

ISCI-2015 conference:

„From Welfare to Well-Being:

Child indicators in research, policy and practice“

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“It is not such a big issue”–

empirical findings about the experiences with sexual violence
of young people living in foster care and boarding schools

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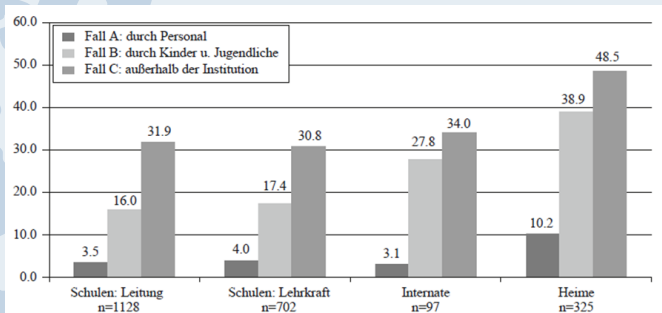
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1.1 Child sexual abuse within pedagogical institutions in germany

Current state of research:

- study „Sexual Violence against Girls and Boys within Institutions“ (2011) examine the extent to which pedagogical institutions obtained knowledge of sexual victimization by personnel, peers or outside the institution by questioning mainly the management level of these institutions



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1.2 Survey of the experiences with sexual violence of adolescents in residential care institutions and boarding schools

Study: „Survey of the experiences with sexual violence of adolescents in residential care institutions and boarding schools and deduction of recommendations for action for practice“

- perspective of young people (15 to 18 year old) living in boarding schools and residential care institutions in germany today
- research design: study used quantitative as well as qualitative methods
 - a) quantitative survey questioned: **322** young people living in 32 institutions in germany (20 residential care institutions and 12 boarding schools)
 - b) qualitative survey include: **10** group discussions as well as **13** interviews with young people affected by sexual violence (self-declaration)
- research question (inter alia): which collective orientations and knowledge concerning experiences of sexual violence of young people living in foster care and boarding schools can be found?

2. Qualitative findings

“It is not such a big issue”– the challenge to talk about a taboo subject

- Young people talk about sexual violence as a taboo subject
 - in first reaction often statements that it is “no big issue” meaning that sexual violence does not take place in their institution or in their life altogether (distance and defence)
 - young people talk about sexual violence in terms of two directions (closeness and distance)
 - process of finding a definition of the term „sexual violence“
 - similar way of talking about the topic in omissions
- main finding: young people in institutions have diverse experiences with sexual violence in very different contexts but only few experiences of talking about sexual violence

2. Qualitative findings

Sexuality and sexual violence: „omnipresent but silent“

- findings support the statement that we have an absence of the topics sexuality and sexual violence and a lack of prevention in these institutions (Helming, Mayer, 2012, S. 49)
- in contrast to claims of experts speechlessness prevails and pedagogical concepts are missing (ebd., S. 512).
- in contrast to these findings it is interesting to see that mainly the female adolescents orientate on an open way of talking about sexual violence (positive value)
- young people know that the ability to openly discuss and handle these topics has to be learned at home or in school

2. Qualitative findings

Knowledge (extracts):

- being young, female and unknowing are risk factors for the experience of sexual violence
- sexual violence has to do with difference in age and power imbalance
- sexual violence is related to the ability to decide self-determined in sexual relationships (female respondents)
- young girls (below the age of 14 years) are sexually immature and not able to decide self-determined in sexual relationships (female respondents)
- in sexual relationships: male partner is sexually proactive , female part has the duty to set limits by saying „no“ or „stop“ in a clear way (verbal or at least by the use of body language) if any sexual activity is not wanted

2. Qualitative findings

Knowledge (extracts):

- limits need to be defended if you dont want to become victim of sexual violence (female respondents)
- physical force helps to protect yourself from sexual violence (male respondents).
- to disclose that one has become victim of sexual violence stands for the incapability to act which means weakness (male respondents)
- protective and defence measures need to be realized in order to defend yourself against sexual violence (glass example)
- at the same time they know: sexual violence can potentially happen to anyone – 100 percent protection against sexual violence is not possible

3. Discussion and prospects

Main statements and conclusions:

- The (still) unaccepted pedagogic challenge? - about the need to talk to young people about sexuality and sexual violence in institutions
- From the ability to act to the pressure to act or: the question of responsibility – do we deal with negative side effects of prevention programs?

Thank you
for your attention

