



Impacts & Responses to: Victims of Technology-Assisted Child Sexual Abuse

Problem

- > Child abuse material (CAM) continues to increase on a global scale in quantity, availability, and severity
- > Research examining treatment options for victims, particularly responding to the impacts of technology-assisted child sexual abuse (TA-CSA), is scarce
- > Many current treatment options are arguably not tailored to address the unique experiences of CAM victims, particularly the additional complexities and impacts created by digital technology (eg. permanency of images)

Aims

- > Examine the perspectives of professionals working within the countering child exploitation field in Australia, specifically focusing on their experiences working with victims of TA-CSA
- > From the perspectives of these professionals, identify whether victims of TA-CSA have unique impacts and specific support needs, given the use of technology in these crimes

Methodology

- > One-on-one semi-structured interviews, utilising open-ended questions
- > Six interviews conducted, consisting of one representative from a non-government organisation, and five law enforcement personnel. Participants work in sectors that focus on TA-CSA and/or have experience working with victims
- > Analysis to identify themes in participant responses

Key findings

- > Participants stated that unique complexities accompany TA-CSA. Specifically, permanency of CAM online, and the risk of CAM circulating on the surface web, can have impacts upon victims
- > Participants believed that **compulsory online safety education** should be provided by schools starting at a young age to prevent and protect children from the harms caused by TA-CSA
- > Participants believed that **open communication** should be utilised by parents to prevent TA-CSA and to mitigate the impacts caused by CAM
- > Participants believed that victims require **long-term support** that is **tailored** to their individual needs and victimisation experiences

Implications and recommendations

- > This research should be interpreted with the small sample size in mind, as results cannot be generalised
- > Improvements can be made in terms of prevention and treatment responses to address the unique impacts of CAM
- > Future research could be conducted with a larger and more varied sample of professionals within the Australian countering child exploitation field. This could include comparing the perspectives of those in different professional sectors involved in responding to TA-CSA
- > Future research could consider formulating, examining, and evaluating prevention and treatment efforts in the interest of harm minimisation and providing tailored support to victims of TA-CSA