and avoiding sexual victimization.

H3 Generate useful information

[Additional scientific and, above all, qualitative studies](#) are needed, which:

- > evaluate the effectiveness of prevention and intervention measures,
- > contribute to reliable clarification of risk factors and causal relationships based on longitudinal studies,
- > investigate why underage victims of sexual victimization do not contact specialist organizations more frequently and why certain victims are less likely to make use of psychological or psychiatric support,
- > look into the profiles of victims and perpetrators, and identify risk groups and risky/escalating settings so that they can be more easily avoided,
- > look at the impact of violence during (early) childhood along with studies on what impact violence has in the first romantic teenager relationships,
- > investigate the correlation between sexual abuse and mental or physical disability,
- > identify the outcomes of non-violence efforts promoted in families and schools and the consequences of these efforts on the prevalence of violence among teenagers.

Research design of the Optimus Study Switzerland

During the 2009/2010 academic year, the research team from the University of Zurich surveyed almost 450 school classes throughout Switzerland. More than 6700 students from all levels of the Swiss ninth grade (around 16 years old) completed a questionnaire on their experiences of sexual abuse on a laptop brought by the researchers. The random sample was drawn from a list of all classes in state schools and is representative of Swiss adolescents at the end of compulsory education. The survey was authorized by the cantonal ethics committees and departments of education, and participation was voluntary for the students.

For the agency survey a total of 1267 organizations from all sub-areas of child protection in Switzerland were invited to fill in an online questionnaire. In it they were asked to provide details on the number of cases of child abuse, neglect and sexual abuse that they dealt with, as well as information on the victims, their family backgrounds and – where available – the suspected perpetrators. Agencies were also asked about the intervention measures they had implemented. 324 of the organizations contacted complied with the request, which corresponds to a return rate of 27 percent. 47 percent of them were custody authorities, 28 percent were involved in voluntary child protection and 25 percent in child protection under criminal law.

In order to investigate the extent and the circumstances of sexual victimization among adolescents two questionnaire tools were

used, namely the Juvenile Victimization Questionnaire (JVQ) and the Sexual Abuse and Victimization Questionnaire (SAVQ), developed specifically for the Optimus Study. A total of 22 questions were asked, for example, see right:



Excerpt from the questionnaire

Victimization with physical contact

- > Did a grown-up you know ever touch your private parts when you didn't want it or make you touch their private parts? Or did a grown-up you know force you to have sex?
- > Now think about kids your age, like from school, a boyfriend or girlfriend, or even a brother or sister. Did another child or teen ever make you do sexual things?
- > Has someone ever urged or forced you to take his penis or another person's penis in your mouth?
- > Has someone ever tried against your will to have anal sexual intercourse (in your behind)?

Victimization without physical contact

- > Did anyone ever make you look at their private parts by using force or surprise, or by "flashing" you?
- > Did anyone ever hurt your feelings by saying or writing something sexual about you or your body?
- > Were you ever forced or pressured to undress yourself and to show your genitals to an adult or another kid?
- > Have you ever been forced or urged to look at pornographic pictures, drawings, films, DVDs or magazines (also on a cell phone)?
- > Did someone ever pass on intimate pictures of you to other people or even publish them on the internet?
- > Have you ever been clearly sexually harassed or molested when you were chatting (MSN, Netlog, etc.) or during some other type of internet-based communication?

Further reading

Allroggen M., Spröber N., Rau T., Fegert J. M. (eds.) (2011): Sexuelle Gewalt unter Kindern und Jugendlichen. Ursachen und Folgen. Eine Expertise der Klinik für Kinder- und Jugendpsychiatrie / Psychotherapie. Universitätsklinikum Ulm, 2. erweiterte Auflage 2011. URL: http://www.stmas.bayern.de/imperia/md/content/stmas/stmas_internet/jugend/expertise_delinquente_jugendliche.pdf

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Bundesministerium der Justiz (ed.) (2012): Verdacht auf sexuellen Missbrauch in einer Einrichtung – was ist zu tun? Fragen und Antworten zu den Leitlinien zur Einschaltung der Strafverfolgungsbehörden. URL: http://www.bmj.de/SharedDocs/Kurzmeldungen/DE/2013/20130220_Verdacht_auf_sexuellen_Kindesmissbrauch_in_Einrichtungen.html

UBS Optimus Foundation (ed.) (2012): Sexual assault on children and adolescents in Switzerland. Forms, extent and circumstances, Zurich

WHO (1999): Report on the Consultation on Child Abuse Prevention. Geneva, March 29-31, 1999. URL: <http://www.who.int/mip2001/files/2017/childabuse.pdf>

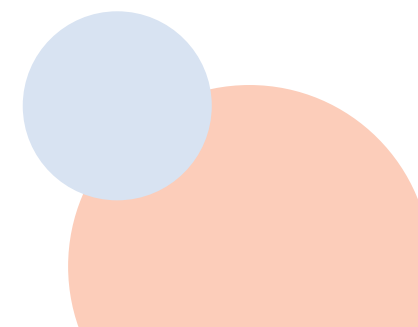
UBS Optimus Foundation

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The UBS Optimus Foundation supports projects in places where children face adversity. UBS covers all the Foundation's administrative costs so that 100 percent of all donations go directly to the projects.

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